

Australian IYSSE members protest ban at University of Melbourne

4 September 2015

Below is a selection of letters sent by International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) members at Australian universities, 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 to establish an IYSSE club at the campus. Some letters have been slightly edited for reasons of grammar and length.

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.

From a student at University of Melbourne

This is a letter of protest in regard to your recent decision to reject for a third time in 18 months the formation of an IYSSE club on the University of Melbourne campus.

I am writing on behalf of students not only interested in the formation of the club and not even only on behalf of students on campus. I am writing on behalf of the youth and students globally who, by such actions, are bereft of the political perspective and alternative put forward by the ICFI (International Committee of the Fourth International) and its youth and student arm, the IYSSE.

I find your committee’s decision against the IYSSE’s affiliation to be a clear infringement of the democratic rights of these students to express their political views on campus and of the 56 students who had openly expressed interest in the club’s formation. The claims the Clubs and Societies committee has made are, in themselves, extraordinary and indicate the political motivation behind the rejection. The C&S committee has made no attempt to listen to the students involved with the IYSSE or the students who have articulated interest in the clubs perspective and

proposed activities.

The IYSSE has an important void to fill on campus with no other organisation, club or society putting forward the internationalist, socialist or anti-war perspectives which define the ICFI’s political perspective and aims of the world Trotskyist movement. The students, inundated with both the bourgeois media and the politics of the pseudo-left, deserve an alternative view. This is exactly what the IYSSE is putting forward in its opposition to inequality and the drive to war.

Having obliged the committee by trying to approach the initial set-backs that were produced by the C&S committee’s hand, the IYSSE was knocked back again earlier this year. The IYSSE only then informed the students of the decision and the injustice it represented. The C&S committee then tried to claim that this should not have happened. That the students they are meant to represent have no right to know of the consequences of the C&S committee’s meetings and decisions! This, in the eyes of the C&S committee, is bad faith. This, in my eyes, is freedom of speech and the enablement of a truly democratic campus community. To reject the IYSSE on the grounds that they were acting in such a way that compromised any “good working relationship” is not only ludicrous, but cynical.

As a student, I am disappointed by the actions and narrow-mindedness of the C&S committee in representing myself and my peers. My voice and the voices of those around me have been silenced by the rejection of affiliation to IYSSE.

I would like to see the decision repealed and the IYSSE able to operate with the freedom enjoyed by the other political clubs on campus. Without it, the voices of dozens of students, and the potentially many more who may have appreciated the work of the IYSSE, will be suppressed.

Regards,

EY

IYSSE at University of Melbourne

From the University of Newcastle

On behalf of the IYSSE club at the University of Newcastle, we find it truly extraordinary that you have rejected for the third time the IYSSE’s application for affiliation at the University of Melbourne.

The IYSSE had the temerity to oppose your decision and to bring the nature of this decision to the attention of students by circulating an open letter, exposing and refuting the claims of the committee that the aims and perspectives of the IYSSE and those of Socialist Alternative were, as the committee claimed, “overlapping.”

That the Committee should use this fight for the democratic right to establish the IYSSE on campus as the basis for refusing yet again affiliation, reveals that you do not consider the C&SC accountable to the student body and reflects a far wider attack on democratic rights and principles and a turn to authoritarian methods.

The vindictive treatment of the IYSSE has sent a message to any students who oppose or seek to discuss publicly decisions of the committee—do that and you will be targeted and banned from forming

your own clubs.

We demand that the C&SC immediately lift its ban and all obstacles to the IYSSE's affiliation. We insist as a basic democratic principle, complete freedom of expression on campus, without fear of retribution by university or student union authorities.

Yours sincerely,

JD

IYSSE at University of Newcastle

IYSSE at University of NSW: "The ban is nothing short of anti-democratic"

As a current student of the University of New South Wales, I am writing to you to express opposition to your ban on the IYSSE student club at the University of Melbourne.

The ban which you have imposed on this club is nothing short of anti-democratic. I find it rather contradictory that an organisation which claims to represent all students, and aims to improve their experience on campus, is, in fact, inhibiting the rights of students to freedom of speech and affiliation. Universities have been the epicentres of the development and sharing of intellectual thought, which is a necessity for the continuous progression of the human race.

The IYSSE provides a unique aspect to intellectual thought which is not present in clubs with affiliations to the Labor or Liberal parties, as well as pseudo-leftist groups such as Socialist Alternative. Your actions thus far will only have the effect of destroying the diversity of this condition, thereby politically censoring discussion on campus, and pushing the atmosphere towards that of nationalism and militarism.

However, it is no coincidence that your organisation's current actions intersect with the ramping up of the promotion of these before mentioned agendas, and the silencing of any anti-war position, which only prepares present and future youth for the slaughterhouse of imperialist war, and the grinding down of the living conditions of students and workers internationally into dust.

As a student myself, I urge you to revoke your ban on the IYSSE, and stand for the democratic rights of workers and students.

Regards,

RP

IYSSE at University of NSW, Sydney

From the University of Western Sydney

After reading about your actions to politically censor the students that wish to establish the IYSSE as a club on campus, I am writing to you to condemn such actions as being undemocratic. And yes, I will use the word undemocratic, because being elected does not automatically define all your actions thereafter as democratic.

There are 56 students that want the IYSSE to establish a club at their university. I ask you, were any of their wants considered in your decision? Considering how they continue to persist in establishing this club and your response to them hasn't changed, I can safely assume you have ignored any input from the students you supposedly represent.

Regardless of what excuses you have given to continue to reject the establishment of this club, the fact remains that students have the democratic right to establish whatever clubs they wish. These clubs do not interfere with the ability for a university to function as it normally would—as students manage these clubs themselves. There is no legitimate reason why anyone else should be concerned of "overlapping" themes in clubs.

Of course, even then, your reasoning of "overlapping" aims with another club as a justification to reject the establishment of the IYSSE is fundamentally inaccurate. Which, I believe, you already are fully aware.

I am a student at University of Western Sydney, where there is a student club for the IYSSE and for the Socialist Alliance. As a member of the

IYSSE, I can tell you from personal experience that our club and Socialist Alliance do not get along. This is due to how our aims differ. The IYSSE's political views are based on the analysis of Trotsky and traditional Marxism, whereas Socialist Alliances' political views are based on working within the capitalist system.

It is time that the C&SC end this façade of being an organisation to uphold the rights of the students. Rejecting the establishment of any student club on such faulty grounds is evidence against this claim. If the C&SC—and the student union in general—truly has any intentions of genuinely defending the rights of students, then allow the IYSSE to be an established club at the University of Melbourne.

CJ

IYSSE, University of Western Sydney

From the University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

These repeated moves to ban the IYSSE as an affiliated club on your campus will only draw attention to this issue as an attack on the rights of students to form clubs and societies. Sections of the IYSSE have been established at other universities such as University of NSW, and it is clear from the presence of other organisations on these campuses calling themselves "socialist" that your move to block them yet again is nothing related to "overlapping aims."

As numerous others have pointed out, these moves are politically motivated, just as were the attempts to impose censorship onto the Socialist Equality Party and its student movement earlier this year. The IYSSE has fought relentlessly under similar conditions against the suppression or removal of it as a club from other universities, and it will not tolerate the actions taken by the UMSU in the slightest.

If the IYSSE were not a target for censorship, its affiliation would have been a non-issue. I strongly agree with the IYSSE's opposition to the *threat that it will be banned indefinitely*, and urge you to allow their affiliation.

JBP

University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

From a Murdoch University student in Western Australia

I am dismayed to read of the most recent act of censorship levelled against the IYSSE at the University of Melbourne, for it reeks to high heaven of illegitimacy. How dare you unilaterally revoke their application to form a club! It is the democratic right of all students to form any such club of their choosing, in the pursuit of freedom of association and expression. I wish to register my outrage.

Your decision is very sinister. The IYSSE and the WSWs were correct to place this unprecedented attack on the democratic rights at the university in its wider historical and geopolitical context. It is not an isolated incident.

Lenin wrote in his seminal pamphlet *The State and Revolution* that the state is an instrument for the exploitation of the oppressed class, "its power consisting of not only special bodies of armed men, but also of material adjuncts, prisons and institutions of coercion of all kinds."

In this epoch we can now add the anti-democratic university guild bureaucracies.

Sincerely,

OA

Murdoch University student and refinery worker, Western Australia



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact