IYSSE supporters protest ban on IYSSE at University of Melbourne

3 September 2015

Below is a selection of letters sent to the IYSSE protesting the decision by the Clubs and Societies Committee of the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU) to reject, for the third time in eighteen months, an application by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) to establish an IYSSE club at the campus.

As an IYSSE statement, published on September 1, explained, the actions of the C&S committee are part of a broader attack on the IYSSE at campuses across the country. These attacks "serve to silence the only student organisation opposing the militarist preparations against China and the US-led military intrigues internationally, and seeking to turn students to the fight for the independent mobilisation of the working class against the accompanying assault on jobs, wages, education, health, welfare and other social rights." The statement pointed out that the C&S committee's decision is part of an assault on democratic rights by "authorities at every level", which "are attempting to suppress political opposition—particularly conscious socialist opposition—through censorship and persecution."

We urge IYSSE members and supporters, and WSWS readers, in Australia and around the world, to join the campaign against this attack on fundamental democratic rights, and demand that the Clubs and Societies Committee of the UMSU retract its ban on the IYSSE and uphold, as a basic democratic principle, the right of students to freedom of expression and association.

Letters of protest should be sent to Stephen Smith and Claire Pollock, the UMSU Clubs & Societies Committee officers at clubs@union.unimelb.edu.au and to Hana Dalton, the General Secretary of UMSU, at secretary@union.unimelb.edu.au.

Please send copies of all letters to the IYSSE at iysseaus@gmail.com. A selection of letters will be published on the World Socialist Web Site.

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I am writing to you from Britain to condemn your repeated moves to block the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) from affiliating a club on the University of Melbourne campus. Your decisions are a blatant act of political censorship. Time and again the IYSSE has exposed the spurious character of your reasons for rejecting affiliation. These have been documented as a public record for an international audience to review.

Your most recent explanations for blocking affiliation, which is staggering for its bureaucratic arrogance and arbitrary authority, only serves to further expose the anti-democratic character of your decision and prove that your reasons are completely political. There is no room for any other conclusion than that you have made a collective, conscious decision to impose political censorship on campus.

This undermines any democratic rights of students, whether it be a particular group of students who want to establish clubs and speak freely or students as a whole who have a right to hear and consider different perspectives. As elected representatives of students in what is supposed to be an organisation for students, I would have thought the defence of democratic rights would have been your overriding consideration regardless of your own individual political stances. Instead you play the role of the political police on behalf of the Australian state.

This role is all the more obvious because you conform to a recent wave of censorship both on and off campuses throughout Australia when the Australian state is engaged in criminal activity within and outside its borders, is tearing up democratic and social rights and aggressively promoting nationalism and militarism to carry out and prepare new war crimes. This censorship, particularly at universities which have in the past become arenas of anti-war and critical thought, is a crucial pillar in official operations to suppress any opposition to the above.

Your decisions not only pave the way for censorship on your campus and other campuses in Australia but campuses across the world where the same anti-democratic and militarist tendencies are in effect. You would do well to reflect on history to know the roles you play with your decisions and their consequences.

I would encourage you to consider the struggle waged by the IYSSE in Germany to recognise that our members will not be cowed into silence, that we are aware of our historical responsibility and will relentlessly work to overcome any bureaucratic and authoritarian obstacle by drawing on the mobilisation of students, youth and workers in defence of their own democratic and social rights.

With that said I completely support the demand of the IYSSE to immediately retract your ban on the IYSSE and lift all obstacles to the club's affiliation as a matter of basic democratic principle.

JW

Britain

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Attn: *Stephen Smith, Claire Pollock and Hana Dalton*

You should be aware of this article posted on wsws.org yesterday.

Very serious issues have been raised in this article, which you are directly accountable for.

Your complicity in this political censorship is undemocratic and completely unacceptable. The pernicious part you have played in this suppression of freedom of speech and freedom of association will be duly noted.

