

Sri Lankan SEP/IYSSE holds successful meeting on the US and Sri Lankan elections

Our correspondents
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The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka held a well-attended meeting in Colombo last Saturday to discuss the political lessons of the recent US and Sri Lankan elections. On November 5, the fascist Donald Trump was elected president. In Sri Lanka, Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP)/National People's Power (NPP) leader Anura Kumara Disanayake was elected president on September 21. In the subsequent general election on November 14, this party won over two-thirds of the country's parliamentary seats.

About 100 people, including workers and youth from Jaffna in the Northern Province and the central hill plantation district of Nuwara Eliya, attended the meeting which was held at the Mahaweli Center Auditorium. Jerry White, the vice-presidential candidate of the SEP in US, was the featured speaker, addressing the meeting via internet video.

The meeting was chaired by Pani Wijesiriwardena, SEP Political Committee member and the party's candidate in Sri Lanka's presidential elections. Warmly welcoming participants, Wijesiriwardena said that the SEP intervened in the presidential and parliamentary elections to develop an independent political movement of the working class based on international socialism against war, austerity and dictatorship. The SEP, he said, was the only political organisation in the elections that warned about the threat of imperialist war.

"In the current, internationally highly connected world, political changes taking place in the US have far-reaching implications. That is why we pay serious attention to political developments there," Wijesiriwardena said. For first time in US history, a fascist president has been elected, an event which the SEP in the US and the *World Socialist Web Site* have described as a political earthquake.

Referring to the Sri Lankan elections, Wijesiriwardena spoke about Disanayake's call, after becoming the president, for a "strong government." Refuting the promotion of the JVP/NPP government as "Marxist," "socialist" or "left-leaning" by the local and international media, Wijesiriwardena reviewed the right-wing, pro-imperialist and Sinhala chauvinist character of Disanayake's party.

Wijesiriwardena briefly reviewed the origins of the JVP as a petty-bourgeois organisation based on an eclectic mix of Maoism, Che Guevarism and Sinhala populism in late 1960s, its subsequent degeneration along Sinhala-Buddhist supremacist lines into a

fascist organisation in 1988–89 period, and its transformation in the 1990s into a party of the bourgeois political establishment.

The next speaker, Jerry White, the vice-presidential candidate of the US SEP, explained the political lessons of the US election.

"The November 5 election in the United States was indeed a political earthquake. Donald Trump, a fascist who four years before attempted a coup to overthrow the US Constitution and stay in power after losing the 2020 elections, won the popular vote and the vote in the electoral college," White said.

Trump's co-conspirators in the Republican Party also won control of the US Senate. This means that when Trump is inaugurated on January 20, the Republicans will control every level of the federal government—the presidency, both houses of Congress and the Supreme Court, he added.

As the SEP has explained, the vast majority of the 77 million people who voted for Trump are not fascists and do not support his plans to establish a dictatorship. In fact, exit polls showed large majorities saying they believe immigrants deserve a pathway to citizenship rather than face mass deportation as Trump plans.

Explaining how Trump won the election, White said: "The vote was a mass repudiation of the Democratic Party, which over the last four years has overseen a massive assault on workers' living standards and the expansion of American imperialism's wars for global domination. This includes the US-backed Israeli genocide, the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and plans for what the US military calls the 'Big One,' war against China."

White also presented an outline of the voting patterns that went in favour of Trump while pointing that his election did not signify a mass movement of workers and youth going to right.

"The years leading up the elections have seen a rising tide of worker militancy and strikes, which have more and more taken the form of a rebellion against the pro-capitalist and nationalist trade union bureaucracy. The efforts by the Democratic Socialists of America and other pseudo-left organisations to promote identity politics and subordinate the working class to the Democratic Party, has produced the catastrophe of a second Trump presidency," White said.

White's speech provoked enthusiastic questions from the audience. One participant wanted to know how an openly fascist candidate was able to win votes from workers and youth in America.

