

SEP presidential candidate Jerry White speaks in South Carolina

Our reporter
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Jerry White, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for president, spoke at a public meeting held at the University of South Carolina in Columbia on Tuesday. The meeting was well attended by students and members of the community who were enthusiastic about a genuine alternative to the two big business parties.

White opened his presentation with a critical examination of the presidential race between the Democrats and the Republicans. He said that the campaigns of both candidates “have been, and continue to be, chiefly an exercise in deception, aimed above all at concealing from the American people what the ruling class is planning to do once the elections are over.”

“Regardless of whether Barack Obama or Mitt Romney wins,” he continued, “the next administration will accelerate the destruction of health care, retirement protections, public education and other essential services, on which tens of millions depend.

“On an international scale, both parties are determined to launch new wars: against Syria, Iran and ultimately China to defend the economic and geopolitical interests of US imperialism. None of this is being discussed or debated. Instead these measures are being prepared behind the backs of the American people.”

White discussed the significance of the recently leaked video of Republican candidate Romney speaking to a gathering of wealthy Boca Raton residents who each paid \$50,000 to attend. In the video, Romney declared that 47 percent of Americans are freeloaders who believe they are “entitled to health care, to food, to housing, to you-name it.” Romney also denounced Obama for supposedly advocating the redistribution of wealth.

White pointed out that the most significant revelation

in the wake of the leaked video was the reaction of the Democrats, who have not sought to question Romney’s blanket assertion that the American people have no right to the most basic requirements of life.

White explained that the entire capitalist system is based on a redistribution of wealth, “in reverse,” from the workers who produce everything to the capitalist class that expropriates the products of its labor. Romney’s remarks, he said, were aimed at reviving the myth of the “self-made man,” an idea that only makes sense if you ignore the fact that all production is social.

White reviewed the history of working class struggle to win basic rights. He highlighted the struggles of workers in the south, focusing on the militant struggles of South Carolina mill workers in the early part of the twentieth century. These workers lived at the mercy of mill owners who had the power to make decisions about every part of their lives.

He quoted one mill manager who said, “We govern like the Czar of Russia.” Against the backdrop of the real overthrow of the Czar in Russia and the threat of revolution in America, White said that the capitalist class in the US, including South Carolina, was forced to make concessions to the workers in order to save the capitalist system.

White also highlighted the decay of the unions over a period of decades. He pointed out that these organizations, which were originally formed to defend the interests of the workers, have been transformed into arms of company management.

White emphasized that there is now no constituency in either big business party party for any form of social progress.

“This sets the state for immense social upheavals, under conditions where only the revolutionary socialist movement defends the right of the people to the

requirements of civilized life,” he said.

White concluded his remarks by insisting that the basic social rights of working people to a job, economic security, education, housing, food, and a comfortable retirement “can be fought for and secured only in an implacable struggle against the modern-day financial aristocracy that exercises a dictatorship over the economic and political life of the country—and the world.”

There was a lengthy discussion following White’s presentation, and the questions of the attendees touched on a number of significant issues, including possible obstacles to working class unity, ballot access, the nature of the difference between the Democrats and Republicans, national security, the threat of war, the environment, the rights of women, and the nature of socialist wealth redistribution.

One attendee asked how the unity of the international working class is possible given the vast cultural differences even within a single country over issues such as gay marriage.

White explained the universal character of the economic issues faced by workers worldwide. As an illustration, he mentioned a discussion he had with a worker during his recent trip to Sri Lanka. This worker lives in a house with a single bedroom, whose floor is made of cow dung. Eleven people have to sleep in that one room. White said that there is also a television in the house and that he asked the worker what he thought when he watched the television and saw the houses of people in the US.

Without hesitation, the worker told White that he thought that everyone all over the world should have the same decent housing. White pointed out that this worker’s reaction to his question did not involve a “problem of culture,” and that “no leap of faith” was required for this worker to understand that the need for equality.

In answer to the question whether the SEP would be on the ballot in South Carolina, White explained that it would not, reviewing the antidemocratic election laws in the US. Pointing out that in most states tens of thousands of signatures are required for ballot access, he said these laws are designed to exclude parties other than the Democrats and the Republicans.

White added that the purpose of the SEP election campaign is not simply to obtain votes. Instead, the

SEP is working to build a socialist movement. White said that he and his running mate Phyllis Scherrer are holding these election meetings with workers, youth and students throughout the country, and around the world, in order to build a revolutionary socialist leadership for the coming struggles of the working class against austerity, war and social inequality.

Rachel Evans, an international business major who joined the IYSSE a week before the meeting after seeing a flier posted on campus, asked what White thought she should tell her friends when they told her she would be throwing her vote away if she did not vote for a Republican or a Democrat.

White replied that she should tell them that if they vote for either Obama or Romney, they are throwing their own votes away. He said that a vote for either of these candidates would not be in their interests, because the Democratic and Republican parties serve only the interests of the big banks and corporations, not the interests of ordinary working people. A vote for the Socialist Equality Party, on the other hand, would be a vote for equality and for rational control of all the resources produced by society.

In informal discussion following the meeting, several USC students, including Rachel, enthusiastically expressed their desire to build the IYSSE on the USC campus.



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