

ISSE meeting at RMIT in Melbourne

## Five years since the US-led invasion of Iraq

15 April 2008

March 20 marked the fifth anniversary of the US-led war against Iraq, a war that is regarded as a criminal venture by the vast bulk of the world's population. While most people also believe that all foreign troops should be withdrawn from Iraq, the occupation continues.

The media is now claiming that an end to the war is in sight, with the end of the Bush presidency and its possible replacement with Democrats Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton. In reality, neither Obama nor Clinton is proposing the immediate withdrawal of troops, nor more fundamentally can they offer an alternative to the aggressive military policy of the United States.

Obama, who makes the greatest play of being an opponent of the Iraq war, opposes what his campaign described as a “precipitous withdrawal,” stating that he “has always believed that our troops need to be withdrawn responsibly” and that troops involved in “counterterrorism” operations would stay. In practice this means maintaining the occupation indefinitely.

Last month the Bush administration took the extraordinary decision to nullify Congressional legislation barring the use of funds for the construction of permanent US bases in Iraq, with barely any protest from the Democrats. And a planned reduction in the number of US troops in Iraq was put on hold by Defense Secretary Robert Gates, meaning that four of the five additional army brigades sent to implement Bush's “surge” will remain there. Even the implementation of the planned withdrawal of troops would still leave 140,000 there—*more than the pre-surge levels*.

Washington is secretly negotiating with the puppet regime in Baghdad to establish an indefinite occupation after the Bush administration leaves office. A joint declaration signed by Bush and Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki last year commits the US military to

protect Iraq from “foreign aggression” and internal threat, while the Iraqi regime must facilitate and encourage “the flow of foreign investments to Iraq, especially American investments.”

The motive behind the war against Iraq is the striving by US imperialism to offset its declining world position against its major rivals in China, Russia and Europe by securing control of vital energy reserves through military force.

In every part of the world, the competition between the great powers for resources, cheap labour and markets is intensifying. Thus the danger of war is spreading to encompass not only other major oil producers such as Iran, but the rest of the Middle East, as well as Central Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The newly elected Rudd Labor government has no fundamental differences with the US-led occupation of Iraq. The government's planned withdrawal of Australian combat troops from the south is taking place at the same time as a major escalation of military force into East Timor and plans for a significant surge in troops numbers in Afghanistan—not to speak of ongoing troop deployments in the Solomon Islands and other small Pacific states, all conducted under the fraudulent banner of “humanitarianism” and “democracy”.

The International Students for Social Equality is fighting for the development of a global movement of students and the working class against war and imperialist militarism. War cannot be averted by protests and appeals directed toward this or that capitalist politician. The only way the Iraq war can be ended—and the threat of even bloodier wars in the future—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 producers themselves, so that they can be used to meet pressing

social needs, rather than to augment the obscene personal fortunes of the ultra-rich.

Friday, April 18, 1 p.m.

RMIT

Bowen Street, Building 7 North, Level 4, Room 47

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

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