

SEP and IYSSE in Southern California hold public meetings on US war drive

Our correspondents
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This past week the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held public meetings in Los Angeles and San Diego, California. Both meetings emphasized how the drive towards war and dictatorship was the result of the breakdown of the capitalist system, and that the only solution to the problems facing mankind was an international socialist revolution.

The meetings were attended by students and workers from the Los Angeles and San Diego metropolitan area. For many participants this was their first time encountering the SEP and IYSSE. Several young people in attendance had been long-time readers of the *World Socialist Web Site* and expressed interest in joining and building the IYSSE.

Tom Carter, a writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*, delivered a comprehensive report to the Los Angeles meeting. His talk emphasized the history of Syria and the class questions at stake in the conflict. Carter reminded the audience that the United States' involvement in Syria was nothing new. Dating back to the late 1940s, it had engineered multiple coups to preserve US interests.

Carter reviewed the series of wars launched by the US over the past 25 years, as the American ruling class sought to counteract its declining economic power through military force. While the US is currently pursuing a "diplomatic" track with Syria and Iran, it is ramping up its military engagement in Southeast Asia as part of an effort to contain the rise of China.

Carter also demonstrated how the ruling class of the United States failed to anticipate the mass popular hostility to war in Syria. This hostility forced the Obama administration to change its strategy in overthrowing Assad. Carter warned that this did not end the danger of war. At the end of the meeting he

stressed that fighting US imperialism required building a mass working class party with revolutionary socialist aims.

In San Diego, John Burton, the 2003 California gubernatorial candidate for the Socialist Equality Party, spoke at San Diego State University. Burton told the audience, "You cannot understand the drive toward war without understanding the fundamental drives of US imperialism and the other major powers."

Burton traced the trajectory of the US's recent ramp up of imperialism and push towards dictatorial forms of rule. "Assassinations, drone strikes, torture, indefinite detention without trial, and the buildup towards a police state are such a profound break with due process and the bill of rights," he said.

"The CIA has a long history of backing and launching insurgencies against governments it has targeted in the region, such as in Libya. Now in the case of Syria, the US is backing what it refers to as a 'revolution,' but is essentially Al Qaeda-linked forces pursuing Syrian regime change that benefits the US."

Burton traced the history of the decay of bourgeois democracy in the US, referring to the 1998 impeachment proceedings against President Bill Clinton and the stolen election of 2000, when the Supreme Court set a "precedent that there is no constitutional right to cast ballots."

The overriding characteristic of American society that underlies the decay of democracy, Burton said, is the growth of social inequality. "The top 10 percent of the population takes in 50 percent of the national income," he said. "Of that 50 percent, 25 percent goes to the top 1 percent. There has been no economic recovery for the working class after the financial collapse of 2008 and 2009, yet workers are told the economy is 'recovering.'"

Eric, a power plant worker who attended the Los Angeles meeting, said he had driven two hours with three co-workers to attend. “I thought the meeting was really good, really informative. I liked how they backed up their presentation with examples...” Asked about the assault on democratic rights he said, “It’s a disgrace, it’s pitiful, [democratic rights] are what this country was founded on.”

Ian, a student who had been reading the WSWS, told our reporters in San Diego that the WSWS is “one of the only sources that doesn’t limit itself to national interest or perspective—it’s international and looks at the crisis of the working class as a whole.”

Asked about attacks on workers worldwide, Carlos, a student from Los Angeles responded: “The class struggle is manifesting itself, the interests of the bosses are mutually exclusive to the interests of the workers. They are the complete opposite.”



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