

Jerry White speaks on the crisis of American democracy at San Diego meeting

Toby Reese
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Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Jerry White spoke at a meeting of about 25 workers and students at San Diego State University Wednesday night. The talk focused on the 2012 elections and the erosion of democracy and democratic rights in the United States.

The elections, dominated by money and controlled by two big business parties, offered no choice for the American people, White explained. “Both the Democrats and Republicans have made it clear that the working class must pay for the crisis of capitalism. There is no fundamental disagreement between Obama and Romney about the wars the US military is engaged in—or the wars being planned against Iran and Syria.”

White explained that both parties are dedicated to the enrichment of the financial aristocracy. He spoke of the growth of social inequality, the attack on social programs and the wages of the working class, and the resort to police state measures by a ruling class that anticipates growing popular opposition.

“In the last three years, the Democrats accelerated the attack on democratic rights.” White pointed to a speech last month by Attorney General Eric Holder upholding the right of the president to assassinate US citizens; the passage of the National Defense Authorization Act, which allows for indefinite detention without charge; and a recent Supreme Court ruling that sanctions strip searches of anyone arrested, even for the most minor offenses. “Basic constitutional rights are being systematically undermined,” he said.

White connected the erosion of democracy to the growth of social inequality and the austerity demands of the ruling class, an international phenomenon. “In Britain, the government is building up police state

measures under conditions of growing popular opposition, including student protests against the tripling of tuition. The banks of Europe are dictating cuts in country after country,” he said.

“2011 saw the return of open class struggle,” White concluded. “However, the central question in every single country is political leadership of the working class. The question of democratic rights is ultimately a revolutionary question. These rights can only be defended by breaking the hold of the financial elite on politics. Only by mobilizing the great social force, the working class, and by reorganizing society on the basis of human need instead of private profit, can democracy be defended. There is an inseparable link between democracy and socialism.”

White’s remarks were followed by extensive discussion and questions. Justin, a sociology and religious studies major at SDSU, asked about the impact of technology in taking away jobs from workers and eliminating the necessity for skilled labor.

White responded by explaining that operating modern production processes require a much higher level of skill than ever before, and that these technologies have an immensely liberating potential. “The question is, ‘who controls production?’” he said. “Technology is a means of liberation when it is under the control of the working class. The problem is capitalism. Under socialism, the labor saving advances in technology will allow us to focus on the other cultural potentials of mankind.”

Justin also asked White’s opinion of Ron Paul. “Ron Paul is an absolute defender of capitalism and the free market,” White replied. “He has a certain attraction among youth because of his stated opposition to war.

But Paul wants to destroy government programs, eliminate minimum wage laws, and implement other ultra-reactionary policies that all play into the hands of big capital. War emerges inevitably out of the logic of the capitalist system—the system Paul ardently defends.”

Eric, another student who was covering the meeting for the student newspaper, asked White what he planned to do if voted into office. White explained that it was not the perspective of the SEP to change society by working within the existing political framework, but of building a movement of the working class in opposition to this system.

“If I were to win the elections, it would imply an immense development of working class consciousness. The current government is a dictatorship of the wealthy elites,” White said.

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Eric and Justin came to the meeting with Brianna, a graphic design major, and David, a history major, who both also stayed after the meeting to have further discussion.

David said he plans on becoming more involved with the ISSE and thought White gave a very convincing presentation.

“The decay of democratic rights is very concerning. It’s unbelievable how they have recently pushed through the National Defense Authorization Act and what an infringement it is on the rights of citizens.”

Another person in the audience asked about the SEP’s attitude toward the Occupy protests. “The issue again is leadership and perspective,” White explained. The questioner replied, “But ‘leadershiplessness’ is what the movement prided itself in.”

“This plays the role of allowing the present politics to dominate, which means the politics of the Democratic Party and the Obama administration,” White replied.

Vance, an industrial mechanic, traveled from some distance to attend White’s lecture. “You don’t get specific information about the problems we face from any of the major news sources or politicians,” Vance said after the meeting. “Jerry’s lecture was comprehensive—encompassing of the entire vision of a global struggle of the working class.

“What I appreciate about the SEP is the historical analysis and the carrying on of the scientific vision of

the Marxist tradition. Without this aspect, which describes other, ‘socialist’ tendencies, it turns into a devolved monstrosity. Social struggles turn into shouting about this or that—groups calling for a one day strike here or ‘Solve the problem for me, today.’ There is no endgame in mind or a greater picture.”

Vance made a point to stand up after the meeting and tell the audience that they should consider becoming involved and joining the SEP. “I’ve looked at a lot of the other nominally socialist groups in this country. The SEP has the most sound historical and scientific vision.”



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