

SEP vice-presidential candidate campaigns in San Diego

Our reporters

19 September 2012

The Socialist Equality Party's candidate for vice-president, Phyllis Scherrer, campaigned in San Diego, the first of a series of cities she will visit on the West Coast. Scherrer spoke to workers in City Heights, a working class community in the eastern part of the city. She also spoke to students at City College, a community college downtown, and at San Diego State University, in preparation for a public talk.

In the discussions, Scherrer found workers and students to be generally disillusioned with Obama, and to a certain extent indifferent to the electoral process as a whole. This attitude reflects the systematic disjuncture between the basic needs and aspirations of working people and the right-wing policies advanced by the Democrats and Republicans.

In City Heights, immigrant workers from Somalia and Mexico expressed their opposition to war, and showed sympathy for the SEP's internationalism. In the colleges, the discussions dealt with the issue of identity politics, the bailout of the banks, and the legacy of the Russian Revolution.

At City College, Scherrer spoke with Michael Gonzales, who initially expressed some support for Obama's policy toward immigrants. Scherrer explained how under the Obama administration there were more deportations than under Bush, and described how the Dream Act was actually a way for the US government to create a database of immigrants that could be later used to carry out further deportations.

Michael stated, "immigrants should be allowed to become citizens if they want to. I don't think I'm going to vote at all because neither one of them are going to do anything."

Scherrer explained, "We are running to build a party

that will stand for the social rights of workers and students."

"Money should be made available for jobs, education, and healthcare and not for imperialist wars of aggression and the bailout of the banks. Everyone has the right to a job and a high quality education," Scherrer said.

Michael agreed concerning the 2008 bailout, "It wasn't fair at all. The rich got more money and the working people that need it didn't get any."

Michael bought a SEP program and expressed an interest in becoming involved with the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

Two other students at City College shared their opinions about the recent protests in the Middle East. They stated, "The Islamic population has been provoked for so long anything will set this kind of thing off."

When asked why the wars were still going on in the region one of the students responded, "It's about oil. US citizens support the troops but they don't support the wars."

Kila, a sociology major at City College, has already received a bachelors degree but is trying to get into San Diego State University for a masters program.

"I have a child and a degree. I'm working at the YMCA and trying to get into classes. It's so much harder than in 2006 when I graduated from high school. Then I didn't have a problem registering for classes at a community college, now there have been so many classes cut."

Kila took leaflets on the campaign as well as on the cuts to community colleges and the student loan debt.

Another student, Art, expressed his frustration with the apathy he senses in some of his friends: "I'm hurt if

people in my generation don't care about what's going on around us."

Art described how in Fresno, where he is from, there is a large population of immigrants and poor workers who are looking for employment. Since he has been in San Diego he has noticed how many more homeless people there are and people asking for money.

"I was just talking to someone about capitalism not working well. We were saying that socialism would help get us back on track. People would be able to contribute and there would be a division of labor and trades."

Art also brought up the question of the Dream Act. Scherrer explained the reactionary components of it. Art was surprised, but said he agreed. He had not thought about the danger to democratic rights posed by the creation of a database of immigrants. He was also surprised to hear about the number of deportations under Obama.

Scherrer also engaged a thoughtful student named David on what social and democratic planning would look like under Socialism.

"Under capitalism the profit motive prevents any rational planning of energy and the supply of natural resources. There has been a proletarianization of the world's population. Although, we as workers produce all the wealth, we have no say in how it is distributed."

David asked, "So do you stand for socialism or communism?"

"We are Trotskyists," Scherrer replied. She described the betrayals of Stalin in the Soviet Union, how Lenin and Trotsky fought for international socialism until the day they died, and how socialism could not be built in one country—as the Stalinist doctrine in the Soviet Union became.

Scherrer continued, "Stalin murdered a whole generation of revolutionaries in the Soviet Union and other countries, there is a whole history that has been obscured from the working class and politicians have continually tried to cover it up."

At City Heights, Scherrer spoke with David DeLuis, a recent high school graduate who was unable to register for classes at his local community college this fall semester due to the ongoing budget cuts in California.

When asked about the Obama administration he

stated, "I support Obama, but I feel his policies aren't helping the people who need it most. Honestly, I haven't noticed any change at all." David expressed frustration with the fact that he would have to "wait around" until January of next year before he could try and register for classes again.

Campaigners explained that the attack against education was bound up with the Obama administration's overall policy of placing the financial burden of the economic crisis on the backs of working people. "It doesn't make sense. At my high school a lot of teachers were being laid off for no reason." Asked if he would vote for Obama's reelection, David stated, "I'm registered, but I don't think I'm going to vote." David expressed interest in the SEP's program and the demand that education be made a social right.

Norma Murillo, 31, is studying social work and spoke extensively about the need to fund social programs the working class depends on.

"Whoever has the money decides what is important. It's not fair. The wealthy are making it impossible for us to achieve a comfortable standard of living, hence the cuts to education and social programs."

Asked about the presidential election, she stated, "It's all fake and full of lies." Norma spoke about how the effects of the economic crisis are increasingly being felt by working people.

"When you talk to families about their ability to purchase necessities they immediately recognize that their position has declined." Norma voiced her support for the campaign and said that it "is giving hope to those who would otherwise give up."



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact