# Oppose political censorship at the University of Melbourne!

**The IYSSE**
**28 April 2014**

In a blatant attack on the democratic rights of students, the Clubs and Societies (C&S) Committee at the University of Melbourne has bureaucratically blocked the affiliation of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) club on campus.

The IYSSE was informed at a meeting with the C&S Committee this month that its affiliation had been rejected, despite the club having submitted all the requisite paperwork. The committee alleged that the club's name was "unreflective" of its stated aims, and that its aims overlapped with those of another, already-affiliated student club, Socialist Alternative. Under the anti-democratic provisions of the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) constitution, the C&S Committee can, on these grounds, prevent the affiliation of any club.

The committee made no attempt to justify either of its claims, which have no basis in fact.

The IYSSE is the student and youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), and its Australian section, the Socialist Equality Party—a registered political party in Australia. IYSSE clubs conduct meetings and other activities on university and college campuses across the United States, Germany, Britain, Canada, Sri Lanka and Australia. They promote and circulate the analysis made by the *World Socialist Web Site*, which is published by the ICFI. The fight for internationalism and social equality, both of which are contained in the name of the IYSSE, have been the cornerstone of the socialist movement for over 160 years.

The IYSSE has no overlapping aims with Socialist Alternative, which is openly opposed to the program and principles of Trotskyism fought for by the ICFI. Like its pseudo-left counterparts internationally, Socialist Alternative is lurching even further to the right. It politically supports the US-backed rebels in Syria and has endorsed the fascist-led putsch in Ukraine. It falsely labels China as an "imperialist" power in order to provide a political cover for the alignment of the Australian ruling class with the US preparations for a military confrontation with Beijing. Against the SEP and IYSSE, Socialist Alternative defends the anti-working class trade union apparatuses, which seek to suppress any independent struggle by workers and youth.

The C&S Committee consists of seven students, drawn from the executives of affiliated clubs on campus. It is not selected by popular election. Nonetheless, this group of students has the authority to arbitrarily determine which clubs should exist on campus.

Underscoring the arbitrary and anti-democratic character of their decision to refuse to affiliate the IYSSE, they ignored the fact that a Socialist Alternative representative on the committee correctly advised them that the IYSSE did not have common aims with their club and cast a vote in support of the IYSSE being affiliated.

Displaying an utter contempt for the rights of more than 40 students who signed an expression of interest form to establish the IYSSE at University of Melbourne, one of the C&S Committee members provocatively asserted that they should join Socialist Alternative, regardless of the differences between the organisations.

The attack on the IYSSE at University of Melbourne occurs in the context of broader attacks on the rights of students to form political clubs and hold political activities on campuses.

In 2011, the minority Labor government of Prime Minister Julia Gillard, with the full support of the

© World Socialist Web Site

Greens and the National Union of Students, introduced legislation reinstating a compulsory Student Services and Amenities Fee (SSAF). The legislation contains anti-democratic provisions that stipulate that funds raised from the fee cannot be used "to support political parties, or to support the election of a person to a Commonwealth or State or Territory Parliament or local Government body." No such restrictions apply on giving funds to organisations of a non-political nature.

The broader implications of this legislation have since become clearer. At Griffith University in Queensland, university administrators have utilised the SSAF to arbitrarily bar political student organisations, including the IYSSE, the Greens, the Labor Club and the Liberal Club, from using rooms and facilities on the spurious grounds that it is equivalent to the university making a financial donation to a political party. At the University of Newcastle, in New South Wales, political clubs were informed during Orientation Week that if they invited members of parliament or election candidates to participate in their activities, they would be ordered off campus and the club could have its right to an O-Week stall overturned.

At both Griffith and Newcastle, the IYSSE has energetically opposed the attempts to use the SSAF legislation as a cover for flagrant political discrimination.

A statement issued by the IYSSE on February 24 explained: "It is not accidental that the management of a university has begun to re-interpret the fee legislation in a way that facilitates the suppression of political activity. The political atmosphere is changing rapidly and the conditions are emerging where large numbers of students will be turning to politics, especially to socialist politics, to fight against the attacks being waged by governments of all stripes on living standards, the erosion of democratic rights and the dangers of war.

"Under the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments, tertiary education funding was systematically slashed, leading to the cutting of courses and staff, overcrowding, inadequate facilities and raising the cost of getting a degree. There is no question that further budget cuts or fee increases by the new Liberal-National Party government, as well as cuts to health and social spending, will provoke further anger among students.

"Opposition is also developing to the Australian government's complicity in the mass US spying exposed by Edward Snowden, its ruthless treatment of asylum seekers and its participation in Washington's preparations for war against China, including providing the US military with greater use of Australian bases."

The statement warned that the persecution of political clubs was aimed at preventing students from developing the means to fight these attacks through the organisation of political lectures, classes, meetings, debates and demonstrations. That is exactly what is taking place at the University of Melbourne.

The IYSSE calls on students to oppose the bureaucratic censorship carried out by the C&S Committee and demand the club's affiliation to the student union. Students should defend, as a matter of basic democratic rights, the right of all students to establish the clubs of their choice.

*The author also recommends*:

Defend the democratic rights of Griffith University students!
[4 April 2014]

Oppose political discrimination at University of Newcastle!
[24 February 2014]

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**wsws.org/contact**

© World Socialist Web Site