

Take up the fight against war, austerity and dictatorship!

Build the IYSSE on Australian campuses and schools!

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
25 July 2016

As Semester Two begins, students and young people confront a continuing global economic meltdown, an assault on living standards, the erosion of fundamental democratic norms, and an eruption of militarism that threatens to trigger world war.

Twenty-five years since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the paeans of innumerable commentators and capitalist politicians to the wonders of the free market, and their declarations that history had ended, lie in tatters. World capitalism is in the grip of a systemic breakdown caused by its inherent contradictions, opening up a period of revolutionary upheaval.

Crises have become the norm, not the exception, with each day bringing news of yet another political shock.

Within the past month, the United Kingdom has voted to leave the European Union. The EU itself is breaking up and Europe fracturing along similar lines to those before World War Two.

In the US presidential election, Donald Trump, a fascistic billionaire, has been selected as the candidate of the Republican Party, while his Democratic Party opponent will be Hillary Clinton, a war criminal despised by millions. At the same time, protesters opposing the daily police killings of working-class youth have been subjected to mass arrests.

The turn toward authoritarian forms of rule around the world was underscored by the attempted military coup in Turkey, which was backed by the US and Germany. The Erdogan regime has responded by imposing a “state of emergency” and carrying out a massive crackdown on its political opponents.

The French government recently extended its own “state of emergency,” for the third time, citing terrorism as the pretext to provide the state with powers to ban protests and conduct warrantless searches.

In every country, the old political mechanisms of capitalist rule are breaking down and the ruling elites are responding with preparations for dictatorship.

The recent federal election has shown that Australia is no exception. At the end of an election campaign dominated by lies, evasions and banality, millions of workers and young people voted against the parties of big business, Labor, the Liberal-Nationals and the Greens.

The Turnbull government, and the entire political establishment, however, are pressing ahead with a program of war abroad and austerity against the working class at home.

Throughout the elections, all the official parties, including the Greens and their allies in various pseudo-left organisations, sought to maintain the conspiracy of silence surrounding Australia’s central role in the US-led preparations for war against China.

The Socialist Equality Party and its youth and student movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), were alone in warning that whichever party formed government, it would escalate Australia’s involvement in reckless military provocations against China, threatening the outbreak of open conflict.

On July 12, the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague ruled in favour of a Philippines’ legal challenge to Chinese activities in the South China Sea. The case, drafted by a Washington-based law firm with close ties to the Obama administration, was the latest attempt by the US to justify its massive military buildup in the Asia-Pacific on the grounds that it is defending “freedom of navigation” and opposing an expansionist and aggressive China.

In reality, the US is dispatching 60 percent of its Navy and Air Force to the region, based on Pentagon plans for a bombardment of the Chinese mainland and a naval

blockade of its key shipping routes. The US has already conducted three “freedom of navigation” operations, dispatching warships into Chinese-claimed territory in the South China Sea.

These military provocations have nothing to do with longstanding disputes over reefs and outcrops in the South China Sea. Rather, the US ruling elite, faced with the deep-going economic decline of American capitalism, has set out to dominate the vast Eurasian landmass and reduce Russia and China to the status of semi-colonies, under the control of the Wall Street banks and major US corporations. This is nothing less than a plan for global nuclear war.

Australia’s central role in this war drive was underscored by US Vice President Joseph Biden’s visit last week. Biden declared: “The United States is going nowhere. The United States is here in the Pacific to stay... We are a Pacific power.” Warning that the US would brook no opposition in the region, he emphasised that it was “never a good bet to bet against the United States,” and asserted there was “no daylight” between the US and Australian militaries.

The pro-US constituency within the Australian ruling elite, including key figures in the Australian Labor Party, has responded by renewing calls for the Turnbull government to send warships and military aircraft into Chinese-claimed territory. Behind the backs of the population, a daily discussion is taking place between sections of the media, government and think-tank circles about the implications of Australian involvement in an all-out war with China.

The preparations for military conflict go hand-in-hand with an onslaught against the social rights of the working class. In the immediate aftermath of the elections, the three largest international credit ratings agencies warned that Australia’s AAA rating would be downgraded if billions of dollars in spending cuts were not imposed over coming months. The global accounting firm, KPMG, issued a report insisting that \$12 billion be slashed each year from public health, education and welfare.

This is an agenda that cannot be imposed democratically. Discussions are taking place within the financial elites about the need for authoritarian forms of rule directed against an increasingly restive population. Retail billionaire Gerry Harvey blurted out this agenda when he recently declared that Australia was “living beyond its means” and “our democracy at the moment is not working.” He went on to insist that, “The only cure we’ve got is to have a dictator like in China or something

like that.”

The ruling elite’s fear of the emergence of a conscious political movement against the drive to war and austerity has been demonstrated in attempts by university authorities and student unions to block our IYSSE clubs from conducting political work on campuses across the country. The most flagrant example is the University of Melbourne Student Union’s two-year refusal to affiliate an IYSSE club, despite it having met all the stipulated requirements.

At the same time, pseudo-left organisations such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance are doing everything they can to divert widespread social opposition behind Labor, the Greens and the corporatised trade unions. This attempt to channel anger and hostility to the official establishment back behind the mainstream capitalist parties is an international phenomenon. In the US, Bernie Sanders won mass support in the Democratic Party presidential primaries by falsely claiming to be a socialist, then proceeded to endorse Hillary Clinton, the personification of the political status quo.

The real alternative is the development of a independent, socialist movement of the working class, based on a revolutionary and internationalist program, aimed at ending the capitalist profit system and transforming society in the interests of the vast majority. As in the 1930s, the choice confronting young people is not between socialism and parliamentary democracy, but between socialism and barbarism. The challenge confronting the working class is the necessity of taking political power, and beginning the reorganisation of society along internationalist and socialist lines, before the capitalist class once again plunges humanity into the horrors of world war and dictatorship. The IYSSE calls on students and young people seeking to fight for a future to join us, attend our meetings, and take up the fight for socialism.



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