

Students and workers speak out on the danger of war

Our correspondents
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Members of the audience at the Socialist Equality Party's public meetings in Australia on "Why have Australia's parliamentary parties all signed up for war?" spoke to WSWs correspondents after the meetings.

At the Sydney meeting, **Darryl**, a warehouse assistant and fork lift driver, originally from Los Angeles, said Nick Beams "hit on a lot of things that are researched, about what's going on around the world today. All he said about America, with its hundreds of military bases, trying to take over the planet; that's true."

Darryl said the danger of war was connected to the social conditions in the US. "In America things have changed a lot, for the worse. My relatives, my nephews, my nieces, they can't find jobs ... There's more billionaires than ever these days, but I'm always sending money home, from here."

"I have never seen so many police shootings in America. Not just the ones they are showing on the mainstream media but the ones that don't even get covered. And yet, with these grand juries, the cops are just getting off. It shows the martial law police state that we're heading to. I'm really worried about that coming here too, I really am."

Darryl, who was born in 1964, just as the fabricated Gulf of Tonkin incident was used to justify the American war in Vietnam, said: "You are not exaggerating about the danger of war. Look, all my life I have known war! The Gulf of Tonkin, when they said the Vietnamese attacked a US ship, was a total lie. And millions of Vietnamese died, along with 60,000 US soldiers. That bothers me. I've been duped my whole life."

Darryl said the police shootings at home were driven by the same "brutality" as the US torture abroad. "The CIA's been known for doing that, and there's just no way they can sit there and defend that. It's torture and Obama is defending it. Obama is a liar too. He is for torture. But he's just a puppet, taking his orders from the men

upstairs."

Allison, an IT contract worker, said: "Today's meeting made me recognise the danger of world war and how real it is. I'd been reading about Russia's and China's plans but hadn't realised the aggressive role of the US."

"The meeting also planted a seed in me that working people have more power than they thought. I came here with the impression that we are ruled by a tiny elite, a handful of capitalists, and that to try and fight this was futile."

"Governments don't appear to be governing anywhere. It is money that governs. Obama and people like him are just pawns. I was so hopeful after his election, but he isn't running America, money is."

Shehab, 28, an international student from Bangladesh, said this was the first meeting he had attended, after reading the WSWs for a year. "I would draw attention to the Israeli-Palestine conflict. The world saw how unfair and oppressive that was, and yet the war continued. That tells you that no matter how much public opinion opposes war, it is still going to happen if the people upstairs decide that it is going to happen."

"Countries aren't run by governments. Countries are run by people with money and big businesses."

Shehab said there was a connection between war abroad and social conditions at home. "All the economic unrest feeds into the drive to war. A rise in unemployment produces a big crowd of people who are very unhappy with their lives. They need someone to blame and at that point if you can direct their hate, it's just too convenient and aids the drive to war."

Michael, 32, a disability service worker, said: "It's actually rather scary how the world is progressing towards conflict. I had no idea just how much Australia was involved in these conflicts and the provocation of them. I was aware of the US involvement and I had heard Tony Abbott threatening to 'shirtfront' Vladimir Putin, but I

had no idea of the extent of Australia's involvement.

"I also had no idea about the number of US military bases in Australia and the country's history of first turning to Britain and then having the US as its master and then letting Australian citizens having very little say. The point made about the ousting of both Hatayama in Japan and Rudd here because they didn't completely fall in line with the US, I agree with strongly.

"The ongoing media coverage of the downing of MH17 hearkened back to 9/11 where Bush used the people's deaths to pursue his own war agenda. Bush, Obama and Abbott. The names change, but the same agenda of a drive to war continues.

"I thought the discussion of the power of a mass movement by the working class was very moving and I think it is quite true. There's only so much people are willing to take, only so much people are willing to be stepped on before they say, 'enough's enough' and demand action or rise up. The SEP's the party to lead such a movement."

Simone, 26, from Italy and currently working in Sydney, said: "I think there's going to be a war really soon in Europe, Russia and the US ... The USA has something like 800 military bases all over the world, which is huge, and it seems that they are preparing for a war. I don't see many solutions in the near future, but I agree completely that capitalism is driving the world in this direction ...

"Australia and Italy are both linked to the US. In Italy we have US bases, and we have always been linked to America since World War II. The 11th article of our constitution says that Italy can't carry out war unless it's for self defence, so I think it's horrible and crazy that we have participated in America's wars in the Middle East."

In Melbourne, **Robert**, a retiree, said: "I thought the meeting was really informative and I really appreciated all the answers from the speakers. I guess I am like most people—I tend to think on the basis of Labor, Liberals and the Greens, although I increasingly feel alienated from them all. I am basically a socialist."

Robert spoke about the promotion of war and militarism. "My grandmother's brother died in World War I. All this stuff today about the glory of war and the world war celebrations—it is a monumental waste of time. I don't agree with the brainwashing of kids and then sending them off to war, to become cannon fodder for imperialist interests. What a complete waste of life."

Adam, a public service worker, said: "I found the meeting very informative. Statements are being made by

our leaders without any evidence or justification—against Russia, against China. Anyone who stands in the way of American imperialism has to be demonised ... Just recently at the UN there was a General Assembly resolution sponsored by Russia opposing the glorification of Nazism. But it is not in the interests of the US or its puppets to support that, and so they voted 'no.' Nazism in the Ukraine suits the imperialists."

In Brisbane, **Trent**, who is starting at university next year, said he was impressed by the openness of the discussion.

"As was said today, we're going into war, not to help our fellow man but for profits and that's what's driving world wars, to get all the oil that's left in the world. That's just killing innumerable amounts of people. Some people get to have the money and buy what they want, but it's workers who are actually forced to fight the wars. That's just not fair."

Asked about the official celebrations of World War I, Trent commented: "With what's going on the world, it looks like we're gearing up for World War III. They are trying to get some country pride going, sprouting Anzac Day and what-not for the Diggers. It adds some kind of heroism to the wars, to make people want to become one of those of heroes that everyone seems to speak of. It makes it easier to enlist people for the next war."

Trent spoke about the conditions confronting young people. "I'm finding it rather daunting becoming a uni student, facing a debt of \$50,000-plus that I'm going to be paying off for the rest of my life. I'll never be able to own my own home or really get a good footing, and then I'll face the prospect of being just another person with a gun in a war, when I'm a pacifist."



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