

Young people in Brisbane denounce “population control”

A WSWS reporting team
13 November 2014

Young people interviewed by the WSWS yesterday on the near-deserted streets of Brisbane’s Southbank precinct, near the G20 summit venue, expressed disgust toward the immense police operation surrounding the gathering.

They commented, in particular, on the spending of half a billion dollars on protecting government leaders who are responsible for wars and boosting corporate profits under conditions of mounting global inequality and deteriorating social conditions, especially for youth and working class people.

Jordan, an unemployed 18-year-old hoping to commence an aviation mechanic diploma course next year, said: “Today, I’ve seen police every five minutes, everywhere I go. It’s kind of restricting our freedom. These are the 20 most powerful leaders in the world but I don’t think there’s a real danger of terrorism here. Personally I reckon they are taking too seriously. They’ve shut down parts of the city.”

Told that the official cost of the summit was \$478 million, Jordan commented: “I’ve seen a lot of people in Brisbane who have no homes or are struggling to eat. I reckon those people deserve the money more ... It comes down to classes. The world is still split that way. They try to pretend that it has evolved away from that, but really it hasn’t. The rich still rule things, pretty much.”

Jordan explained that he completed high school last year, but found it “very difficult” to get work. “I had three jobs this year. I’ve done courses and have a lot of qualifications but still find it hard to get a job. I was a contract warehouse storeman until two months ago. Since then, I’ve been unemployed.”

The teenager condemned the G20 agenda of generating economic growth via slashing social spending and privatising infrastructure. “I don’t like all

these budget cuts,” he said. “No one knows what that money is going to. I know a lot of people on Centrelink [social security benefits]. Like me, they are finding it very difficult to get by. I’m planning on moving from home but I don’t know if that’s going to happen, because I’ve been out of work for more than a month.” He concluded: “World leaders are more greedy.”

Brayden, a supermarket worker, objected to the overwhelming police presence. “It’s about population control,” he commented. “It’s about trying to make placid any kind of civil disobedience or whatever it might be, even taking photos of barricades. Does anyone feel safe having all these cops here? No, I don’t think so. It’s about intimidating people.”

The young worker explained: “I’m opposed to the amount of money they are spending on this event, and the slashing of the budget. They say they are trying to fix things, but it’s not helping to spend an enormous amount of money on this summit. It is not to help the workers. It is simply for their own interests. It’s all at the expense of the environment and the working class.”

Bradyn was appalled by the extension of the security lockdown to cover US President Barack Obama’s speech at the University of Queensland. “That sounds harrowing,” he said. “It’s pretty draconian.”

Yumana, an environmental management student, said the G20 itself was “ridiculous.” She commented: “I don’t see why they had to come to Brisbane. I think it’s a huge waste of money for a government that’s crying about budget problems and making so many cuts, including to all our arts and culture things, and our health system and everything.”

The University of Queensland student was outraged that climate change was kept off the G20 agenda. “That’s stupid. Climate change is what the discussion should be all about. They are all flying here, but no

change will come about. They're completely out of touch with the real-world problems.

"And there's 6,000 police! That's completely unnecessary. Then the authorities have to train them all. So that's even more money! All these anti-terror laws are stupid. It's all based on scare stories. The media was talking about ISIS beheadings, without any evidence."

Yumana was scathing about the fact that Obama would speak at the university to a selected audience behind a security cordon. "That's stupid too. What's the point of having leaders if they're not accessible?"

Jon said the G20 security was "excessive" and a "bit messed up." He commented that the summit would "definitely not" do anything to alleviate poverty. Instead, the assembled leaders would "do what they have done throughout their entire reign. It's all self-serving policies that benefit a minority, a rich minority."

Asked what workers and students could do to fight the austerity measures and attacks on their living standards, Jon replied: "It is difficult to say because the system is very organised, and in a way that's how the system works. It's really that the government is an adversary toward the student or worker. For there to be progress towards a positive end for people like us there needs to be more organisation among the lower classes and middle classes."

Jon condemned the bipartisan unity between Prime Minister Tony Abbott's government and the Labor Party opposition on sending the military to join the US-led war in Iraq and Syria, especially with Obama now wanting more troops to expand the intervention. "I am against most wars," he explained. "I don't see the point with any of the alliances we have built with America." He said he "definitely" opposed the invasion of Iraq in 2003. "It was farcical. There was no legitimate evidence. Saddam Hussein was not a great guy but we invaded on hearsay and rumours, which is illegal."



To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact