

Workers and youth denounce government attacks on Julian Assange

Our reporters
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The *World Socialist Web Site* interviewed workers and youth attending the Socialist Equality Party public meetings held last Sunday in Sydney and Melbourne about the escalating US-led vendetta against Julian Assange and WikiLeaks and the role being played by the Gillard Labor and its political allies. (See: “SEP public meetings pass resolutions defending Assange”).

Felipe, a community development student at Melbourne’s Victoria University, said he was deeply concerned about the escalating government attacks on Julian Assange.

“They are making these false accusations [against Assange] in order to maintain the status quo, that is, the imperialist system,” he said. “They are so ferocious because they know that WikiLeaks is impacting on US interests. The photo of the little girl being napalmed in the Vietnam War changed the course of the war, but Julian Assange has worked on a much bigger scale to reveal the truth.

“When you see US troops slaughtering people from a helicopter you see the human cost of the war and that’s why the US government is trying to keep people’s attention away from the slaughter it’s perpetrating.”

The Labor government, he continued, is “dancing to the US rhythm. In every major war Australia has been next to the US and so Gillard is keeping this tradition alive. Australia is the first unconditional ally of the US regardless of the opinions of the people.”

The Greens, Felipe said, were only “concerned about their own interests in parliament.” He supported the SEP meeting resolution because it is “courageous” and “clear and direct.... There’s no secret discourse like the Greens,” he added. “The fight is for the values and recognition of an equal society.”

Aynur, a part-time aged care worker and full-time Victoria University student, said Assange “deserves

international support” because he was “exposing the workings of US and European imperialism. People have to know what is happening around the world, what the governments are doing.”

Aynur, who immigrated to Australia from Turkey three years ago, said she was “surprised that the US is using the Australia government against Assange and that Australia is in alliance with US against rising Asia.”

Addise, a University of Melbourne law student decided to attend the meeting because he “wanted to learn.” The reports and the responses to questions “were very comprehensive,” he added.

“What Assange is doing was based on freedom and is his perception of contributing to his ideals. He was only presenting the facts—and there’s nothing wrong with that—and I don’t think he was violating any international laws.

“I’m from Ethiopia, which is one of the worst countries in terms of political freedoms,” he said, “and I read the WikiLeaks cables on Ethiopian-US relations. I knew it was like that in Ethiopia, but I’m surprised by the fact that governments in other countries—like Australia and Sweden—and that to the same extent they stand with the rich, and against the population.”

Sandi, an aged-care graduate from Victoria University, said he regarded Assange as a “real hero” because he had stood up against all manner of attacks and had exposed the truth about secret government activities and war crimes in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Somalia.

“He’s very courageous and the working class has to defend him,” Sandi said. “The majority in the world defend his stand. We really need to applaud someone who is exposing the abuses of power at his own personal risk... The Gillard government’s aim is to

shame Assange because of what he's revealed about its relationship with the US."

Sandi said that the SEP resolution was "very emphatic, especially because the Australian government has attacked him, and we have to come to his defence as the resolution brought out. We have to stand on an independent program, to take up our own agenda, the agenda of the SEP."

Darcy, a primary school teacher, and his friend **Ryan**, who is studying to become a secondary school teacher, came to the Sydney public meeting.

Ryan said he was "shocked" by the Gillard government's response to the attacks on Assange's basic rights: "He's an Australian citizen but they've totally sided with the US. If he's extradited and sent to a US Grand Jury it's obviously not going to be a fair democratic trial. It is basically a witch-hunt to get him silenced." Governments everywhere "are worried that and more and more people are fed up and want to find out about how governments work behind closed doors."

"Information is power," he said. "The more people know, the more they can act on it."

Darcy said he found it "hard to see how anyone could think that [the treatment of the Australian citizen and Bradley Manning] is legitimate and a humanitarian course of action for anyone, let alone someone who is filling the role that Assange is..."

"For a nervous government or for a nervous [social] system it's easy to demonise someone like Assange with the claims against him in Sweden...But the things that have happened show that people are more willing to mobilise and to stand up and voice their opinions against the larger corporate system."

Marcus, 34, an apprentice butcher, said the Sydney SEP meeting was "an affirmation of what I perceive to be happening in the global climate. There's a suppression of all information that's detrimental to government interests but honest information liberates the working class..."

"There's a lot of confusion about wars such as Iraq and Afghanistan because of the misinformation fed to people every day. If billions of people knew the truth, there would be an end to this."

Marcus said the Labor Party was "a wolf in sheep's clothing" and added, "We don't really live in a democracy. Democracy means majority rules but we only have participation in what the government does

every four years when we vote for these puppets..."

"We need something like the French Revolution," he said. "The similarity between then and now is the concentration of wealth among a very small percentage of people. It's history repeating itself because people have less and less resources like affordable housing and food."



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