

SEP meetings oppose Australian involvement in US war in the Middle East

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party held a series of successful public meetings on Sunday in the Sydney suburbs of Liverpool, Auburn and Dulwich Hill and in Melbourne, the Victorian state capital last Sunday. These were followed by a meeting last night in the New South Wales regional city of Newcastle.

Attended by a broad range of workers, students, youth and retirees, the meetings were held to oppose the Australian involvement in the US-led military intervention in Iraq and Syria and the recent police anti-terror raids and associated attacks on democratic rights.

Nick Beams, SEP national secretary and member of the WSWs international editorial board was the featured speaker at Liverpool with SEP national committee members addressing the other events.

SEP speakers warned those in attendance, many of them at their first SEP meeting, of the danger of a third world war and the necessity for the working class to take up an internationalist and socialist fight against capitalism, the system responsible for war. Extended question and answer discussions covered a range of subjects at the meetings.

Beams told the Liverpool meeting that the US war in Iraq and Syria, like the 2003 invasion of Iraq, was “founded on lies.” Contrary to the “humanitarian mission” claims of the Abbott government, Labor and the Greens, the latest military intervention, he said, had nothing to do with “protecting” Iraqi and Syrian people from Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorists.

“Its real goal,” Beams said, “was the resumption of Washington’s regime-change operation against the Assad regime in Syria and total US domination over the oil-rich Middle East.”

Beams explained that the eruption of US militarism was driven by the profound decline of American capitalism in the world economy. He pointed out that

the succession of US wars and interventions since the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 was an attempt to prevent any rival power emerging to challenge to its global hegemony.

“War arises from the contradiction between the global economy and the nation state system,” he said, and demonstrates “the impossibility of resolving this question within the framework of the capitalist system.

“The fight against war can only be grounded on a socialist and internationalist perspective aimed at the overthrow of capitalism and the taking of political power by the working class in order to expropriate the banks and corporations and reorganised the entire world economy.”

The realisation of this perspective, Beams said, “meant overcoming the gap between the advanced stage in the objective situation and the political consciousness of the working class. The lag of consciousness was above all the lack of historical understanding of the Russian Revolution, the first attempt by the working class to resolve the crisis of capitalism.” Beams urged those in attendance to purchase copies of *The Russian Revolution and the Unfinished Twentieth Century* by World Socialist Web Site chairman David North.

The political rearming of the working class, the speaker explained, could only occur through “the development of its understanding of the course of the 20th century” and appealed to everyone to study the analysis of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist party, and to join the SEP, its Australian section.

Questions were asked about inter-imperialist rivalries, religious sectarianism in the Middle East, the police anti-terror raids and anti-Muslim media provocations and increased spending on Australian spy agencies.

Beams said that although Germany, Japan and Britain were currently operating within the framework of US imperialism, these powers did not have the same interests. He pointed to the rise of German militarism and moves to rehabilitate Hitler by a layer of German academics and the ruling elite. The speaker also referred to the Abe government's "reinterpretation" of the Japanese "pacifist" constitution and the remilitarisation of Japan.

Answering a question on the Middle East, Beams said the central issue was not Arab identity but the fight for the independent interests of the working class and a unified movement of workers throughout in the entire region.

"This must be developed as an integral part of the struggle by workers internationally to put an end to the profit system. The working class by its very nature is the only force that can transcend religious, ethnic and national divisions and put an end to the carnage of imperialist war," he said.

Commenting on the police anti-terror raids and anti-Muslim hysteria, Beams explained that the attacks were directed against the entire working class. They were being used to justify Australian military involvement in the Middle East and the introduction of anti-democratic laws, and to whip up right-wing social forces. "We live in an era of daily provocations which are being used in an attempt to intimidate and silence anti-war opposition," he said.

A lively question and answer session followed the main report at the Dulwich Hill meeting and centred on the political, theoretical and practical tasks required in the construction of an anti-war movement. SEP assistant national secretary James Cogan stressed the need for the working class to assimilate the lessons of the 20th century and in particular the struggle led by Leon Trotsky against Stalinism.

At Auburn questions were asked about the 2008 global financial crisis and the current state of the world economy, the role of German imperialism and the geo-strategic significance of the Euro-Asian land mass. One audience member asked about the Greens' position on the new war in Middle East.

SEP national WSWs editor Peter Symonds explained that the Greens had no fundamental disagreements with the imperialist nature and objective of the military intervention.

Their differences were "purely tactical," he said. "They fully endorse the 'war on terror' and the war on ISIS as legitimate but believe that Australian troops should be deployed closer to the Asia Pacific region to ensure Australia's national interests are safeguarded."

Questions were also asked in Melbourne about the Greens. The main speaker, SEP member Will Marshall, reviewed the parliamentary manoeuvres of the Greens, including its endorsement of the bogus "war on terror" and backing for the associated anti-terror laws.

Marshall explained that the Greens were not a genuine anti-war movement but a capitalist party that "seeks to keep all anti-war opposition trapped within the official parliamentary framework and back behind imperialism."

The Newcastle meeting was attended by university students and workers. SEP member Max Newman delivered the main report and answered questions about Washington's relation to ISIS and other Islamic jihadist groupings.

One student asked about Prime Minister Tony Abbott's threats to "shirtfront" Russian President Putin at the upcoming G20 summit. Newman said that the comment revealed the increasingly global role being played by Australian imperialism as a point man for the US war drive. He explained that was another indication of the intensifying geo-political tensions where militarist language was replacing the usual diplomatic language.

Many of those attending remained behind after the meetings to further discuss the SEP's analysis and purchase party literature. Over \$1,600 was donated in collections for the SEP's \$30,000 special fund.



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