

Join the International Students for Social Equality! Build an ISSE chapter at your college or high school!

19 February 2007

The following is a statement issued by the International Students for Social Equality in the US outlining its political perspective and calling on students to join the ISSE and build clubs at schools throughout the country and internationally. The statement is available in pdf format to download and distribute. An Australian version is also available.

The ISSE calls on students and workers to attend the Emergency Conference Against War called by the ISSE and the Socialist Equality Party, to be held in Ann Arbor, Michigan on March 31 and April 1. Click here to find out more about the conference. Click here to register for the conference.

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

The United States' military escalation in Iraq, in the face of overwhelming opposition in the US 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 on a scale not seen since the Second World War.

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

Human progress is being blocked by the social relations of capitalism, which subordinate everything to the drive for corporate profit and the accumulation of personal wealth by a tiny layer of the population. The ISSE is an organization of students around the world dedicated to building a socialist movement that will finally realize the potential of the modern era, put an end to poverty and war, and lay the foundations for genuine freedom and equality.

Join the fight for a renewed international socialist movement! Join the ISSE!

Colonialism, imperialism, fascism, world war—the barbaric scourges of the 20th century—are being reborn in the 21st 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 21st century.” These wars serve one basic purpose: to bolster the global interests of the American ruling elite by offsetting its declining position in the

world economy through the use of military force. Every other rationale spewed out by the American government and media is a lie.

According to a study conducted by researchers at Johns Hopkins University and published in the British medical journal *Lancet*, more than 655,000 Iraqis have died as a result of the invasion and occupation of their country. Over 3,100 US soldiers and more than 250 from other countries have been killed. The invasion and occupation have devastated an entire society and sparked a brutal sectarian conflict.

The 2006 US elections reflected the antiwar sentiments of the vast majority of the population, views shared by billions of people around the world. Yet the response of the US government is to send more troops to Iraq—more young people to kill and be killed. Looming on the horizon is a renewed 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 as well as Japan and Australia. The drive to carve up the world's resources, pitting the different major capitalist powers against each other, is leading inexorably to another global war.

The people of the world must join together in a common struggle against militarism and imperialist plunder. Young people of all countries have no interest in killing for the sake of corporate profit.

Opposition to war cannot be separated from opposition to the social system that creates it. Students today face a society that 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 that of the bottom 57 percent. The richest *three individuals* possess more assets than the poorest 10 percent of the world's people. In the United States, the wealthiest country in the world, the top one-tenth of one percent (300,000 people) has an income greater than the combined income of 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 access to the most basic necessities—food, water, housing, health care, education. The fruits of the vast expansion of the productive forces over the past several decades have gone almost exclusively to a narrow oligarchy which controls corporations that scour the globe for cheap labor and raw materials.

No global social problem—the AIDS pandemic or other diseases, pervasive poverty, the vulnerability of millions to natural events such as hurricanes or tsunamis—can be seriously addressed without

addressing the concentration of wealth in the hands of a small elite.

Students face particular problems that reflect social inequities. College tuition in the United States continues to soar, and many students upon graduation are burdened by tens of thousands of dollars in debt. Most students must work in order to help pay for school, and many work full-time even while taking classes.

Young people face an increasingly bleak job outlook, and the wages of college graduates are declining along with the wages of the working class as a whole. Public education at the primary level in the US is under attack, with schools in many major cities forced to close their doors even as billions are spent on war and taxes are cut for the wealthy.

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

Social inequality is at the heart of the attack on democratic rights in the United States and internationally. The Democrats and Republicans will not listen to the wishes of the American people because these two parties serve the interests of the US oligarchy, which is determined to pursue its imperialist aims abroad while continuing its assault on the jobs and living standards of working people. As the interests of the ruling class increasingly come into conflict with the demands of the population, the political establishment intensifies the attack on democratic rights.

The US government promotes the lie that it is seeking to advance democracy internationally, even as it attacks basic rights and openly repudiates the democratic will of the American people. The people voted last November for an end to the war in Iraq. The result is an escalation of the Iraq war, the dispatch of more troops to Afghanistan, and preparations to extend military action into Iran.

The actions of the US government—summed up in the torture centers at Guantánamo and Abu Ghraib—are shameful and odious. Student youth have a deep obligation to rise up in opposition to the barbarity perpetrated against the peoples of the world by a government that claims to speak for the American people.

The assault on democratic rights is an international phenomenon, with governments around the world enacting police state measures. Democratic rights—the right to a fair trial and due process, including the right of *habeas corpus*, freedom of expression and assembly, privacy rights, safeguards against abuse and torture—can be defended and extended only as part of the fight for social equality. Democracy is ultimately incompatible with extreme levels of wealth concentration. Genuine democracy requires democracy in the sphere of economic life.

The crisis-ridden and historically outmoded system of capitalism is responsible for every major social problem we face today. Under capitalism, so-called “equality of opportunity” and “equal standing under the law” are frauds. 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 a wealthy elite.

The ISSE fights for the rebirth of an international socialist movement, which will base itself on the political lessons of the historical experiences of the working class movement in the US and internationally. The mantra that “socialism has failed” is the product of either deceit or ignorance.

The 20th century saw great revolutionary struggles for socialism, including in the United States, but these were systematically betrayed by Stalinism, Social Democracy and the corrupt bureaucracies of the old labor 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 organization, 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, which comprises the vast majority of the world's population. Most student youth today are or will be part of the working class. The particular problems faced by students are products of the capitalist system, which is based on the exploitation of all workers.

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

We reject any conception that in the United States progress can be achieved through the Democratic Party. The Democrats, no less than the Republicans, defend the interests of the American corporate-financial oligarchy. The Democratic Party is deeply implicated in the criminal invasion of Iraq, the assault on democratic rights, and the growth of inequality.

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

The International Students for Social Equality is the student organization of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), which is in political solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The ICFI publishes the World Socialist Web Site, the most widely read socialist publication on the Internet.

Read the WSWS for daily news and analysis of major world events and commentary on political, cultural, historical and philosophical issues.

To find out more about the ISSE and help build a chapter at your school, visit <http://www3.wsws.org/dd-formmailer/dd-formmailer.php>



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact