

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

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The following is a statement by the International Students for Social Equality in the US outlining its 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.

The ISSE is the student organization of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), which is in political solidarity with the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). To find out more about the ISSE and help build a chapter at your school, click here.

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 American occupation of 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, 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 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 war, and lay the foundations for genuine freedom and equality.

As young people, we are the future, but we must fight for our future. Join the fight for international socialism! Join the ISSE!

No to war and colonialism!

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 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 given 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, through June 2006 more than 655,000 Iraqis died as a result of the invasion and occupation of their country. Millions have been turned into refugees. Over 3,700 US soldiers have been killed, and nearly 300 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 was to send more US troops to Iraq—more young people to kill and be killed. Preparations are far advanced for the resumption 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 drive to carve up the world’s resources and markets, pitting the different capitalist powers against each other, is leading inexorably to another global war.

The population of the world must join together in a common struggle against this policy. Young people around the world 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. 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, healthcare 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 labor and raw materials. At the same time, the danger of a global economic recession looms.

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 addressed without addressing the distribution of wealth.

Students face particular problems that reflect inequalities in society. College tuition in the United States continues to soar, and many students graduate with tens of thousands of dollars of debt. Most students must work in order to help pay for school. 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 tax cuts for the wealthy.

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 and internationally. The Democrats and Republicans will not listen to the wishes of the people because these two parties serve the interests of the American 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 will be sacrificed.

The American government promotes the lie that it is seeking to advance democracy internationally, even as it attacks democratic rights in the US. The actions of the American 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 also an international phenomenon, as countries around the world have stepped up repressive measures. 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 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 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, 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, 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, that will take power and reorganize society on a democratic, egalitarian and rational basis.

We reject any conception that in the United States, progress can be achieved through the Democratic Party. The Democrats, no less than Republicans, defend the interests of American capitalism. The Democratic Party is deeply implicated in the criminal invasion of Iraq, the assault on democratic rights, and the growth of inequality. One year after it gained a majority in Congress, the so-called opposition of the Democratic Party has shown itself to be nothing more than a miserable charade.

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.



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