

IYSSE in Germany protests against University of Melbourne ban

11 September 2015

The IYSSE in Germany has 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. As the letter explains, the IYSSE is conducting a decisive struggle at German universities, particularly at Humboldt University in Berlin, against the attempts to re-write history and downplay the past crimes of German imperialism in order to ideologically justify the revival of militarism.

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.

Dear Stephen Smith and Claire Pollock,

Dear Hana Dalton,

On behalf of the members of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Germany, we are writing to oppose your latest measure against the IYSSE's branch at the University of Melbourne and your attack on the democratic rights of students.

We have been closely following your acts of political censorship, which are clearly aimed at banning the IYSSE from campus and obstructing the activities of our comrades and supporters to establish a club at your university since April 2014. Up until the present day, you justify these attacks in the most spurious manner.

Your arguments are both absurd and reactionary. To state that the IYSSE is not allowed to criticize elected bodies is a travesty of democracy and can be used to suppress any opposition to the right wing and militarist positions of the Abbott government.

Your behavior serves the interests of Australian imperialism. The IYSSE is the only organization waging a principled fight against war and militarism among students and youth. The Australian government is the closest ally of the Obama administration and fully supports the US "pivot to Asia." Canberra has been stepping up its attacks on democratic rights and those opposing this dangerous threat to humanity in line with its increasing involvement in the US drive to war.

We have witnessed a very similar development in Germany. Following the declared end to "the policy of military abstention" in late 2013, the German government has intervened in Ukraine, Iraq, Mali and many other countries. In doing so, Berlin has returned to its imperialist traditions of the 20th century and, once again, is seeking to dominate Europe.

Well aware of the broad popular opposition against any sort of military deployment, the ruling elites in Germany are undertaking to re-write the history of both World Wars to present the role of German imperialism in a favourable light. To this end the universities in Germany are being increasingly turned into think tanks for modern war propaganda. Professors at Humboldt University in Berlin are playing a crucial role in preparing the ideological basis for new wars involving German troops.

Political scientist Herfried Münkler downplays the responsibility of the German ruling elite in the outbreak of World War One. In an interview in early 2014 he declared that "[t]here can hardly be a responsible policy operating in Europe based on the notion: It was all our fault. With regard to 1914, that is a legend ..." His

colleague, Eastern Europe Historian Jörg Baberowski, even attempts to downplay the crimes of the Nazis. In February 2014 he was quoted in *Der Spiegel* magazine, saying “Hitler was not a psychopath, and he was not vicious. He did not want people to talk about the extermination of the Jews at his table.”

For opposing such brazen lies and distortions of the crimes of German imperialism in the 20th century, the IYSSE in Germany confronted attacks on its democratic rights very similar to those taking place at the University of Melbourne. The university management tried to prevent us from holding anti-war meetings at the campus and started a campaign against our group. As in Melbourne, the university management was supported by some so-called student officials, who demonstrated a similar contempt for democratic rights as your own.

Generations of workers fought for the basic democratic rights to put forward oppositional views on campus and oppose war and militarism. You have no right to misuse your function and invent one baseless argument after the other against the IYSSE.

We mobilized hundreds of students and workers at Humboldt-University to defend our right to hold meetings and conduct political work on campus, including winning the support of the student parliament and other student bodies. As a result, the university administration had to withdraw its allegations and allowed us to hold our meeting. Around 200 people attended, and it turned out to be the largest political meeting at Humboldt University of the entire semester.

We demand you reverse your ban on the IYSSE on the campus of the University of Melbourne and immediately register our organization as an official club.

Philipp Frisch and Sven Wurm,
IYSSE Germany



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact