

SEP presidential candidate Jerry White speaks in Ypsilanti, Michigan

Our reporter
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Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Jerry White spoke Wednesday at a campaign meeting in Ypsilanti, Michigan attended by local students, workers and their families. A once-prosperous city on the western edge of the Detroit metropolitan area, Ypsilanti has been hard hit by plant closings and the shrinking of the automotive industry. Today over 25 percent of the city's population lives below the poverty line.

SEP supporters built for the meeting by going door-to-door and speaking to residents about the campaign.

White explained that the SEP was running in the elections to provide a perspective and build a leadership to guide the struggles that would erupt regardless of whether Obama or Romney won the elections. Pointing to the chronically high levels of unemployment in the US, the financial meltdown in Greece and the slowing of economic output in China, White explained that the world capitalist system was gripped by the worst crisis since the 1930s, and there was no end in sight.

"The ruling classes around the world are gripped by paralysis and perplexity," White said, "but the one thing they all agreed on was that the working class must be forced to pay for the crisis of the capitalist system." Both the Obama and Romney campaigns were seeking to conceal from the American people the historic cuts in health care, pensions and public education that they have already agreed to impose on the population.

White stressed that socialism was not a utopian dream but the only means to overcome the irresolvable contradictions of the profit system. "Billions of workers around the globe are engaged in social production, yet the wealth of society is expropriated privately. Solving the immense problems of the planet require the ever-greater coordination and cooperation of the world's producers, yet under capitalism the planet is divided

into nation-states each vying for control of markets, raw materials and access to cheap labor, he said. That struggle was leading to the danger of another world war.

"The claims that there's 'no money' for schools, pensions and health care," White said, "are lies." Trillions, he said, were handed over to the Wall Street banks and a new report has revealed that the super-rich have salted away up to \$32 trillion in off-shore tax free havens.

The SEP candidate noted that US corporations were sitting on a cash hoard of \$3 trillion but refusing to hire. Instead, the Obama administration was using high levels of unemployment to implement his policy of 'insourcing,' that is driving wages so low in the US that corporations will look to the US instead of Mexico or China for cheap labor.

Accompanying this process, he said, has been rising militarism. He pointed to the "war on terror," which Obama has escalated since taking office. "Obama is the first president in history to openly boast of assassinating US citizens, personally authorizing drone attacks," Despite the claims that the US is fighting Al Qaeda, White said, the *New York Times* reported that the US is supporting "suicide cells" in Syria made up of Al Qaeda fighters in order to topple the Assad regime in Syria. This was the first step in a war against Iran for the control of Persian Gulf oil. "Plans for war against Iran are being drawn up behind the back of the American public."

White reviewed the events in Egypt, Wisconsin, and elsewhere in 2011, saying they expressed growing working class resistance. "The question that emerged in all of these struggles is one of leadership," White stated. "We are not appealing to the conscience of the ruling class. We are fighting to build a political

movement of the working class that will take the levers of economic and political life in its own hands.”

A lively question and answer session followed White’s remarks. Candace, an Ypsilanti resident, said, “I have seen the decline you talk about for a long time. I’m currently applying for jobs, and I’m being paid \$7.50 an hour. I was paid that in 1978! What is wrong with this picture?” She expressed frustration at the high percentage of goods produced in other countries, and suggested that protectionist measures would benefit workers.

“The same banks and corporations that are attacking us here are going after workers in Greece, Japan, and Mexico,” White explained. He pointed to the auto bailout in 2009. “When workers here were forced to take wage cuts, the first thing Fiat did was tell the Italian workforce that they had to take a wage cut or the company would close their plants and move production over to the US where it was now cheaper.

“Nationalism is the Achilles heel of the working class,” White said. “It is used to blur the line between the workers and the owners, and it has meant a drastic decline in living standards. Now the UAW brags that GM is shutting down plants in Mexico to move back to the US.” Moreover, White explained, workers must understand the danger of war in the name of “the American way.”

Technological advances and the globalization of production were not the problem, White added. “It’s that all economic and social decisions are made in the interests of private profit. We insist that the working class has inalienable social rights, like a decent job, free education, a dignified retirement, access to culture and leisure time. Globalization produces conditions for abundance—socialism is not an equal distribution of poverty, but the raising of the economic level of all to live up to the full potential of humanity.”

Charles, an SEP supporter, asked White about the response of Caterpillar workers to the campaign, and the role of the unions. “Caterpillar revenue is up 28 percent in the quarter,” he said. “The CEO said something really stupid like, ‘what economic crisis?’ What has the union said of this?”

“The unions say that a company’s success has a ‘trickle-down’ effect for its workforce,” White said, “but corporate profits are an expression of just the opposite process. Profits are a product of exploitation.”

White explained the SEP’s call for the building of independent rank-and-file committees of workers.

Reagan, a 29-year-old tutor, asked White what the Socialist Equality Party’s “vision of a future society” would be. “What sets you apart from the Green Party and so-called left libertarians?” He asked about the difference between the SEP and Noam Chomsky, or the French Socialist Party.

“The Greens are not a socialist party, but a party of the upper middle class,” White replied. “Everywhere they have come to power, including in Germany and Australia, they have imposed austerity, supported militarism and other attacks on the working class.”

As for Chomsky, White said, he is an opponent of the Russian Revolution, a supporter of anarchism, and backed Obama’s election campaign in 2008. The anarchists reject the revolutionary role of the working class and the struggle for workers to take political power in our own hands. “Anarchists reject the claim that workers need politics, or even that there is such a thing as objective truth. We say you *can* learn from history. Our movement was founded by Leon Trotsky on the basis of internationalism, in opposition both to Stalin’s ‘socialism in one country’ and the national chauvinism of Social Democracy.

“The working class demonstrated its revolutionary capacity throughout the 20th century. The question, however, is leadership. Our movement is building that leadership based on the lessons of history.”

For more information on the SEP campaign and to get involved, visit socialequality.com



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