

Youth and the fight for socialism

2 September 2011

Socialist Equality Party (SEP) conferences on “The Failure of Capitalism and the Fight for Socialism Today” were held in Sydney and Melbourne over the past two weekends. They discussed the new stage in the breakdown of global capitalism, and the fight for a socialist and internationalist perspective for the working class to answer the intensifying assault on jobs, living standards and basic democratic rights.

Below we publish the third and final resolution that was discussed and adopted unanimously at the two conferences. The first was published yesterday and the second was also published today.

Youth and the fight for socialism

1. The breakdown of the capitalist system has special significance for young people everywhere. Without its overthrow, an entire generation will be condemned to decades of unemployment, poverty, police-state repression and war. During the past decades, the vast global development of production and technology has been utilised, not to benefit society, but for the rapacious accumulation of wealth by a tiny elite. The capitalist system, along with all the political parties and organisations that defend it, condemns the majority of the world’s population, and above all the youth, to an existence of poverty and insecurity. According to a Gallup study earlier this year, barely 40 percent of the jobs that exist world-wide offer the stability of full-time employment.

2. Internationally, at least 80 million young people have no work at all. In just the past two-and-a-half years, unemployment among 15 to 24 year-olds has increased by an average of 25 percent throughout the European Union. In Spain, it has doubled to a staggering 46 percent; in Greece it stands at 40 percent. Across the continent, youth unemployment averages

20.5 percent.

3. One in five American youth cannot find work. Those who can are being forced to take temporary positions, or to work for as little as half the pay of an older worker doing the same work, as a result of two-tier wage arrangements agreed to by the trade unions.

4. Young people in Australia face a similar crisis. Around 60 percent of 16 to 24 year-olds who have jobs only work part-time or as casuals. Official youth unemployment is currently 16 percent. In working class areas, it has reached Depression levels of over 30 percent.

5. Youth are bearing the brunt, not only of the economic slump unleashed since 2008, but the consequences of the abject abandonment of the working class by the pro-capitalist labour and union organisations, and nearly 30 years of unrelenting attacks on its living standards and social rights.

6. The running down of every level of public education has denied an entire generation the right to a quality education and training. The gutting of funding to public facilities and the arts has combined with poverty to deprive the youth of sport and recreation, personal involvement in music, drama, dance and art, and other progressive outlets for their energy. The corporate-controlled media function as mouthpieces for the wealthy elite, polluting the airways, spreading lies and specifically promoting the mantra of “individual responsibility”. The subordination of culture to the profit motive has had incalculable consequences, helping create the sense of failure and hopelessness among young people that has contributed to the epidemic of mental illness, substance abuse and suicide.

7. It is no accident that the London suburbs where youth rioting first erupted this month have among the highest rates of unemployment and poverty in the country. These have been drastically worsened in the past year by the British government's austerity budget cuts. The degree of social deprivation in these areas parallels what exists in the sprawling working-class suburbs of Australia's major cities, and cities across the globe.

8. The ruling class and its governments have only one answer to any expression of opposition to the social catastrophe they have inflicted: police-state repression. They cannot offer reforms, because there are none to offer amid the collapse of their system. The violence unleashed against young people in Britain, and their dehumanisation as "feral rats" and "wild beasts", sums up the universal fear and hatred felt by the capitalist elite and the privileged upper middle class towards today's youth.

9. Young people feel justifiably alienated from the parties of the political establishment and from the trade unions. The aspirations and concerns of the working class find no reflection in official politics. Governments are rightly viewed as nothing more than the servants of the rich and powerful, implementing their dictates regardless of the views of the majority. The unions have collaborated in every assault on the working class and are indifferent to the conditions their betrayals have created for future generations.

10. Anger and alienation, however, are not a perspective. They do not provide a means to achieve the free high-quality education, access to culture, sport and leisure, well-paid jobs and fulfilling and productive lives to which every young person is entitled. That requires a political struggle by the working class to overthrow capitalism and reorganise society on a socialist basis.

11. This conference makes a special appeal to the youth. We call on you to turn to the working class and take up the banner of world socialist revolution. Oppose the efforts of the various pseudo-left, middle-class tendencies to promote the position of "no politics", which has been raised in anti-austerity

demonstrations in Europe to suppress discussion on the need to break with the old labour organisations and unions and develop an open struggle for a workers' government. Reject, likewise, all those organisations that seek to divide the struggles of the working class by promoting "identity" issues, such as race, nationality, gender or sexual orientation over the common class interests of every section of the international working class.

12. The International Committee of the Fourth International, the Socialist Equality Party and its youth movement, the International Students for Social Equality, alone fight for the political independence of the working class and a genuine revolutionary and socialist internationalist perspective.

13. This conference encourages every young person to study Marxism and the history and program of the Trotskyist movement. Take up the fight for world socialism by building the Socialist Equality Party as the new revolutionary leadership of the working class.



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