

Students discuss lessons of history at IYSSE lectures

Our reporters
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Students, workers and young people who attended the IYSSE's lectures on "100 years since the Zimmerwald anti-war conference: How the Russian Revolution was prepared," spoke with *World Socialist Web Site* reporters after the campus events.

James, an 18-year-old supermarket worker, said he attended the lecture at the University of New South Wales because he wanted to "learn more about" the Socialist Equality Party's policies.

"The issues raised at the Zimmerwald conference were clear. Lenin, in particular, explained that the role of socialists was to oppose one's own government in World War I. This is relevant for the 21st century," he said. "We can see the drive towards a war with China and the American government's aggression against Russia that led it to support fascists in government in the Ukraine.

"The legitimacy of this system is seriously undermined because the capitalists are not able to fundamentally resolve the crisis of the economy. The capitalist class is not going to give up their system willingly. They will be calling on this generation of youth and workers to fight in their war. Workers need to understand that they need to oppose war. A war will be workers fighting other workers."

Mohammad, an international student from Pakistan attended the University of Newcastle lecture. "It was good to find out about the positive aspects of the Russian Revolution and Lenin, about what they actually wanted to achieve through all the revolutions and how they were able to end the world war," he said.

"People have got to learn from history. We've gone through two world wars and we don't want a third. If we don't learn from history there will be destruction all over the world."

Shehryar said he "learnt a lot" from the lecture. "I

found this perspective very interesting and it's great what you guys are doing providing this knowledge to everyone. What should have been done a hundred years ago and what needs to be done today should be compared and emphasised," he said.

"The US government spends billions of dollars, it was revealed by Edward Snowden, to spy on its own citizens. Meanwhile unemployment is rising. People are revolting against it.

"Now the US has its eyes on Pakistan and says 'This country has Taliban, this country's unsafe, we have to clean that up.' Well who told you? You have to ask them 'Why are there Taliban?' You're funding them! You're sending them into the country! What happened with Iraq? They destroyed the country and they're still there. Why?"

Commenting on attempts by university bodies to hinder IYSSE activities, Sharia said "The IYSSE is trying to grow and set up bodies in universities and take action. This is the basic democratic right of students like us and we just can't have [university authorities] trying to stop us, it's terrible."

Kathryn, a software developer, said that the Newcastle meeting showed her that "there's a higher chance of war, and nuclear war, in Asia than I previously realised."

"Our government is getting us into 'war mode' by making Anzac Day this year more of a celebration than a commemoration," she said. "In 2003, people internationally showed their opposition to the Iraq War. Now even more people disagree with war but world governments are ignoring their people. We can't express ourselves within the political establishment and our opposition to them is stifled."

Jake, a psychology student, attended the Western Sydney University lecture. "I think it's crucial to learn

from the lessons of history. One of the greatest problems today is ignorance of history and major social events. It's actively promoted, look at the Murdoch press. It's promoted that all that's necessary is a very shallow understanding of what's going on," he said.

"I think the parallels Nick drew between one hundred years ago and now were pretty poignant. I can see that there's a decline and crisis in the international economy, there's a lowering of living standards and there's definitely a militarisation of society as a whole, which is an inherently bad thing.

"The glorification of war is pretty rampant, particularly around Anzac Day. I remember a Remembrance Day commemoration we had in high school and I was thrown out of the hall for saying, 'What about the Germans who died.'"

Aaron, another Western Sydney University psychology student said, "It seems blatantly obvious that there is a threat of war today. I'm concerned about the Syrian conflict and everything that's gone on in the Middle-East.

"I really agreed with what was said about Anzac Day—there's more and more of a glorification of militarism and it does seem to be a preparation for more wars. It's in all forms of media and very in your face. It feels like they're gearing up. There are also tensions in the Asia-Pacific ... If you look at the history of the American military in this region, and around the world, it's not a pretty picture.

"History is significant. You can only go forward off the past. And history does repeat itself, so I think you do need to look to it for answers."



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