

Workers, students and youth in Australia discuss May Day rally

Our correspondents
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Some of the many workers, students and youth in Australia who participated in the International Online May Day Rally spoke with *World Socialist Web Site* correspondents this week.

All responded enthusiastically to the event, which began at 4.00 a.m. Eastern Australian Time last Monday, commenting on the powerful international character of the rally and the depth of the historical and political analysis presented.

They voiced concerns about the rise of imperialist militarism and spoke about the importance of the struggle waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) to unify the international working class against war.

Amy, a University of Newcastle student, said: "I've always believed in human equality. This is why I'm drawn to socialism. I thought it was great to have an international event connecting like-minded people. I really hope the widespread access to the Internet will help push the movement forward."

Amy drew parallels between the government and media glorification of Australian involvement in World War I and the promotion of militarism in Germany. Referring to Partei für Soziale Gleichheit national secretary Uli Rippert's speech to the rally, she said:

"I was really surprised to learn about the recruiting efforts for the military in Germany at schools. It's very dangerous to idealise war and the army. I agree with Rippert that democracy, freedom and social partnership are incompatible with capitalism. A socialist system that is run by the majority instead of a small elite will most definitely result in less corruption, prevention of dictatorship and will promote equality.

"I'm very concerned about the whitewashing of history, especially when it comes to war. The horrors of war should always be the first point to mention. It should not be swept under the rug. It's the working class that suffers from war. We can't allow the elite to treat us like pawns. A Marxist change in the system will definitely help prevent this from happening."

Craig, a 23-year-old boilermaker from Sydney's western suburbs, attended the rally after meeting Socialist Equality Party supporters campaigning in Fairfield last Saturday.

"I think the capitalist system is corrupt," he said. "It only leads to the rich getting richer and the gap between the classes getting wider. A lot of governments see war as a financial thing. It's motivated by wanting power, land, oil wells and

natural resources, that sort of thing."

Commenting on the international character of the rally, Craig said: "It's good that people are standing up for equality and for a society where everyone's treated the same. I saw people participating in the rally from Australia, the UK, America and all around the world. The workers are starting to get word of this and see the corruption of the capitalist system.

"I was struck by the comments about the US 'pivot' against China. It's scary. If things went bad, it might end up with war, and we shouldn't be having that...When things start to go downhill, that's when they [governments] start making irrational decisions and you don't want people in power making irrational decisions. That's why we should have public ownership of society's resources.

"One thing that angers me is the way the insurance companies are organised just to make money. The more money they make, the more money they can accumulate. Look at how many new billionaires there are. There's absolutely no way you can stop that within the current system. The worker has no say in what happens. They won't allow that gap to be closed."

Michael, a carer from Sydney, said the rally was "one of the most powerful and important events I've ever attended."

"The threat of a new world war, this time involving nuclear weapons," he continued, "draws ever-closer and is just as savage and blatant as it was back in 2003 when the decision was made to go into Iraq.

"This vicious drive to war is also coupled with the exploitation of the working class and the outright assault on their rights, as well as their freedom of speech. All of this has the intended purpose of serving the needs and interests of the ruling elite. After attending the May Day rally it has become more and more evident that the working class all over the world face similar issues.

"Hopefully the online rally can be a step closer to not only showing the working class from country to country that they are not alone in their struggle but will play a part in uniting them on a socialist and revolutionary perspective."

Anthony, a University of Western Sydney psychology graduate, said the rally "highlighted the role that Australia is playing in the drive to war and the measures being taken to try and get the population to support war.

“The meeting showed how things have escalated and that China is the main target here. It also showed the importance of Australia to the US in this because of its place in the world, geographically speaking. Hearing all this brought together makes clearer the dynamic of the drive to war and how serious things are getting.

“We’ve been talking about how the nations have to compete with each other under capitalism and to try to dominate the resources. The idea that you can actually change things is very important. The working class will eventually understand this, even if it takes a while.”

Jeff, a retired refrigeration mechanic from Geelong, said: “If this planet is to survive, capitalism has to come to an end. Inequality is growing everywhere in the west. Parties like the Greens are in the same tent with capitalism. Anzac Day was non-stop militarism and hysterical.

“The speeches for May Day spoke about a war with China. The US doesn’t want to lose its top spot. Like the British previously, they want to stay there. The US never stops fighting wars and when one ends, they are planning the next one. The media here in Australia questions nothing. This is what it must’ve been like in Germany in the 1930s.

“Capitalism is failing. I can feel this. There are so many students coming out with qualifications all over the world, but there is nothing for them. It is really bad and a lot of people are going to suffer.”

Kirstin, a writer, composer and filmmaker from South Australia, said the May Day speakers “cut through the rubbish” put forward by the media, the pseudo-lefts and the trade union bureaucracy.

“The analysis presented in the rally clearly and succinctly showed all the machinations of the ruling class to condition the working class to go to war against their class brothers, particularly the analysis of the commemoration of WWI and Gallipoli.

“I know from experience that everything—funding, acquisition and commissioning—has been geared toward television and film that commemorates and glorifies war. If I wanted to make a film glorifying war, I could easily have got funding, but I didn’t. We’ve been swamped in the film and TV industry—it has been overwhelming for us and for viewers.

“I think the May Day Rally is a powerful achievement and can’t stress enough how proud I am to be living through a period where we can have such an event. It is one of THE moments in life,” she said.

Michelle, a health worker from Melbourne, said: “What struck me about the May Day event was its international character. Each speaker addressed something different about the drive to war, the economy or the social crisis.

“There is no other group that is seeking to unify the Chinese working class with the entire working class. This part of May Day has been buried before. Now such an analysis is available and it’s part of history itself.

“The rally made me realise that the situation is even more advanced than I previously thought. There are real preparations for war going on. It’s quite frightening.

“Without the International Committee the objective nature of history, of what actually happened in the past, would remain hidden... Thousands of workers need to read the analysis that was presented. The rally shows that people have to be actively engaged in whatever form they can in building the IC. There has to be an active engagement.”

Erin, a father of two from Brisbane, said the rally was “very informative.” He explained: “It laid bare the dynamics all over the world. War is being prepared by most, if not all, the major powers, and we are reaching a critical point.

“The speeches were top-notch. There were no empty slogans or simplified claims. We were not treated like children to be manipulated. We were given tools to think with. It is vital to build an international working class movement. The ICFI has shown that it is the only party with the theoretical underpinnings to do that...

“The point that David North made about the Zimmerwald conference in 1915 was a very important one. They only had 38 people, and Lenin had a contingent of 5, but the Bolsheviks led a revolution two years later. History has an objective character. If people have a correct analysis and they take it into the working class, the working class will respond. The Russian workers certainly did, and there were mutinies and uprisings elsewhere.”

Jordan, a student at Brisbane’s Griffith University, said: “What struck me the most was all the unity between workers globally, and the sense of urgency, particularly from David North, to develop a movement against the drive to war, especially by America and countries like Australia.

“I was aware of the danger of war before, but not the gravity behind it. Some of the quotes from the military documents, where they spell out that China is a threat, were chilling. It is a valid scenario; a war could happen, and not in the distant future. We need a socialist workers’ movement.

“My biggest concern was where they said that the US and China, as two major powers, could not co-exist. There was no vagueness to it. Obama’s ‘pivot’ to Asia puts that on the cards.

“It was good to see a unified message around the world, and that anti-war sentiment and the socialist movement is alive and strong. It shows the power that the working class has across the globe. It is not a little background voice.”



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