

Build the International Youth and Students for Social Equality!

For a socialist program against Labor, the Liberals and the Greens

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
11 May 2016

The IYSSE is distributing the following statement at protests called by the National Union of Students.

As protests take place at a number of universities around the country today, students and young people, like the working class as a whole, confront an official election campaign of lies, false promises and phony populist posturing.

Announcing the Liberal Party's campaign on Sunday, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull highlighted the government's commitment to a massive expansion of defence spending, including the allocation of \$195 billion over the next decade to new warships, submarines and military acquisitions. The campaigns of Labor, the Liberals, the Greens and their pseudo-left allies, including Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, are suppressing the purpose of this unprecedented build-up of the armed forces—to place the country on a war footing in preparation for a US-led conflict with China.

The entire political establishment supported the Gillard Labor government's alignment with the aggressive US "pivot to Asia" in 2011. Since then, all the major parties have sought to blind workers and young people to the fact that the population has been placed on the frontlines of a potential nuclear conflict in the Asia-Pacific, without any discussion or vote.

No reference will be made in the official campaigns to the discussions underway in government-connected think tanks for Australia to impose a naval blockade of shipping routes that pass through South East Asia, in the event of a US attack on China. Nor will ordinary people have any say over Washington's increasingly strident demands that Australia conduct "freedom of navigation" provocations inside Chinese-claimed

territorial waters in the South China Sea—a move that could lead to direct armed conflict.

At the same time, the domestic agenda of whichever party forms government will be determined by the dictates of the corporate and financial elites for sweeping austerity, under conditions of the deepest crisis of the global capitalist system since the 1930s. With the collapse of the mining boom, the banks and big business are demanding an unprecedented assault on spending for education, healthcare and other social services, and a stepped-up offensive against jobs, wages and working conditions.

Well aware of the mass popular opposition to this agenda, which has fuelled intense political instability and crisis, the Labor Party has initiated a cynical, populist campaign aimed at presenting itself as a defender of "working people." They are basing themselves on the example of Bernie Sanders, who has won mass support in the Democratic primary for the US presidential election by falsely claiming to be a "democratic socialist." Sanders is now preparing to channel his supporters behind the campaign of Hillary Clinton, the political personification of Wall Street, and a major proponent of America's predatory wars and military interventions.

Labor's demagogic denunciations of the "millionaires" are no less a fraud than Sanders' empty calls to "break-up the banks." Shorten's pledges to balance the budget, and the ALP's entire record as a party of big business, make clear that if Labor forms government, it will rapidly dispense with its limited promises for social reform and implement a program indistinguishable from that of the Liberals. For their part, the Greens, who are also running a populist

campaign, have signalled that they are willing to form a coalition government with Labor, in the interests of parliamentary “stability.”

The National Union of Students (NUS) has called today’s protests to once again promote the lie that Labor and the Greens will resolve the mounting social crisis confronting young people and end the assault on higher education. Above all, they are seeking to channel the widespread disaffection among students and youth behind the increasingly discredited and moribund parliamentary set-up.

That is why today’s protests today will remain completely silent on the fact that the Rudd and Gillard Labor governments carried out some of the most sweeping attacks on tertiary education, as well as on the most vulnerable sections of working class youth, including cutting off benefits to tens of thousands of single parents and forcing them onto the dole. The Liberals are simply continuing Labor’s basic orientation when they cut university funding and launch an internship program to create a low-wage army of unemployed youth.

Students should also recall that in its 2013 budget, the Greens-backed 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.

At the last series of major demonstrations in 2014, the NUS did everything it could to suppress any discussion of Labor’s record, including by blocking representatives of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) from speaking. The last thing they wanted was for students to hear a genuine socialist perspective, i.e., the only viable alternative to the existing political-up. Since then, the corporatisation of higher education has proceeded apace, with the University of Sydney, Monash University and university administrations across the country outlining huge pro-business restructurings.

At the same time, democratic rights are under assault, in the name of the fraudulent “war on terror.” Students should be warned that the main purpose of the draconian measures that have been introduced over the past 15 years is to suppress social discontent and opposition. And the gutting of basic civil and political rights has extended to universities. Students are now routinely denied the right to form student clubs and

conduct cultural and political activities on campus, either by university administrations, or by the student unions themselves. At the University of Melbourne, the Clubs and Societies Committee has refused to affiliate our IYSSE club on four occasions in the last two years. In March, the committee effectively banned the IYSSE, without providing any grounds, and in contravention of the University of Melbourne Student Union’s own constitution. The NUS has done nothing to oppose this attack on the University of Melbourne IYSSE, or similar measures against our clubs and other student organisations at universities across Australia.

The IYSSE calls on students and young people to reject attempts by the NUS and its pseudo-left allies to direct mounting anger behind Labor and the Greens. We urge you, instead, to support the election campaign of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement. Its campaign will break the conspiracy of silence surrounding the advanced preparations for war against China, and fight to unify workers and young people throughout the Asia-Pacific region and internationally in a global anti-war movement against the descent into World War III. The SEP will advance a revolutionary socialist program aimed at abolishing the source of war, austerity and the assault on democratic rights—the capitalist profit system itself. We call on students to support our campaign and to contact the IYSSE to get involved.



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