AB

Perth, Australia

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

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I am writing to protest your rejection of the application by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) to affiliate a club through the University of Melbourne Student Union (UMSU). By denying them the right to establish a UMSU chapter of the IYSSE, you collectively stand in the worst anti-democratic traditions of the Australian and international ruling class, which has often resorted to such methods to suppress progressive thought and any challenge to the status quo.

Universities, colleges, and other institutions of higher education have, for many decades, furnished young minds with an environment in which to seek out knowledge and express themselves intellectually. Though far from perfect, and organically encumbered by the influence of the ruling class and their state, these places of learning were arenas where the interplay, exchange, and conflict of ideas—often unpopular ones—could produce significant contributions for the betterment of mankind.

The IYSSE has already exposed the dishonest nature of your arguments. Your claim that the aims of the IYSSE "overlap" with those of the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative exhibits a flippant attitude towards matters of political principle, or, what is more plausible, a conscious attack on Marxist politics. A veritable "river of blood" separates the political program and perspective of the IYSSE from Socialist Alternative—a political organization that has openly advocated for one US-backed imperialist intervention after another in the Middle East in recent years, leading to the deaths of tens of thousands of unarmed civilians. These crimes against humanity are only a fraction of those in which Socialist Alternative is culpable.

In contrast, the IYSSE has warned that the only answer to the continued bloodbath in the Middle East is the unity of the working class in the region to pursue an independent political road against capitalist barbarism and for socialism and peace. In Australia, the IYSSE has condemned both the Liberals and Labor for participating in these imperialist interventions, and insisted on the need for the Australian working class to form its own independent political party to fight for socialism, in common cause with their class brothers and sisters around the world. Socialist Alternative, on the other hand, has always constituted a small but essential prop for Labor, mouthing tepid criticisms while encouraging workers to remain subordinated to this right-wing capitalist party of war and austerity.

Furthermore, as the IYSSE has pointed out, there exist on campus numerous groups which express very similar aims, such as two clubs affiliated to the Labor Party. Yet you have chosen to selectively apply your rules and regulations to one aspirant club. The question you must answer is: Why have you singled out the IYSSE? The answer to this question would be most illuminating.

It is your responsibility to immediately grant the IYSSE's request and affiliate them as a UMSU club. They have fulfilled the proper requirements and aptly demonstrated that they have not violated the spirit of the UMSU mandate. To do any less would be a gross dereliction of your duties.

By persisting in your deliberate campaign of blacklisting the IYSSE, you mock the essentially democratic character of the modern university, and completely repudiate your school's motto: "May I grow in the esteem of future generations." Rest assured that future cohorts will only look back in shame at this disturbing episode.

Yours sincerely,

DL

Canada

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As a former student at all levels and then as a teacher in New York City and because history has proven that democratic rights requires an international defense, I demand the retraction of the ban on the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at the University of Melbourne.

Education not only requires academic freedom both as necessary for the full, truthful and creative development of intellectual, physical, personal, and social progress but also because education as the continuation and growth of culture is at the heart of human society and our struggle to survive and benefit all people. The ongoing attacks on the democratic rights of the IYSSE in the form of the obstacles to the club's affiliation on the U of M campus by the Clubs and Societies Committee (C&SC) of the Student Union necessarily reflects the larger attacks on democratic rights emanating from the global economic crisis with its attacks on the working class and youth, including in education, on behalf of capitalist profits and the drive toward imperialist war.

This is no hyperbole and we have seen this before in history. In this age of information and globalization, and the need to unite the working class for the welfare of humanity, I write because this is not merely an isolated, local issue. I call on you, members of the committee and all students to recognize this and reverse course in this matter. Thank you for your attention.

HL

United States

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You don't have the right to ban an organization just because you don't like its politics, even if you think that it "overlaps" with another organization, which in fact is not true—neither of the two organizations believe that they have anything in common with the other. Eventually, as support for the IYSSE grows, you will be revealed to more people as anti-democratic bureaucrats, you will look foolish, and you will eventually reverse your decision. But you will be discredited in the process.

RR

United States

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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