

International Students for Social Equality (UK) meeting: Oppose extradition of Richard O'Dwyer to the US!

3 February 2012

Sheffield Hallam University computer science student Richard O'Dwyer faces extradition to the United States on copyright infringement charges, where he faces five to ten years imprisonment in a US federal jail.

O'Dwyer established the TVShack.net web site nearly four years ago. The web site did not utilise any US-based web servers, nor did it host any files whatsoever. His web site acted only as a conduit and did not breach existing UK copyright laws. The only previous charge of a similar nature, the suit against TVlinks, was thrown out of court last year.

The British court's agreement to his extradition must be set in the context of Internet censorship legislation currently before the US Congress. With the backing of film and music producers, the Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and the Protect IP Act (PIPA) are immediately targeted against violations of intellectual property laws. However, their more fundamental driving force is the efforts of the US ruling elite to create a pseudo-legal and technical mechanism for significantly expanding the power of the US government to regulate the Internet.

If passed, SOPA and PIPA represent a significant assault on freedom of speech. They would grant the US attorney general the power to effectively shut down access to entire domains via a court order, force search engines and other web sites to cut links to the offending site, and firms such as PayPal to cut off its finances.

The moves must be seen as a continuation and expansion of the offensive launched last year against WikiLeaks, after it released classified documents exposing war crimes and other conspiracies by the US administration.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange is currently

fighting extradition to Sweden on trumped-up sexual assault charges. He is a victim of the European Arrest Warrant (EAW) system, which means that although he has not been charged with any crime in Sweden or any other country, he can be forcibly removed on the basis of unsubstantiated and contested accusations. In this case, the EAW could be used as the first stage in moves to extradite Assange to the US.

An extensive campaign in O'Dwyer's support is integral to the necessary defence of democratic rights. We call on all students to attend our meeting to discuss these vital issues.

Tuesday, February 7, 5:30 p.m.

Sheffield Hallam University Students' Union
The Fishbowl @ The Hubs
Paternoster Row, S1 2QQ



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact