

SEP US presidential candidate addresses London meeting

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Socialist Equality Party US presidential candidate Jerry White addressed an attentive audience of some 70 workers, retirees, students and youth in London Thursday evening.

A large mix of nationalities were present, with individuals travelling from across the capital and many parts of southern England to hear White address his second meeting in the country, following a successful meeting in Manchester Tuesday evening.

White is on the second leg of his international tour, having held a succession of meetings in Sri Lanka the week previous. He will speak in Berlin on Saturday.

The last time White had addressed an audience in London was in October 2008, just a month after the collapse of the Lehman Brothers investment firm and a month before the election of Barack Obama.

Then he had explained that the unfolding crisis in the US was not a one-off phenomenon, but a systemic crisis bound up with the long-term decline of American capitalism and the shift to the most reckless forms of financial parasitism.

The policies of the next US president, he had warned, would not be determined by election slogans about the "candidate of change," but by the economic crisis and the interests of the financial oligarchy, which both the Democrats and Republicans served.

"We are now on the eve of another US presidential election," White told the London meeting. "The economic crisis that originated in America has spread to Europe, bringing the eurozone and the project of trying to unite Europe on a capitalist basis to the brink of collapse.

"Unemployment and social misery have reached levels not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s, with 18 million Europeans out of work and more than half of the young workers in Spain and Greece. The universal

demand of the global banks is austerity and so-called labor market 'reform,' by which they mean the destruction of any semblance of job security or livable income.

"No portion of the world is escaping this crisis. I have just returned from Sri Lanka where textile and tea exports are being undermined by the falloff in demand in North America, Europe and Japan. The same is true of South Africa, Brazil, India and China, where manufacturing has fallen by the sharpest level since the worst period of 2008-09."

Similarly, the claims of economic recovery celebrated by the Obama administration are largely fictional and certainly not based on any improvement of conditions for American workers and their families, White explained.

The Obama administration has conducted a savage attack on the jobs and living standards of US workers. "Since the beginning of the so-called recovery two years ago, 93 percent of all income gains have gone to the top one percent of the US population."

Internationally, the ruling class is using the economic crisis it created to implement a policy of social counterrevolution, White said, in which any resistance to these measures is met with unprecedented state repression.

Only last month, in South Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) had ordered the police murder of 37 striking platinum miners, in a scene reminiscent of the massacres carried out by the apartheid regime.

"Fearing a 'contagion' of struggles against the new class of black millionaires and their foreign investors, the ANC ordered a further attack on gold miners last Monday, wounding at least another four," White explained.

In Britain, the coalition government of Prime Minister David Cameron—with the full backing of the Labour Party and so-called leaders of the black community—responded

to last year's riots in London and other cities with an unprecedented police crackdown that resulted in more than 5,000 arrests nationally.

In the US, "Obama has gone even further than his Republican predecessor, declaring the right to assassinate anyone, including US citizens, without charges, evidence or the slightest pretense of due process."

The US elections themselves are a mockery of democracy, White continued, with corporate and wealthy donors spending an estimated \$3-\$6 billion on the Democrat and Republican campaigns, while the political conventions of both parties are entirely stage-managed affairs, with every comment scripted word-for-word.

Behind the backs of the American people, both parties have already agreed to destroy whatever is left of the social protections won by the working class over the course of the 20th, and even the 19th centuries, White said.

Whoever wins the election, he continued, the American bourgeoisie is determined to escalate military violence to seize control of critical markets, raw materials and territory, and block any global or regional challenges.

White reviewed the historical decline of US capitalism as epitomized in Detroit.

"In 1950, the US car companies headquartered in the Motor City produced nearly 80 percent of the world's cars. The city's population was close to two million and the determined struggles of industrial workers gave the city the highest per capita income and home ownership level in the US."

All these gains have been under systematic attack over the last three decades. Mass layoffs have seen Detroit lose more than 50 percent of its population, and it is now the poorest city in the US, White said.

"The ruling class made an example of the working class of Detroit and punished its enemies like the Romans pouring salt in the fields of Carthage so nothing would ever grow again."

This situation is repeated across the US, where nearly half the population is categorized as poor or near poor. Since 2008 the median US family has suffered a staggering 40 percent decline in household wealth, mainly because of the wiping out of home values.

"These conditions are not the result of a policy failure by the Obama administration but are in fact the result of deliberate policy," he explained.

"A 'new normal' is emerging in which the so-called 'American standard of living' has been thrown out the window and workers are being thrown back to the back-

breaking exploitation and poverty wages their great-grandfathers once endured."

Relying on the trade unions, the administration intends to drive down wages and conditions in the US so as to more effectively compete against countries like China and India.

Pointing to the universal significance of the support by South Africa's trade unions for the police massacre, White stressed that the SEP stood for a rebellion against these rotten organizations and decisively rejected the efforts of the various pseudo-left groups who seek to conceal their transformation into anti-working class organizations behind the bogus slogan of the "unity of the labor movement."

These same organizations have lined up behind Obama's reelection campaign. They were fully aware that the installation of an African-American president was nothing more than an attempt to repackage US imperialism and prepare the way for new war crimes, under the guise of "humanitarianism," which they all supported.

The Obama presidency, no less than events in South Africa, has underscored that the fundamental division is not race but class, White said, and shown that the advocates of identity politics are the willing tools of imperialism.

"That is why the SEP's decision to conduct an international tour is not a diversion from our election campaign in the US, but an expression of our most essential aim," White stressed.

"American imperialism is powerful, but the American ruling class is not invincible. The economic, political, social and moral foundations of its rule are rotten to the core," he emphasized.

The central question is the fight for an international strategy and program to unite workers around the world. Only in this way can the economic and political stranglehold of the corporate and financial elite over society be broken, White insisted, and society reorganized on the basis of social need, not private profit.



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