

Letters oppose refusal to affiliate IYSSE at University of Melbourne

8 September 2015

Below is a selection of letters sent to demand that the Clubs and Societies Committee of the University of Melbourne Student Union retract its ban on affiliating the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and uphold, as a basic democratic principle, the right of students to freedom of expression and association.

We encourage IYSSE members and supporters, and WSWs readers, in Australia and around the world, to continue to write letters. 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 also 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.

On behalf of the IYSSE at Griffith University in Brisbane, I am writing today to voice our opposition to the decision of the C&S committee to block the IYSSE club's formation at the University of Melbourne. The grounds upon which the decision was made are deeply flawed...

We fully endorse the open letter that the IYSSE issued to your committee, which lists in detail the key differences in policy between the IYSSE and Socialist Alternative.

Your decision to ban the IYSSE is an outrageous attack on the democratic rights of all students to be provided independent perspectives and views alternative to that of the major political parties.

We believe it is essential that universities provide a place for the fostering of ideas and debate. For centuries, universities have been a place of independent thought and discussion. To break from these traditions

would be of great detriment to students and the working class as a whole.

Regards,

JS

Griffith University IYSSE

As a university professor and supporter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, I am writing to add my voice to the protests against your anti-democratic decision, for the third time in 18 months, to refuse to permit the IYSSE members at Melbourne University to register the IYSSE as a club.

It is difficult to imagine a more blatant act of political censorship. You have not only denied the basic democratic rights of the IYSSE and the 56 students who applied for its registration. You have ridden roughshod over the rights of all students at the University of Melbourne, and elsewhere, to consider the socialist program offered by the IYSSE and decide for themselves which club to join.

Your ban is directed against the only student organisation that fights to alert students and young people to the mounting drive to war and austerity, and provide them with the socialist perspective needed to overturn the capitalist profit system.

First, your committee rejected the IYSSE club's registration on the spurious and false ground that its aims overlap with those of Socialist Alternative. It is perfectly clear that the aims of the IYSSE are diametrically opposed to those of that pseudo-left group. The IYSSE seeks to educate students and young people in the history and principles of the Trotskyist movement, whereas Socialist Alternative represents a grouping that explicitly rejected Trotskyism in 1951...

Then, when the IYSSE correctly objected to your ban, and pointed out the fundamental differences between the IYSSE and Socialist Alternative, you

declared that the IYSSE's reply, issued to students as an open letter, disqualified the IYSSE as a club because it had undermined any possible "good working relationship" with your committee.

What an outrageous and dictatorial response! What contempt for democratic principles and the rights of free speech of the students you claim to represent!

By taking this decision at the University of Melbourne, one of the country's major educational institutions, you have lined up with a pattern of attempts by university and other authorities to silence the IYSSE in order to suppress the development of socialist-led opposition to militarism, inequality and austerity.

I call on you to reverse your ban and uphold the basic democratic rights of the IYSSE members, and all students, to freedom of expression and association.

MH

As a former student of the University of Melbourne from 1971 to 1974, I wish to add my condemnation of the decision by the C&S Committee of UMSU to reject the IYSSE's application to form a club on campus.

My student days were set against the backdrop of the Vietnam War. Many political tendencies were freely active on campus and a deep-grained anti-war sentiment was expressed by the majority of students. Political protests, meetings and discussions formed a large part of university life. Any attempt to hinder such activities would have been viewed as anti-democratic and pro-war.

Today, when every political grouping, including Labor, Liberal, the Greens and Socialist Alternative, have lined up behind the eruption of US militarism and the drive to war against China, in which Australia is playing a pivotal role, the UMSU seeks to prohibit the IYSSE from warning students of what is being prepared and arming them with a socialist perspective and program.

The UMSU's spurious rejection of the IYSSE club is an affront to students, past and present, who defend the democratic right to freedom of political expression on campus. If you refuse to reverse your decision, you will stand exposed before an international audience.

Regards,

VG



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact