

Join the International Students for Social Equality

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ISSE

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Capitalism is gripped by the greatest economic, social and political crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. All the scourges of the 20th century—mass unemployment, poverty, militarism and the threat of world war—are once again emerging.

This year, for the first time since the end of World War II, the global economy will contract. More than 50 million people will lose their jobs throughout the world as companies shut down or lay off workers. The number of chronically hungry people worldwide is expected to rise by 100 million in 2009, bringing the figure to well over 1 billion.

In Europe, the social gains won over decades of struggle are being wiped out, with wages falling and social programs being gutted.

In America—the heart of world capitalism—shantytowns and food lines have made their appearance. Millions have been laid off and are unable to find a decent job. The conditions of life for masses of people are becoming intolerable.

Why should this be so? 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 progress. Yet young people confront a world full of war and want, poverty and disease, and assaults on basic democratic rights.

Human progress is blocked by the capitalist system, which subordinates all considerations to the drive for corporate profit and the accumulation of personal wealth by the very rich. Capitalism must be done away with.

The ISSE is an organization of students around the world dedicated to building a socialist movement of the working class—one that will finally realize the potential of the modern epoch, put an end to poverty and war, and lay the foundations for genuine human freedom and equality.

Join the fight for international socialism! Join the ISSE!

The offensive against the working class

Led by the Obama administration, the world's governments have responded to the economic crisis by funneling trillions of dollars to the banks, and from there to the pockets of the billionaire financiers responsible for the crash.

The US government has pledged assistance to the banks that could total \$23 trillion. In Europe, governments have given the banks the equivalent of a third of yearly output. This money has to come from somewhere, and the working class—the vast majority of society—will end up paying the bill. This is why the bank bailouts are coming together with unprecedented cuts in essential social services and falling wages.

Millions of workers and students all over the world gave their support to Barack Obama because they saw in him a means to oppose the Bush administration's policies. Those who supported him are now finding that Obama is pursuing not only a continuation, but an intensification of the very policies that made George W. Bush so hated.

Since taking office, Obama has:

- Given trillions more dollars to the banks.

• Refused to assist states facing budget crises, instead demanding spending cuts through layoffs, attacks on workers' wages, tuition hikes at universities, and cutbacks of basic social services.

• Intensified the war in Afghanistan and expanded US military aggression in Pakistan. The occupation of Iraq continues. In 2009, military spending reached \$640 billion.

• Continued the policy of torture and domestic spying, while refusing to hold accountable those who initiated these policies.

• Forced US auto companies into bankruptcy in order to slash workers' jobs, wages and benefits.

These actions demonstrate that nothing can be changed so long as the world's working class remains tied to the bourgeois parties. Workers need a socialist and internationalist party to fight for their interests. This is what the ISSE fights to build.

The crisis facing students

The interests of students can be defended only as part of a struggle to mobilize the international working class against capitalism. The basic social questions facing students—including rising tuition and housing costs and declining financial aid—are inseparably bound up with the broader questions confronting all workers: unemployment, the decay of social infrastructure, the attack on wages and benefits.

Most students work, and many work directly for their universities. Their interests as workers and students directly converge. ISSE clubs conduct their political work not just on campus, but among the broadest sections of workers.

A turn to the working class does not mean an alliance with the trade union bureaucracies. Working class struggle will develop only in opposition to the trade union apparatuses, which serve as junior partners of corporate management and the state, policing the working class, suppressing the class struggle, and enforcing concessions. Politically, these organizations offer support to the Democrats in the United States, the Socialist Party in France, the Social Democratic Party and Greens in Germany, and other bourgeois parties that defend the capitalist system.

The ISSE calls for a break with the official unions and the building of rank-and-file workplace committees, and committees of struggle bringing together workers and youth in the neighborhoods.

A socialist program

The resumption of class struggle is an inevitable and objective outcome of the economic crisis. But if it is to succeed, it must be guided by a new political strategy. The struggles of working people and youth must be consciously directed against the capitalist system, which is the source of unemployment, poverty and war.

A radical change is necessary in the basic organization of the world economy. No longer can the vast productive forces of mankind remain under the control of a tiny layer of billionaires. Only through the socialist reorganization of economic life to meet social needs, not private profit, can a solution be found to the pressing problems facing working people.

The world is now more unequal than at any time since the Great Depression. The richest 1 percent of the world's population has an income equal to the bottom 57 percent. The richest three individuals own more assets than the poorest ten percent of the world's people. The economic crisis is creating a social catastrophe for the working class worldwide. Foreclosures and indebtedness are rising to historically unprecedented levels.

No social problem, including climate change, can be resolved without addressing the ownership and distribution of wealth. The private ownership of the major corporations and banks makes an integrated, rational economic plan geared to human needs impossible.

The ISSE calls for the allocation of trillions of dollars worldwide for public works programs that will put people to work to rebuild schools, housing and hospitals, upgrade the social infrastructure, and provide cultural institutions accessible to workers and young people. We call for the nationalization of the basic levers of economic life—the big industrial companies, the banks, transportation, health care, telecommunications, agribusiness—under the democratic control of the working population. We fight for a redistribution of wealth, taking society's resources out of the hands of the very rich and placing them at the disposal of the overwhelming mass of the world's population.

For internationalism

Globalization has increased the social wealth. The objective economic and technological conditions exist to provide everyone in the world with a decent and ever-rising standard of living. The two basic features of capitalism—private ownership of the means of production and the division of the world economy along national lines—block the progressive utilization and development of man's productive forces. Private ownership and production for profit, and the nation-state system, are historic barriers to progress that produce ever-greater social inequality and the horrors of war and dictatorship.

