

Socialist candidate's open letter exposes attempted political censorship at UNSW rally

Zac Hambides
22 July 2010

The following open letter by Zac Hambides, the Socialist Equality Party candidate for Kingsford-Smith and president of the International Students for Social Equality (ISSE) at the University of New South Wales (UNSW), was circulated at a students' rally on Tuesday. The letter was issued in protest at the UNSW Student Representative Council (SRC) leadership's refusal to include Hambides on the official speakers' list on the grounds that it would be "impolite" to the other speakers.

SRC president Osman Faruqi grudgingly allowed Hambides to speak after ISSE members and supporters began distributing the letter among the assembled staff and students (See: "This fight is first and foremost a political struggle against the Gillard government").

International Students for Social Equality
July 20, 2010

To Osman Faruqi
President of the Student Representative Council
University of New South Wales

Dear Osman,

I am writing this Open Letter to you on behalf of the UNSW branch of the International Students for Social Equality and the Socialist Equality Party to register our strongest possible protest at your anti-democratic decision, and that of the SRC, to deny me the right to speak at today's rally.

I am the President of the ISSE at UNSW, and the SEP's candidate for the seat of Kingsford-Smith, which covers UNSW, in the upcoming federal elections. In

our telephone conversation yesterday, you refused to agree to let me address the rally, then said we could meet before it began, discuss what I would say and a decision would be made then. When the SEP's national campaign manager spoke with you later, insisting on my right to speak, you replied that I would not be included among the speakers because that would be "impolite", under conditions where you had "invited the Greens and the Socialist Alliance to speak".

There is no question but that you, the SRC, the National Tertiary Education Union, the Greens and Socialist Alliance are all very well aware of the political opposition of the ISSE and SEP to the attack that has been waged on UNSW staff, and on the right of all students, domestic and overseas, to a universal, free and high quality tertiary education. The reason you do not want our position to be heard is because we are also deeply opposed to the political agenda that lies behind the university administration's attack: the pro-market, corporatist tertiary education policy of the Gillard Labor government and its so-called "education revolution", which Vice Chancellor Fred Hilmer is imposing and with which the NTEU fully agrees. As for the Greens and Socialist Alliance, they defend the union, seek to suppress opposition to it, and continue to sow dangerous illusions that the Labor government is a "lesser evil" to the Liberals that can be "pressured" to change course.

Your refusal to allow an open political debate on an issue that concerns every student and staff member, not only at UNSW, but at every university around the country, and to suppress discussion about the need for a unified political struggle against the Labor government, amounts to a gross act of political censorship.

I demand that you reconsider your decision and allow me speak from the platform at today's rally.

Signed,

Zac Hambides, president of the ISSE at UNSW and SEP candidate for Kingsford-Smith.

Authorised by N. Beams, 307 Macquarie St, Liverpool, NSW 2170



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