

SEP candidate visits Ohio, Indiana and Illinois

Our reporter
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Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Jerry White concluded a three-state tour this week in Chicago, where he spoke with working class students at Truman College, one of the schools in the City College system.

Earlier in the week, White campaigned and met with locked out Cooper Tire workers in Findlay, Ohio, visited the home of American socialist pioneer Eugene Debs in Terre Haute, Indiana and spoke at a public meeting at the University of Illinois—Champaign-Urbana.

The city of Chicago is a social powder keg, with popular anger growing over high levels of unemployment, stagnant and falling wages and out-of-reach housing and other living costs. While White's campaign team visited, the price of gas in the city hit \$4.19 a gallon.

Mayor Rahm Emanuel, President Obama's former chief of staff, is implementing savage cuts in public transportation, fire protection, public education and other city services. The former investment banker and multi-millionaire is continuing tax cuts and other pro-business policies that have enriched the corporate and financial interests that run the city.

Emanuel responded to last year's Occupy Wall Street protests by banning demonstrators from public sidewalks, and his administration has already drawn up plans for a virtual lockdown of the city during expected protests at the G-8 and NATO summits in May.

The Democratic Party has also relied on the trade union apparatus, the corrupt "civil rights" establishment and middle class "left" groups like the

International Socialist Organization to suppress political opposition to Obama and the Democrats.

Among workers and young people there was widespread interest and support for the Socialist Equality Party campaign and the struggle to build a socialist political movement against both big business parties.

Jasmine Cook, a 37-year-old laid off worker, said, "They're closing schools all over the city. They're even closing shelters when the homeless situation is terrible. I never heard about this, a socialist candidate for president. I voted for Obama in 2008, and this time I wasn't going to vote.

"I was laid off as a case worker at Cornerstone, a community outreach program in this neighborhood. I was on unemployment benefits for two years—then I got a letter from the state saying I owed \$7,000 because I failed to file the right paperwork. When I sent in the documents, they said they lost them."

Jasmine bought the SEP program and told campaigners to contact her about joining the campaign.

Marsheka Jones, 19, added, "It getting harder and harder to get a job, even with a college degree. I don't understand why we're getting into more wars."

Two other students, Elizabeth and Rudy, also spoke with White and his supporters in front of the school. Elizabeth was angry over the continual reduction in taxes for the wealthy while working class and middle class families bore the brunt of high taxes. White asked her why she thought this was so, and Elizabeth said, "Because the rich want to get even richer, and they

control the government.”

Her friend Rudy added, “My professor said the US economy is now a ‘service’ economy. I told him it’s a stagnant economy. Obama says more tax cuts and profits for the corporations will create jobs and improve our lives. That’s nothing but the ‘trickle down’ theory of Ronald Reagan.

“My mom works in a hospital in Florida. The hospital collected millions more in profits last year and laid off 250 workers. She’s been a dedicated employee for 10 years, and last year she was forced to take four ‘holidays’ a month with no pay. The last time I called her, she said the hospital owners were planning to lay off another 900 workers.”

Elizabeth was also very concerned about the Obama administration’s moves towards a new war in Syria and Iran. “It’s in the interest of the 90 percent, the vast majority of the population, to oppose war—I agree with you.”

Several students complained about rising prices and the lack of opportunity for graduates. Others, concerned about the scapegoating of immigrants by both political parties, asked White about his position on immigration.

“The SEP says that workers should have the right to live anywhere in the world they want, with full citizen rights,” he said. “The corporations travel anywhere in the world to exploit the working class, but immigrant workers are treated like pariahs and stripped of any rights so they can be used as cheap labor.”

Ola, a student from Nigeria, said, “In January thousands of people were in the streets [in Nigeria] protesting the 150 percent rise in fuel prices. The government turned a deaf ear on their demands. The government is supposed to be for the people—but they are not. And it’s the same thing in the US.”



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