

Statement of the International Students for Social Equality to the students of the University of Sao Paulo

15 June 2007

The following is a statement issued by the International Students for Social Equality to the students of the University of Sao Paulo (USP), Brazil's largest university, who have been engaged in a strike, together with professors and staff members, since May 3. The action, which has been accompanied by an occupation of the university's administration building, was taken by the students on May 3 in response to series of decrees by the state of Sao Paulo's right-wing governor, Jose Serra, abrogating university autonomy, particularly in budgetary matters, thereby paving the way to the privatization of higher education and subordinating learning directly to the demands of the major corporations. Serra has repeatedly threatened to end the occupation by sending in military police riot squads. The strike has spread to other universities in the state.

Students at USP have translated the statement into Portuguese and are distributing it at the struck university.

The International Students for Social Equality sends its warmest revolutionary greetings and expresses its solidarity and support for the students, workers and professors of the University of Sao Paulo, now in the second month of struggle against the reactionary and authoritarian decrees of the state administration of Governor Jose Serra, backed by the Lula government and international capital.

The strike and occupation at USP, which has been joined by similar movements in other universities in the state of Sao Paulo and throughout Brazil, is part of a worldwide struggle. Government after government has introduced counter-reforms in the attempt to subordinate higher education to the profit interests of the transnational corporations and banks and to turn

colleges and universities into the privatized preserve of a narrow elite.

Education, a basic democratic right, is under attack internationally. It can be defended only by means of a fundamentally new political orientation and program that challenges the foundations of the current social order, which subordinates every aspect of life, including education, to the dictates of the capitalist market.

The present crisis confronting working people, students and youth in Brazil and around the globe is the direct outcome of the decades of betrayals carried out by national reformist leaderships within the workers movement in country after country. These include the Communist and Socialist parties, the trade union bureaucracies as well as their political allies in the leaderships of various protest movements, all of which begin from the perspective of pressuring existing governments for a change in policy or a shift to the left.

From movements that in an earlier period pressured their respective governments for limited reforms, these parties and organizations have been either transformed into agencies for the implementation of the counter-reforms demanded by international capital, or condemned to irrelevance.

In Brazil, the political trajectory of the Workers Party (PT) provides among the starkest examples of this general global political trend, with the Lula presidency presiding over the implementation of successive cuts in social spending, the implementation of the demands of the International Monetary Fund and the widening of the gap between wealth and poverty to a historically unprecedented level.

Moreover, it is an irony of history—though an instructive one—that Jose Serra, who is leading the

assault on the universities, began his political career as a student militant, becoming the president of Brazil's National Union of Students before being forced into exile under the military dictatorship.

The current strike movement at USP is testimony to a profound opposition among students, as well as broad layers of Brazilian working people, to the right-wing policies of both the PSDB (Partido da Social Democracia Brasileira) state administration of Serra and the national PT government of Lula. But the generalized assault on basic social and democratic rights, driven by the crisis of the capitalist system, cannot be reversed by student protest alone, no matter how militant or determined. Neither appeals to, nor threats against the ruling elite will reverse the protracted big business offensive against education as well as the jobs, wages and basic democratic rights of working people. At the most, such protests can only convince the government to make a temporary retreat, for example, rescinding the decrees of Serra on university autonomy, while carrying out other attacks on the working class.

Maintaining fundamental institutions of a democratic society, including public education, is impossible given the staggering levels of social inequality that exist in Brazil and internationally as all of society's productive forces are directed to furthering the drive for profit and amassing ever more obscene levels of wealth for the top 1 percent.

The International Students for Social Equality was founded recently to develop a political offensive for an internationalist and socialist perspective among students in every part of the world in order to direct the fight against militarist violence, social inequality and attacks on democratic rights.

While the ISSE is a student organization, its aim is not to build a purely student movement. It fights for students to turn to the working class as a whole—the vast majority of the world's population and the only social force whose interests are irreconcilably opposed to the profit system and imperialism—in the struggle for the rebirth of the international socialist movement.

We are the *International* Students for Social Equality because, under conditions of globally organized capitalism, none of the fundamental problems facing students and workers can be resolved on the national level, whether it is in Brazil, Europe, the United States,

Asia or elsewhere. The struggles of working people in each country must be coordinated and unified across national boundaries.

The building of such a movement requires the conscious assimilation of the historical lessons of the struggles of the working class, including the betrayals of the previous revolutionary struggles for socialism at the hand of Stalinism, Social Democracy, the corrupt trade union bureaucracies and the bourgeois nationalist demagogues.

The ISSE draws its political inspiration from the great liberating intellectual and political traditions of international socialism associated with the figures of Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, which are today continued and developed by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

We urge Brazilian students to join in this international struggle, to read the *World Socialist Web Site* (wsws.org), the most widely read socialist publication on the Internet, and to build the International Students for Socialist Equality.



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact