

## Resolution adopted by the ISSE/SEP Emergency Conference Against War

# End the occupation of Iraq! No to war against Iran! For an international socialist movement against war!

4 April 2007

*The following resolution was passed unanimously on April 1 by the International Students for Social Equality/Socialist Equality Party Emergency Conference Against War, held March 31-April 1 in Ann Arbor, Michigan. It represents the position of the conference on the necessary political foundation for a renewed struggle against war.*

1. The International Students for Social Equality/Socialist Equality Party Emergency Conference Against War calls on students and workers around the world to intensify the struggle against the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and the threat of military attacks on Iran.

2. The conference takes place four years after the illegal US invasion of Iraq, launched on March 20, 2003. For the population of Iraq, these four years have been a long nightmare of unending death and destruction. According to a study by Johns Hopkins University, published by the British medical journal *Lancet*, through June 2006 an estimated 655,000 Iraqis were killed as a result of the invasion and occupation. Many more have been injured, and an entire society has been devastated. More than 3,400 American and other soldiers have been killed and nearly 25,000 injured.

3. The war against Iraq is an imperialist war. 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 increasingly global integration of production smashes against the limits of the obsolete nation-state form in which the capitalist system is historically rooted. This contradiction intensifies the basic conflict between the private ownership of the means of production by an increasingly narrow ruling class and the social character of a productive process that involves the labor of hundreds of millions.

4. Iraq is not the first and, unless the capitalist system is overthrown, will not be the last target of imperialist war. The 21st century is not even a decade old, and already it has become all too clear that without the intervention of the working class, the tragedies and bloody crimes of the last century will not only be repeated—they will be exceeded. Over the past two decades, the world has been subject to the continued expansion of American militarism—from the first invasion of Iraq, to the wars against Somalia and Serbia, to the colonial-style invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq.

5. In February 2003, millions of people all around the world took to the streets to protest US war plans. Four years later the war drags on, even as

popular opposition has intensified. The only way the war can be ended is through a unified political movement of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program. The world's productive resources must be placed under the democratic control of the world's population so that these resources can be used to meet pressing social needs, rather than the amassing of personal fortunes and corporate profit.

### **Iraq and the global strategy of US imperialism**

6. All the justifications that have been given for the war—including Iraq's alleged ties with Al Qaeda and its supposed weapons of mass destruction—have long been exposed as lies. Those in the Bush administration who advanced these lies, along with their accomplices in other governments, in the media and in the Democratic Party, are guilty of war crimes. Never can they wash clean the blood that stains their hands.

7. The predatory nature of the war is most clearly exposed in the universal demand within the US political establishment that the Iraqi government open up the country's oil to international corporations. But in launching this war, the aim of the American ruling class was not only to seize Iraqi oil fields and establish through military force its domination of the Middle East, but to increase its leverage over its major imperialist competitors and offset its declining economic power.

8. The invasion of Iraq in 2003 represented a new stage in the protracted machinations of the US in Iraq and throughout the Middle East. This policy has increasingly taken the form of direct military intervention and neo-colonialism—culminating in the Gulf War of 1991, twelve years of deadly sanctions overseen by the United Nations and the Clinton administration, and finally the 2003 invasion.

9. The move toward direct US military domination in these regions has its roots in the erosion of US economic hegemony. 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.

10. The interests of American imperialism are not confined to the Middle East and Central Asia, but reach into every corner of the globe,

including South and Central America, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

11. Humanity is threatened with the eruption of violence on a global scale not seen since the bloodiest days of the First and Second World Wars. The global ambitions of the United States represent no less a danger to peace than those of imperialist Germany in the first half of the 20th century. The fundamental cause of war is to be found not in the ambitions of the American ruling class, but in geopolitical and economic tensions that arise inevitably out of the reactionary capitalist nation-state system. The United States is not alone in its expansionist geopolitical interests. Competition for resources between different capitalist powers—including the US, Japan, Australia, Russia, and the European powers—has brought with it an extreme heightening of inter-imperialist antagonisms. The ruling classes of historically-oppressed countries, including China and India, are striving for a more dominant world position, while more minor powers have their own regional interests and ambitions. All of this combines to intensify the danger of a global conflagration. The threat of a new world war can be answered only by the unified global struggle of the international working class, directed toward the establishment of a democratic and egalitarian world socialist society.

