

Oppose the drive to war, austerity and the assault on democratic rights!

Build the International Youth and Students for Social Equality!

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
13 April 2016

As protests take place at a number of campuses across Australia today, students and young people confront a world in the midst of a major crisis of global capitalism, which poses critical political questions.

Governments internationally are responding to the greatest economic breakdown since the 1930s with a program of militarism and war that has created flashpoints for a new global conflict. At the same time, they are carrying out, on behalf of the corporate and financial elites, a social counter-revolution aimed at destroying publicly-funded healthcare, education and social services and the decimation of the jobs, wages and social conditions of the working class. Amid mounting opposition to this agenda, authoritarian methods of rule are being developed. The police-state measures introduced over the past 15 years, in the name of the fraudulent “war on terror” are increasingly being directed against social opposition at home.

None of these issues will be discussed at today’s rally. Nor have they been so much as mentioned by its organisers in the National Union of Students (NUS). After years of single-issue protests and “days of action” held by the NUS and other student groups, students need to draw some serious lessons. What have these demonstrations accomplished? How have they prepared young people to fight against war or the drive to completely corporatise universities, or any of the other burning issues we face?

The answer is clear from the declared purpose of today’s rallies. Once again, the NUS is promoting the utter fraud that the election of a Labor government, supported by the Greens, will halt the assault on higher education. The NUS is completely silent on the fact that it was the Labor governments of Kevin Rudd and

Julia Gillard that carried out some of the deepest cuts to universities in history, and prepared the ground for the Coalition government’s drive to deregulate university fees.

It was the Gillard Labor government that in 2012 deregulated course enrollments and uncapped the number of places universities could offer to students, resulting in ever-greater competition for student enrollments and the abolition of “unprofitable degrees.” In its 2013 budget, the Labor government introduced the largest ever single cut to university funding—\$2.3 billion. Between 2011 and 2013, Labor cut a total \$6.6 billion from higher education and research. These measures were a continuation of a decades-long, bipartisan drive to transform universities into for-profit entities—initiated through the reintroduction of university fees by the Hawke-Keating Labor governments from 1983 to 1996.

At the last series of major demonstrations, the NUS did everything it could to suppress any discussion of Labor’s record. While inviting prominent Labor and Greens politicians to posture as opponents of the Abbott government’s cuts to higher education, the NUS blocked representatives of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) from speaking, in order to prevent students from hearing a genuine socialist perspective to fight the university cuts.

Since then, the corporatisation of higher education has proceeded apace, with the University of Sydney, Monash University and university administrations across the country outlining sweeping pro-business restructurings. The ever-greater dependence of university budgets on endowments from wealthy

patrons, and on corporate sponsorship, has been accompanied by the evisceration of fundamental democratic rights on campuses. And the student unions are playing the key role in enforcing this agenda.

At the University of Melbourne, the Clubs and Societies Committee of the student union has refused to affiliate our IYSSE club four times in the last two years. Last month, the committee effectively banned the IYSSE. Why? Because we defended the principle that all students should be able to form clubs of their choice, without interference from any union or university body. And the NUS itself has done absolutely nothing to oppose this attack on the University of Melbourne IYSSE, or similar measures against our clubs at other universities across Australia. In other words, they are complicit in the establishment of a dangerous precedent, which poses before all student clubs the prospect of arbitrary and politically-motivated proscriptions and bans.

The attacks on the IYSSE take place in the context of a state-campaign to indoctrinate young people with pro-war sentiment, through the glorification of militarism and the rewriting of history. Hundreds of millions of dollars are being spent by the government on a celebration of the centenary of World War I, extending into every area of life, including the universities and even primary schools. Last year, the University of Sydney banned the Socialist Equality Party and the IYSSE from holding a meeting on campus over the Anzac Day weekend, entitled “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism and the drive to World War III.” The meeting opposed the orgy of militarist propaganda and put forward a socialist perspective against the danger of war.

The University of Sydney ban was aimed at preventing mass anti-war sentiment among students, workers and young people from finding any organised expression. This year, less than two weeks away from Anzac Day, the government, the universities and every official institution is once again preparing to bombard the population with the lie that Australian participation in World War I—an imperialist bloodbath, fought by the various powers for resources, profits and geo-strategic advantage—was a heroic and “nation-building” development.

Underlying this campaign is Australia’s complete integration into the US preparations for war against

China. While the Labor Party, the Greens, the unions and the pseudo-left organisations such as Socialist Alternative and Solidarity maintain a conspiracy of silence, extensive basing arrangements have already been established and hundreds of billions of dollars dedicated to military spending, to place the country on a war footing. In Canberra and in Washington, government-connected think tanks openly discuss plans for Australia to impose a naval blockade of shipping routes that pass through Indonesia, in the event of a US attack on China. More and more, they are discussing “thinking the unthinkable”—i.e., waging nuclear war.

The only means of preventing such a catastrophe, and halting all of the horrors of the moribund capitalist system, including the abolition of the right to education, is through the development of a revolutionary, socialist movement of the working class—the only social force that has no interest in the capitalist nation-state system, which inevitably leads to war, or in the private ownership of society’s resources by a tiny parasitic corporate and financial elite.

Such a struggle can only go forward on the basis of an international perspective. Young people, whether they live in the United States, Europe, China, Australia or any other part of the world, confront a future of war, poverty, and joblessness under the present social order.

The IYSSE, the student and youth section of the world Trotskyist movement, fights to unify the struggles of the working class and of students and young people across national borders, against the capitalist profit system itself, on the program of world socialism—the establishment of a global, planned economy to end the scourge of war and place society’s resources under the democratic control of the working class—the vast majority—to provide free, high quality education, healthcare, childcare and other essential social services for all.

We call on all students who want to fight against war and austerity cuts, and defend democratic rights, to join the IYSSE and build an IYSSE club on every campus around the country.



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