

The political censorship of the SEP (Australia) and the fight against war

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The attempted suppression of the meeting called by the SEP (Australia) under the title “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III” is a warning to the international working class of accelerating militarism and the accompanying attacks on democratic rights in every country. The veneer of democracy is being ripped off.

The campaign waged by the SEP in support of its right to hold the meeting has revealed that what might have initially appeared to be actions of a single local government authority to block the event, in fact involved decisions and discussions at the highest levels of the political establishment. This became clear when Sydney University, one of the country’s most prestigious educational institutions, joined Burwood City Council in seeking to block the SEP meeting.

The Anzac Day celebrations, commemorating 100 years since the landing of Australian forces at Gallipoli in Turkey on April 25, 1915, the first operation by Australian forces in World War I, are part of a campaign being waged by the political, corporate and media establishment aimed at suppressing anti-war opposition as the drive to a new imperialist war intensifies.

Within Australia, some \$400 million is being spent on what Prime Minister Tony Abbott has described as a “celebration” of World War I. This is more than double the amount being spent by all the other allies combined. The money is going to promote a state-organised campaign that reaches right down into schools and even child care centres. Added to this are the tens, if not hundreds, of millions of dollars more being spent to glorify Anzac Day and World War I by corporations and media organisations.

The challenge by the SEP to this orgy of militarism has hit a raw nerve because of the central ideological

and political role played by the commemoration of Anzac over the past century and its significance in the present geo-political situation.

The Gallipoli landing ended in a complete catastrophe. Thousands of young men were sent to their deaths as the hail of machine gun fire combined with the blood, filth and disease of the trenches to lay bare the barbarism into which the ruling classes of the capitalist powers had plunged much of the world.

Fearing the eruption of anti-war sentiment and the consequences for their continuing rule that such opposition entailed, the Australian ruling classes from the outset mobilised material and political resources to turn this disaster into a day of national celebration. What began one hundred years ago continues today as preparations are made for a new world war.

The celebrations in Australia are a particular expression of what is a global process. In Germany, a campaign organised at the highest levels of the state is underway to rehabilitate the role of German imperialism in World War I and World War II. The official line states that Germany, as a global and not just European economic power, must play a global military and political role. In Japan, the Abe government, the most right-wing and militaristic regime in the post-war period, is seeking to whitewash the past crimes of Japanese imperialism as it rearms in preparation for committing new ones.

American imperialism, confronted with the consequences of the erosion of its economic might, launches one military campaign and regime-change operation after another as it strives, ever more desperately, to maintain its hegemony, threatening to set off a global conflagration.

For the US, achievement of its objectives centres on dominating the Eurasian landmass, from Russia, the

countries of Eastern Europe and the former republics of the USSR in the West to China and the countries of South East Asia in the East—the main centres of global economic growth.

The crucial strategic role—political and military—of Australian imperialism for the achievement of these goals is the underlying driving force behind the eruption of militarism expressed in the Anzac celebration. This is clear from even a brief examination of recent events.

The launching by US President Obama of the “pivot to Asia” in November 2011 from the floor of the Australian parliament has been followed by the ever-closer integration of the Australian military into the US war machine.

A US Marine base, complete with operational B-52 bombers potentially carrying nuclear weapons, has been established in Darwin in the north of Australia to ensure control of vital sea lanes to China. The network of US communications bases in Australia, above all at Pine Gap, functions as an integral component of US military operations ranging from the Middle East to the Asia-Pacific region.

Every day, the US military seeks to refine and develop its anti-China Air/Sea Battle Plan, organises joint military exercises with its allies, and upgrades its scenarios for attacks on the Chinese mainland amid an ever-louder propaganda drum beat about Chinese “assertiveness” in the South and East China seas.

The political changes in the region surrounding the pivot, both in Australia and throughout the region, have been no less significant. The ousting of Australian Labor Party Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in June 2010 in a coup organised by faction leaders in the Labor Party with close ties to the US embassy was an essential preparation for the pivot. Rudd’s perspective—that while the US should retain its dominant position in the region, at least some accommodation should be afforded to China—was anathema to Washington. His ouster came within weeks of the removal of Japanese Prime Minister Hatoyama following a conflict with the US over its military base on the island of Okinawa.

In January of this year, Washington was at the centre of a regime-change operation in the strategically important island nation of Sri Lanka, when China-leaning President Rajapakse was ousted and a pro-US

government installed.

The extent of the Anzac celebrations is an indication of the fear in ruling circles of the anti-war sentiments of broad masses of people and the intensification of this opposition as the drive to war, both in the Asia-Pacific region and internationally, unfolds ever more openly.

But if militarism is to be defeated, anti-war sentiment has to be actualised on the basis of a thoroughly worked-out political program. This is what the ruling class fears above all else.

Hence the high-level targeting of the SEP. Its April 26 meeting, in the midst of the Anzac promotion of jingoism, is aimed at politically arming the working class and the youth with an understanding of the drive to war and the necessary international socialist program to prevent it.

The attempt to politically censor the SEP, an attack on the democratic rights of the entire working class, underscores the importance of next Sunday’s meetings on the fight against imperialist war. We urge all those who oppose war and the threat of dictatorship and see the need for a mass movement against war based on the working class to attend the meetings in Sydney, Melbourne and Wellington. We also call for messages of opposition to the actions of Burwood City Council and Sydney University to be sent.

Above all, it must be understood that the struggle against militarism and war can be fought only on an international basis. We urge all our readers and supporters to participate in the International Online May Day rally on May 3.



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