## War and social inequality

12. The dominant tendency of international social relations over the past three decades has been the extraordinary growth of social inequality and the concentration of wealth into the hands of a tiny layer of the population. Nowhere is this process more pronounced than in the United States.

13. Militarism is inextricably linked to social inequality in two respects: 1) War is an expression of the social interests of the same ruling class that has enriched itself on the backs of working people; and 2) as social tensions intensify, war is used by the ruling class in an attempt to suppress internal conflicts and direct them externally.

14. According to Internal Revenue Service tax data, social inequality in the US is at its highest levels since 1928, before the Great Depression. The top tenth of one percent of the population in the US (300,000 individuals) has an income greater than the combined income of the poorest 150 million Americans. Since the 1970s, the income of the majority of the population has stagnated or declined, while the income of the top 1 percent has increased sharply. The greatest levels of income growth have been concentrated in the top one-hundredth of one percent of the population.

15. Internationally, the richest 1 percent of the world's population has an income equal to that of the bottom 10 percent. The richest three individuals possess more assets than the poorest 600 million people. The combined assets of the 946 billionaires in the world grew 35 percent in 2006 to \$3.5 trillion—over \$1 trillion more than the gross domestic product of the entire continent of Africa.

16. The growth of inequality has involved a systematic attack on gains made by workers over previous periods. Social programs in the United States, Canada, Europe, Australia and other capitalist powers are being eliminated. In the more underdeveloped regions, national reforms and protections against exploitation by international capital are being dismantled.

17. In waging its imperialist wars abroad, the American ruling elite treats with complete contempt the workers and young people it employs as cannon fodder. The utter hypocrisy of the “support our troops” mantra is revealed in the inadequate medical treatment and support facilities for injured US soldiers and veterans. The strains placed on the military by the occupation of Iraq have led some sections of the ruling establishment to

call for the reintroduction of the draft in order to provide the American war machine with fresh supplies of troops. The war fever of imperialism will take an increasingly devastating toll on workers and youth in all the imperialist countries.

18. The world has witnessed an extraordinary development of technology, even as billions remain mired in poverty and disease. The population of the globe is menaced by environmental problems such as global warming. While the resources exist to address these problems, they remain trapped within the framework of a social system that subordinates everything to the pursuit of profit and the mad drive of a corrupt oligarchy for the accumulation of personal wealth.

19. The struggle against war cannot be separated from opposition to the political and social interests underlying it. At the center of the struggle against war must be the fight for social equality and the establishment of a society that guarantees jobs, decent wages, quality housing, health care and education for everyone.

## War and the attack on democratic rights

20. Social inequality and militarism are ultimately incompatible with democratic forms of rule. The wholesale attack on the most basic democratic rights, spearheaded by the American ruling class, is a response to the inevitable resistance that will arise to its policies of militarism and social reaction.

21. The so-called “war on terror,” used as a catchall pretext by the US ruling elite, is a monumental fraud. Five-and-a-half years after the September 11 attacks, there has been no credible investigation into these events and the significant evidence of US government complicity.

22. One of the first consequences of the “war on terror” was an unprecedented attack on basic democratic rights—from the passage of the USA Patriot Act, to the vast expansion of domestic spying, to the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, to the setting up of secret CIA detention facilities and the infamous prison at Guantánamo Bay. The US government has declared its right to arrest and detain anyone, including US citizens, as in the case of Jose Padilla, hold people indefinitely without charges, and subject them to torture—all in the name of the “war on terror.” In late 2006, Congress passed, with bipartisan support, a law establishing drumhead military commissions, sanctioning the use of evidence obtained by torture, and denying the fundamental right of habeas corpus to prisoners held at Guantánamo Bay.

23. These moves toward authoritarian rule in the United States pose a grave threat to the population of the entire world. They will be used against anyone who opposes or challenges the interests of the American ruling elite.

24. The war in Iraq is itself a devastating expression of the failure of American democracy. It was launched on the basis of lies in the face of mass popular opposition both in the US and around the world. In the November 2006 midterm elections, the American people voted for an end to the war, but instead they have been given military escalation.

25. The attack on democratic rights is an international phenomenon. The “Anti-Terrorism Bill” in Australia, the “Act on Aviation Security” in Germany, the “Terrorism Bill” in Britain, the “Prevention of Terrorism Act” in Sri Lanka—all of these measures, and many more in countries throughout the world, have been pushed through to attack the democratic rights of the population.

