

Australia: IYSSE anti-war rally wins support in Newcastle

Our correspondent
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Students enthusiastically applauded speakers at a lively lunchtime rally at the University of Newcastle, north of Sydney, organised by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) to oppose the US-led preparations for war on Syria.

Groups of students held IYSSE placards declaring, “No War on Syria” and demanding “Close Pine Gap,” the US spy facility in Australia that provides target information for American drone attacks in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen.

The rally was part of an international campaign by the IYSSE and the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and their sister organisations around the world to mobilise workers, students, youth and workers against the ongoing plans by Washington and its allies for military intervention in Syria and the Middle East.

Addressing the gathering, University of Newcastle IYSSE president Joshua Cromarty explained: “Just weeks ago Washington was preparing to unleash a massive bombardment of Syria using claims for which there was no evidence that the Syrian regime had carried out a chemical weapons attack on civilians in Damascus.”

Cromarty warned that the Obama administration had only temporarily stepped back in the face of popular opposition. “The US has not abandoned its plans for constant intervention into the Middle East until the entire oil-rich and strategic region is firmly under its domination. It is not a question of if American imperialism will seek new pretexts and justifications for war, but only when,” he said.

Cromarty drew out the connection between the US operations in the Middle East and the Obama administration’s strategic “pivot” to Asia aimed at blocking China from emerging as a world political and military rival to the US. He said the “former Labor

government of Julia Gillard, backed by the then Liberal opposition and the Greens, signed up for these US preparations for war against China.”

Groups of students and campus workers listened closely, some clapping and cheering. At the end of Cromarty’s address, one student called out “No war on Syria” and another crossed his arms in front of his chest to indicate his agreement with the call.

Terry Cook, an SEP national committee member, spoke next, explaining the connection between the turn to war, and the “war at home by corporate and financial elite in every country to dismantle social conditions and living standards to force the working class to pay the cost of the capitalist crisis.”

He pointed to the ongoing onslaught on social conditions and the living standards of working people being carried out by governments across the world, even as they spent billions on preparations for war. He reported that the SEP in the United States held a demonstration in Detroit attended by over 500 people as part of the fight to mobilise the working class in defence of the Detroit Institute of Arts (DIA).

Cook explained: “As a result of Detroit being declared bankrupt, not only are the pensions and health care benefits of city workers being slashed, the precious art works of the DIA are to be plundered and sold to pay off the banks and bondholders.” As workers’ jobs and social conditions were being destroyed, so was the right of access to art and culture.

Cook emphasised that the drive to war by the US and its allies could not be stopped by appeals to capitalist politicians or to bodies such as the UN. It would only be halted through the independent mobilisation of the international working class on a socialist program to overturn the capitalist private profit system that gave rise to war.

There was more applause throughout Cook's speech. At the end of the rally, half a dozen students gathered around the campaign table to sign up to join the IYSSE, and several bought copies of Marxist literature. The WSWS spoke to students after the rally.

Lachlan, who is studying communications, said he was walking by and stopped "because the IYSSE speaker was saying a lot of things that just resonated with me and appealed to my left ideals and my opposition to war."

Lachlan added: "I agree with the speaker that people should not go to war to defend the financial interests of the rich and powerful. The frequency of US wars in the Middle East and the amount of attention they pay to that area means that it all comes down to the US looking to have domination over the resources of the region by knocking countries over."

"In this light I was interested to hear about the US pivot to Asia and its preparations for war against China, and the Australian governments support for this. I knew nothing about this. I did not know that the Gillard government signed up to it."

"It is something like the National Security Agency spying revelations by Edward Snowden. Before he spoke out, we knew nothing about it. Now we know that the Australian government was involved and knew about it. Snowden should be defended because he is a whistle blower and he has let everyone know the extent of the spying operation being carried out on the people."

Lachlan said: "In official politics, human rights and needs take a back seat to the interests of the wealthy. I think the speakers are right; workers need to get rid of the capitalist system. After coming to the rally I have really been inspired to learn more about the perspective of the IYSSE and how to fight against war and the other imperialist attacks on humanity."

Overseas student **Manan** said: "I agree with this rally and I think it is very important. I hope that this reached many people because it is important they hear the position of the IYSSE. I was talking to a number of people at the rally and asked their position on the war in Syria. Everyone I spoke to were very keen on what the speakers had to say. I agree that military action should not be taken against Syria."

"I met one guy who was Kuwaiti and his mother is Syrian and half his family is from Syria. He said he

supports the positions put at the rally and opposes military intervention into Syria. He said that he feels that every military force vying for power, including the Assad regime, does not represent the interests of the people."

Manan said he was shocked by what was happening in Detroit and the selling off of the art works in the Detroit Institute of Arts. "I strongly oppose this sell off. When I first heard about it, I thought 'is that even legal?' The art is publicly owned and I assumed that it was for the people of Detroit. How can they sell off paintings that belong to the people of Detroit?"



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