

An open letter to the Clubs and Societies Committee at the University of Melbourne

Overturn the decision to block IYSSE affiliation on University of Melbourne campus!

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
16 April 2015

The following letter has been sent to the members of the Clubs & Societies Committee of the University of Melbourne, which voted at a meeting on March 29 to reject the application of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) to affiliate its club at the university. It is being distributed by members of the IYSSE among students on campus.

To the members of the University of Melbourne Clubs & Societies (C&S) Committee:

Gulsara Kaplan (Secular Society)
Lauren Taylor (Cosmic Hitchhikers Appreciation Society)
Yasmine Luu (Science Students Society)
Ryan Davey (Arts Students Society)
Steven Connolly (Pirates)
Claire Pollock and Stephen Smith (C&S office bearers)

On behalf of the members and supporters of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), we are writing to oppose your anti-democratic decision of March 29 to block our application to affiliate an IYSSE club on campus, and demand that you overturn it.

On March 31, the IYSSE received an email from C&S coordinator Fiona Sanders, of the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU), stating that the club's application had been rejected. Stephen Smith, a C&S office bearer of UMSU and member of the "More activities!" student election organisation, had moved that the IYSSE should not be affiliated because its aims "significantly overlap" with those of an already-existing club, Socialist Alternative (SA).

We understand that all of you voted for this motion without any attempt to contact the IYSSE beforehand, thus preventing us from clarifying that Smith's unsubstantiated claim was completely false. In reality, none of the aims of the IYSSE overlaps with those of Socialist Alternative. Moreover, your decision rides roughshod over the democratic rights of the 54 students who signed an expression of interest form in support of establishing the IYSSE club on campus.

First and foremost, the notion that the C&S Committee, or any other organisation, should be able to determine which clubs can or cannot be formed undermines the fundamental rights of students to organise and exercise freedom of expression. All students should be permitted to establish whatever clubs they choose, whether their interests are

cultural, spiritual, political, sporting or academic.

That said, your decision contains a glaring contradiction. While you cite "overlapping aims" to proscribe the IYSSE, no such objections have been raised to block other clubs on campus—something the IYSSE would most certainly publicly oppose.

Among the more than 200 affiliated student clubs are two separate clubs representing the same political party, the Australian Labor Party—under the names ALP Club and Labor Club. And, as far as tens of thousands of students are concerned, if ever there were two parties with "overlapping aims," they are Labor and Liberal, whose big business programs are essentially indistinguishable.

Moreover, there are four different Christian societies, as well as at least three science fiction clubs. In addition to Socialist Alternative, the Solidarity Club, which also defines itself as "socialist," is also affiliated.

What is to account for this double-standard? Why has the IYSSE been singled out for rejection? We can only conclude that your discriminatory decision is based, not on procedural, but on undisclosed political considerations.

Without producing a shred of evidence, either this year or last, the C&S Committee used precisely the same justification of "overlapping aims" in 2014 to block our affiliation. So absurd was the motion that the Socialist Alternative club representative on the committee voted against it!

The class character and orientation of any political organisation is determined, first and foremost, by its history and political program. From this standpoint, the IYSSE and Socialist Alternative represent diametrically opposed political tendencies.

The IYSSE is the global student and youth organisation of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), the world Trotskyist movement. The ICFI publishes the *World Socialist Web Site*, the most widely-read socialist publication in the world. The IYSSE is openly affiliated with the ICFI's Australian section, the Socialist Equality Party, a registered political party.

The IYSSE's aims, which were provided to the C&S Committee as part of our application, make this crystal clear. They state the IYSSE seeks to "educate students in the history and principles of the Trotskyist movement, the International Committee of the Fourth

International,” and to “raise the level of intellectual discussion and debate on campus through the sponsoring of regular forums discussing the daily political analysis of the *World Socialist Web Site*, the Internet site of the ICFI, dealing with Marxist philosophy, economics, history and the arts.”

Socialist Alternative is not part of the ICFI and is not a Trotskyist organisation. It traces its origins to a petty bourgeois political trend known as “state capitalism,” which broke from the Fourth International in 1951, on the basis of an explicit rejection of its principles.

Socialist Alternative does not support either the *World Socialist Web Site* or the Socialist Equality Party. In elections, it calls on voters to give their support, not to the SEP, but to capitalist parties such as the Greens and the Labor Party.

