

For an international campaign to defend the democratic rights of the Socialist Equality Party

Sydney University blocks SEP's anti-war meeting

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
18 April 2015

The University of Sydney, one of the country's oldest and most prestigious institutions of learning, yesterday joined the unprecedented attack on the democratic rights of the SEP (Australia) by blocking its April 26 anti-war meeting, "Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III."

The SEP meeting is part of the campaign being waged by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), among workers and youth around the world, for its international online May Day rally against capitalism and imperialist war. We call on all workers and youth to oppose the university's decision to prohibit the SEP meeting, which makes a mockery of the university's claim to stand for intellectual freedom.

On April 10, in a flagrant act of political censorship, Sydney's Burwood City Council cancelled an SEP hall booking, citing "complaints" from "residents" as justification. The real source of the "complaints," along with open threats to disrupt the meeting, were supporters of "The Great Aussie Patriot" Facebook page, which has connections to the extreme-right wing "Reclaim Australia" group.

Yesterday, the University of Sydney, after stalling on the SEP's application for a room booking for several days, finally contacted the party at 4.00 p.m. The university's representative stated that the booking was being denied because of the "potential for disruption to activities on campus as a result of the event" but refused to reveal the university's security concerns.

In effect, an assertion that it is *possible* that a meeting might be disrupted has become grounds for denying the SEP access to a venue. This means that the "Reclaim

Australia" nationalists, or some other unnamed pro-war group, have effectively been given veto powers over the SEP's meeting and any other political meetings they choose to threaten.

Under questioning, the University of Sydney official declared that the decision to reject the SEP application was the outcome of "widespread consultation within the university organisation" and that it was "discussed at all appropriate levels of the university."

A decision with such far-reaching implications cannot be allowed to be taken behind-closed-doors. The SEP is demanding, and calls on workers and youth internationally to demand, full public disclosure. What meetings took place? Who was present? What was said? Were police or intelligence agencies involved? Was the Abbott government or the NSW state government consulted?

The admission that the ban on the SEP meeting was discussed throughout the university hierarchy confirms that these acts of political censorship involve top levels of the political establishment and the state apparatus. They occur under conditions of a deluge of pro-war propaganda accompanying the "celebration" of the centenary of the landing of Australian and New Zealand troops (Anzacs) on the Gallipoli peninsula on April 25, 1915. As far as the media and political establishment is concerned, nothing can be allowed to puncture this government-sponsored glorification of war or to provide an outlet for the widespread and deeply felt anti-war sentiment within the working class.

The lavish commemoration of Australia's involvement in World War I is aimed at conditioning

public opinion for new military interventions and war and suppressing anti-war opposition. Australian imperialism, which took part in the criminal US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, is central to Washington's "pivot to Asia" and war planning against China.

Amid a deepening global economic crisis, the situation in Australia is paralleled around the world. The capitalist ruling classes are incapable of meeting any of the social needs of the working class and are preparing, once again, for a catastrophic war over resources, markets and sources of profit. Politically isolated and fearful of mass opposition, their response is to stoke nationalism, abrogate democratic rights and unleash ever-more naked police-state repression.

Both Germany and Japan are remilitarising, amid concerted efforts to rewrite history and justify their past war crimes. Across Europe, chauvinist and separatist tendencies are being promoted to divide the working class. American nationalism is endlessly whipped up to justify the continuous criminal wars being waged by the Obama administration, under the fraudulent pretext of the "war on terror," and the police violence being meted out against the most oppressed and exploited layers of workers and youth throughout the US.

The only social force that will defend democratic rights and fight to prevent dictatorship and war is the international working class. This has been demonstrated once again in the SEP's campaign against political censorship. While workers around Australia and internationally have demanded that Burwood Council reverse its hall cancellation, a conspiracy of silence prevails in the Australian political and media establishment.

To date, not one media outlet has reported the issue. Of particular significance is the silence of the state-owned Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), which is providing blanket coverage of, and commentary on, every conceivable aspect of the Anzac centenary. The trade unions, the Greens and pseudo-left parties such as Socialist Alliance and Socialist Alternative, have failed to condemn the censorship and uphold the SEP's right to hold its meeting. They are all thoroughly steeped in nationalism, subservience to the profit system and have aligned themselves directly with the drive toward imperialist war.

The critical importance of the international online

May Day rally flows from the fact that the ICFI is the only political movement on the face of the planet fighting to mobilise the working class against war. As the ICFI-authored perspective published by the WSWS on April 13 stated: "The turn must now be to the unification of the working class, across all national, ethnic and regional lines. In every country, the same basic question is posed: The independent political mobilisation of the working class on the basis of a revolutionary, socialist and internationalist program." Click here to register for the online rally.

The SEP calls for letters of protest to be sent to the University of Sydney, demanding that it reverse its refusal to hire its venue for the SEP's April 26 anti-war meeting. Letters should be directed to Vice Chancellor and Principal Dr Michael Spence, vice.chancellor@sydney.edu.au, who is responsible for the executive decisions of university management. Please CC all emails to the SEP at sep@sep.org.au.

The SEP is continuing to insist that Burwood Council rescind its hall cancellation. WSWS readers and supporters should send emails to the Labor Party Mayor of Burwood, Councillor John Faker, at mayor@burwood.nsw.gov.au, and to Burwood Council management, at council@burwood.nsw.gov.au. The email addresses of all seven current Burwood councillors can be seen here. Please specify "Complaint" in the subject field and CC all emails to the SEP at sep@sep.org.au.

Once a venue is confirmed for the April 26 meeting, it will be announced on the WSWS and on the SEP's website at www.sep.org.au.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact