

Workers and students in Australia discuss SEP's antiwar program

Our reporters
22 July 2014

The growing danger of a third world war was underscored at a series of successful meetings held by the Socialist Equality Party and International Youth and Students for Social Equality over the past ten days.

Initially called in response to the growing debacle for the United States in Iraq, the meetings broadened to include, as well, analysis and discussion of the Israeli military assault on Gaza, the intensifying drive of the imperialist powers against Russia, and the origins of the crisis in Ukraine.

SEP National Secretary Nick Beams spoke in Melbourne on July 13 and a week later James Cogan, SEP assistant national secretary, spoke in Sydney while Mike Head addressed a meeting in Brisbane.

At the heart of the discussion was the resolution adopted by the International Committee of the Fourth International in June, *Socialism and the Fight Against Imperialist War*, which centres on the danger of imperialist war and the fight to build the Fourth International.

Those in attendance closely followed the reports, which related the most recent global political events to the central issues of historical perspective contained in the resolution. The serious concerns expressed by audience members over the deepening crisis in geopolitical relations were reflected in interviews conducted by the *World Socialist Web Site* at the end of the meetings.

In Melbourne, **Edgar**, a 20-year-old La Trobe University psychology student, said: "I liked how Nick Beams explained in detail where the danger of war comes from and what the core problem was—why capitalism cannot work. It's clear that it's a good solution to have the working class go against capitalism.

"He showed that the events in World War I are

closely linked to what is happening now. The difference is that now it is even more intense, more advanced than it was back then. Most people say, 'there are problems in society, and the government lies,' but they can't say why. They don't know what's going on behind the lies. Coming here has answered my questions. It makes me want to research more about it ...

"I also liked the historical explanation of revolution, especially the Russian Revolution and how it was betrayed by Stalinism. I never knew about that; they never taught me about that in high school. In school they said, 'socialism doesn't work,' but they never explained that what happened in Russia wasn't socialism. The people were actually betrayed by Stalinism."

Farouche decided to attend the Melbourne meeting with her two young children after receiving an SEP leaflet at an anti-budget rally, where she carried the handmade sign, "No to NATO expansion."

After the SEP meeting, she said: "I have been trying to learn about what is happening from the news—well, the Internet—not the mainstream news. I was getting concerned about what was happening in Ukraine, but it's hard to follow anything, because there's always a back story and different agendas." Farouche said the meeting was "very informative" and wanted to be contacted about future SEP events.

Birwan, a young warehouse worker, originally from Nepal, said: "I wish there was less emphasis on greed in this society. There are people like [mining magnate] Gina Reinhart, who has enormous wealth but thinks that everyone should be working for \$2 a day, like they do in Africa. There's enough wealth for everyone but Western democracies say to working people 'look how lucky you are' compared to people in the poorest

countries like Nepal, and therefore you should have to accept the way your life is.”

In Brisbane, **Erin** attended his first SEP public meeting, after reading the WSWWS for about six years. Asked to comment on the SEP’s warnings of the risk of a third world war, he replied: “I think your analysis is spot on. There are definite historical trends to these things. You are not exaggerating at all. Everything you have said about the need for an antiwar movement and a new leadership in the working class to achieve that is absolutely right.”

Referring to developments in Ukraine, he said: “It’s a drive to carve up Russia for potential markets and even for the gas lines that Russia controls. The American companies have their eyes on that, and so do the Germans. This crisis is being manufactured by NATO to help break up Russia and the previous territories of the Soviet Union and open them for exploitation by Western imperialism.”

Erin contrasted the WSWWS’s analysis with the mainstream media and various “leftist” web sites. “The WSWWS is very informative, with a clear-headed analysis. While there is, of course, a socialist bias, the bias is obvious, well thought-out and is based on rigorous analysis. I’ve found other news sources, and not just mainstream ones, but leftist ones, to be rather empty of facts, with a lot of bluster and misinformation, not analysis. The WSWWS is concise, considered and in-depth, and well-written. You actually go into the whys and wherefores of the historical realities and bring this analysis into force.”

Erin said he was disgusted by the backing of pseudo-left groups for military interventions by the US and its allies. “I found the hypocrisy galling. Say for example, the Egyptian and Syrian situations ... Their support for military force by the imperialist powers—I can’t see how that is socialist—and their support for selling arms to Islamic extremists makes no sense to me. I can’t see how that’s a Marxist perspective.”

In Sydney, **Cheyenne**, 15, a high school student from Fairfield, also attended her first SEP meeting. “The thought of war makes me angry, but I’m disappointed in America and the Australian government too,” she said. The promotion of militarism amongst young people, she said, “disgusts me and I hate all of it. They should let the children think for themselves but they are just forcing ideas into their minds. I don’t like it ...

“It doesn’t help when the teachers at school try to tell you that everything to do with socialism and communism in general is bad. It is so burnt into their minds that it will never work.”

Asked why she decided to attend the SEP meeting, Cheyenne said: “I didn’t want to just be on the sidelines and say ‘I support socialism.’ I wanted to do something and show that I do.”

Belinda, a receptionist, said she could not understand “why in 2014 anyone with a brain in their head would think that war is a good thing for anyone.

“Australia’s involvement in the Iraq war is all about financial and political reasons. Australia is in bed with the US but I think if we were more aware of what’s really going on, we would not go along with it. I haven’t heard anyone else holding meetings to discuss wars.

“The SEP wants to open people’s eyes to what’s really going on and to form a mass party to expand the awareness of what is going on globally and to explain that it’s basically about finances, oil and commodities rather than about religion or anything else.

Michael, 31, a disability support worker, said the SEP meeting “was very informative and free of bias. There was criticism not only of the right-wing but also of the pseudo-lefts and I’d encourage anyone to come to SEP meetings.”

Asked what was behind the drive to war, Michael said: “Profits, profits over people. They divide the rich and the poor, not only within a country, but between countries, and they want to control countries for their resources. People have been downtrodden for so long that they accept that this is the way things are, but now they are realising they want something else.”



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