In her letter to the IYSSE on April 1, C&S Coordinator Sanders wrote: “We recommend that you contact Socialist Alternative to discuss how your goals can be achieved through partnering with them.”

The arrogance of this statement is breathtaking. What gives the C&S Committee the right to instruct students, who support the ICFI and the SEP, to join an anti-Marxist organisation that we explicitly oppose?

A review of just some of the public statements of the IYSSE and Socialist Alternative on major global issues should be sufficient to demonstrate to you that the two organisations do not have “overlapping aims.”

On Syriza, which formed a self-proclaimed “left-wing” government in Greece in January of this year

World Socialist Web Site, supported by the IYSSE: “Syriza’s election does not express a political development, a step forward, progress or anything of the kind by or for the working class ... In its origin, social composition and politics, Syriza is a bourgeois party—one of many, including the Democrats under US President Barack Obama—that come to power making promises of ‘hope’ and ‘change’ and then impose policies of austerity and war. It will inevitably betray, sooner rather than later, the aspirations for an end to social hardship and suffering that it has cynically exploited.”

Socialist Alternative: “A stunning victory for the left in Greece”—“These commitments [Syriza’s election promises to oppose austerity spending] combined with other policies—such as writing off much of Greece’s debt to the international banks, nationalisation of the local banks and an end to privatisations—are a direct challenge to the neoliberal agenda that has dominated Western capitalism over the last 30 years.”

On the United States-sponsored campaign to overthrow the Russian-backed regime of Bashar al-Assad, with the assistance of anti-Assad rebels financed by the US and its supporters in the region

World Socialist Web Site: “The Syrian war is the latest chapter in US imperialism’s efforts—with the support of its ultra-reactionary Gulf State clients—to violently carry out a restructuring of Middle Eastern and Central Asian politics.... In the Syrian war, as in the 2011 Libyan war before it, whatever initial protests occurred were overwhelmed and utilized as a pretext for large-scale military intervention by Washington against a regime with which it had long-standing grievances. In both wars, Washington’s key proxies were Sunni sectarian forces tied to Al Qaeda—veterans of the Libyan Islamic Fighting Group in Libya and the Al Nusra Front in Syria.”

Socialist Alternative: “Imperialism, in the sense of Western neo-

colonialism, is not the main threat facing the masses of Syria, or of the Arab world as a whole ... The time for ‘knee-jerk anti-imperialism’ has now passed ...”

On the US pivot to Asia, and the preparations of both the US and Australian governments for war on China

Socialist Equality Party: “The Obama administration initiated its ‘pivot to Asia’ in the wake of the 2008–09 global financial crisis ... While the US military was bogged down in quagmires in Afghanistan and Iraq, China had emerged as the chief nexus of globalised production ... The US was intent on ensuring that it, not its imperialist rivals in Europe and Asia, would dominate this massive cheap labour platform and source of profit. This, not the fraudulent claim that China is seeking new territory in the Asian region, is the real aim of the ‘pivot.’”

Socialist Alternative: “[The] United States, Australia’s traditional military ally and still its most significant foreign investor, is engaged in an increasingly tense struggle with China for domination over the Asia-Pacific. The US wants its allies to stick close and help it contain China’s expansion.”

On the nature of the trade unions

The Socialist Equality Party: “The unions are not workers’ organisations in any sense. Under the impact of globalisation, the unions, grounded on nationalist and pro-capitalist foundations, have been transformed from organisations that once advanced limited reforms in order to contain the class struggle within the framework of the profit system, into corporatist apparatuses committed to achieving ‘international competitiveness’ on behalf of big business.”

Socialist Alternative: “Socialists support trade unions as the basic defensive organisations of the working class.”

If you cared to investigate you would find such fundamental differences between the IYSSE and SA on every political question. And that is because the two organisations have fundamentally opposed aims. The IYSSE and the Socialist Equality Party are revolutionary Marxist organisations, representing the interests of the working class. Our aim is to build a unified international movement of the working class against imperialist war and austerity, and their source, the capitalist profit system. Socialist Alternative is a middle class pseudo-left organisation that has fully aligned itself with imperialist war and austerity, and is preoccupied with the politics of identity, aimed specifically at undermining and suppressing the independent interests of the working class.

We again insist that the C&S Committee overturns its decision and immediately grants affiliation to the IYSSE.

Yours sincerely,

University of Melbourne IYSSE



To contact the WWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wws.org/contact