

Sri Lankan workers and students discuss Trump's election

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka are conducting an extensive campaign among workers and students for their public meeting in Colombo on November 30, entitled “The International Implications of Trump’s Election.”

The public meeting has been called to discuss the global impact and significance of Trump’s electoral victory, following a well-attended public meeting in Colombo late last month addressed by the US SEP presidential candidate Jerry White via the Internet.

The meeting will clarify the essential political factors that led to Donald Trump’s election, in particular the pro-business character of Democratic Party candidate Hillary Clinton and the role played by various pseudo-left organisations. The speakers will detail the immense dangers confronting the working class internationally and outline the program of socialist internationalism that the working class needs to oppose the threat of imperialist war and escalating attacks on living conditions.

Every section of the Sri Lankan ruling elite, including the government and the official opposition parties, is appealing for Trump’s support. President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe have both voiced their readiness to closely collaborate with a Trump administration. Sinhala extremist groups have been energised by Trump’s election and are trying to utilise his victory to whip up their Sinhala chauvinist agenda.

In spite of the confusions generated by the political establishment and the media, workers and students were keen to discuss the issues with SEP and IYSSE campaigners. Many wanted to talk about the shift in world politics reflected in Trump’s win and asked questions on various aspects of the US election result.

SEP members campaigned in Obeysekarapura, a Colombo working class suburb.

Ramya, a clerical worker, commented: “Trump is a very corrupt businessman. That is enough to understand that inequality in America will become unbearable under his rule. That is the reality that all the workers around the world are facing today.”

She further explained that in Sri Lanka “all what we heard about the American election were short segments in local news bulletins, nothing else. Intellectual discussions about important foreign affairs like this, which I’ve heard and read as a youth, are not there anymore.”

Ramya also said that because of brutal workplace conditions and extended working hours most people cannot afford to any time for intellectual or aesthetic matters. “It’s a very serious situation,” she said. “People are being dragged into darkness and ignorance.”

D. P. Kumara, a government press worker, said: “The media created a picture of Clinton’s inevitable victory. I was very surprised to hear that Trump had won. Anyway, Hillary or Trump—both would be equally bad for the common man in America or anywhere else ... It’s the same in Sri Lanka. What was the result of bringing in the new [Sirisena-Wickremesinghe] government? People are suffering in the same manner, or even more.”

Kumara was critical of all the big parties. When WSWs correspondents explained the threat of another world war, he commented: “After talking with you, now I understand the real reason for it. There is a danger of another world war. I think that threat would be intensified under Trump’s rule.”

Many questions arose during the campaign among students.

Asha, who was among some international relations students at Colombo University, said: “I fully agree that US imperialism caused the biggest miseries to people in many countries. Obama expanded them and Trump will intensify them.”

Iresha, another student in the group, intervened asking: “Why can’t we think of Trump being a man who seems to take strong unwavering decisions and might follow a strict policy to end worldwide terrorism?” Campaigners pointed out that the most horrifying and ruthless terrorist attacks were actually committed by the US, which also utilised terrorist groups like ISIS for its geo-strategic interests.

Iresha posed another question: “But Trump has been elected through a democratic election, what can be done now?” The campaigners explained that there was no capitalist alternative to Trump or the destruction that the Trump administration could bring upon the American people and the world. The only force that could defeat the danger of war and fascism worldwide was the international working class, armed with a socialist perspective.

Chaturanga, a final year medical student, was concerned about the fascistic nature of Trump’s program, especially his anti-immigrant policies. “I think that immigrant people in America are going to be harassed under the new Trump administration if he implements what he vowed in his election campaign.”

Chaturanga told the campaigners he had read that ISIS was originally backed by Washington. “Now it’s clear to me these kinds of strategies of US imperialism makes another world war possible and nothing is going to be changed under Trump,” he said. “But how can we stop a war waged by the world powers?” A discussion ensued on the campaign of the International Committee of the Fourth International to build an international anti-war movement based on the working class.

A female Muslim student commented: “Up to now it was America’s actions against other countries that took the centre stage of world politics. But this election showed to the whole world the crisis in American society. I think the American people would want their president to solve their problems, not launch wars against other countries.”

Another student expressed her concerns about Trump’s fascistic appeals and “Islamophobia.” She said: “He will create problems all over the world. I’m

not saying that Trump would stop the wars in the Middle East. Most probably he would continue them more brutally. But what I’m saying is he will be under pressure by his own people who are seeking solutions for their burning problems within the country.”

Pradeep, a management student, initially indicated support for the nationalist campaign that is exploiting Trump’s victory. After some discussion, he said: “Now I’m very clear about your explanation that I had never figured out before. Class is the fundamental division of the society instead of race, religion, gender or any other category, and the policies of any political party are based on the class that they serve.”

One graduate from the university who is a regular reader of the *World Socialist Web Site* expressed appreciation for the WSWS’s analysis of the US presidential election. “I read many articles on WSWS about the election,” he said. “I didn’t find such a broad and scientific analysis of the presidential election anywhere, apart from the WSWS.”



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