

Successful IYSSE meetings in Australia and New Zealand against the drive to war

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
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Over the past weeks, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) has held a series of successful meetings at campuses across Australia and in New Zealand calling on students to take up the fight for an international anti-war movement based on a socialist program to halt the drive to a new world war.

Based on the historic statement issued by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) on February 18 entitled “Socialism and the Fight Against War: Build an International Movement of the Working Class and Youth against Imperialism!” the meetings were addressed by James Cogan, Socialist Equality Party (SEP) national secretary, Nick Beams, member of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and Linda Tenenbaum, a longstanding member of the SEP National Committee. An IYSSE member chaired each of the meetings.

Students participated in lively discussions at Western Sydney University, the University of New South Wales and Macquarie University in Sydney; at the University of Newcastle; and at Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand. In Melbourne, the IYSSE meeting was held at a venue near the University of Melbourne, because the U of M Clubs and Societies Committee had recently banned the IYSSE club for the fourth time, preventing it from utilising university venues. Despite this act of blatant political censorship, several University of Melbourne students attended the meeting, along with other students, and several SEP supporters.

In his remarks to the meeting at the University of New South Wales, Cogan explained that the ICFI statement “outlines the enormous dangers now facing the world’s population arising from the military preparations and provocations being carried out by the world’s major powers, which, if not prevented, will inevitably result in the eruption of a Third World War.”

Cogan pointed to the emergence of potential flashpoints for a broader conflagration in every corner of the globe. He exposed the fraudulent character of US claims to be defending “freedom of navigation” in the South China Sea, commenting that the US was conducting military provocations against China to assert its “unfettered right to maintain its military apparatus in the region in readiness for a strike on the Chinese mainland and to maintain military dominance off the coast of China as part of what is known as the AirSea Battle plan. This plan envisages a massive strike on the Chinese mainland.” Cogan made clear that the entire political establishment—Labor, the Liberals, the Greens and the pseudo-left organisations—were complicit in Australia’s integration into these war plans, behind the backs of workers and young people.

The speaker reviewed the eruption of imperialist war over the past 25 years, and explained that the predatory intrigues and interventions

spearheaded by the US were an expression of the historically outmoded character of the capitalist system, and its inherent contradictions, above all between the integrated character of the global economy, and the division of the world into antagonistic nation-states.

Cogan said that the ICFI statement “elaborates the political strategy and perspective which must be taken up and fought for to prevent a new world war.” He dwelt on the four principles outlined in the statement as the basis of a new anti-war movement—that the struggle against war must be based on the working class, it must be socialist and anti-capitalist, and therefore politically independent of all parties of the capitalist class, and that it must be international in its perspective and organisation. He called on students who agreed with those principles to join the IYSSE and take up the fight for socialism.

At each of the meetings, the main report was followed by questions and discussion. Students asked whether the campaign of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party primary for the 2016 US elections was a vehicle for socialism. Others asked whether there was a “model” for socialism, and what policies a workers’ government would implement. At many of the meetings, students asked the speakers to elaborate on the underlying processes that had led to the eruption of militarism, and the means by which they could play a role in the fight against war.

After the meetings, a number of students spoke to IYSSE reporters.

At Macquarie University, **Evgeny**, a first-year accounting student said, “I saw a poster for the meeting and thought it looked interesting. I have always had socialist views. The points you made in the meeting reinforced my views. What you were saying was reliable, backed by facts and easily understood.”

He noted the role of the media in promoting the lies used to justify imperialist wars in the Middle East, commenting, “The Syrian war is not being reported properly. Facts are hidden. The US and its allies alleged the Syrian government used chemical weapons. This has never been proven. There is even proof of the opposite—proof of the US using chemical weapons. The purpose is to get support from people for the US war against Syria.”

Evgeny expressed his support for the principles outlined in the ICFI statement. “I agree. The working class has the power to stop wars. It is a matter of wanting to, and thinking of it as an issue. There has to be a total turnaround to socialism to overthrow the banking regime.”

At the University of Newcastle, **Chris**, a part-time electrical engineering student commented, “it was very interesting to hear a lot of the history and the current political talk filled in because we don’t hear the news of what is happening with the ‘pivot to China’ or the issues surrounding the conflicts between NATO and Russia.

“I believe that most of the people I know around Australia, which is

generally the working class, would be horrified by the extent of the drive to war. This is not what they want. As you guys pointed out quite correctly, the working class has no interest in war with China, or US-backed regime change there. It is the same for so many things. Most people will be able to see that they do not want to go to war with China.”

