

today. The so-called “equality of opportunity” under capitalism is a fraud. Genuine equality requires *social equality*, but social equality is not possible in a society where all human needs are subordinated to the drive for profit and the interests of the wealthy.

The ISSE fights for the rebirth of an international socialist movement, which will base itself on the experiences of the working class movements of an earlier era, in the US and internationally. The oft-repeated mantra that “socialism has failed” is a product of either deceit or ignorance. The twentieth century saw great revolutionary struggles for socialism, in Europe, Asia, the United States and elsewhere, but these were systematically betrayed by Stalinism, Social Democracy, and the corrupt bureaucracies of the old labour movements. The ISSE draws its inspiration from the great intellectual and political tradition of international socialism associated with the figures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky.

None of the problems we confront can be dealt with on a national level. We live in a world society, a world economy, and the basic issues confronting student youth in every country are fundamentally the same. For this reason, we are the *International Students for Social Equality*. We reject all forms of nationalism, chauvinism, racism, and parochialism.

While we are a student organisation, our aim is not to build a purely student movement. The pressing need is for an independent political movement of the working class as a whole, the vast majority of the world’s population. The majority of student youth today is or will be part of the working class. The particular problems faced by students are products of the capitalist system, based on the exploitation of all workers.

The ISSE rejects the politics of radical protest, of sloganeering, of pressuring the powers that be. This perspective, characteristic of so many groups on campuses, is a hopeless and bankrupt one. Our aim is to build a mass political movement, based on a clear and comprehensive theoretical perspective, which will take power and reorganise society on a democratic, egalitarian and rational basis.

We also reject any conception that in Australia, progress can be achieved through the Labor Party, the Democrats or the Greens. They, no less than the Liberal-National Coalition parties, defend the interests of the corporations and the ruling elite. The Labor Party is deeply implicated in the criminal invasion of Iraq, the assault on democratic rights and the growth of inequality, and the entire official political establishment backs the Howard government’s neo-colonial interventions in the Pacific.

Socialism means genuine equality. It means an end to the capitalist system of exploitation and inequality. It means democratic control of the great productive resources of society, so that these resources can serve social need rather than private profit and the interests of the wealthy.

Join the fight for socialism! Join the ISSE!

The International Students for Social Equality is the student organisation of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). To find out more about the ISSE, and to help build a branch at your university, technical college or school, visit www.socialequality.com/isse.

The ICFI publishes the *World Socialist Web Site* (www.wsws.org), the most widely read socialist publication on the Internet. Read the WSWWS for daily news and analysis of major world events, and comments on political, cultural, historical and philosophical issues.

INTERNATIONAL ISSE STUDENTS FOR SOCIAL EQUALITY

Build ISSE branches at your university, technical college or high school!

The International Students for Social Equality calls on student youth in Australia and around the world to initiate a campaign against militarist violence, social inequality and the growing attack on democratic rights.

The escalation of the American occupation of Iraq, in the face of overwhelming opposition in the United States and internationally, is only the most barbaric expression of the catastrophe created by world capitalism. Hundreds of thousands have been killed in the course of an illegal invasion and occupation, justified on the basis of lies, to advance the geo-strategic aims of the American ruling elite. Now, preparations are being made for an even more deadly war against Iran, which poses the danger of a global conflagration, the scale of which has not been seen since the Second World War.

This madness must stop! Great advances in science and technology, accompanied by unprecedented global integration, have made possible a new era of human prosperity. Yet young people confront a world full of war and want, of massive global poverty and disease, of pending environmental catastrophe, of cultural backwardness and superstition, of assaults on the most basic democratic freedoms.

The progress of human society is being blocked by the social relations of capitalism, which subordinate everything to the demands of profit and the accumulation of personal wealth by a tiny layer of the population. The ISSE is an organisation of students around the world dedicated to building a socialist movement that will finally realise the potential of the modern era, put an end to war, and lay the foundations for genuine freedom and equality. *Join the fight for a renewed international socialist movement! Join the ISSE!*

No to war and colonialism!

Colonialism, imperialism, fascism, world war—the barbaric scourges of the twentieth century—are being reborn in the twenty-first in an even more brutal form. The invasions and occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan are the first stages in what Bush has called the “wars of the twenty-first century.” These wars serve one basic purpose: to bolster the social position of the American ruling elite and combat its declining position in the world economy through the use of military force. Every other rationale spewed out by the American government is a lie.

According to a study published in the British medical journal *Lancet*, and carried out by researchers at Johns Hopkins University, more than 655,000 Iraqis have died as

a result of the invasion and occupation of their country. Over 3,100 US soldiers have been killed, and over 250 from other countries. The invasion has led to the devastation of an entire society, and the US occupation has sparked a brutal sectarian conflict.

