

Jerry White speaks in Detroit and Ann Arbor

SEP presidential candidate warns of war dangers

By a reporting team
24 September 2016

Socialist Equality Party candidate for US president Jerry White addressed enthusiastic audiences this week at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor and Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. Both meetings sparked intense discussion, questions and interest in the party's election campaign and its history.

"There are well advanced preparations for war," White told both meetings, "but no one is telling the American people." White outlined the geopolitical calculations of the ruling elite, including the drive by the US to overthrow Syrian president Bashar al-Assad and dominate the Middle East, as well as very advanced military plans for war against China and Russia. He cited Hillary Clinton's pledge to upgrade US nuclear capacity and make it her first priority.

"The United States government is a tool of the most powerful corporations in the world. They want raw materials, markets and cheap labor. As the US declines economically, they are grabbing up large portions of the world. It is a plan for global conquest and the consensus policy of both big business parties," White explained.

He referred to a new report from Brown University on "The Costs of War", which explains that between the costs of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan—computed in the study—and the regular military budget, the US has spent approximately \$14.8 trillion on war since 2001. "This followed another \$15 trillion dollar bailout of the banks, with no strings attached," the SEP candidate added, emphasizing that no one should believe the lying claim "there is no money" for jobs, schools, education, or social services.

"The source of war is rooted in the bankrupt social order of capitalism," he concluded, calling on everyone present to attend the November 5 conference of the SEP and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality and join the fight to unite the working class across the globe in the fight for socialism.

The Detroit meeting ended with a showing of a new video produced by the SEP, which has been widely shared on social media. Many audience members immediately had questions and comments.

"How are you different than the Greens?" was the first issue raised. White explained that the Greens are not socialist, but capitalist. They call for "sustainable capitalism" or "Green New Deal", he said, an explicit rejection of that the cause of war and environmental destruction is capitalism. Moreover, they are nationalists--wherever they have been in power, they have embraced the military policies of the major parties, White detailed.

Asked by another attendee what would be a "reasonable" defense budget, White replied, "zero." He outlined the SEP's policy for the dismantling of the Pentagon, CIA and standing army. He emphasized that it was the existence of US imperialism that propped up every reactionary dictatorial regime internationally.

The breadth of the questions and topics of discussion at both meetings indicate a growing politicization among workers and youth. The dozens of attendees asked for further information on the party's position on issues confronting working people worldwide. This included the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Latin America, the possibility of a Russian attack on the Baltic States, the policies of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the "Fight for 15" and the unions. At the Ann Arbor meeting, questions arose on the role of the pseudo-left, the role of the legal and electoral system, the Greens, sustainability and postmodernism.

Debra, one of hundreds of seniors victimized by Detroit billionaire Dan Gilbert's gentrification policy, both asked a question and made a statement to the WSU meeting. Pointing to the monthly income deductions being taken from senior citizens, she said, "Is this applying to war? Is this going to Dan Gilbert's bank account? We get a lousy \$16 in food stamps a month, but someone is taking \$114 from our checks every month.

"To the young people here, when I was your age we watched the unions starting to go downhill. Now the seniors and young people need to join together and we need to fight together. When are we going to get out there and say enough is enough?"

After the meeting concluded, lively discussion continued informally. Katie, who works for a temp agency, said she

would be attending the November 5 conference. “This was a good meeting. There were a lot of questions. I liked having a different version, rather than the two forced options—which are now very unpopular. At first I thought Jill Stein might be promising, but I’ve now learned the Greens are only national. You aren’t going to go anywhere nationally—we need to unite people globally.

“I was especially concerned to hear how close to war we are. That is terrifying. It is not widely known because, no one would vote for these [Democratic and Republican] candidates if they knew.”

“I work as a temp for a temp agency. There is such a massive flow of people looking for work. But if you miss a day or have the smallest reason, they’ll remove your job.

“Our company will charge \$15 an hour, but the workers are asked, when they apply, what is the base amount of money you’ll work for. The temp agency keeps the difference. So if they don’t ask for enough, it’s even more for the agency. And, once they come in on a certain shift or lower pay, they’re stuck, and it takes forever to work their way up.

“Nobody should have to work like that. I suppose that makes me a socialist. Seeing the mechanics behind this shows me about the system.”

Alex said, “I liked how Jerry White spoke about Hillary Clinton and Donald Trump, that both represent essentially two sides of the same coin. Both are members of the capitalist class. I also liked that he brought to light the movement of the US against China and Russia and the total threat of World War III.”

Eboni, a WSU student, registered for the November 5 conference, explaining, “The report was really informative. It made a lot of sense to me. I didn’t know much about socialism, only what I learned in school. I had learned about the wealth going to the top 1% in sociology class. Profits come from war; you can see that throughout history.

“I was behind Sanders when he was running against Hillary. It [Sanders’ endorsement of Clinton] was really disappointing. It made me think that the whole thing was a set-up in a way, very discouraging. I’ve seen the pictures; Trump and Hillary are like friends. It seems like the elections have become something like a big celebrity ‘Apprentice’ show.”

Erich, an engineering student at the University of Michigan, reacted to Jerry’s report stating, “I had no idea how bad the international situation actually is. My biggest takeaway from tonight was how dire things actually are, and that the war drive is so widespread.

“It was a real revelation to hear Jerry’s analysis of US imperialism. The US military is clearly trying to back Russia and China into a dangerous corner. And Hillary Clinton’s eagerness to pursue war is really chilling. This was kind of profound to me, just how serious this is.”

Joe, a young worker, signed up for the November 5th conference and said, “The importance of the IYSSE/SEP and

this meeting should be something anyone from any activist or belief group should attend. I have many friends from both the upper and lower social classes. So the first time I went to an IYSSE meeting it was like I just hit the jackpot. I never knew such a group existed, a group that is so dedicated to the truth and antiwar movement.

“Capitalism is war, it’s part of the system. I was very glad that Jerry brought out the numbers, \$15 trillion for war, just that number right there should convince anyone to join the struggle. I have a lot of friends who supported Sanders. It made me very mad because I tried to warn them ahead of time.

“There are a lot of things to be angry or sad about. We are on the verge of a revolution. The whole world can feel it. But it is truly up to the American population, namely the youth and the working class, to stand up and do something about it. In my opinion the challenge is helping to wake people up to realize that we are the truest, realest, and most important activist group out here.”

Ben said, “It is exciting that this election is stirring up enough discontent to make it clear to the working class that they are not represented by any major American parties.”

Registering for the conference, Debra added, “I am doing this because, number one, the money spent on war could be feeding people, paying light bills, gas bills, water bills and training more people. Secondly, war is designed to cover up how much they are stealing from us people around the world. All the countries are doing the same thing; they [the ruling classes] are getting richer and using war to thin out the population. There is a whole lot of money to be made. Why are we fighting for oil? We need a new system in place so that we don’t have to fight.”

A Detroit Public Schools teacher also explained, “I am attracted to a socialist candidate because of his antiwar stance. I like the way the SEP puts people and their needs first.

“With socialism all kids would have an equal chance of improvement. Education funding in this country is a class issue. I think the SEP recognizes all children should have the same access to resources in the classroom. Under socialism, teachers would have more of an input into curriculum and the actual things kids need to achieve.

“People should come to the November 5th meeting to get a better understanding of what socialism is and what the SEP candidates actually represent.”

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