

IYSSE in Sri Lanka, US, condemn University of Melbourne ban

10 September 2015

The IYSSE in Sri Lanka and at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, have written to the University of Melbourne Clubs & Societies Committee to demand that it 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. The letters have been slightly edited for length reasons.

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.

The General Secretary,
UMSU Clubs & Societies Committee,
University of Melbourne, Australia

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Sri Lanka vehemently condemns the unjustifiable rejection of the application of the IYSSE.

Your ban on the IYSSE is an attack on the basic democratic rights of students to express their views and to independently organise on the policies and principles of their own. Above all, the ban is directed against the only student organisation that fights among the students and youth for an international socialist programme against war and austerity.

As the Australian IYSSE has already pointed out, your claims that the IYSSE club's name was

“unreflective” of its aims, and that it “overlapped” with the student club of Socialist Alternative are baseless and targeted to reject IYSSE's affiliation. The IYSSE and SEP have no affiliation with pseudo-left tendencies like Socialist Alternative in Australia and their counterparts throughout the world like the Nava Samaja Party (NSSP), United Socialist Party (USP) and the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP) in Sri Lanka, which have lined up with the pro-imperialist Sirisena government.

Also, your argument that all your decisions are always “democratic” and any criticism or exposure of your actions “undermine the democratic representative system” because your “committee members are elected,” best resembles the statements about “democracy” by the Obama administration in the US and governments around the world.

As correctly stated in the statement of the Australian IYSSE, the ban on IYSSE is organically bound up with the accelerated anti-democratic methods of the Abbott government in Australia and its counterparts internationally under the pressure of the global capitalist crisis.

Sri Lanka is among worst examples of the suppression of democratic and social rights. Repression on students within the state universities has been paramount. In 2014, under the previous government of President Rajapakse, more than 1,400 students, including student activists, were suspended from universities. In order to block any political activity of the students within the university system, student unions and elections for student unions have been suspended. Water cannon and tear gases are being used against the student protests over education spending cuts and privatisation. Student leaders have continuously become the target of government witch-hunts.

The suppression of student and youth struggles against austerity measures and imperialist war preparations under the new pro-US “national unity government” of President Maithreepala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremasinghe will be intensified to higher levels.

We, the Sri Lankan IYSSE, demand the immediate withdrawal of the ban imposed on the IYSSE in Melbourne University. We emphasise to the international working class, the youth and students the necessity to oppose this ban as an attack on the programme of international socialism and the struggle against the danger of world war and social counter-revolution.

Kapila Fernando
Convener,
IYSSE (Sri Lanka)

To whom it may concern at UMSU:

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan categorically opposes the ban on affiliation of the IYSSE by the Clubs & Societies Committee at the University of Melbourne. The arrogance involved in the decision to block a club from affiliating on campus based on “insubordination” is astounding. The decision is an attack on the democratic rights of the entire student body. The slogan “More Activities!” is obviously a misnomer.

You do not have the right to decide what information reaches the students or what discussions can take place. What expertise on Marxist program and principles do you have to claim an overlap in aim between various groups?

The IYSSE has repeatedly made clear its differences with Socialist Alternative, which does not advance a program for the political independence of the working class and instead supports bourgeois politicians and governments. By barring the IYSSE from participating in campus life, you are blocking students from gaining an understanding of the vital political lessons of the twentieth century, without which it is impossible to analyze the current political situation.

Since many students came out in support of the IYSSE last year, the claim that any criticism of the C&S Committee’s actions would “undermine the student representative system” falls flat on its face. You

are not representing the democratic will of the student population.

The IYSSE brings speakers from all across the world to lecture on a variety of topics, from history, to economics, to contemporary politics, to art and culture. It works to educate workers and students on the basis of a scientific, Marxist understanding of society and history.

In this epoch of deep-seated global economic crisis and the danger of nuclear war, the suppression of an organization that fights against imperialist war has the most dangerous implications. In carrying out such suppression, the University of Melbourne C&S Committee places itself in the company of right-wing political forces. We strongly urge the committee to reconsider its action.

With regards,
International Youth and Students for Social Equality,
Wayne State University Chapter



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact