International letters protest IYSSE censorship at University of Melbourne

5 September 2015

Below is a selection of letters sent by International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) members and supporters at universities internationally, 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 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—particularlyconsciousssocialistopposition—thr ough 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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From the University of Liverpool in Britain

I want to add my voice to the growing opposition to your decision to ban the International Youth and Students for Social Equality from Melbourne university campus.

Further, you have outrageously condemned any public discussion of your activities. Why do you seek to cover up your unprincipled machinations?

Your actions are clearly part of a systematic attempt to block students from articulating their independent political interests, across Australia and internationally. Our societies have been blocked at universities internationally due to bureaucratic clumsiness and conscious political manipulation by cynical careerists in the students' unions.

Whether here in Britain, where freedom of expression is being stamped out under the pretext of fighting "campus extremism," or Germany, where academics attempt to force students to accept their rehabilitation of Nazi war aims, our movement recognises the significance of the repression of youth as a necessary part of the drive to imperialist war on behalf of all the major capitalist powers.

The IYSSE represents a distinct—and diametrically opposed—political tendency to "Socialist Alternative," a right-wing organisation.

We will fight for our democratic right to organise as an independent organisation as part of a specific and unique international political tradition, the International Committee of the Fourth International.

Yours sincerely,

JM

IYSSE, University of Liverpool

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Another letter from Britain

I am disgusted to learn of your repeated rejection of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) application to affiliate a club on campus.

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Earlier this year the Socialist Equality Party, of which the IYSSE is the youth movement, fought to overcome censorship in Sydney after the extreme right-wing Facebook group "the great Aussie patriot," which is in the same vein as the Australia First party and Australian Defence League, attempted to shut down their meetings entitled "Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to third world war."

The local council in the area bowed to their demands against the democratic rights of the party to organise their meetings.

I am to assume that this is the same anti-democratic tradition that you stand in.

JS
Britain

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From Western Washington University in the US

I am writing in protest of the University of Melbourne Student Union Clubs and Societies committee's decision to withhold club recognition once again from the International Youth and Students for Social Equality.

The C&S committee decision constitutes a gross violation of students' democratic rights; not only those of the fifty-six students who have taken the initiative to register a club that represents their noble ideals, but also the rights of the general student body to hear and consider alternative points. This decision is part of a dangerous and disturbing political trend: the suppression of social opposition to inequality and war.

The IYSSE is the student and youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International…. The ICFI, IYSSE and the Socialist Equality Parties stand at the head of a renaissance in classical Marxist thought. They seek to bring this rich heritage to workers, students and youth. The strength of their movement grows from the strength of the international working class.

I hereby demand that you rescind your ban on the IYSSE and grant them the full rights of association, to which they are entitled.

Sincerely,
JO
Student, Western Washington University
United States of America

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From Wellington, New Zealand

As a former student and organiser of IYSSE activities at Victoria University in Wellington, New Zealand, I am writing to protest your arbitrary and unjustifiable decision to ban the IYSSE from affiliating as a club at University of Melbourne.

The reasons you have given for this are an insult to the intelligence of students. The politics of the IYSSE do not "overlap," but are completely opposed to those of Socialist Alternative, as anyone familiar with both organisations can tell you, and as the IYSSE has spelled out. In any case, why should students be prevented from forming clubs just because the C&S Committee decrees that they have "overlapping aims?"

As for your recent statement that you won't affiliate the IYSSE because you can't have a "good working relationship" with it, after IYSSE members opposed your ban... What can one say, except that this is a blatant attack on the rights of students to take part in whatever political activity they like. It is an attack on freedom of speech at one of the major universities in Australia.

I urge you to reverse your ban on the IYSSE. You should not see this as a trivial matter, as your actions have profound implications. If you maintain the ban you will have joined a right-wing campaign against the only political organisation in Australia that seeks to build a movement of students and workers against the drive towards war, and the attacks on democratic rights and living standards.

Students cannot allow their universities to be transformed into think tanks for big business and militarism, where dissent is suppressed. Any organisation that claims to represent students should uphold complete freedom of discussion and debate about politics as an essential component of university life. Students should not be restricted to the Liberals, Labor, the Greens and other groups that basically support these parties and whose politics the C&SC approves of. Everyone must have the absolute right to discuss the programme and perspective put forward by the IYSSE, and to join it.

Sincerely,
TP
Wellington, New Zealand

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

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