

Australian meetings discuss US war drive in Middle East

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held meetings in Sydney and Melbourne on October 13, titled “Syria, Iran and the geopolitics of American militarism.” Speakers presented workers and young people in attendance with a detailed assessment of the situation in Syria and the Middle East, and a socialist perspective to oppose the militarist intrigues of US imperialism and its allies, including the Australian government. Further meetings are to be held in Perth, Brisbane, and Wellington in New Zealand.

In Sydney, Peter Symonds, a member of the *World Socialist Web Site’s* International Editorial Board, reviewed the context in which the US and its allies had prepared to launch a massive air war on Syria in late August. In Melbourne, Will Marshall, a leading SEP member, delivered a similar report.

For over two years, Symonds explained, a devastating civil war in Syria had been fomented, funded and armed by the Obama administration and its allies. The rebel forces, which were dominated by right-wing Islamist militias, had failed to oust the Syrian regime of Bashar al-Assad. During a meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry on July 25, the Syrian opposition leaders reported that they faced a “desperate” military situation. A chemical attack in Damascus barely a month later was then seized upon by Obama as the pretext to prepare a military intervention.

Overwhelming popular opposition in the US and internationally, Symonds noted, had compelled the Obama administration to delay its war plans. They had not, however, been abandoned. “The complex process of detailing, collecting and destroying Syrian chemical weapons within a tight time frame provides any number of opportunities for the US to manufacture a pretext to rapidly ramp up and launch an attack on Syria,” he

said.

Symonds pointed out that the entire Australian political establishment—Labor, Liberal and the Greens—had backed the US war in Syria. He concluded by establishing the critical service that has been given to the imperialist agenda by the pseudo-left tendencies internationally and in Australia, such as Socialist Alternative, which falsely promoted the US-backed forces in Libya and Syria as “revolutionaries.”

Nick Beams, the SEP’s national secretary, spoke after Symonds in Sydney. In Melbourne, Patrick O’Connor, a SEP National Committee member, gave the main address.

Beams, in an extensive report, traced the militarist agenda of the American ruling class to the profound decline in the world economic position of American capitalism from the late 1960s. The succession of US wars and interventions since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 had been aimed at ensuring it dominated every major region of the globe—and above all the Eurasian landmass—so as to prevent any power emerging as a challenge to its global political and military hegemony.

Beams highlighted indices of China’s rapid economic development, the outcome of the globalisation of capitalist production, to clarify the objective reason why China had become the central target of US war planning. He noted that the US portion of global production was estimated to have been 31 percent in 2000. By 2010, it was 23.5 percent and in 2020 it was expected to fall to just 16 percent. By contrast, China’s share, which 30 years ago stood at barely 2 percent, was now approaching that of the US.

“We are in the midst of a vast shift in the tectonic plates of the world capitalist economy and such shifts will have the most far-reaching and violent political

consequences,” Beams explained. “The most recent US interventions in the Middle East have to be placed within this global context ... Syria has been targeted because of its relationship with Iran, but Iran in turn is linked to the US drive for domination of the Middle East and the entire Eurasian land mass, posing a direct conflict with Russia and China.”

A catastrophic world war, Beams said, could be prevented only by drawing the lessons of history. “The working class must advance its own strategy, worked out and fought for to the end,” he concluded. “It must be based on the fight for the international unification of the working class in the struggle to overthrow the capitalist profit system, which is the source and driving force of war.”

Following the reports, audience questions included what the consequences would be if the US government defaulted on its debt obligations, and how the crisis of leadership in the working class in the Middle East could be overcome. In Sydney, an important discussion took place in response to a question on the significance of the October 4 demonstration led by the SEP (US) to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts (see: <http://defendthedia.org/>). In Melbourne, discussion developed around the extent of US-China tensions and the alignment of the Australian ruling elite behind the US pivot to Asia.

In answer to a young student’s question on how a socialist perspective could prevent war, Nick Beams said: “When it comes to war and politics, issues are always discussed in the media, in the schools and elsewhere in terms of ‘Britain,’ ‘America’ or ‘Australia.’ This is aimed at covering over the most fundamental social reality—that all societies are divided into classes. In every country, the division is between those who work for wages and the capitalist elite who profit from the system. One of the reasons why there was such powerful opposition in the US to the attempts to perpetrate a war against Syria is that American workers have seen themselves impoverished over the past three decades. The so-called recovery since the 2008 crisis has gone almost entirely to the wealthiest one percent.”

Beams continued: “This has produced a tremendous class polarisation. America is not ‘America.’ It is divided, as Australia is divided, and as is Britain, China, India, and every country. The program that has

to be fought for is the unification of the international working class and the construction of a new social order, not based on nation-states but rational economic planning.”

Generous donations of close to \$2,500 were made toward the SEP’s \$30,000 special fund, which the party is raising by October 31.

In Sydney, Zeshan, a 15-year-old student who attended with his father, said he agreed with what the speakers had explained. “It felt really close to what I thought about America and capitalism,” he said. “The answer to my question on socialism really helped, as I wanted to know what can stand up against capitalism and militarism. It is possible if people all unite. If the working class gets together there will be no more capitalism, and no more dying, as workers don’t want to kill each other.”

Peter, a construction worker in Melbourne, said: “The meeting pretty much confirmed what I have been thinking. Syria is the next step to Iran, which is the next step to China or Russia. From what I know of history, if the US is backed into a corner they are not going to give up power. If China attempts to equal them militarily, as it is now doing by building up its blue water navy to protect shipping lanes, the US won’t allow it. I heard an interview with the US ambassador where he said the US won’t allow China to dominate in the Pacific.”

Durmush, a former school teacher, also attended in Melbourne. “I’m concerned about the danger of war,” he said. “I think it has been averted temporarily because of a tactical decision by the Americans—they took the Russian proposal with both hands because it suited them. The Russian foreign minister suggested getting rid of Syria’s chemical weapons stockpiles. But once that happens, the issue won’t be finished. That’s not what it’s about. The real issue is Iran, and after Syria it will be Iran’s turn.”

Durmush said he had family still in Cyprus, near Syria: “The whole area is worried. The US wants to demolish Syria as they did in Libya and Iraq.”



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