US SEP presidential candidate begins international tour

Our correspondents
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US Socialist Equality Party (SEP) presidential candidate, Jerry White, has begun his international tour, arriving in Sri Lanka yesterday.

White was warmly welcomed at Colombo International Airport by a delegation from the SEP's political committee, led by General Secretary Wije Dias. Dias presented a flower bouquet to White, while political committee members held a banner welcoming the socialist candidate.

White will address public meetings organised by the SEP in Colombo, Kegalla and Galle on August 26, 28 and 30 respectively. The SEP held a press briefing at the Hotel Nippon's conference hall in Colombo on August 22 to announce White's Sri Lankan visit.

White said it was an "honour and pleasure to be in Sri Lanka, where the world Trotskyist movement has such a rich history of struggle." He continued, "Our party's fight for socialist internationalism against the communal politics that have long dominated South Asia has been an inspiration to, and provided critical political lessons for, the most advanced workers around the world."

The US presidential candidate added: "I look forward to our meetings in Colombo, the tea and rubber plantation area of Kegalla and the southern port city of Galle, and discussions with workers and young people about the common problems and struggles workers in the US and Asia face."

White explained that his tour, which will continue on to England and Germany, was not a diversion from the SEP's election campaign in the US but "expresses its essence."

"From the beginning, the SEP has insisted that American workers can defend their social and democratic rights only by rejecting the nationalism promoted by the unions and the two big business parties and fighting for the international unity of the working class and socialism. The economic crisis that began in the US in 2008 has spread to Europe and is now hitting export-dependent countries like China, Brazil, India and Sri Lanka.

"In every country, capitalist governments demand austerity and the ever greater impoverishment of the working class. At the same time, whether President Obama or Mitt Romney wins, American imperialism is preparing new wars, including against Syria and Iran, to offset its economic decline. This island in the Indian Ocean and its population of 21 million has already been dragged into the efforts to encircle China and maintain US domination of the Asia-Pacific. The only way new and even bloodier wars can be prevented is to put an end to this bankrupt capitalist system and reorganise the world economy on the basis of a rational and egalitarian plan."

Several reports of White's trip have appeared in the Sri Lankan media.

On Thursday, the Sinhala daily *Lakbima* reported on the SEP press conference announcing White's visit. The article, which appeared in bold letters, stated: "Mr. Jerry White, socialist candidate in American presidential elections, will arrive in Sri Lanka on August 24, Mr. Wije Dias, general secretary of the Socialist Equality Party revealed in press conference

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held on August 22."

The article provided details on the SEP's public meetings and added: "The aim of his visit will be to explain the plans of American imperialism, the world's major war aggressor, and rally the working class and oppressed masses in Sri Lanka against them."

Thinakukural, a Tamil language publication, carried a front-page story on the SEP press conference in its August 23 issue. Suriyan FM, a Tamil radio station, also reported White's visit in its Thursday morning news bulletin.

Members and supporters of the SEP and its student and youth wing, the International Students for Social Equality, are vigorously promoting the public meetings. Campaign teams visited housing areas in Colombo, Kegalla and Galle, discussing with workers, youth and housewives and circulating leaflets in Sinhala and Tamil about the political significance of White's visit.

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