None of the problems we confront can be dealt with on a national level. Man's productive forces have outstripped the narrow confines of the nation-state. At the same time, the problems faced by working people and youth of every country are fundamentally the same. It is only the working class, the only truly international class, that can advance a solution to the crisis.

In all countries, the ISSE opposes nationalism, chauvinism, racism and

protectionism. These are used to divide and weaken the working class, especially in times of crisis. Working people of all countries must join together in a common struggle against the domination of society by a financial aristocracy.

Against militarism and war

It is now more than seven years since the beginning of the Iraq war. This criminal act of aggression has resulted in the deaths of over a million Iraqis and destroyed an entire society. The lives of over 4,000 US soldiers have been squandered, along with hundreds of billions of dollars in social resources. In prosecuting the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, now under the direction of the Obama administration, the American financial and corporate elite is seeking to assert military control over regions rich in oil and other natural resources.

The ISSE demands the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US and foreign troops and private mercenaries from Iraq and Afghanistan and an end to US military aggression throughout the world. The US war machine must be dismantled, and the vast sums expended upon it used to pay reparations to the societies devastated by American bombs and help meet pressing social needs at home. The same policy holds for every other imperialist country.

Instead of military violence, repression and exploitation, the ISSE advances a socialist foreign policy based on the solidarity and mutual assistance of all working people.

For the defense of democratic rights

Employing the pretext of the "war on terror," the American government has initiated a series of anti-democratic measures, including torture, rendition, indefinite detention and domestic spying. While mostly utilized against opponents abroad, the ultimate target of these policies is the American working class. The framework for a police state is being erected to unleash violence and mass repression against workers and students who oppose the policies of war abroad and mass unemployment and poverty at home.

The ISSE calls for an immediate end to all these programs and the restoration of fundamental democratic and constitutional rights. We call for the arrest and prosecution of leading government officials who ordered torture. All those who knew about these actions and kept them secret—including leading members of the Democratic Party—must be held accountable.

For Marxism and materialism

For decades, university campuses have been dominated by the bankrupt ideology of post-modernism and its associated trends. At the root of these philosophies is the rejection of science, progress, and objective truth. The ISSE fights for the revival of the intellectual heritage of the Enlightenment and materialist philosophy, embodied in the modern period in Marxism.

Socialism arises as a historical necessity from the contradictions of capitalism—a social system that has long outlived any progressive role. The ISSE has unshakable confidence in the development of an

international socialist movement, because socialism corresponds to the objective interests of the working class, i.e., the vast majority of humanity.

For an independent socialist movement of the working class

Obama and the Democrats, just like Bush and the Republicans, represent not working people, but an elite class of capitalist owners and financiers. The same is true of the Labour parties in Britain and Australia, the Social Democratic Party in Germany, the Socialist Party in France, and similar bourgeois parties.

The ISSE rejects the policy of pressuring these parties to “take action.” This perspective is bankrupt. Our aim is to build a mass political movement of the working class based on a clear and comprehensive theoretical perspective to fight for political power—the establishment of a workers’ government to reorganize society on a democratic, egalitarian and rational basis. The working class needs its own party, its own program and its own voice. This is why the ISSE stands for the building of the Socialist Equality parties throughout the world and the International Committee of the Fourth International.

All of the various middle-class protest organizations, such as the New Anti-Capitalist Party (NPA) in France, the Left Party in Germany, and the International Socialist Organization in the US have the opposite program. These groups pose as opponents of the established bourgeois parties, but in reality seek to tie workers to them.

The ISSE rejects identity politics, a staple of middle-class “left” and liberal groups, which elevates race, religion, national origin, gender or sexual orientation above the fundamental class divisions in society. The driving force of politics is the class struggle. Only through the recognition of this fact can a viable response to the crisis be put forward.

We fight for the rebirth of an international socialist movement based on the lessons of the strategic experiences of the working class over more than a century of struggle. The 20th Century saw great revolutionary struggles for socialism, but they were betrayed by Stalinism, Social Democracy and the bureaucracies of the old labor movements. The result was two world wars and fascism. This must not be allowed to happen again.

The ISSE traces its lineage to the great figures of international socialism—Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky—who dedicated their lives to building an independent revolutionary party of the working class. We fight for the building of the International Committee of the Fourth International—the World Party of Socialist Revolution that was established in 1938 by Leon Trotsky, who led the struggle for the program of international socialism in opposition to the counterrevolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy that arose in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s.

Socialism means the democratic control of society’s productive forces and an end to the capitalist system of exploitation and inequality. Rather than the market dictating every aspect of human life, society’s priorities must be determined by social need. The task of bringing this about falls to the working class and its revolutionary socialist party. Socialism will not be achieved apart from a conscious struggle to bring Marxism into the working class. A movement must be built and a struggle waged. We call on students and young people to carry forth this struggle and build the ISSE.

Join the fight for socialism! Join the ISSE!

The International Students for Social Equality is the student organization of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The ICFI publishes the *World Socialist Web Site* (www.wsws.org), the most widely read daily socialist publication in the world.

We urge all students who agree with this manifesto to seriously study the program, history and analysis presented on the *World Socialist Web Site*. Make the decision to join and build the ISSE and begin your political preparation for the period ahead. Help build a club of the ISSE at your school or university and join the fight for socialism.

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