

Australian workers and young people discuss US election crisis

Our reporters

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The US presidential election and the deepening political crisis in the United States is the subject of lively discussions among workers, students and young people in Australia, many of whom have closely followed the unfolding campaign.

Within the Australian political establishment, the turmoil and deep-going instability revealed in the election is a source of fear and concern. Commentaries in the financial press have noted that the campaign has witnessed the breakdown of the two-party set-up that has been in place for decades in the centre of world capitalism.

At the same time, there are mounting concerns within the ruling elite over the implications of the election for the Asia-Pacific, including Washington's vast military build-up in the region, directed against China.

Among ordinary people, the campaign is widely viewed as a bizarre spectacle. Many who spoke to the WSWS noted the similarities between the character of Labor, the Liberals and the Greens as parties of big business, and the control of the corporate elite over the political process in the United States. "They're all the same," "there's no real choice" and "both of the candidates are for the rich" were common refrains.

Joel, a warehouse worker, spoke to the WSWS in a working class suburb in Sydney's south-west. He said that the election was, "a bit of a joke. It's all about money and influence. Clinton is part of the financial establishment and Trump is a billionaire. He hasn't paid taxes for years and people like me are struggling with rent rises, new taxes and a rising cost of living. Ordinary people don't have a say in the election."

He noted that in the Democratic primaries Bernie Sanders had won mass support by claiming to be a socialist. "He said he was against the billionaires and the banks and so people supported him. It shows there's a movement going. But now he's acting like a sheepdog

and telling people to vote for Clinton. Look at these speeches she gave to the banks—she's bought and paid for."

Joel said that he was hostile to Australia's role in US-led wars. "That's what we've seen. All of these wars in the Middle East for oil and resources. Whoever gets in, there are going to be more wars. And now they're going after Russia"

Joel noted the parallels between rising social inequality in the US and Australia. Describing conditions for warehouse workers, he said, "Management always wants you to do more for less. It's constant and it's only getting worse." Asked about the role of the trade unions, he said, "They're just in bed with the companies. Who do you go to? You've got management on one side, and then the unions, who are just as bad."

Graeme, who works in the medical industry in Sydney, said, "What a degrading spectacle. I'm not American but if I were I would be absolutely disgusted. I don't have a television so was spared the sickening debates.

"I've been following the election from way back in the primaries. The choice that it offers working people is that Trump is a robber and Hillary a stooge of Wall Street and the military. It's clear that the Democrats have been trying to criminally divert attention away from Hillary's emails. Is it going to make any difference?"

"Trump is posturing. He is not going to change the system, he's done too well out of it. He will very soon be marching to the tune of the powers that be: war and slashing jobs. He's very xenophobic. One of these two is going to be president of the most powerful nation, which makes me feel things are very dangerous and feeling depressed. This could start a major military conflict."

Anton a high school student in Newcastle, a working-class regional centre in coastal New South Wales, commented, "It's odd that both Clinton and Trump are in the run for the presidency considering they are the most

hated candidates in history. Obama, this supposed figure of change, did not give what the working class wanted. Workers are looking for a change, and Trump is saying 'make America great again,' so some people think he is sort of a breath of fresh air."

Asked about the Democratic Party's candidate, Anton said, "Clinton has been a figure in the political establishment for quite some time, and she has played a central role in covering over the role of the banks in the global financial crisis in 2008, with the rest of the government."

He commented on the exposure of Clinton's secret speeches to Goldman Sachs bankers. "It's in the public's interest to know about these issues. The ruling elite is scared that this fraudulent, criminal behaviour behind the scenes will be exposed. They are intimidated by WikiLeaks releasing this information to the public. It's a threat to them and they want to get rid of it. Julian Assange's big crime, which really isn't a crime, is exposing these issues. There is nothing illegal in any sense to what Assange is doing, he is just exposing them."

Muad, a 22-year-old medical student in Sydney's west originally from Iraq, said, "I think Donald Trump is going to win. The reason is, with all the issues in the world, like terrorism, he's saying 'I'm going to stop this.' I think at the end of the day, the world is going to World War III. Trump is saying it openly whereas Clinton is doing it sneakily. I don't agree with the Trump perspective. He's an 'open enemy.' He tells you what he is. Others will tiptoe around questions."

Commenting on Clinton's secret admission that she has different "public" and "private" positions on key issues, Muad said, "There is a public speech where they say what the people want to hear. Then they have a private meeting on what they will actually do."

"For example, for the war in Iraq, they talked about weapons of mass destruction. None were found. The real issue was to get oil. But they won't say that to the people. With the war in Syria, there are underlying issues. Russia wants that place, America wants that place. Russia wants Assad. I think America is funding the 'rebels.'

"Where did ISIS come from? Where do they get the money? I think the Americans are supplying them. Other Western governments are supplying them. I think Saudi Arabia is supplying them."

Sam, a University of Queensland student, told the WSWS, "What happens in the American elections is relevant for the rest of the population of the world, not just because of the size and power of America but because

it is a harbinger of what is to come. America, while being the largest economy, is also the most vulnerable to extreme social tensions. It is the canary in the coal mine. These issues are occurring in Australia, in the countries of Europe, wherever you may go, and in so many different ways, the same fundamental issues are ahead."

Commenting on Sanders' political role, Sam said, "He did pose, to some extent, as an opponent of the system. To capitulate so clearly to Hillary Clinton, as he did, has basically left millions of people adrift politically. They're angry but they find no genuine outlet for their sentiments and aspirations. Those who supported Sanders have to see that they were betrayed."

"What people have to understand is that the problem is not just putting one person in charge or another. It's the system as a whole, the capitalist system, which is the real heart of darkness in the modern reality in which we live. Only by addressing that directly is there any hope for the future, and for a world in which there is no war, no poverty, no destitution, and in which people can have meaningful lives. What is required is the development of a political perspective."

Sam concluded, "Trump is not an aberration. When Hitler came to power in Germany, many people wrote that off as a sort of joke, as the arrival of a beer hall politician, an ignorant buffoon now in charge of Germany. But within a decade, there had been incalculable destruction rained down on upon millions of people. Similarly, if America were to break down and become a fascist state or a dictatorial regime and engage in war with Russia and China, that would cause a great deal more destruction than the Nazis could, even at the height of their power."



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