# Successful start to SEP West Coast campaign

**Our reporter**
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Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Jerry White and supporters concluded a successful campaign stop in San Diego, California on Friday, the first leg of a West Coast trip that will include meetings and events in Los Angeles, Berkeley and Sacramento, California, as well as Portland, Oregon. (See List of SEP election meetings)

White and SEP National Secretary Joseph Kishore spoke at a well attended public meeting at San Diego State University Thursday, followed by a campaign at SDSU the next morning.

Workers and youth in California have been devastated by the economic crisis and the collapse of the housing market, compounded by massive budget cuts in education, health care and social services—first under Republican Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and now under Democrat Jerry Brown.

Higher education has been particularly hard hit, and the budget for the California State University system (including SDSU) was slashed by 27 percent in 2010. Tuition is soaring, and students graduate with huge levels of debt with little prospect of a decent job. The Obama administration has made a specific point of refusing to assist California with its budget deficits, and both parties have rejected increasing taxes on the state's large number of multi-millionaires and billionaires.

The Thursday meeting, sponsored by the International Students for Social Equality, was attended by about 25 students. It focused on war and the attack on democratic rights.

Kishore's report focused on the far-reaching implications of the Obama administration's assertion of the right to assassinate anyone, anywhere, including US citizens, without even the pretext of legality. This policy was outlined in a speech by Attorney General Eric Holder on Monday, which has been covered up by the mass media. (See, "Military tribunals and assassination")

White reviewed the political basis of the SEP's election campaign, explaining that it was necessary to connect the fight against war and the destruction of democratic rights to a mass movement of the working class, based on a socialist program.

"There is no discussion in the presidential elections of the most basic issues facing the population: the assault on democratic rights, war, inequality and the attack on the working class," White said. "This is because Obama and his Republican challengers, whatever their differences, fully agree on all fundamental issues."

After the initial reports, there was lively discussion on several topics, including the new "humanitarian interventionism," promoted by the Democratic Party and its supporters among middle class "left" and pseudo-socialist organizations. In this context, one student asked about the "Invisible Children" campaign supporting US intervention in Uganda. ISSE member Ricardo responded by reviewing the geopolitical interests of the American ruling class in the region, and the developing conflict with China.

On Friday, White campaigned along with ISSE members and had discussions with many students on the basic political issues that the SEP is stressing in its election campaign.

Taryn, a social work student, said that she did not know who she would support in the elections but was considering Ron Paul, "even though he is running as a Republican." Taryn said she was dissatisfied with the two-party system. Paul has gained support, particularly among younger people, because of his stated opposition to war and the attack on democratic rights. He also supports the elimination of all restraints on capitalist exploitation.

White responded by explaining that the the foundation of war and the decay of democracy was capitalism and social inequality. "The stock markets are going up, the rich are doing better than ever, and yet ordinary people are suffering," he said. "The rich salivate at the policies supported by Paul—the elimination of regulations and income and corporate taxes, combined with sharp cuts in social programs."

Taryn said she was opposed to cuts in education. "I understand that in a recession there have to be cuts, but it seems like they are taking too much."

White explained that the SEP program rejected all cuts. "They gave trillions of dollars to the banks. They found money for this, yet they say there is nothing for social programs. There are basic social rights that must be guaranteed to everyone, that are inalienable, the modern-day equivalents of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness: health care, jobs, education, a secure retirement, a future without war. In the 21st Century, why should anyone live without these necessities?"

Taryn wondered whether socialism was possible in the US. "People seem to believe in the free market, in freedom in general. Socialism is seen as the government controlling and regulating your lives."

"The actual conditions that millions of people face are the most damming indictment of capitalism," White replied. "We say that social need must come before private profit. Millions of people need to work, and there is so much to be done. Why can nothing be done? Because everything is subordinated to profit. Even in the New Deal, they had government programs to put people to work. Now there is nothing."

Taryn noted that some of the buildings on the SDSU campus had been constructed during the New Deal.

Michaela, a nursing student, said that she was disappointed in Obama, but that she was planning on voting for him again. She said that it was difficult for Obama to accomplish much in only three years.

White responded by explaining that it was not that Obama was struggling to defend the interests of working people, but rather that he was a representative of the corporate and financial elite no less than Bush. "Look how quickly he moved to bail out the banks. Trillions were expended overnight. Young people like yourself voted for Obama, but it is not your interests that he represents, but the interests of the big banks."

Michaela said she appreciated what White had to say and would study the SEP program.

Zachary, an undergraduate student who has not yet declared a major, complained of the attack on public education in discussion with a member of the ISSE.

"What is going on with the budget cuts? Why are they cutting education?" he asked. "This is the most important thing for the future. Yet education is usually the first thing they cut. The first thing to go is what is beneficial to ordinary people. Why give money to the people who already have it?"

When asked why this was the case, he said it was about lobbyists.

The ISSE supporter said that the influence of corporate and military lobbyists was one expression of a social system. "The rich, the corporations and the banks, control everything, including the political system. That is the basic problem."

The campaign concluded with a discussion between White, ISSE members, and several young people studying psychology and anthropology. One complained about Obama's concessions to churches on requiring religious-based employers to provide insurance that includes contraception.

"If president Obama felt strongly enough to make this policy, he should have stuck with it. There is a separation of church and state, after all."

White explained that the duplicity of the Democrats was bound up with the social interests that they actually represent. "Republicans speak openly for the most ruthless actions of the ruling class. The Democrats are always two-faced because they pretend to speak for ordinary people, but in fact represent the same interests. Obama talks about reconciling Main Street and Wall Street. But who do they defend in the end?"

The student interjected, "Wall Street."

"We are socialists," White said. "The wealth of society has to be controlled in the interests of society. It is not a question of a lack of resources. It is a matter of the organization of society. In these elections, we are fighting to bring a socialist program into the working class."

*For more information on the Socialist Equality Party campaign, visit socialequality.com.*

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