

SEP meetings oppose US-Australia war preparations against China

Our reporters
30 May 2012

During the past week, the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) has held successful public meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth, and in the New Zealand city of Wellington, to discuss the dangers of the US-Australia military build-up against China and the urgent need for a genuine anti-war movement based on a revolutionary socialist program.

Entitled “Oppose the US-Australia war preparations against China”, the meetings were well attended by a wide-range of workers—from health, retail, manufacturing, transport and education—youth and students, including several from China, and pensioners. Associated lunchtime meetings were also held by the International Students for Social Equality at seven university campuses.

Nick Beams, SEP national secretary and member of the WSWs international editorial board, addressed the public meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Perth. SEP assistant national secretary James Cogan was the main speaker in Wellington.

Speakers projected maps of the Asia-Pacific region to explain the diplomatic, economic and military actions taken by the Obama administration since 2009 to encircle China—its so-called “pivot to Asia”. Last November’s military agreement between US President Barack Obama and the Gillard Labor government to establish Darwin as a base for US Marines and the growing US use of other Australian military bases are key elements of this strategy.

By 2016-2017, the US deployment to Darwin will involve 2,500 Marines, the first significant basing of American troops on Australian territory since World War II. Tindal air base, south of Darwin, will be used by US Air Force B-52 long-range bombers and US warships and submarines will make increased visits to northern and western Australian

naval ports. Washington and Canberra are also discussing the possibility of using the Australian-controlled Cocos Islands for surveillance flights by US drones.

James Cogan, who also spoke at the Sydney public meeting, explained that Australia had been selected as a US base because of its proximity to the Malacca, Sunda and Lombok straits in South East Asia through which most sea trade between the Indian and Pacific Oceans passes. Military control of these choke points could be used to block Chinese imports of energy and raw materials from the Middle East and Africa, he said.

The speaker reviewed the Obama administration’s moves to secure the support of governments in the region—including South Korea, Japan, Singapore and India—in its military encirclement of China. He pointed to Washington’s encouragement of the Philippines and Vietnam to press their territorial claims against China in the South China Sea. Such provocative actions threaten to spark a military conflict that could escalate into a war with catastrophic consequences, not only for the region but for all humanity.

Cogan warned that every effort was being made to prevent millions of people from understanding the implications of the Gillard government’s new military agreements. Behind the backs of the population, he said, the minority Labor government, with the complicity of the Greens, the unions and the entire pseudo-left milieu, have “placed Australia on the front line of a potentially catastrophic war by the United States against China ... and made Australia a target of a Chinese retaliation.”

“There is no debate, no discussion, and no controversial studies. Instead, the entire establishment is promoting Australian nationalism and a worship of militarism, glorifying Anzac Day and other celebrations of war in the

schools and society as a whole,” he said. This was combined with the beginnings of a campaign to whip up anti-Chinese sentiment, he added.

SEP national secretary Nick Beams explained that the growing imperialist aggression, militarism and war were the product of the deepening contradictions of capitalism, which had sharpened since the 2007-2008 global financial crisis.

“We no longer live in a post-war period. Rather, we are in a new pre-war situation that more and more resembles that which prevailed prior to World War I and World War II,” the speaker said. “Geo-political relations increasingly take the form of gangsterism as the United States, supported by other imperialist powers, initiates a series of wars, interventions and regime-change operations, threatening to set off an international conflagration.”

Beams explained that capitalist governments everywhere, after spending trillions of dollars to bail out the banks and financial institutions, were attempting to impose this burden on the working class threatening the destruction of all the social gains won over decades. This was being resisted by the working class, the speaker said, but its old parties and organisations, with the crucial assistance of the pseudo-left, were blocking the development of a revolutionary movement against capitalism.

The speaker referred to mass opposition to social austerity in Greece, where the electorate had rejected the establishment parties and supported the SYRIZA because it denounced the austerity measures. The Greek working class was moving to the left, Beams said, but had turned to a party that did not oppose capitalism and was moving in the opposite direction.

This posed serious political dangers, Beams warned, and the Greek bourgeoisie, the military and the forces of the state would exploit the situation to impose their own solution in the form of fascism or military dictatorship. Herein lies the danger facing working people, not just in Greece but everywhere, that can only be resolved by overcoming the crisis of revolutionary leadership and perspective.

Beams reviewed the role being played by the ex-left organisations in the face of rising imperialist militarism.

In the post-war period, various “left” tendencies postured as opponents of capitalism. Our movement, the speaker said,

exposed the opportunist character of these organisations and the petty-bourgeois class forces they represented. “This analysis is now confirmed by the transformation of the one-time antiwar ‘left’ into the most fervent advocates of imperialist interventions.”

Beams pointed to the support of the Greens and the pseudo-left for imperialist interventions in the Balkans, East Timor and Libya and said these forces were playing the same role in relationship to the war preparations against China.

“For the most part, the so-called “left” has retained a diplomatic silence on the agreement made by the Gillard Labor government and the significance of the US moves,” he said.

Beams reviewed an article published last year by Tom Bramble from Socialist Alternative, a state-capitalist grouping that falsely defines China as an imperialist power. The speaker said that Bramble claimed that war between China and the US was “not likely in the foreseeable future”. This only sowed complacency and disarmed the working class in the face of the rising danger of militarism and war.

Beams emphasised that the development of a genuine antiwar movement could only go forward to the extent that the role of the ex-left outfits was exposed and a political struggle waged against them.

“The unification of the working class on a common socialist program against imperialist war is not a slogan. It must become a central driving force for a resurgent international workers’ movement. That is the program of the SEP and the International Committee of the Fourth International. We urge that you join our party and begin to fight for it,” Beams concluded.

Extended question-and-answer sessions followed the main reports at all the meetings and over \$1,800 was donated in collections for the SEP Special Fund.

The authors also recommend:

Youth and workers discuss US-Australia confrontation with China
[30 May 2012]



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