

Youth and workers discuss US-Australia confrontation with China

By our reporters
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The WSWS interviewed those attending the Socialist Equality Party public meetings last week in Australia and New Zealand about the issues raised and their concerns over the danger of a war between the US and China. (See meeting report).

Ahmed, a University of New South Wales first-year economics student and regular WSWS reader, said that he came to the Sydney meeting because “no other organisation is discussing the issues being raised by the Socialist Equality Party and the ISSE. No other party is addressing the real issues of international relations or the problems facing society.

“Today I learnt about the historical roots of the issues we face. For example, I knew that there was a rift between the United States and China but the speakers placed it in an historical context, going all the way back to World War II.

“Young people need to get politicised and understand what’s happening. Before doing something, you need to know what the problems are and what causes them. Young people need to read, and come to meetings like this one—to learn about society’s problems—and to make an informed decision about what they can do to change things.

“Wars arise from economic interests. Today’s situation may lead to war, and from the looks of things, it will. The concept that economic interdependence will prevent war is false. As Nick Beams explained, before World War I, England and Germany were close trading partners and economic allies, but they launched into one of the most destructive wars of all time. Ruling out the possibility that the US and China can enter into armed conflict is rather juvenile.”

Kieran, a 25-year-old finance worker who regularly travels throughout the South Asia Pacific region, said that he was concerned about the US-Australia

agreement.

“I’ve done a lot of research prior to this and I do believe in the key messages here,” he said. “America is pushing its war agenda into Australia, which is not in the interest of the Australian people. The Australian government, of course, doesn’t really support the views of the Australian people.”

Kieran commented on the SEP’s analysis of the rising US-China tensions and their relation to the anti-democratic coup that removed Kevin Rudd as Australian prime minister. “No one in the Australian media or government would want to discuss that, it’s a bit of a taboo. That’s one of the reasons I try to be informed on different political issues, and that’s the reason why I’ve attended today’s event.”

In Wellington, Kevin told WSWS reporters that ordinary people were misled about developments in China. “What China is doing now is not what we were told. In the media, we’re told that it’s socialist but it’s actually a ruthless capitalist country.” He discussed the difficulties and importance of building a section of the International Committee of the Fourth International in China.

Emmett said that the Wellington meeting “was really insightful and clear, and that working-class politics are the logical alternative to the crisis.” Josue, from Peru, compared the SEP meeting to a class on geopolitics and commented: “What I will take home is a sense of the building geopolitical tensions in the Pacific.”

In Perth, Jen said she was concerned about last November’s US-Australia military agreement and had come to the meeting to find out more. “With US troops being stationed in Australia it shows there must be something definitely going on,” she said.

“Although there may not be a direct military conflict between US and China straight away a smaller power

could be used to start a conflict with China. The US may start unrest and try to weaken China as much as possible.”

Aaron, a Perth sales assistant, said the meeting had provided “a genuine perspective on what is happening in the world that you don’t get that from the mass media or Socialist Alliance or Socialist Alternative.

“Irrespective of your political stance, or whether you agree or not, you can’t dispute the facts that were presented here today ... I don’t know what is going to happen but I’ve seen that the WSWS was talking about the conflict of US and China six months ago when the right-wing media was saying nothing at all.”

Ashley, a university student, commented: “I’ve had some experiences in Wollongong involving local and community issues but the things discussed at this meeting are on an international scale. The US has been on the decline and it seems they would go to any extent to rebuild their power. They feel challenged by China. The working class should be opposed to war and people need to come to these types of meetings.”

Davey, a former teacher, attended the Melbourne meeting. “The meeting reinforced for me that the SEP is one of the few organisations that is trying to grapple with and educate people about the seriousness of the rise of militarism and the competition between China and America in the Asia-Pacific,” he said.

“I understand why people are kept in the dark about this but I’m more confused why other left groups are not doing their part to educate the public. This seems to me to be a real problem. It’s ridiculous for parties like Socialist Alternative to say there are possible skirmishes [between the US and China] but not war.... It seems to me we are re-living the 1930s and the 1914 period. The parallels are so obvious ...

“I agree with the development of an anti-war movement opposed to austerity, opposed to capitalism, and for socialism but this is huge task.”

Ben, 28, a maths/science teacher, said: “The US is trying to overcome its economic situation with its military presence and interventions in different parts of the world. China, however, is not going to stand by and let it happen. In all likelihood there will be conflict down the line, potentially a very big conflict.”

Ben said that the meeting drew out the significance of the trade routes to China and Australia’s geo-political importance. “I think it also validated the WikiLeaks

cables that showed Washington’s involvement in Gillard’s installation as prime minister. It makes sense that Kevin Rudd’s position that Australia could somehow mediate between the US and China was untenable for the Obama administration,” he added.

“Australia is not immune from the austerity measures being imposed in the rest of the world and the Australian economy will be affected if China is drawn into a war with the US. Australia will also be in the danger because of the military involvement with the US. It’s quite scary really.”

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