Youth and workers in Australia denounce war and join international May Day

Our reporters
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Workers, students and youth in Australia continue to register for the International Committee of the Fourth International's Online May Day Rally. Some of those participating spoke with WSWS reporters about the importance of uniting the working class and voiced their concerns about the growing danger of war, attacks on basic democratic rights and the widening gulf between rich and poor.

In the Sydney western suburb of Fairfield, **Jason**, a store manager whose family originally came from Samoa and then New Zealand, said he was registering for the May Day rally because "for me personally, it's more about my son. I don't want him growing up in these dark times. We've already had two world wars, and now we've got all this fighting in the Middle East, and starting a fight with China and Russia.

"It's going to be the end of the world, that's the bottom line. It's not going to be, 'I shoot you, you shoot me.' It's going to be a nuclear war. One push of the button and we'll all be dead.

"I like it [the rally]. I think it's a great idea. Someone needed to do it… We have to get workers together. Most of the major powers have nuclear weapons ready to go at the drop of a hat. It's common knowledge too; everyone knows that. If workers ended World War I through revolution, why don't we do it again? Why do we have to fight to resolve the issue? It's all about resources, oil and stuff like that. The Americans said, 'Let's go find the nukes in Iraq,' which did not exist, but now they control the oil."

Jason was opposed to the glorification of Anzac Day and World War I by the Australian government and the media. "We have more, bigger issues in our own country to think about… Unemployment is at an all-time high. People with qualifications can't get jobs. All you have to do is go to St James train station [in central Sydney] and see all the homeless people there. We need to really ask ourselves and think about these things and not just go off to fight because America wants us to fight."

Bashar, a development engineer, originally from Iraq, said he would urge his friends to take part in the rally. "I feel strongly about this," he explained. "War is crazy and we have to stop capitalism… I will encourage every one of my friends—I have a big group of people, they are working class—to take part, to go on line and register. To sit at 4 in the morning, that's fine.

"I spend all my days at work, like most of us, but when we get to talk, we talk about things like war. The other thing that concerns me is the media. It pushes people into extremes… There is no reason or justification for continuing the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq… The US invasion destroyed Iraq. And it takes a long time to rebuild, not just the material things but the spirit and the soul of people. It's all damaged and destroyed.

"Enough is enough. People, especially young people, now have access to media and they know what's going on around the world anywhere, live. That's one of the factors that drive people strongly to oppose war.

"It's not just Bush or Obama. Basically there's an agenda behind it. The rich are getting richer. One of the ways they want to control the world is to push people, or drive people, into going to the other side of the world to fight a war."

Mohammad, a Pakistani electrical engineering student in Melbourne, said yesterday that he would register for May Day. "I think this rally is a good idea," he told SEP campaigners at Victoria University and urged others to sign up.

"We suffered in the past—with WWI and WWII—but the same scenario is developing and we are heading

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towards WWIII. There was mass destruction and we should not repeat that again," he said.

"The source of war is capitalism, definitely. The superpower countries are invading poor countries all over the world. They're trying to get minerals out of them and create a crisis in those countries, leading to civil war. The major powers then say they have to go and 'help them.' This is a trick to invade.

"I think the May Day rally is the best step to bring out these issues. It's about awareness against war. What we suffered in the past we should not be suffered in the future. At the moment we face repeating history so we need to stop them," he said.

Connie, a University of Western Sydney student, said she was eager to participate in the May Day rally because it was an international event and one that opposes war and defends democratic rights.

"We live a global world—economic and political. This is the default position today and it means that the working class has to fight as an international organisation. The struggle for democratic rights, the fight against war and the fight against poverty are global issues," she said.

"Instead, we live in a world where people are divided up into competing nations and every country chooses its own version of democratic rights. Some have more rights than others and it usually depends on whether you're rich or poor.

"If you're a refugee and there are millions of refugees, then your right to have a better life for you and your children is determined by the political leaders of each country. In Australia that means you can be locked up in concentration camps. This has to be fought against by the international working class and with a socialist policy to get rid of capitalism," Connie said.

At the University of New South Wales, **Michael**, a disability carer from Sydney, said the May Day rally was "extremely important for the international working class. It tells people that they are not alone, that they are not helpless, and that there is a way in which they can take a stand against war."

Referring to the danger of another world war, Michael said: "This threat is terrifying and becoming more and more blatant. Just think about the language that the politicians are using. There's the so-called pivot to Asia, the US provocations against Russia and China and the new US-Japan agreement allowing Japanese soldiers to serve alongside American troops. The WSWS video advertisement about the danger of a third world war is powerful and distressing and hopefully will open people's eyes."

Referring to the Burwood City Council and University of Sydney's recent censorship of the SEP's anti-war meeting in Sydney, he said, "This shows that there is a growing fear by the bourgeoisie in Australia about any organisation that warns the working class about the danger of war. The fact that the SEP fought this and held its meeting was an important blow against the pro-war movement."

Reed, an engineering student at the University of New South Wales student, registered for the ICFI's May Day rally "because it addresses the problems we now face, not from the standpoint of a single country but as an international issue. It is not possible to resolve the issues facing the working class if you see them as single country issues.

"The Anzac Day memorial events in Australia, for example, were not really used to mourn the deaths of soldiers during World War I, or to understand why this happened, but to glorify war and justify re-militarisation.

"In my experience there's severe opposition to war amongst students and even their parents who are worried about how their children are being indoctrinated with patriotism and pro-war sentiments. The importance of the May Day rally is that it provides an alternative socialist perspective to the danger of war. As a student and, I hope a future member of the working class, I'd urge everyone to register and participate in May Day."

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