

SEP rallies in Sydney and Melbourne oppose US war drive against Syria

Our reporters
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Rallies organised by the Socialist Equality Party and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality in Sydney and Melbourne last Saturday to oppose the US-led preparations for war on Syria attracted considerable interest from passers-by. Both in Sydney's Liverpool Mall and outside Melbourne's state library, people listened intently as speakers explained the driving forces behind the turn to war.

The rallies were called as part of the fight by the SEP and its youth movement, the IYSSE, and their sister organisations internationally, to mobilise the working class globally against the plans by Washington and its allies, including Australia, for military intervention in Syria as part of a bid to secure hegemony over the Middle East and Central Asia.

The Sydney rally was held in Liverpool, a major working class suburb. Chairing the event, SEP assistant national secretary James Cogan emphasised: "Just weeks ago, a massive American bombardment of Syria was imminent... Claims that the Syrian regime had carried out a chemical weapons attack on civilians in Damascus—claims for which no evidence was provided—were being presented by the US, France and Britain as justification for war.

"In the face of popular opposition, there is no question that the Obama administration and the American capitalist elite it represents have temporarily stepped back. But, as our speakers today will review, they have not abandoned their plans to intervene again and again into the Middle East until the entire oil-rich and strategic region is firmly under their domination."

Cogan condemned the support provided to US imperialism by successive Australian governments and the capitalist ruling elite, and called for the working class to oppose the deployments of Australian troops, the US-Australia military alliance and the presence in

Australia of American military bases, warships, aircraft and troops.

Cogan drew out the connection between the US plots in the Middle East and the Obama administration's military and strategic "pivot" to Asia, seeking to block China from emerging as world political and military rival to the US. "Behind the backs of the Australian working class, the former Labor government of Julia Gillard, with the backing of the then Liberal opposition and the complicity of the Greens, joined the preparations for war against China," he said.

Nick Beams, the national secretary of the SEP, warned: "While the weight of public opinion at this point has been able, at least temporarily, to stay the hand of US imperialism, no one should make the mistake of thinking that it can do so permanently. Rather the US and the other imperialist powers will seek ways of circumventing this mass opposition."

The speaker outlined the fundamental driving forces behind the turn to war. "Under conditions of economic decline, which began more than three decades ago, the US is striving to maintain its position of global dominance by military means. And that involves above all control and dominance over the Eurasian land mass."

Beams explained the dangers of another world war, as the US sought to prevent any other power, including Russia and China, emerging to challenge its dominance. "How to prevent war?" Beams asked. "Not by appeals to capitalist politicians or to bodies such as the UN, but only through the independent mobilisation of the international working class to overturn the capitalist private profit system which gives rise to war."

Beams concluded: "The Socialist Equality Party is the only party which opposes war. It has called this rally as part of a campaign by our world party, the

International Committee of the Fourth International, to alert the working class and youth to the dangers of war and initiate the necessary political struggle for international socialism, which is the only way war can be prevented.”

Zac Hambides, a leader of the IYSSE, warned that the ruling elite’s response to mass opposition to war was to step up its wholesale spying on the population and prepare for mass repression and dictatorship. “This has been exposed by the courageous actions of Edward Snowden, the former NSA contractor who turned whistleblower. His exposure of the spying carried out by American intelligence agencies, along with Washington’s allies, including Canberra, followed the powerful exposure of US war crimes by Bradley Manning and WikiLeaks and its editor Julian Assange.”

Terry Cook, a retired railway worker and leader of the SEP, explained the connection between the turn to war, and the “war at home by corporate and financial elite in every country to dismantle social conditions and living standards to force the working class to pay the cost of the capitalist crisis.”

Cook said the rally was being held a day after the SEP in the United States held a demonstration in Detroit to begin to mobilise the working class across that city and throughout the US in defence of the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA). As a result of Detroit being declared bankrupt, “along with the destruction of pensions and health care benefits of city workers, and the further slashing of essential services, the precious art works of the DIA are to be pillaged and sold to pay off the banks and bondholders.”

Cook warned: “What is happening in Detroit, once the auto capital of the world, is to be a model for similar agendas in cities in the US and internationally. Everywhere the rights of the working class, including the right to access culture, are under sustained attack. Australia is no exception.”

Summing up the rally, Nick Beams said the speakers had shown that the turn to war was bound up with every other pressing issue facing the working class. “The question of war arises from the crisis of the capitalist system itself all over the world. This crisis sees deeper and deeper attacks on the social position of the working class in every country, all over Europe, where unemployment is at depression levels, and in the US and around the world where similar processes are

underway, with sweeping cuts to jobs, wages and social services.”

A new perspective—a socialist perspective—was needed for the overthrow of the system based on corporate profit, so that the vast technological advances of humanity were used for the benefit of the working people who created this social wealth, not for cruise missiles and other weapons of death and destruction.

At the Melbourne rally, long standing party member Will Marshall chaired the rally, and introduced the speakers: WSWS staff writer Patrick O’Connor, IYSSE convenor Will Morrow and SEP national committee member Sue Phillips. At both demonstrations, workers and young people spoke out via interviews with the WSWS and numbers of participants purchased tickets to the SEP’s public meetings, next weekend, on “Syria, Iran and the geopolitics of American militarism”.



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