

US SEP 2012 presidential candidate denounces war plans against Syria at Australian campuses

Our reporters
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Jerry White, the US Socialist Equality Party's candidate in the 2012 presidential election, spoke at the University of Technology in Sydney, and RMIT University in Melbourne this week. He will be addressing the final election campaign meetings of the SEP (Australia) in Melbourne and Sydney, today and tomorrow respectively.

White's visit is a concrete expression of the uniquely international character of the SEP's election campaign, which is part of the unified struggle by the world Trotskyist movement to mobilise the international working class against war, austerity and the growing threat of dictatorship.

At both campuses, White began by warning of the danger of an imminent US war against Syria, which he said would have "incalculable consequences." "It would spread into Lebanon, and it would be the prelude for an attack on Iran," he stated. "It would raise the real prospect of a global conflagration, pitting the US against China and Russia."

White was speaking at campus meetings called by the SEP's youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). He exposed the fraudulent character of the propaganda being used by the US government, its allies, including Australia, and the pliant corporate media, to justify an attack against Syria. White noted the parallels between the claims that the Syrian government had used chemical weapons against its own population, and the lies about weapons of mass destruction used to justify the invasion of Iraq in 2003. None of the proponents of war had furnished evidence substantiating the accusations against the Assad regime.

In reality, White said, the war drive was aimed at

securing the control of resources, and establishing US hegemony in the geo-strategically critical Middle East region. He explained that the explosion of American militarism, along with the austerity measures being carried out by the Obama administration, was incompatible with democratic forms of rule. Polls revealed that the overwhelming majority of the American population opposed a war against Syria.

Referring to the revelations of massive government spying on the American population, White commented: "The root of the attacks on democratic rights exposed by Snowden are the deeply unpopular measures being imposed by the government, which more and more require authoritarian forms of rule."

White noted that the world Trotskyist movement, of which the SEP is the Australian section, was alone in opposing the drive to war against Syria. The Greens parties around the world, and the various pseudo-left organisations which had claimed to oppose war in the past, were all lining up behind the US war drive. He concluded by insisting on the necessity for workers, students, and youth unite in a common struggle against imperialist war, and its root cause, the capitalist system.

White's report was followed by lively discussions at both meetings. In Sydney and Melbourne, students asked what the SEP's alternative to the civil war in Syria was, given that the party opposes imperialist intervention.

At the meeting in Melbourne, White began by explaining that the anti-democratic character of the regimes in the Middle East was a product of the historical domination of the major imperialist powers over the region. "Dealing with Assad, any more than Saddam Hussein or Gaddafi, is the task of the working

class in Syria and the Middle East. It can't be outsourced to imperialism," he explained.

"Our proposal is along the lines of what the masses in Egypt sought to do," White stated, referring to the revolutionary upheavals over the past two years. "But there, the masses of workers, who were the biggest social force behind the revolution, came up against the crisis of leadership in working class. No section of the capitalist class in the Middle East can oppose the carve-up of the Middle East by the imperialist powers. All the parties in Egypt support the International Monetary Fund and do the bidding of imperialism, so none of the issues that confront ordinary people—unemployment, poverty, imperialism—can be opposed through these parties."

Another student asked whether the United Nations could resolve the crisis in Syria.

"The UN is not an alternative," White replied. "Time and time again it has provided a fig leaf for wars, and the claim after World War II that the UN would put an end to wars hasn't exactly paid off that well."

"You now have the situation," he added, "that increasingly resembles that which existed before World War I. There are British and American battleships off the coast of Syria, and also, Russian warships. What happens if a missile hits a Russian ship? Outside of an international struggle of the working class against militarism and war, capitalism is going to plunge mankind into a third world war."

White insisted: "The working class, which is an international class, has absolutely no interest in slaughtering each other over markets and raw materials."

Other students asked questions about Australia's role in the preparations for war against Syria, the theory that John F. Kennedy was assassinated by elements within the American establishment, and the threat of right-wing movements emerging in the US. One asked about White's experiences as the SEP's presidential candidate, and the wholesale cuts to social spending being imposed by the unelected Emergency Manager of Detroit, Kevin Orr. Another referred to the National Security Agency revelations by whistleblower Edward Snowden, and asked which democratic rights remained intact in the US.

White concluded with an appeal for students to join the IYSSE and the SEP. "There's a lot of complacency

that's sowed on the campuses, or the idea that somehow you can bypass this crisis by becoming an entrepreneur. But this is your life and you have to fight for it."

Following the meeting, a number of students stayed back for discussion with White, and other SEP members. Dylan, a psychology student, expressed his appreciation for White's visit: "It's great to speak to someone from another country, and to discuss their experiences. It was fantastic."

He said he was opposed to the preparations for war against Syria: "It's unjust and cynical the way they're claiming the Syrian regime has used chemical weapons. Since when does the US care about civilians being killed? The United States is the one that used depleted uranium in their munitions in Iraq."

"There were also a lot of detailed points in the meeting about the way civil liberties are being taken away from the American people. The way that the police are being militarised is very concerning. They're scared of their own people."

Anna, another student, had a lengthy discussion with White. "Regarding Syria, I think we should stop intervening. I don't support the US intervention," she said. "Australia has always been in need of the support of a higher power. First we needed Britain, now it's America. With the war in the Middle East, Bush said jump and [former Australian Prime Minister] Howard said 'how high'?"

"Especially after Libya, there were so many American contractors there after the war, just to make a buck. I feel so helpless with what's happening. There are alternatives, but people haven't yet been exposed to this party, so people are still in the dark about what they can do about the world."

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