

Build the International Youth and Students for Social Equality!

A socialist program to fight war, austerity and dictatorship!

The IYSSE (Australia)
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As 2016 begins, young people in Australia and around the world confront the mounting threat of war, an increasingly desperate social crisis, another financial collapse with even greater repercussions than that of 2007–8, and the erosion of fundamental democratic rights. Governments around the world are responding to the deepest crisis of the world capitalist system since the 1930s with criminal military interventions that have created flashpoints for a global conflict in every part of the globe.

The Middle East, having been decimated by 15 years of US-led invasions and occupations is the scene of a new predatory military operation in Syria and Iraq involving virtually all of the major powers. Millions of refugees fleeing the carnage are being met by barbed-wire fences and police-state violence, reminiscent of the horrors of World War Two. In Eastern Europe, the US is spearheading a confrontation with the Russian regime of Vladimir Putin, which has already led to a bloody civil war in Ukraine and poses the threat of nuclear war.

In the Asia-Pacific region, the Obama administration is carrying out a massive military build-up directed against China.

Behind the backs of the population, the entire political establishment—Labor, the Liberals, the Greens and their pseudo-left adjuncts in groups such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance—has signed-up to Washington’s preparations for war against China, in defiance of the anti-war sentiment among the vast majority of workers and young people.

In 2011, Julia Gillard’s Labor government struck a military deal with the Obama administration, aligning Australia with the so-called “pivot to Asia”, boosting ties between the two country’s military forces and establishing a new US marine base in Darwin. Every government since then—under Rudd, Abbott and Turnbull—has placed military expansion at the very centre of its agenda.

Washington now insists that Canberra participate in its provocative challenges to Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea—provocations that could trigger armed conflict. In preparation for war, the Australian establishment is devoting ever greater resources to acquiring new submarines, warships and aircraft. A report published last month by the

Center for Strategic and International Studies, a Washington-based think tank, commissioned by the US Department of Defense, declared that the US and its allies in Asia, particularly Australia, needed to be ready to “fight tonight.” It stated: “As Australia’s own influence expands and Australia’s geopolitical position becomes more central to US strategy, Washington’s expectations of Canberra are growing.”

Young people must be clear: our generation confronts the stark alternative outlined by the great revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg following the outbreak of World War One—either socialism or barbarism. The same inherent contradictions of the capitalist system—above all, between a globally integrated economy and the division of the world into antagonistic nation-states—that led to two world wars last century, have created the conditions for a Third World War, which would inevitably involve nuclear weapons.

The International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), are fighting to build a socialist anti-war movement of the international working class aimed at averting such a catastrophe. As students and youth, we are being placed on the frontlines of a new global conflict and have definite historic responsibilities in this struggle. To halt the relapse into imperialist barbarism we must be at the forefront of the fight to politically educate and mobilise the great social power of the working class to overthrow the source of war, the capitalist profit system itself.

The ruling elites are well aware that masses of workers and young people are deeply opposed to war. That is why the entire political establishment has been whipping-up an atmosphere of nationalist patriotism, promoting militarism, the demonisation of refugees and the vilification of Muslims.

At the same time, state and federal governments are spending hundreds of millions of dollars to “celebrate” the centenary of World War I. Everything is being done to obscure the predatory character of these wars, which were aimed at securing resources, markets and profits for the imperialist powers, including Australia. Instead, in a flagrant campaign of historical falsification that extends into primary and secondary schools,

Australian participation in the two world wars of the last century, and a host of other military adventures, is being whitewashed as the defence of “democracy,” and the celebration of “mateship” and the “Australian spirit.” Nationalist myths are being promoted through the publication of pro-war “history” books and biographies and the regular staging of public “commemorations.”

That the ICFI, the Socialist Equality Party and IYSSE alone oppose this militarist campaign was underscored by the extraordinary attempts of the Burwood Labor council and the University of Sydney (USYD) last year to prevent us from holding a meeting on the Anzac Day weekend, exposing the glorification of militarism and the preparations for new wars. This political censorship—replicated in attacks on the IYSSE at a number of other campuses since then—is the sharpest expression of broader attempts to suppress opposition to war and prevent young people from understanding the situation they confront.

It is no accident that USYD banned our meeting. As one of the most prestigious universities in the country, it is being transformed into a key ideological centre for the promotion of militarism. Its “United States Studies Centre,” a think-tank founded in 2006 to churn out propaganda aimed at overcoming hostility to US-led wars, devotes considerable resources to promoting the US-Australia military alliance.

Global war preparations go hand in hand with an escalating assault on the social rights of the working class. While almost \$2 trillion is dedicated to military spending world-wide every year, the financial elites are carrying out the destruction of public education and healthcare and the decimation of living conditions.

In Australia, the \$50 billion being squandered on the construction of new submarines would pay for at least 25 new, state-of-the-art public hospitals. The \$39 billion earmarked for frigates and destroyers could finance a desperately needed five-and-a-half million dollar upgrade to every public school in the country.

The militarisation of society is incompatible with universities as centres of genuine higher learning, cultural advance and freedom of speech. The tertiary education sector has faced decades of unrelenting funding cuts, with students confronting endless restructurings involving the abolition of entire courses and faculties, while graduates face the prospect of being unable to find work in their field of study. Many will never find a decent job. TAFEs are being dismantled through the rapid hiking of fees to the tune of thousands of dollars a year, forcing many students to abandon their studies altogether. Last year, in New South Wales alone, enrolments dropped by 80,000.

In working class suburbs around the country, official youth unemployment often surpasses 30 percent. Here, young workers confront a life without a future, constantly targeted by parasitic private colleges peddling sham-degrees along with military recruiters promising a lucrative army “gap year.”

This social crisis will inevitably create major upheavals. A new mood of social opposition is developing around the world, reflected in emerging strike and protest movements throughout Europe and the US, and seething hostility to the official political establishment in every country.

The decisive question, however, is political leadership. Pseudo-left organisations, including Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, play a central role in seeking to channel mass disaffection back behind the existing political set-up—above all, behind Labor, the Greens and the thoroughly corporatised trade unions. The pseudo-left, which speaks for an affluent layer of the middle-class seeking to advance its own careers in academia, the unions and the public sector, promotes identity politics associated with race, gender, ethnicity and sexuality to suppress the fundamental class issues, including the fight against imperialist war.

We urge students and young people to oppose all forms of nationalism and militarism and turn to the internationalist perspective of the IYSSE. As the youth movement of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world party of socialist revolution founded by Leon Trotsky, we will be holding regular meetings throughout the year, clarifying the fundamental theoretical and historical questions associated with the fight to develop a genuine revolutionary movement of the international working class. We encourage you to begin your political education in Marxist politics by reading the *World Socialist Web Site*, the most widely-read socialist publication on the internet, and contributing articles on the political, economic, cultural and social issues facing the working class and youth. Above all, we call on you to join the IYSSE and participate in the fight to build it as the new mass, socialist, anti-war movement among students and young people in Australia, throughout Asia, including in China, and the world.



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