26. The basic rights of the population are viewed by the ruling elites of these different countries as obstacles to the pursuit of their unpopular policies. Opposition to the attacks on democratic rights must be based on opposition to the capitalist system. The defense of these rights must be

accompanied by an expansion of democracy to encompass the democratic control of social and economic life—that is, through the establishment of international socialism.

## **Internationalism**

27. There is a force that can oppose these policies and put an end to war—the international working class, the vast majority of the world’s population. The working class is the only segment of the population whose social interests are irreconcilably opposed to the social interests that underlie imperialism. It is also the only genuinely international class, whose social interests transcend the confines of the capitalist system of competing nation-states.

28. American imperialism is not the only culprit in the growth of militarism. The ruling elites of different countries have sought to pursue their own interests through military force. All the major capitalist powers have either supported or facilitated the invasion of Iraq. To the extent that opposition to American policy has emerged in these quarters, it is because they have their own interests to defend, including in the Middle East.

29. In economically less developed countries, such as Iran, China and India, the ruling elites have their own interests and ambitions that are completely antagonistic to the interests of the working class and have nothing to do with principled opposition to imperialism. Opposition to wars against these countries in no way implies support for their governments or the capitalist interests that these governments represent. The defeat of imperialism will not take place through the acquisition of nuclear or other weapons by these states, but through the mobilization of the international working class on the basis of a socialist program.

30. At the root of the problems confronted by workers internationally is the increasingly intense conflict between economic globalization and the capitalist nation-state system. Competition between capitalist states and cliques fuels the ever-greater attack on the living standards of working people, as well as the scramble for control over natural resources. If not halted by the working class, these antagonisms will lead ultimately to a worldwide conflict of catastrophic proportions.

31. Attempts to constrain the global productive forces within the confines of the outmoded nation-state system are both reactionary and utopian. 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.

## **The political independence of the working class and the struggle for socialism**

32. In fighting for this program, workers and youth internationally must base themselves on the struggle for the political independence of the working class, in conflict with those parties and tendencies that seek to direct, in one way or another, popular opposition into the safe channels of the political establishment.

33. This means 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 Democratic Party is a bourgeois party of imperialism that has a long history of leading the United States into war—including World War I, World War II, Korea and Vietnam. Today, all sections of

the party’s leadership—from open reactionaries to the misnamed “Out of Iraq Caucus”—are responsible for the perpetuation of 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.

34. Workers must reject the farcical and hypocritical posturing of the Democrats in Congress, the spectacle of non-binding resolutions and deadlines in the distant future, the passage of supposedly “antiwar” resolutions that provide billions of dollars for the escalation of war, and the shedding of crocodile tears over the fate of American soldiers whom the Democrats help send to their death. The Democrats want an “antiwar” policy that allows the occupation to continue, while building up the military for use in future wars and interventions. To the extent that differences exist between the Democrats and Republicans, or within the two parties, these are differences over tactics—over how best to pursue the interests of American imperialism.

35. Similar political questions confront workers in every country. 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. They in no way give political expression to the interests of the vast majority of the population.

36. A movement against war must also be based on opposition to those tendencies in different countries around the world—from the Green Party, to the organizations that have led the main antiwar demonstrations, to nominally socialist or communist tendencies such as the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire in France and Communist Refoundation in Italy—that serve as props for the political establishment. These tendencies block the independent political mobilization of the working class by channeling opposition behind bourgeois governments or championing the supposedly revolutionary credentials of bourgeois nationalists such as Hugo Chavez of Venezuela. It is necessary to oppose all those who argue for a false “unity” that is based on attempts to pressure the ruling class and its representatives.

37. On campuses and schools internationally, the fight for socialism must be based on an opposition to the ideological and political tendencies that dominate the campuses—including the bankrupt perspectives of postmodernism and identity politics. Students must draw the lessons of history, which demonstrate the futility of protest politics that aim to pressure the political establishment. The fight for a socialist movement among student youth must begin with the recognition that the problems facing students—including the threat of war and military conscription, rising costs of tuition, the explosion of student debt, the lack of quality jobs—cannot be separated from the crisis of global capitalism. Today, an increasing proportion of workers attend schools or colleges, and an increasing proportion of students work. A movement of students must fight for a socialist political movement of the working class as a whole.

38. 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 (ICFI), against Stalinism and revisionism.

39. This 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.



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