"War means the people are losing"

Wayne State University students and workers speak out against war

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As the US military launches an open-ended war in Iraq and Syria, a broad section of workers and young people say they feel deeply opposed to war, but their views find no reflection in official politics.

"War is about money, money, money!" Janice Anderson, a liberal arts student at Wayne State University, told an International Youth and Students for Social Equality campaign team at Wayne State University Wednesday.

"There's plenty of money for war, they say, but none for education," Anderson added, "I've never been this poor. I'm 70 years old, but I'm going to college in order to get another job. I have to work two part time jobs, go to school, and spend 3 or 400 dollars for books that don't get opened half the time. And they keep taking money away from the education system."

"Instead of going to war we should be putting money into education and infrastructure," said Joe Fletcher, a Vietnam war veteran and Wayne State University maintenance worker.

"Over the summer we had highways that turned into rivers because of some rain: they have plenty of money to drop bombs on other countries, but they won't put money into infrastructure. War means the people are losing."

Anna Gibson, a journalism student, noted the parallel between the drive to war and the attack on democratic rights in the US. "Look at what happened in Ferguson: that wasn't just a race issue, it was also a class issue. There is so much poverty in the US."

Jennifer Gray, a social work major, said, "Look at the billions of dollars being sent to fight senseless wars when you've got people at home suffering financially. People can't afford healthcare and you're going to send money to fight a war in the name of power and control?

"If justice were being served in the US you wouldn't need the national guard in Ferguson," she said. "I need public assistance for the first time in my life and they're telling me I don't qualify because I don't have any minor children, and I'm still too young to collect social security."

"I was of age during Vietnam. I opposed it and didn't fight," said Ken, a 63-year-old musician, "You don't see protests like you used to. I think it's great that you guys are out here," he told the IYSSE campaigners. "You should keep doing what you're doing."

"I don't think we should be involved in another war," said DJ, a library monitor at Wayne State University. Our government actually trained and funded Bin Laden. I wonder what the case is with this ISIS group. Where did they really come from?"

A student, who asked to remain anonymous, said "The US government created ISIS; the military-industrial complex created ISIS, and profited from it."

"Rich people want to wage wars to steal resources, but the rich won't go to war themselves; that's what they use the poor for. And what better way is there to get poor people to go fight some war that has nothing to do with them than to put up a propaganda video, like the beheadings of the journalists, in order to get them to think it's in their interest to fight in these wars?

"Ask any soldier what they were there doing in Afghanistan or Iraq," he said. "They'll tell you they stood around guarding oil fields. They weren't protecting anyone's freedoms."