

Australian protesters speak on war dangers and Trump immigration ban

Our reporters
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Reporters from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to a number of students, workers and retirees who attended demonstrations opposing the sweeping immigration ban imposed by the new US administration of Donald Trump.

While the Greens and the pseudo-left used the demonstrations as an opportunity to promote Australian nationalism, and to call for a more “independent” foreign policy, many of those who joined the demonstrations were animated by genuine opposition to the persecution of refugees, the eruption of militarism and war, and the growth of far-right movements around the world.

In Sydney, Carolyn, a 76-year-old retired deputy principal, spoke about the anti-establishment sentiment that the Trump campaign had capitalised on.

“I think people were fed up in the long term with the series of Bush’s, Clinton’s, probably even going back to the Kennedy’s,” Carolyn said. “I think they were fed up with the whole political establishment. That’s fair enough but you don’t do that by voting in someone like Trump. They didn’t want to vote for the establishment but for god’s sake don’t jump the boat for someone with a narcissistic, personality disorder.”

Commenting on Trump’s foreign policy, she said, “The age of imperialism is gone and the US realised they lost in Vietnam and didn’t get anywhere in the Middle-East. They’ve got to wake up to the fact that they are not going to stop China. I think it’s a survival instinct and they are hunkering down.”

Carolyn agreed that this heightened the threat of a global conflict, noting, “Every time countries look inward that is the result and it’s not funny now that warfare is entirely different and you have idiots like Trump with their fingers on the nuclear button.”

Grace, who works in digital media, carried a

sign pointing to the parallels between the persecution of refugees and the crimes carried out by the Nazi regime. “I feel that history will judge us really poorly for what we’ve done in this period of time,” she said. “I want to feel that I’ve done whatever I can to protest against the immoral actions of this government.”

Grace said that during the Holocaust, “People denied it and pretended that they didn’t see. They turned a blind eye. But we can see what’s happening here and I think we should do something about it.” She commented on the responsibility of the major imperialist powers for the refugee crisis, stating, “We’ve intervened in those countries and created wars that those people have had to flee from. I think there is a lot of hypocrisy between international actions and the flow of refugees coming. People don’t see the connection between the two.”

Nati, a lawyer from Chile, and Larissa, a refugee advocate, also spoke out against US-led wars in the Middle East. “You don’t need to invade other countries for resources,” Larissa said. “Let the Iraqi’s live their lives. I wouldn’t be surprised if Trump started his own war, because it has become somewhat of a fashion for American presidents to start wars.”

They also pointed to the erosion of American democracy. “They think they have a democracy but they don’t have a democracy,” Larissa said. “More people voted for Hillary Clinton than Trump.”

Sydney, a pensioner said, “We thought it was an appropriate time to come and give some support. And there is the fact that it is not illegal to come as a refugee. The government keeps having to change their language to illegal boat arrivals instead of illegal immigrants to avoid the fact that it is perfectly legal for people to turn up and ask for refuge. We think that both sides of politics are to blame, Liberals and Labor.”

Her friend, Carolyn commented, “The western world is going so right wing, so ‘Me First’. Everything is ‘America First,’ ‘Australia First.’ We have lost compassion. We have lost concern. We used to give a lot more money to funding overseas. All of that is being pulled back.”

In Melbourne, Claudia, a student, said, “If anything, Trump’s actions will lead to grassroots activism. I want to be part of a global movement against racism, bigotry, xenophobia and war-mongering. He is cutting off funding for abortion, putting in climate deniers. He wants to reinstate torture, maintain Guantanamo Bay detention.”

Her friend Georgia added, “The ban on immigrants is so hypocritical. Trump is not banning people from Saudi Arabia or Turkey, because of his business interests there.”

Oliver, a software engineer, said, “The majority of US politicians are interested in war, the oil industries and big business. All the wealth goes to the top. Wealth is concentrated in few hands, it’s a joke.

“I don’t think the election of Trump is a surprise. People voted for change. That doesn’t mean that every change makes things better. To be honest I wasn’t expecting Trump to be so reactive when he got in. His attack on people with visas is illegal.”

George, a scientist from Germany said, “Trump’s election has implications for the whole world but particularly for countries like Mexico. I think if you specifically ask me about Germany, I see some common policies between German President Angela Merkel and Trump. They are both intolerant and selfish.”

George noted the rise of far-right parties across Europe, and Brexit, Britain’s vote to leave the European Union. “One of common characteristics between those that voted for Trump and those that voted for the Brexit is that they were attempting to avoid the alternative,” he said.

“Many people in England have been very disappointed in the European Union, so voting for Brexit was a vote against the EU. I think it might have been the same situation in the US. I remember a long time ago when Hilary was going for mayor in New York so many of my friends opposed her. I’m guessing that opposition was even stronger this time. In other words, the so-called alternatives such as Clinton did not

offer something that people could vote for.”

“I’m very worried about what Trump is planning to do and what he is already destroying,” George said. “The vast inequality in the US is expressed right throughout the western world, in Germany, France and Britain, not just in the US. The society is vastly split and divided.”



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