

ISSE holds public meeting at Florida State University

Our reporter
30 May 2007

On Thursday, May 24, the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) at Florida State University held its first public meeting. *World Socialist Web Site* writer and Socialist Equality Party member Lawrence Porter delivered the featured report titled, “Which way forward in the fight against the war in Iraq?” Around twenty students and local residents attended the event.

Porter’s report summarized essential facts concerning the 2003 US invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq. From the well-known Johns Hopkins school of Public Health estimate that 655,000 Iraqis have perished—a figure now estimated to have grown to 900,000 to one million—to UN reports stating that 15 percent of the population has been driven from their homes, to the latest data on the sharp rise in infant mortality, the report concretized the horror of the invasion and its long-term implications for the region and the world.

“If the US were to lose 15 percent of its population” and the people were forced to become refugees, stated Porter, “we would be speaking of more than 45 million Americans, or almost all of the population of the southern states driven from their homes.”

“This would include Florida, 17.7 million; Georgia, 9 million; Mississippi, 2.9 million; S. Carolina, 4.2 million; N. Carolina, 8.6 million; and Louisiana 4.5 million. Imagine the entire population of these states dispersed and wandering from place to place to while they searched for a place to stay. It would make what took place after Hurricane Katrina look like a minor event.”

Porter also demonstrated the complicity of the Democratic Party in the acts of aggression in Iraq and concluded that a mass independent movement of the working class must hold US and foreign leaders as well as media figures accountable for their war crimes of historic proportions.

“The cave-in by the Democratic Party on the timetable for withdrawal of the troops was not a surprise,” stated Porter. “The process was to give the appearance they were speaking for the millions who voted against the war,” continued Porter, “but they were never serious about opposing it. How can you say you are opposed to a war that you vote to give \$100 billion to and say your bench-marks are non-binding?”

A lively discussion followed the report, with most of those in attendance participating by either asking questions or answering them. One of the many questions was: “What can your party do when the Democrats are trying to marginalize you?” Another audience member asked, “How do you reach the working class?” Near the end of the meeting a young woman stated, “Your cause is noble and idealistic. However, irrespective of the reasons for the war, won’t it mean chaos if the US pulls out now?”

A member of the ISSE answered that the current state of affairs in Iraq could only be understood by examining how and why the war started in the first place. He concluded that those politicians and pundits who now insist on staying in Iraq to avoid “chaos” are the same people who dishonestly employ the mantra “support the troops” when it has become obvious, given the conditions of facilities like Walter Reed Hospital, that they do not at all have the best interest of the troops at heart.

Porter added that the Bush administration lied justify going to war. “Why did they lie? The lie serves definite political ends: to conceal the predatory designs of American capitalism in invading Iraq.”

One attendee, who is an avid reader of the *World Socialist Web Site*, said she had looked forward to meeting representatives of the WSWWS after reading the site for several years.

“I was so happy to find the wsws.org when I first came to this country from Africa,” stated the reader. “I had finally found people who I agreed with.” “I had always read widely, and from a young child I was concerned with the injustices in the world,” she said, explaining why she had become a socialist.

“The land of my great-grandfather was taken by the British,” she continued. “They killed all those who had wealth and land and put them in concentration camps, at the turn of the last century. The British took all of the nice parts of Kenya.

“When I grew up and came to the US I was really shocked by this war because I truly believed in democracy. Kenya today is the most westernized country in Africa, after South Africa. In Kenya they have adopted American values wholesale; the liberals follow the market like leading the blind into a ditch. However, the conditions in my country are bad. Forty percent of the population is starving, eating once a day or once every two days. It is normal in my country for children to be homeless. Most shocking of all is the impact of AIDS, for which almost nothing is being done.”

Many attendees stayed in the Rotunda long after the meeting was over to discuss other issues and to express their eagerness to get involved with the ISSE at Florida State. The ISSE at FSU will be scheduling a follow up meeting in the near future for all interested to further acquaint themselves with our politics and program.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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