

SEP presidential candidate Jerry White speaks to workers at Detroit Labor Day event

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Socialist Equality Party presidential candidate Jerry White spoke to workers Monday at the annual Labor Day parade in downtown Detroit sponsored by the Detroit Metropolitan AFL-CIO. As in years past the event served as a campaign vehicle for the Democratic Party, in particular Democratic Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton.

Attending this year's parade was Clinton's husband, former president Bill Clinton, who marched at the front of the parade surrounded by a gaggle of reporters and local Democratic politicians, including Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan and Michigan's two Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters. Bill Clinton's visit was purely a photo opportunity, and he was whisked away by secret service without making any formal remarks. Afterwards Clinton was the guest of honor at a picnic sponsored by the United Auto Workers at UAW international headquarters.

In contrast to union officials, who fawned over Bill Clinton, SEP candidate White found many workers disgusted by both big business parties. One millwright who stopped to speak to members of the SEP campaign team said, "Clinton is an idiot and Trump is a car salesman. Everyone seems to be stuck with choosing the lesser evil. The media is not going to let anyone else compete."

White explained that the unions were backing Clinton based on their program of economic nationalism and support for the profit system. The SEP, he insisted, was the only party speaking for the interests of the working class, which had no interest in fighting a war to defend the interests of the American multinational corporations.

A Fiat Chrysler worker stopped to speak to SEP candidate White, saying, "We don't have a choice in the election."

White replied, "After the election they are going to escalate the wars in the Middle East and even a possible nuclear confrontation with Russia.

"We are fighting to mobilize the working class against the danger of war. There are going to be big struggles of the working class. The rebellion by autoworkers against the UAW in 2015 was just a foretaste."

The worker said that he considered himself a socialist in the traditions of Eugene Debs and had been a supporter of Bernie Sanders, but still had hope that the Democratic Party could be pressured to [move to] the left.

White replied, "Debs was a revolutionist. Sanders says he supports Obama's wars. We have to draw the lessons of history and avoid wishful thinking.

"None of Sanders reformist policies will be carried out by the Democratic Party. Clinton is preparing for war. She is even attacking Donald Trump from the right, saying he is a Russian agent. The Democrats will now say anyone who opposes Clinton's war policy is an agent of Russia." White noted that Sanders is now backing Clinton, claiming that she is carrying forward the "political revolution." The worker took the SEP election statement and said he would consider what White had said.

A young Ford worker stopped to speak at length with White. "They are fighting wars to keep opium and oil flowing," he said. "It is all controlled by multinational corporations. They can destroy an entire economy in an area if they want."

White replied, "The UAW promotes the idea that our enemy is Russia, or Mexican workers or workers in China, and we should be prepared to fight a war against them."

The young Ford worker replied, "Why should anyone sign up for the military and go kill other working class kids. They listen to the same punk rock that we do.

"My grandfathers fought in the Italian infantry in World War Two and both were captured. They had numbers tattooed on their arms. My mother taught me to be class conscious."

White replied, "There is immense opposition to war, but

it is not being spoken about in the elections. The importance of my campaign is that it is putting this issue squarely before the working class. Workers must mobilize their enormous strength against both capitalist parties.

“Sanders took the enormous opposition to war and channeled it behind the Democratic Party. There is a large audience for a genuine socialist alternative. Polls show large numbers of young people identify themselves as socialist.”

A retired Ford worker stopped to speak to White. He also indicated that he had supported the campaign of Sanders. He said that while he opposed Trump, he had concerns about undocumented workers being used to drive down wages, pointing to conditions now prevailing in the meatpacking industry.

White replied, “To say that the lowering of wages is caused by immigrant workers is a lie. In fact, the unions, including the United Food and Commercial Workers, have sold out one strike after another. They call undocumented immigrants ‘illegal’ in order to terrorize workers so they are afraid to fight back and will work for any wages.

“Trump is an enemy of the working class, his father in fact was a slumlord. We are internationalists, workers should have the right to live in any country they chose. After all, corporations can shift their production to any country, why should workers be immobile?”

The worker continued, “The elections have gotten worse and worse. It is like a hologram. You look at it one way and it appears to be this and you look at it another way and it appears to be something different. People are getting frustrated. They should be becoming more adamant in their opposition.”

White urged the workers to attend the public meeting at Wayne State University on September 22 to learn more about the SEP campaign.



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