

More letters denouncing Australian city council and university bans on SEP anti-war meeting

Our reporter
23 April 2015

The failure of the attempt by Burwood Council and the University of Sydney to prevent the Socialist Equality Party from holding its public meeting on Sunday April 26 entitled: “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism, and the drive to World War III” is the outcome of the international campaign waged by the SEP against this attack on democratic rights. The meeting will now be held at another venue.

Published below is a selection of letters and comments from workers, students, young people and academics who continue to protest the censorship of the SEP’s anti-war meeting by Burwood City Council and the University of Sydney.

Revoke the cancellation of the booking of SEP Australia political meeting!

The Burwood City Council’s cancellation of Socialist Equality Party’s booking of the Burwood Library Auditorium for its April 26 public meeting, “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III” is a blatant violation of democratic rights, unwarranted, arbitrary and is a political censorship. It’s a clear display of the Labour Party government’s and so the City Council’s ready support for the racist elements in Australia who have forgot “Lest we forget.” I vehemently denounce this act of the City Council with abhorrence.

The meeting, which was never intended to be a so-called “protest,” was aimed at educating the working class in Australia and around the world of the true significance of the glorification of the massacres of Gallipoli by Anzac and the Australian and New Zealand governments’ multi-million dollar celebration of the centenary since World War I, at a time the imperialist super powers are leading to a Third World War for complete annihilation of life on Earth.

All ‘patriots’ are the enemies of the working class. The programme of the racist and extremist elements like “The Great Aussie Patriot” is in direct opposition to the mass revulsion against war. The Tony Abbot government’s line up with US imperialism and its policy of ‘pivot to Asia’ goes in hand with these extremist elements.

The cancellation of the SEP’s booking by the City Council

without any hearing or proper investigation has already made precedent for the denial of the booking by the Sydney University for a meeting of SEP on the same topic.

I demand that your Council immediately revoke your decision for cancellation of the SEP meeting, unless you have committed a serious breach of a political right of the SEP.

VV, a Sri Lankan lawyer

“Sydney University will tolerate debate only as long as it doesn’t undermine Australian militarism”

Contrary to your reply, you and other top university bureaucrats no doubt concluded that the proposed discussion of Australian militarism at the SEP meeting cut across the University sponsored events designed to celebrate the official chauvinist and nationalist mythology based around the glorification of the mass slaughter of WWI. Therefore, the refusal by the University to allow the SEP to hold a public meeting which critically examines this mythology and its role in preparation for future wars can only be considered as an act of political censorship.

Your recent statement that “[The University] must be a place in which debate on key issues of public significance can take place, and in which strongly held views can be freely expressed on all sides” should have carried the proviso that Sydney University will tolerate debate on issues of public significance only insofar as such debates do not undermine Australian militarist and national chauvinist lies (and any other unsavoury ideological political objectives which the University administration might be seeking to promote at the time).

JE – London, UK

“If it is standard process to violate free speech then your institution cannot fulfil its educational mission”

Thank you for your reply but it is not acceptable. If it is “standard process” to violate free speech and assembly, particularly for a university, even if those who disagree with a political view complain (which has not been made explicit), then clearly your institution cannot fulfil its educational mission. What exactly does “an internal security assessment” mean when you do not involve those, specifically the Socialist Equality Party, and just what kind of “significant risk of

disruption to other University-related activities” are you concerned about? Should not those who would restrict freedom of discussion at the University be the target of your actions? How can one not infer that the “internal” assessment did not involve higher, official political levels?

It appears that the activities that for which you fear disruption would be the criticism of ANZAC Day glorification of the horrific deaths of young, working class soldiers in World War I and the drive toward militarization in Australia. The University did not seem to feel it necessary to cancel the lecture on campus of retired British Colonel Richard Kemp on March 11 when it was known that student protestors might possibly cause a disruption over his pro-Zionist and imperialist views. Your action can only be taken as politically motivated.

Again, the only just course of action is to allow the SEP to hold its meeting on April 26 on the stated topic of entitled “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III.”

HL – New York

“If a university won’t allow free speech, who will?”

As an alumnus of your ‘esteemed,’ ‘respectable,’ university, I would like to state my utmost disagreement with the regressive stance you have taken on the free expression of ideas on campus. Public meetings, of any historico-political school, must be not only allowed but encouraged at any learning institution which hopes to possess or retain any ethical standing or express any support for democracy.

If the Socialist Equality Party is to hold an open dialogue on questions of historical falsification and national identity, where better to hold it than in the halls of the (supposed) foremost school of history in the country?

Moreover, where else? This is the second public venue to refuse a public meeting. If a university won’t allow free speech, who will?

Reverse the decision.

DH – Sydney

“I urge you to reverse this decision and uphold the constitutional, long valued, rights of all concerned”

As a writer/musician working in the Arts sector, two things are important to me; the freedom to obtain information in order to form opinions on the pressing matters of the day, and the freedom to express those opinions through Art.

These rights are being denied me by the recent decision of Burwood council to refuse permission to the Socialist Equality Party to hold a public meeting entitled “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III” at The Burwood Library Auditorium, NSW, Australia, on April 26th 2015.

The rights of the Socialist Equality Party, a registered political party, to conduct this public meeting, are also being denied.

That this decision has been made due to the interference of a right-wing, racist organization is abhorrent to me and I call

upon you to urge the council to reverse this decision and uphold the constitutional, long valued, rights of all concerned.

“If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.”

—George Washington

KB – Adelaide, South Australia

From Andrew Lynch, University of New South Wales law professor.

Andrew Lynch, a law professor from the University of New South Wales, and author of several books on liberty and security spoke to the *World Socialist Web Site*. He said that responding to the alleged threats of “disturbance” by banning the meeting “hardly seems consistent with valuing a free society of the kind that was supposedly fought for in World War I.”

“If the university states that it stands for academic freedom, then it should be open to debate.

“It seems that to the extent that the university has concerns about ‘public safety,’ it should act on those consistently. I don’t understand why, in this instance, security concerns are trumping the right to free speech, while on other occasions they have not been allowed to do so.”

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, at 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.org.au.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact