

SEP and IYSSE hold demonstration in Detroit against war in Syria

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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and Socialist Equality Party (SEP) held a demonstration Tuesday at Detroit's Wayne State University against the threat of a US war in Syria. The event was attended by dozens of students from the campus as well as workers and professionals from the surrounding community.

Speakers at the demonstration included IYSSE National Secretary Andre Damon and Lawrence Porter, assistant national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party. They explained the predatory interests behind the drive to war in Syria and the threat that a new war in the Middle East poses to the democratic rights of working people in the United States.

Damon warned that war with Syria could spark a far wider conflict, drawing the comparison to the events that triggered World War I nearly 100 years ago. "No one should be under any illusion that this will be a 'limited' war, as claimed by Obama. An attack on Syria will be aimed at destroying its military, reversing the course of the civil war, and paving the way for war against Iran, Russia and China. How many millions of people will be killed in this new slaughter?"

Damon noted that the strength of popular opposition to the war had taken the government by surprise. Scrambling to obtain a fig leaf of legitimacy, the Obama administration has called for a vote by Congress, making clear at the same time that it may proceed with the war even if the vote does not go the way it wants.

Damon said workers and young people should place no confidence in Congress to block the drive to war. Instead, "Students seeking to build the fight against war must turn out to the workers. We must send delegations to all the major factories and workplaces. The fight against war must be connected to the fight to defend the

social rights of the working class!" (For the full remarks, [click here](#))

Lawrence Porter drew the connection between the drive to war by the ruling elite and the attacks being carried out on the rights of the working class in Detroit and all across the United States. He explained that there had been no recovery for working people following the crash of 2008, when the banks were bailed out with public money, supported by the votes of the Democrats and Republicans.

In Detroit, Emergency Manager Kevyn Orr has been brought in to rip up contracts, sell off city assets, including art from the Detroit Institute of Arts, and impose massive cuts to pensions. Porter made a particular appeal to students and workers to oppose the sale of masterworks from the DIA. "We urge everyone here to oppose this theft of art that should be available to the people. The DIA is one of the cultural jewels of both the US and the world's population."

Thomas Gaist, an IYSSE member and reporter for the World Socialist Web Site spoke about the threat to democratic rights revealed by whistleblower Edward Snowden. "In addition to asserting the right to kill and detain American citizens indefinitely without trial, the government has created surveillance programs which give the intelligence bureaucracy direct access to information about every aspect of Americans' lives.

Gaist warned that the massive build up of powers by the state were being made in preparation for a revolutionary confrontation with the American working class.

Osman, a Wayne State University student and IYSSE member, drew the connection between the drive to war and the attack on public education. "Tuition at Wayne State University is 8.9 percent higher for this school year than it was for the previous one, while Congress

has passed legislation that will allow student loan rates to go as high as 8.5 percent.”

“What can we, as students, look forward to? More wars? More assaults on our democratic rights? A lifetime of poverty wages? An education that will leave us indebted for life? But there’s no money for healthcare and education, that’s what we’re told over and over again. Yet there is always money for war.”

The WSWS spoke to several people who attended the demonstration. Jeff, an adjunct professor at Wayne State University said, “The war-mongering that is going on belongs in the previous century. These wars are being fought to protect the transnational corporations. All war is driven by financial motivations, and the ratcheting up of global tensions serves the interests of the bankers. The purpose of today’s wars is really to oppress smaller nations, like under colonialism.”

Brett, an Iraq War veteran, also attended the demonstration. “When I was in Baghdad, the population did not want us there. Sometimes people seem to forget that human beings live in the middle of war zones, and they don’t want to leave because that’s their patch of turf.

“Drones don’t have eyes or a heart. The US kills entire families just to get at one person, who probably didn’t need to be killed anyway. Strikes have increased under Obama. Now they want to go after Syria, but I think the rebels were actually responsible for the gas attack.”

Arthur, a young worker from the Chrysler Warren Truck Assembly Plant outside of Detroit attended the demonstration. “I wanted to get involved in an extremely important issue facing the country today. I fear that the future of our country is going down a destructive path that will impact the lives of myself and my children. I feel I must do all I can to right this ship. I do not want to go through life saying I should have done something.

“I think the US is in decline, but to admit that would cause mass panic. The elite wants war to keep this empire afloat. Only 9 percent of the country are in favor of war. The majority of Americans are working people, and the majority of people have already said no to this war. It shows the working class that our voices don’t matter. Your voice doesn’t count; only those in positions of power can make certain decisions.

“The government is selling the war on terror as the most important issue rather than the issues affecting the lives of ordinary working class Americans. As a working guy, my issues are not the issues of a corporate military contractor. We are the only industrial nation that doesn’t offer health care to its citizens. They make more money off denying health care than giving health care. College education loans are unsustainable. I think college should be affordable. It shouldn’t be a profit making system. It is the same with public education. It is being privatized. I think it is being built to produce obedient servants.

“I think we should live in a system where people can work and enjoy life, instead of where the government is doing all this sneaky stuff behind our backs. It is almost like *The Matrix*.

“Obama has really disappointed me, but not discouraged me. He has shown me that faith in the system has to be questioned. He promised hope and change, but nothing has changed for the better, only for the worse. At Chrysler, the two-tier wage has created more profits, but now it seems that this is a system that was meant to be put in place permanently.

“The revolution starts in the minds of the people. A lot of people say, ‘What can I do? I can’t fight the government.’ But the masses can fight, if they are well organized.”



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