

International Students for Social Equality/Socialist Equality Party conference adopts socialist internationalist perspective to oppose war

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The International Students for Social Equality (ISSE)/Socialist Equality Party (SEP) Emergency Conference Against War voted unanimously April 1 for a resolution advancing a socialist and internationalist program to oppose militarism and war. The two-day conference was convened to develop a program for the mobilization of student youth and the working class as a whole within the United States and internationally to halt the war in Iraq and prevent the outbreak of war against Iran.

The conference, held on the campus of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, was attended by more than a hundred students and workers from across the United States and from a number of other countries. Delegates attended from Michigan, Ohio, Kentucky, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Illinois, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Washington, Florida, Texas, Colorado, Connecticut, California, Oregon, and Virginia. Seventeen delegates attended the conference from Canada; others came from Germany and Australia.

The conference received greetings from Australia, Britain, Turkey, and Romania. Supporters from Pakistan, Romania, the Philippines, South Africa, Zambia, the UAE, Bangladesh, Haiti, Pakistan, Nigeria, Turkey, Palestine, Ghana and Venezuela expressed interest in attending, but were unable to come because of the high cost of travel and the difficulty of gaining entry into the US.

Joe Kay, a member of the ISSE steering committee and a writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*, set the tone for the conference in his opening remarks. “We are here to give voice to the outrage and opposition felt by millions, indeed billions of people around the world, who look on with horror at the devastation wrought by imperialism, or are themselves the direct victims of war and militarism,” Kay said.

“Within the framework of the existing political structures and institutions internationally,” he continued, “the interests and views of the vast majority of the world’s population find no expression. We are here to give conscious expression to these interests and views, and to elaborate a political program that can end war.”

Kay introduced for discussion a resolution outlining the fundamental political perspective and program of the ISSE. “Our

response to the war must be based on our understanding of the general tendencies underlying it,” he said. “If war is a product of the capitalist system, then war cannot be ended except through the abolition of capitalism. A movement against war must be a movement against capitalism.”

The resolution pointed directly to the roots of imperialist war in the profit system and the division of the world into competing nation-states. “The war against Iraq is an imperialist war,” the resolution stated. “It is an act of aggression undertaken in the interests of the corporate and financial oligarchy in the United States and its allies in Britain and other countries. As in the world wars of the twentieth century, what is taking place is a re-division of global resources as the US ruling class seeks to assert military control over key strategic regions.”

The recent explosion of US militarism had its origins in the historic decline over the past half-century of US capitalism’s global economic position, the resolution explained. “American capitalism rests on the fragile and unstable foundation of massive capital inflows, unprecedented levels of debt, and various forms of financial speculation and manipulation. Increasingly, a corrupt ruling elite in the United States is seeking to use its principle asset—armed force sustained by a military budget that exceeds the combined military spending of the rest of the world—to offset its declining economic power.”

The resolution stressed that the only force capable of ending the war was the international working class—the only social force whose interests were irreconcilably opposed to the economic and social interests that drove imperialism. The international character of this class and the mass social questions it confronted necessitated, the resolution argued, an internationalist program. “The global strategy of imperialism must be met by a global strategy of the working class and an opposition to nationalism in all its forms,” it declared.

“In February 2003, millions of people around the world took to the streets to protest US war plans,” the resolution observed. However, because this movement was dominated by the perspective of protest politics, “Four years later, the war drags on, even as popular opposition has intensified.”

The resolution emphasized the necessity for the political independence of the working class from all of the parties and groups that were tied in one way or another to the political establishment. In the US, this involved “a complete break with the Democratic Party and all those who seek to pressure the Democrats.”

“From the preparations for invasion, through to the most recent escalation of the war, the Democratic Party in the US has played the role of accomplice to the Bush administration,” the resolution observed. “The Democratic Party is a bourgeois party of imperialism, and all sections of the party’s leadership—from open reactionaries to the misnamed ‘Out of Iraq Caucus’—are responsible for the perpetuation of the war. The main concern of the Democratic Party is to calibrate its public positions just enough to smother social protest and forestall the development of a movement that breaks free of the two-party system.”

The resolution highlighted the fact that workers around the world confronted similar political challenges. “The Liberal Party and New Democratic Party in Canada, the Labour Party in Britain, the Australian Labor Party, the Socialist Parties in France and Spain, and the Social Democratic Party in Germany—all these supposedly ‘left’ organizations have either facilitated right-wing and militarist policies or carried them out directly.”

The resolution insisted: “The fight for the political independence of the working class requires a conscious assimilation of the history of revolutionary international socialism, from Marx and Engels, to the Russian revolution, to the struggle of the Trotskyist movement, represented today by the International Committee of the Fourth International, against Stalinism and revisionism.”

It concluded: “The conference calls on workers and youth around the world to build the Socialist Equality Party and the ICFI, along with its student organization, the International Students for Social Equality, to lead the struggle against war and the capitalist system.”

On Sunday, the second day of the conference, the political perspective outlined in the resolution was accepted with the unanimous support of all those in attendance. The *World Socialist Web Site* will publish the resolution in full later this week.

In the course of the discussion on the resolution introduced by Joe Kay, reports were delivered on the political situation in the US, Sri Lanka, Italy, Canada, Germany, Russia, Iran and Venezuela. Students and faculty active in building the ISSE on university and high school campuses across the US and internationally described the political, social, and economic circumstances confronting students and youth, and stressed the necessity for the socialist and internationalist perspective outlined in the resolution.

David North, national secretary of the SEP in the US and chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site*, delivered remarks that stressed the inevitability of coming political convulsions, in which the existing social and economic organization of society would be increasingly called into question.

The historical period characterized by the unchallenged superiority of American capitalism and the preeminence of the US military was coming to a close, North said. American capitalism was in a decline, while the influence of Europe and emerging

economic powers such as India and China was increasing rapidly.

North said the US intervention in Iraq was an attempt to offset that decline through the use of military force. The failure of that enterprise, therefore, had catastrophic consequences for US capitalism. A transition was underway to a new historical period, in which the various imperialist powers would attempt to secure their own interests through the use of military violence.

In this context, North stressed that “it is only a matter of time before the working class intervenes in politics.” The decisive question, he argued, was what program, principles, and perspective would guide that intervention.

Further topics of discussion included the origins of the political and social crisis in the United States, the history and lessons of the anti-war movement, the educational work of the ISSE, problems of art and culture, and the development of the *World Socialist Web Site*. A collection to carry forward the work of the ISSE raised \$11,000 in donations.

The conference also unanimously adopted a resolution demanding that the government of Sri Lanka conduct a thorough investigation into the disappearance of Nadarajah Wimalaswaran, a member of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka, and his friend Sivanathan Mathivathanan, in the northern Jaffna islands on March 22.

“There is every indication that the military is either directly responsible for or complicit in this disappearance,” read the resolution, which was introduced by Parwini Zora, representing the Sri Lankan SEP. “We hold the Sri Lankan government responsible for the fate of Wimalaswaran and Mathivathanan and demand that it secure their immediate and safe release,” it stated.

The resolution also demanded that the Sri Lankan government conduct a genuine investigation into the murder of SEP supporter Sivapragasam Mariyadas at his home in Mullipothana last August, and prosecute those who carried out the killing.

It declared: “This conference condemns these disappearances and this murder as political crimes carried out against the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka and these individuals because of their opposition to the war and their struggle to unite the working class on the basis of an international socialist program against all forms of communalist politics.”



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