The 2006 US elections reflected the antiwar sentiment of the vast majority of the population, views shared by billions of people around the world. And yet the response of the US government is to send more US troops to Iraq—more young people to kill and be killed. Looming on the horizon is the threat of the military draft, as the ruling elite searches for new ways to force young people to serve as cannon fodder.

The United States is not alone in its imperial ambitions. Similar colonial projects are being planned and carried out by the major powers of Europe, Australia, and Asia. The Howard government has aligned itself completely with the cabal in the White House, contributing troops and other support to US interventions in the Middle East in order to win Washington's backing for its own imperialist ambitions in the South Pacific region. Like the US, the Australian ruling elite is striving for hegemony over resource-rich and strategic territories—in Canberra's case, East Timor, PNG, Fiji, Vanuatu and the Solomon Islands—against rival powers such as China. Howard regards the South Pacific as Australia's "special patch" and has embarked on a neo-colonial and militarist agenda that he has declared will last for the next "10 or 20 years."

This project requires a vast militarisation of Australian society. In August 2006 Howard unveiled plans for the largest increase in military spending since the Vietnam War. Within weeks, Defence Minister Brendan Nelson announced military "gap year" training for Year 12 graduates commencing in 2008, and muted the possibility of reviving conscription. This campaign for militarism and war has the full support of the Labor "opposition" as does the related campaign for the promotion of "Australian values". The latter is aimed at splitting and dividing working people on the basis of race and nationality, and providing an ideological climate conducive to new wars of aggression.

The drive to carve up the world's resources, pitting the different capitalist powers against each other, is leading inexorably to another global military conflict. The population of the world must join together in a common struggle against this policy. Young people have no interest in plunder and killing for profit.

For social equality!

Opposition to war cannot be separated from opposition to the social system that creates it. Students today face a society that in every aspect is infected and corrupted by the most obscene levels of social inequality. Wealth is concentrated internationally in the hands of a tiny elite. The richest 1 percent of the world's population has an income equal to the bottom 57 percent. The richest three people possess more assets than the poorest 10 percent. In the United States, supposedly the wealthiest country in the world, the top one-tenth of one percent (300,000 people) has an income greater than the poorest 120 million Americans.

Inequality in every major country is increasing. A small section of the population is amassing great fortunes while wages for working people stagnate and billions of people lack proper access to the most basic necessities—food, water, housing, health care, and education. The fruits of the vast expansion of the productive forces over the past several decades have gone almost exclusively to a narrow oligarchy, an oligarchy in control of the corporations that scour the globe for new sources of cheap labour and raw materials.

No social problem—the AIDS pandemic and other diseases, the persistence of massive poverty internationally, the vulnerability of millions of people to the whims of natural events such as hurricanes or tsunamis—can be seriously confronted without addressing the distribution of wealth.

Students face particular problems that reflect inequalities in society. University fees in Australia continue to soar, and many students graduate with tens of thousands of dollars of HECS and student allowance debt. Most students must work in order to help pay for their university education, and many work fulltime even while taking classes. Young people in general face an increasingly bleak job outlook, and the wages of university graduates are declining along with those of the working class as a whole. Public education at the primary and secondary level is also under attack. Funding for private schools has increased by more than 100 percent over the past decade, while state schools in working class areas are chronically under-resourced and dilapidated. Billions are spent on war and tax cuts for the wealthy, while a majority of student youth are denied access to decent textbooks and new technologies that have the potential to transform the learning experience for every young person.

Young people must deal with all the problems facing the working class, including increasing economic insecurity, the decay of social infrastructure and the wholesale assault on social programs. A massive redistribution of resources, combined with a rational, democratic plan to employ society's productive capacity, is necessary to raise living standards and solve pressing social problems all around the world.

Defend democratic rights!

Social inequality is also at the heart of the attack on democratic rights, in the United States, Australia and internationally. The Democrats and Republicans in the US, like Liberal and Labor in Australia, will not listen to the wishes of the people because these parties serve the interests of a financial oligarchy, which is determined to pursue its imperialist ambitions abroad, while continuing an assault on the jobs and living standards of workers all around the world. As the interests of the ruling class come into increasing conflict with the demands of the population, democratic rights are being sacrificed.

The American government promotes the lie that it is seeking to advance democracy internationally, even as it attacks democratic rights in the US and openly repudiates the democratic will of the population. The actions of the American government—summed up in the torture centres at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib—are shameful and odious. The Australian government is complicit in each of these crimes. Student youth have a deep obligation to rise up in opposition to the barbarity perpetrated against the peoples of the world by governments that claim to speak for the people.

The assault on democratic rights and the stepping up of repressive measures are also international phenomena. Democratic rights—the right to a fair trial, the right not to be spied upon, the right of *habeas corpus*, the right not to be tortured—can only be defended and extended as part of the fight for social equality internationally. Democracy is ultimately incompatible with extreme levels of wealth concentration. Genuine democracy requires democracy in the sphere of economic life.

For international socialism!

It is capitalism that is ultimately responsible for every major social problem we face