

Workers and youth in Australia speak about US election and SEP program

Our reporters

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Workers, students and youth at SEP meetings in Melbourne, Brisbane and Sydney last week spoke with World Socialist Web Site reporters about why they had decided to attend, their concerns about the election of Donald Trump as US president, and the social and political issues confronting workers internationally. Most of those interviewed were attending their first SEP event.

David, 27, is studying teaching at the University of Newcastle. He came to the Sydney meeting, he said, in order “to hear an alternative from the media spin.”

“With the fall away from the Democratic Party and the outcome of the vote, the ten million or so people that had previously voted for Obama had bailed and didn’t vote at all. I think Sanders dropping out of the race played a major role in the election outcome, a lot of his supporters felt disenfranchised and most of them didn’t turn up.

“I’m not sure why Bernie Sanders capitulated—there was an awful lot of pressure from within his party to move aside—but I don’t think the people bought his endorsement of Clinton because they didn’t end up voting, as the statistics show ...

“The fact that Trump received fewer votes than Romney in the previous election is quite amazing. It completely disproves the rants of the media about this racist and sexist motive behind the outcome of the election of Donald Trump.”

Ye, a landscape gardener, said he came to the Brisbane meeting because he “wanted to do something that’s intellectually stimulating and I’ve always been left-leaning. Both my grandads were involved in the Chinese Revolution.”

Commenting on Trump’s victory, he said, “I thought things would deteriorate much slower but with Trump we are really going to have a full battle. Things will go over the cliff and things will change. Obama was trying to tactically delay on some fronts, but Trump will put his foot on the accelerator.

“I already knew a lot of the information [presented at the meeting] because I’ve done my own research but I learned

more about how the party will progress. What I’m struggling with is how we are going to move forward. Are we just waiting for another World War I or World War II to really stir up the working class?”

Ye said he agreed on the international character of the working class. “That’s a huge part of it,” he added. “Fighting nationalism is important. In every country there are elements trying to divert the discontent by blaming foreigners. There is also a common interest between the US and Chinese capitalists—that goes back to Deng Xiaoping.”

Bart, 40, from Western Sydney works in pathology as a technical officer. He said: “I came here to get a perspective about what it means to be socialist in the modern age—to be prepared for the next developments on a political front. I’d like to be educated about all the options that are out there.”

Bart said the SEP meeting in Sydney provided an “even-handed and educated analysis” of how the election came about and what it potentially means for the world. “It’s very much not just an American election. You provided a good perspective—both current, and how we got there.

“I am interested in political history. How to get that from a theoretical to a working situation is where I find myself struggling. I can see myself coming to more meetings. It’s an interesting political discussion and I think it’s a good political platform. There’s a lot here that you don’t hear in the mainstream media.”

In Melbourne, **Mark**, who immigrated to Australia from Poland in 1988, said the meeting was “The first time I’ve heard a proper analysis of what’s really happening. In the news they say that people voted for Trump because they’re racist, and if you have any concerns that your level of life is declining then it’s your fault because you’re not working hard enough, or if you’ve lost your job, basically you’ve been lazy ...

Mark, a former spray painter for an auto-parts supplier, who lost his job when Toyota began closing its Australian operations, continued: “I regard myself as a socialist. I am for social equity, I am for destroying inequalities. What most people want is a decent income, a decent standard of living,

and that nobody bugs them. And in the age of the 21st century, where there is overproduction of everything, overproduction of food especially, we need a more equal distribution system to meet the basic needs of people.”

Ursula, a recent Bachelor of Arts graduate from Melbourne, who began reading the WSWs early this year, said: “I agree with what you said about Sanders. There are all these people who were disillusioned and disenfranchised and looked to him, and I did too. I had a hope that he was being genuine. When Clinton won the nomination and he flipped, that was disappointing. That’s what got me more into this.”

Commenting on Trump’s victory, Ursula commented: “I had a lot of questions about Trump. I wondered how this guy could get elected but then, when I read what you guys have been writing about it, it just became obvious. He won some support in the working class and from people who are really angry and are struggling. That’s what he tapped into.”

Sadiq, who has just finished high school in Sydney’s southwest, said that he decided to attend the Sydney meeting because he was concerned about Trump’s threat to bar Muslims and people of other backgrounds entering the US.

The voting figures revealing the mass repudiation of the Democrats and the Republicans, he said, was “a pretty new thing for me to see. It was interesting how many people didn’t vote compared to how many people had previously voted for Obama ... Between Clinton and Donald Trump, there wasn’t much to choose from, so it was either choose one of them and have some sort of near apocalyptic future or not vote at all.”

Sadiq said he was impressed by the SEP’s historical analysis and the resemblances today with the conditions that led in the 1930s to the rise of Hitler. “It’s similar and it could meet the same eventual end if we don’t do something about it. Since we already know how it turned out last time so many years ago, we now have a chance at preventing that type of thing.”

Jo, a University of New South Wales student, said: “The meeting provided statistics showing that Trump didn’t win but that the Democrats lost support. Low income families didn’t vote for the Democrats because they had lost hope. Obama was supposed to provide decent health care for workers. Obama-care was supposed to reform the health care system, but the results show that only the rich benefited under his years in office.

“Obama’s ‘reforms’ failed because we live under capitalism, a system that is dominated by the banks. Capitalists aren’t going to reform themselves. And when Trump fails to deliver his promise of a more equal society, and workers realise that neither the pseudo-lefts nor the Democrats can deliver social equality, it could lead to war or

revolution.

“That is not a prediction of war but we need to understand that the solution is in the hands of the people who produce the wealth. Workers will begin to realise from objective events themselves that the governments can’t provide what workers need and that they have to make a revolution.”

Ben, 27, from Bankstown told WSWs reporters that he initially thought Trump was better than Clinton because he claimed he would reduce geopolitical tensions.

“After listening to the [SEP] speaker and paying more attention to the composition of Trump’s cabinet, especially “Mad Dog” Mattis—I know what he’s done in the past—I’m starting to think it’s either much of the same or an escalation in a different direction. They are obviously looking for the next fight and that is what I think is really scary ...

“I accept people for who they are but there are a lot of people who are hyper-focused on identity politics that could be better constructed in defining the real issue, which is this giant corporate, fascist machine that is eating everything and spitting people out.

Ivy, who is studying English Literature at Macquarie University, said the SEP’s analysis was important. “It was a good report and very straight-forward. I could actually understand what was going on in the American elections ... The decrease in the vote for the Democratic Party has been very dramatic and represents that people have lost faith in their politics ...

“Trump represents a real danger. The United States could end up in a civil war and may even break down the United Nations. It will also mean splitting up and dividing workers even further along ethnic and national divisions. It could definitely result in a social upheaval in America.

“The question at the meeting on how would you overthrow the capitalist system was very revealing. The meeting really emphasised the importance of the party in the revolutionary struggle.”



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