

SEP Emergency Conference advances strategy for struggle against social crisis and war

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The Socialist Equality Party held an Emergency Conference on the Social Crisis and War at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor on Saturday and Sunday.

The well-attended conference discussed and unanimously passed six resolutions that together provide the basis for uniting workers in the US and internationally in a struggle against mass unemployment, war, and attacks on democratic rights.

The common theme repeatedly stressed was that, in the US and in countries throughout the world, there would be growing mass opposition to the economic crisis and the efforts of the corporate and financial elite to make the working class pay for it. This opposition requires a political program and perspective, in opposition to the corporate-dominated two party system and the trade unions. A leadership must be built to unite the struggles of workers and direct them against the capitalist system.

Delegates attended from different parts of the US and Canada. Representatives from the German and Australian sections of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) addressed the gathering, and fraternal greetings were read out from other sections.

The meeting attracted many workers and working class youth who have been drawn into politics by the economic crisis.

A number of workers attended from Detroit who learned of the conference through the SEP's leadership in the ongoing struggle against utility shutoffs. Sylvia Young, who lost three children to a Detroit house fire

hours after energy giant DTE shutoff gas and electricity to her home, addressed the conference. On Friday, a court threw out a case attempting to remove from her custody her four surviving children.

SEP National Secretary Joseph Kishore opened the conference by explaining that the economic crisis was being used to undertake a far-reaching attack on the working class.

“The conference has been called under conditions of a mounting crisis of the world capitalist system,” he said. “Despite talk of a ‘recovery,’ the crisis that erupted in September 2008, one and a half years ago, remains very much with us today. Indeed, we have now entered a new stage. With this new stage comes a growing attack on the working class and, at the same, rising anger and opposition.”

The resolutions to be discussed and voted on, Kishore said, would outline a program and perspective for this opposition.

The resolutions provoked intense discussion, with dozens of conference participants speaking in support, raising questions, and making suggestions. The political positions outlined by the resolutions won ringing support, with each passing unanimously.

One conference participant asked what could be done to make people want to fight.

“We don't have to convince anyone to fight,” responded SEP National Chairman David North. “That is not the problem we will face.” All over the world masses of workers are entering struggle, and the US will be no different, he explained. “Our task is to prepare the working class politically for the coming

struggles.”

North pointed to the origins of the fortunes of the ruling elite, which he said were “the products of criminality on a massive scale.”

“This has not been a socially neutral process,” he said. “People have become aware of the rottenness and criminality of the ruling elite.”

The first resolution introduced, “For an emergency jobs program!, For the nationalization of the banks and the redistribution wealth!,” calls for a massive program of public works to provide full employment at high wages. It rejects the claim that there is “no money,” calling for expropriation of the vast personal fortunes of the financial elite, the nationalization of the banks, and the reorganization of the economy to meet social need.

This was followed by a “Resolution on Detroit Fires and the West Virginia mine explosion.” The resolution indicts the criminal policies of mine company Massey Energy, whose disregard for worker safety recently led to the deaths of 29 coal miners in West Virginia, and those of DTE, whose utility shutoffs have led to a rash of deadly house fires in Detroit. The resolution calls for the prosecution of executives and government regulators responsible for the tragedies and endorses the recommendations of the Citizens Inquiry into the Dexter Avenue Fire.

The third resolution, “For the International Unity of the Working Class” states that, because of the global character of the capitalist crisis and the common interests of workers everywhere, struggles of the working class must be waged on a global level and led by an international leadership, the International Committee of the Fourth International.

“Withdraw all Troops from Iraq and Afghanistan!” demands an immediate end to the US-led military occupations of those countries and billions in reparations for their devastated populations. On this basis it calls for new protests against US militarism in opposition to the Obama administration and the official antiwar movement, which has sidelined its criticism of the wars since Obama’s inauguration. The struggle against war must be linked to the struggle against the capitalist system, it states.

The conference passed a resolution on the conditions facing young people that pointed to the enormous

levels of youth unemployment, the attack on public education and the expansion of militarism. It called on working class youth and students to join the International Students for Social Equality and help mobilize the entire working class in the fight for socialism.

The final resolution, “Break with the Democrats and Republicans! For an independent socialist movement of the working class!,” calls for a broad mobilization against the Obama administration and its attacks on jobs, education, and health care, including preparation for a nationwide general strike. It demands free universal health care, and the provision of quality education, housing, and jobs. The interests of the working class can be defended only through the socialist transformation of economic life, the resolution states.

The *World Socialist Web Site* will in the coming days publish parts of this discussion, interviews with conference participants, and the full-text of the resolutions passed by the meeting.



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