Chris noted that the US and its allies had been at war for most of his life. “I was in Kindergarten when the first Gulf War began, and that was well beyond my comprehension at the time. It wasn’t until after 9/11 happened that it came back to me that we were at war, and I realised that I didn’t know a lot of the stuff that had been happening. Then I started looking into it more and more, then of course we joined America and went to war against Afghanistan and Iraq and I spent a lot of time protesting.”

Chris noted the failure of the anti-war movement, which was politically dominated by middle-class protest politics, to halt the 2003 invasion of Iraq, commenting, “we had the largest protests in the world and it meant nothing—the people who made the decisions just ignored it. I was devastated. The people who were running these anti-war movements had no interest in what I had to say. They were not representing me.”

Sian, a second year law student at the University of Newcastle responded to a lively discussion on Bernie Sanders, declaring that, “to understand what somebody stands for is really hard; education is really important. People need to read into what these politicians are saying and their policies, but they also have to read about who they are supporting and the party they are in. Sanders has said he will stand for Hillary Clinton, and what she stands for is not what anyone should want. She is a warmonger.”

Commenting on the US military build-up in Asia, Sian said, “I definitely feel that there is a drive to war going on in the region. We have seen the consequences of this in history in WWI and WWII. People lost their lives and it is very scary. We are going to be the ones fighting in the front line. A lot of Australian working class people will die.”

Sian expressed support for the IYSSE’s program, stating, “The socialist view is very interesting. The working class people need to stand up and have a voice. I signed up to the IYSSE tonight because I don’t want to see a Third World War. Nobody does.”

Andre, a physics student at the University of Melbourne said he attended the meeting “because war and conflict is a real and present danger. The last year has seen the US introduce a massive build-up aimed at China and Russia. These tensions have a potential to boil over into a major war between world powers.”

Andre denounced the US-led intervention in Syria, noting, “you have a clear involvement of NATO countries and their allies. This culminates in ridiculous hypocrisy where the US, as it did in Afghanistan, is siding with Sunni Islamic fundamentalist terrorists and regimes against more secular regimes in Syria now and Libya formerly. This situation has caused a massive refugee influx into Europe.”

Asked what he thought of the IYSSE’s perspective, Andre said, “When there is a drive towards war, and there is, it is very difficult to avert it. Efforts must be made to expose moves toward war and the hypocrisy of narratives given in the mass media. The underlying cause of war is the inherent economic crises driven by the greed of private corporations in charge of key sectors of the world economy. Putting these private sectors of world economy into the public sphere is both an interesting and a viable solution as it addresses the root of the

problem.”

Andre expressed his opposition to the University of Melbourne student union’s refusal to affiliate an IYSSE club, stating, “The banning of the IYSSE club is a nonsensical and ridiculous development. This is a club that is backed by a longstanding and reputable international organisation. It supports socialism and campaigns against the drive to war. It is concerning that the reason for the ban might actually be due to these things it stands for.”

Sam, an international student, also spoke out against the attack on the IYSSE, commenting, “What comes to me is that the student union may have financial interests, and to give space to the IYSSE might jeopardise this. If the IYSSE were to get funds and to have their freedom it may be a problem for the student union. Maybe they would have their funding cut off.”

Speaking on the meeting, he said, “The first time I heard about the “pivot to Asia” was in the ICFI statement. That sort of stuff everyone should know about. We need to know the problems of the world. Some of the brightest minds are hired in the service of the military to kill each other. I talked about it with my friend. He thought that it was China’s aggression. But I read that China is reacting to US aggression.”

Dylan, an international relations student said he came to the meeting at Macquarie University because he was “really interested in how you saw the socialist ideas in a contemporary setting. Your negative views of Bernie Sanders were a really big eye opener to me. You believe in getting equality rather than just reforms and are trying to make it a real socialist revolution rather than capitalism with a new face.”

He said that he “learnt a lot of specifics from the meeting. I knew about the inequalities of the world and had a strong belief in socialism but I didn’t know about the underlying specifics that are brewing an inevitable war.

“The nation state system is rapidly going out of date. Too many feuds have been started in the past hundred years, like World War II, and the Cold War. They’ve created huge antagonisms between people. Now recently we have the entire Middle East in turmoil and America aggressing all over the place.

“With the resources that we have now to learn about the past, the 21st century might be a good time for history to stop repeating itself, which is why I am so interested in this group.

“The international aspect of your ideas is fantastic. I am honestly surprised by it—that I rocked up to a society meeting at a university and am now looking at an international socialist movement that I didn’t know existed before.”



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