

Australia: Join the International Youth and Students for Social Equality!

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality
13 February 2013

The following statement is being distributed by IYSSE members and supporters to students at Australian university orientation weeks, TAFE colleges and high schools this month.

With the eruption of the global financial crisis in 2008, workers and young people in Australia and internationally are being plunged into conditions not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Everywhere, governments are seeking to impose the burdens of the economic breakdown onto the working class at home, and rival nation states abroad. Nationalism, militarism and war, driven by a ferocious competition for markets and resources, are engulfing the planet. Capitalism has no future to offer youth but joblessness, state repression and being used as cannon fodder in military conflicts.

The global crisis is expressed in Australia in the unprecedented decision of Labor Prime Minister Julia Gillard to call the 2013 election more than seven months early, on September 14. The announcement is a desperate bid to convince the corporate elite that Labor, not the opposition Liberal-National coalition, is the best instrument for implementing severe austerity measures. The banks and major corporations are demanding European and American style cuts to government spending, including nothing less than the elimination of all basic entitlements to social services, as well as the driving down of wages and conditions to levels “competitive” with the low-wage Asian manufacturing platforms. Both Gillard and Opposition leader Tony Abbott have signaled that their primary goal is to make deep inroads into the so-called “structural deficit”—that is, welfare, public health and education.

Students and working class youth are struggling to survive on the poverty-level dole, education allowances and in poorly paid casual jobs. Tens of thousands of full-time jobs have been destroyed since Labor took office in 2007. Even by the grossly-understated official figures, youth unemployment doubled from 12 percent in 2007 to over 25 percent in 2012. More than 50 percent of employed youth are working in insecure, often part-time, temporary jobs. The future under either Labor or Liberal will be even bleaker.

The dismal prospects facing youth are compounded by the systematic undermining of public education. Gillard’s

“Education Revolution” is a program of relentless cost-cutting designed to meet the demands of business. In the universities and TAFEs, it means increasing fees, slashing staff jobs and the elimination of subjects and entire departments. In schools, the NAPLAN performance-ranking system is being used to pit schools and teachers against each other as the means for pushing youth into private education, closing “underperforming schools” and slashing funding for public education.

Young people are facing a future of endless war. The Gillard government has unconditionally signed up for the Obama administration’s aggressive “pivot to Asia” directed against China. A US Marine base has already been established in Darwin and more facilities are planned for American warplanes, warships and drones in the north and west of Australia and on the Cocos Islands. The American bases in Australia are integral to Washington’s strategy of containing China that is stoking flashpoints throughout the region and inexorably leading to conflict and thermonuclear war. The Labor government has ensured that the Australian population will be on the frontline of such a catastrophe.

Militarism and war are driven by deepening imperialist rivalries across the world for resources, markets and cheap labour. Desperate to offset its economic decline, the US is recklessly using its military might to assert its global domination. The US-led criminal wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, drone assassinations and neo-colonial intervention in Libya have been followed by the predatory drive for regime change in Syria and advanced preparations for war on Iran. France’s invasion of its former colony of Mali signals a new colonial scramble for Africa.

The agenda of austerity and war is incompatible with democracy. The gunning down of striking miners in South Africa, martial law measures in Greece and Egypt and the persecution of WikiLeaks and Julian Assange are warnings of the police-state methods being prepared against any challenge to the ruling elite by the working class. Australia is no exception. The Gillard government has revived and extended the draconian Pacific Solution to detain refugees indefinitely, maintained a raft of anti-democratic, anti-terror laws on the books and is actively collaborating in the US-led vendetta against Assange,

Every thoughtful young person is posing the question: how to fight for a future against the current economic and political setup? Around the world, workers and youth have entered into mass social struggles, from the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, to the strikes and mass demonstrations that have convulsed Europe. These movements have been pushed back, however, and the ruling elites remain in control, highlighting the crisis of revolutionary leadership and perspective.

The IYSSE is the youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and is active around the world. It is dedicated to the political education and organisation of young people to fight for the program of world socialist revolution. The IYSSE insists that the working class—the vast majority of humanity whose physical and intellectual labour generates all wealth—is the principal revolutionary force in society and the bearer of a higher social order—socialism. Students and youth must turn to the working class and politically fight for its independent mobilisation to establish workers’ governments that will carry out the socialist transformation of world economy.

The IYSSE advocates the restructuring of society from top to bottom to meet the interests of the vast majority, not the ultra-wealthy few. The banks and major corporations must be taken out of private hands and placed under public ownership and the democratic control of the working class. Only in this way can basic social rights be secured for all: the right to a well-paid job, high-quality education, healthcare and housing, a secure retirement and a world free of war and repression. Moreover, the elimination of the private ownership of industry and resources, and of the outmoded division of the world into nation states is the only way to avoid catastrophic climate change and other environmental disasters.

Central to the IYSSE’s political work is the struggle against the reactionary, subjective, idealist and irrationalist political philosophies that dominate pseudo-left politics and have become widespread on university campuses. The theoretical tendencies associated with the Frankfurt School, the varieties of postmodernism, neo-anarchism and identity politics are all rooted in a rejection of Marxism and a denial of the revolutionary role of the working class. The various petty bourgeois pseudo-left organisations—including Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance, the Socialist Party and Solidarity—are all purveyors of identity politics which sets ethnicity, religion, gender and sexual orientation against the fundamental social category of class. The IYSSE rejects the divisive politics of “identity” and insists that only a unified movement of the working class for socialism can establish social equality for all.

The pseudo-left organisations are bitter opponents of any genuine struggle for socialism. They speak for privileged layers of the upper middle class who seek only to advance their own incomes, careers and lifestyles within the framework of

capitalism. Deeply hostile to the working class, they have lined up squarely behind Washington and Canberra in the criminal neo-colonial operations in Syria and Libya, derisively denouncing, in the words of one leading representative of Socialist Alternative, “knee-jerk anti-imperialism.” They form a tendency within bourgeois politics, functioning as political defenders of the trade unions, the Labor Party and the Greens against any independent movement of the working class.

The IYSSE opposes all forms of nationalism and racism, in particular the efforts of the ruling elite to whip up anti-immigrant and anti-refugee sentiment. We defend the right of workers and youth to live and study wherever they choose with full citizenship and democratic rights.

The IYSSE insists that education at every level is a fundamental social right that should be provided free to all. We call for the abolition of HECS, including all outstanding loans, and all fees for both domestic and international students. The resources for extra-curricular sporting, cultural, social and political activities should be provided automatically to all students at no cost.

IYSSE clubs hold regular political forums where all are welcome to discuss current political developments. The IYSSE distributes the statements and analyses published on the *World Socialist Web Site* among students on university campuses, TAFEs and high schools.

The IYSSE is based on the struggle led by Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International against the betrayals of the Russian Revolution and socialism by the parasitic bureaucracy headed by Joseph Stalin. We seek, above all, to develop an historical and international perspective among students and youth, which requires an understanding of the key strategic experiences of the working class in the 20th century, above all, the struggle of the Trotskyist movement, embodied today in the ICFI, to defend the perspective of world socialist revolution.

We urge all students and young people to join the IYSSE and fight to build an internationalist and socialist leadership of the working class.



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