White answered by reviewing the reactionary two-party system in America and explained that those workers and youth who had

voted for Trump did so not because they were in agreement with his fascist agenda but to express their deep-seated anger and frustration with the Democratic Party.

“While the Democratic Party has been traditionally considered as the party of social reform in the US, it abandoned that role decades ago. Over the past four years, it launched one attack after another on the democratic rights and social position of the working class while conducting imperialist wars abroad,” White said, pointing out that this opened the way for Trump to fraudulently pose as an opponent of these attacks.

White said that the SEP in the US has taken initiative in providing the leadership, program and perspective for the working class who will inevitably come into explosive struggles against the incoming Trump administration as it carries out a social counter-revolution and destroys basic democratic and social rights.

The speaker explained the SEP’s fight is to unite the growing working-class struggles in the US with those of the international working class through the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Workers.

Another audience member asked how the giant US corporations were able to make record profits when the capitalist profit system and bourgeois democracy are mired in crisis. How was America able to secure \$US36 trillion in loans and where did this money come from.

White said that the massive increases in corporate profits came through the super-exploitation of the working class in the US and throughout the world. He pointed out that the bulk of the American loans were held by China and explained that the US was attempting to offset its economic decline through its military superiority and by launching wars against its rivals.

The US ruling class, he continued, was causing the death of millions of people while at the same time cutting social programs, such as Medicare and Medicaid, and granting tax concessions to corporations and the oligarchy.

White said these policies were leading to an eruption of struggles by the American working class. He explained that the deepening crisis of the capitalist system could only be solved on a progressive basis through the overthrow of profit system by the working class.

The final speaker, Deepal Jayasekera, general secretary of the SEP in Sri Lanka, told the meeting that “political situation in Sri Lanka could only be understood by placing it in the world context. We see this election of JVP/NPP not as an isolated incident limited to this tiny island but as an expression of global political developments.”

Jayasekera said that the ruling class globally is seeking the service of right-wing communalist and fascistic organisations to prop up bourgeois rule amid the collapse of traditional parties and mass opposition to the assault by successive governments on the social position of the masses.

“The JVP/NPP’s victory in presidential elections, and in general elections with even higher votes, is not due to popular support for the right-wing pro-imperialist Sinhala chauvinist policies of the JVP. Workers, youth and the rural poor voted for the JVP/NPP in their millions not because they supported and approved the harsh IMF austerity program that this new government is fully

committed to implementing,” Jayasekera said.

The speaker pointed out that the JVP/NPP had exploited growing popular anger against the traditional parties and their assault on basic social and democratic rights. Under conditions where these parties lacked any popular support, substantial sections of Sri Lanka’s ruling class and the imperialist powers supported the JVP/NPP as the only means for maintaining bourgeois rule, implementing IMF austerity and fully realigning the island with the geo-political agenda of the US and its allies, mainly India.

Jayasekera explained the political role being played by fake-left organisations such as the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), which promotes the JVP/NPP government as “progressive” and claims it is susceptible to pressure from the left.

The FSP’s election campaign slogan, which was conducted under the so-called People’s Struggle Alliance (PSA), was “change the opposition”—in other words, vote for the FSP which will pressure the government to change its policies for the benefit of the masses. This is a dangerous illusion.

“In his policy speech opening the new session of the parliament, President Dissanayake clearly announced that the JVP/NPP government will implement the savage IMF austerity program in full,” Jayasekera explained. “There not be any change to the agreement Ranil Wickremesinghe government signed with the IMF. Its claims that it would renegotiate with the IMF for changes in the more onerous conditions of the austerity program were just lies to hoodwink the masses.”

Jayasekera concluded by explaining that the SEP campaigned in presidential and parliamentary elections to bring to the working class the revolutionary socialist program that it needs in this situation. The party will base its opposition to the JVP/NPP government on that same program, he said, and fight to organise the most advanced workers and youth into our ranks and develop the programmatic, tactical and organisational leadership for the struggles that will soon erupt.



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