

Australian university students denounce the drive to war and austerity

Our reporters
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During university Orientation Week events in Australia and New Zealand over the past two weeks, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality campaigned at seven campuses in opposition to the drive to war and the related assault on the social and democratic rights of the working class.

The IYSSE fought for students to join the fight to build an international anti-war movement of the working class, based on a revolutionary socialist perspective, as the only means of preventing the descent into World War III.

Several students at each campus gave serious consideration to the issues raised by the IYSSE, and made thoughtful comments, reflecting a developing political radicalisation among workers and young people more generally.

At the University of Melbourne, **Nick**, a first-year science student said, “A big issue facing young people is, either unemployment or, when in the workplace, you have no security. You can come into work one day and then be told that you’ve lost your job. Also, war has been around for a long time, but the issue of world war, a war that’s more global, that is an issue. You had two world wars in the 20th century, but before then, there were none.”

He spoke out about the US military build-up in the region, commenting, “These US bases in Asia are all the way on the other side of the world from the United States. They’re not worrying about protecting themselves. There’s tens of thousands of kilometres between here and the US over which they could shoot down missiles, if they really were trying to protect themselves from China. This is definitely about protecting their interests around the Straits of Malacca, controlling Chinese exports, and in the event of a war, being able to blockade.”

Nick noted that the US was backing Islamist forces in Syria, in a bid to oust the Syrian regime, and commented, “The US did the same thing in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The same groups, the “terrorists” that they arrest people for, they’re actually supporting. At first, I thought the “War On Terror” was about fighting the terrorists, from watching the news. But then I did some more background research, and found that Saudi Arabia was great friends with these groups, and is completely supported by the US. So I thought, ‘hang on, there’s something very fishy here’.”

Harsh, a civil engineering student, said, “The major issue for young people I think is trying to find jobs after they finish studying. A lot of people today are overqualified. That’s what I’m scared of too. I’m studying Civil Engineering. Since the mining boom’s gone down, a lot of investment in engineering has gone down too, and I’m concerned about what that’ll mean.

“I’m scared that WWIII is going to start, involving Russia and the United States of course. I believe it could start from the events in Syria at the moment.

“I’m worried about the refugee crisis right now. War is responsible for that crisis. The countries that are supporting ISIS, above all the United States, are supporting war and creating war. War has created refugees. They need a place to stay, somewhere to eat; they’re humans.

“I didn’t know about the military build-up by the United States in this region. The United States claims itself to be a “good country,” and everyone supports its crimes because it has so many allies. China doesn’t have those same allies. Actually it has a lot of tensions. It has a border dispute with India right now.”

Thomas, a science student from the University of Newcastle, said, “In Australia, but probably

everywhere, young people feel disenfranchised, alienated from public institutions. They have no say.”

“Capitalism benefits from war. People don’t matter, money does. Capitalism requires war to flourish... There are geo-political conflicts—oil-capitalism unregulated inevitably leads to war and conflict among nation states.

“They are illegally invading smaller countries and never mind the consequences. For me it will be a great day when George Bush, Tony Blair and John Howard are hauled before some international tribunal and brought to account.

“Australia as lapdog is going along with the US against China. We will suffer. The reasons are geo-political rivalry. They are trying to give people reasons to push for military intervention.

“There is a real problem with military worship, of the war times. They say Australia was built in war—that there was federation in 1901 but that the nation was not forged until 1915, in this noble event. In fact, the war was a product of geo-political rivalry including between the UK and Germany. People were told it was a noble cause but they died for nothing.”

At the University of New South Wales, **Lisa**, a mature-aged student in Fine Arts, spoke out about the assault on social spending that goes hand in hand with war. “The majority of the wealth in the world is owned by a very small percentage,” she said.

“It seems to be that when we’re coming up to an election the government are always picking on the most vulnerable members of society. The other day they were talking about ‘the dole bludgers.’ I personally believe there’s not enough work for everyone to be employed.

“TAFE is now as expensive as university and apprenticeships aren’t the same as they used to be either. You used to be taken on and were guaranteed to achieve the apprenticeship with one employer. Now they can get rid of you and you have to try and find someone else to take you on to finish your apprenticeship.

“I have young nieces and nephews who live in the Central Coast and Newcastle and it’s so hard to find work. This is what makes me so angry, when the government says people are dole-bludgers.”

Tristan, a 22 year-old worker who participated in the IYSSE’s campaign at the University of Newcastle,

commented, “War is the major issue. We have conflicts happening all over the globe and that is going to draw a lot of young people’s attention to that. Young people are predominantly the people that they send into war and there is a lot of media propaganda targeted towards setting the minds of young people to drag them into these wars.”

Tristan said that for the US and its allies, including Australia, “the end goal would be to beat China and Russia into submission, maybe funding some kind of coup to overthrow the Chinese government, funding some sort of resistance or revolution in their country, or by all-out war. At the moment, things seem to transpiring in the direction of all-out war.”

He noted that there is mass opposition to war among young people and workers. “You can’t have a war without soldiers, you can’t have military equipment unless you have factories. Without the support of masses of people it would be incredibly difficult to go into war; if not impossible. They could use nuclear weapons, which is perhaps the way that they are looking at going, which is as simple as pressing a button. But with the building of a world socialist movement of the working class, we could stop them and overthrow these psychopathic governments that are leading us towards total annihilation.”



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