

The Socialist Equality Party and the fight to build an international anti-war movement

27 July 2016

The following resolution was adopted at the Third National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia), which took place in Sydney from April 24 to 26, 2016.

1. The political tasks of the Socialist Equality Party derive from the February 18, 2016 statement of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), “Socialism and the Fight Against War: Build an International Movement of the Working Class and Youth Against Imperialism!” The SEP’s responsibility is to win workers and youth in the Asia-Pacific region, of which Australia is a part, to the perspective advanced by the ICFI.

2. As the ICFI statement stresses, the danger of a third world war arises from the inherent contradictions of capitalism, between the integrated character of world economy and its continued division into antagonistic nation-states, and between socialised production and the private ownership of the means of production. Propelled by the global economic breakdown of world capitalism that began with the financial crisis of 2008–2009, the United States, the European powers, Japan and lesser imperialist powers, such as Australia, are seeking to assert the interests of their banks, finance houses and corporations in an ever-more bitter struggle for control over resources, markets and sources of profit. The most destabilising factor in world politics is the drive by US imperialism to reverse its economic decline and maintain its global hegemony.

3. To prevent the catastrophe of war, the international working class, the great revolutionary force in society, must unite in a common struggle to end the capitalist profit system and nation-state divisions. This is the urgent strategic task. Workers in Australia, China, Japan, and across the Indo-Pacific region, must be unified with their counterparts in the United States, Europe and around the world into an international anti-war movement, consciously fighting for the establishment of world socialism. In the struggle for that perspective, the SEP in Australia has great responsibilities. The party must expand its influence across the entire country, and give all assistance possible to the historic work of the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand, which is preparing the founding of the first new section of the ICFI in the Asia-Pacific since the establishment of the Australian section in 1972. The SEP, in the closest collaboration with the ICFI, will reach out to and work with individuals and groups in the South Pacific states and East Timor; in Indonesia, the Philippines and across South East Asia; in Korea, Japan and China, who, on the basis of the principles elaborated in the IC statement, recognise the necessity for building the world party of socialist revolution.

These principles are:

- The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.
- The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the

economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.

- The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organisations of the capitalist class.

- The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilising the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism. The permanent war of the bourgeoisie must be answered with the perspective of permanent revolution by the working class, the strategic goal of which is the abolition of the nation-state system and the establishment of a world socialist federation. This will make possible the rational, planned development of global resources and, on this basis, the eradication of poverty and the raising of human culture to new heights.

US preparations for war against China

4. The Obama administration’s “pivot to Asia,” directed against China, has dramatically escalated tensions in the Indo-Pacific. Having failed thus far in its objective of compelling the Beijing regime to submit to what it calls the “global rules-based order”—that is, to US dictates—Washington is recklessly inflaming volatile flashpoints in the region. Over the past year, it has denounced Chinese land reclamation activities and “militarisation” in the South China Sea, and, on two occasions, directly challenged Beijing’s maritime claims by sending warships within the 12-nautical-mile territorial limit of Chinese-administered islets on the grounds of “freedom of navigation.” On the Korean Peninsula, the site of some of the bloodiest crimes of American imperialism in the 20th century, the US and South Korea last year changed their operational plans for war with North Korea, China’s only formal ally, from defensive to offensive, including pre-emptive strikes and “decapitation operations” to assassinate the North Korean leadership.

5. The US, its allies and the corporate media are utilising allegations of Chinese “militarisation” in the South China Sea to turn reality on its head and portray Beijing, rather than Washington, as the regime seeking “hegemony” over Asia. The Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague will soon rule on a US-backed Philippines’ challenge to aspects of China’s claims. The stage is being set for hypocritical denunciations of China’s occupation of territory as “illegal” under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), which the US has refused to ratify. “Freedom of navigation” has joined “terrorism,” “weapons of mass destruction” and “responsibility to protect” as the sinister pretext for military provocations, interventions and wars.

6. The economic driving forces underpinning the turn to militarism were demonstrated with the signing of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) in February 2016. While it is yet to be ratified, President Obama openly declared: “The TPP allows America—not countries like China—to write the rules of the road in the 21st century.” The TPP is not a free trade

agreement but an alliance between the US and Japan, the world's largest and third largest economic powers respectively, to isolate China and apply even greater pressure on Beijing to open its markets on terms demanded by Washington.

7. The response of the capitalist regime in Beijing to the US-led provocations and war preparations is reactionary. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) does not represent the interests of the working class and rural masses of China but those of the parasitic ultra-rich oligarchs, who have amassed their fortunes over the past three decades through the processes of capitalist restoration and the ruthless exploitation of the Chinese working class. Maoism, based on the anti-Marxist Stalinist theory of "socialism in one country," led the great revolutionary struggles of the Chinese masses into a dead-end and betrayed their aspirations. Today, the CCP leadership seeks to appease Washington by offering to open up further economic sectors to global investors, while at the same time engaging in an arms race that can end only in disaster for workers in China and around the world. It promotes virulent nationalism and chauvinism in order to divide workers in China from their counterparts in Japan, across Asia, and the United States, thereby strengthening the hands of imperialism.

8. US imperialism's escalating confrontation with Beijing has set in motion processes over which it has limited control. The entire Indo-Pacific has been transformed into a powder keg, which could be set off by a miscalculation by the US or China, or by any one of Washington's regional allies. The ruling classes throughout the region are increasingly responding to their own internal political and economic crises by attempting to project social tensions outward through the stoking of nationalism. Nowhere is this more ominous than in Japan, where the right-wing government, under the umbrella of the "pivot," is reviving militarist traditions and boosting military spending. Having pushed through unconstitutional legislation last year to allow "collective self-defence"—that is, direct participation in US-led wars of aggression—Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is now seeking the complete revision of the constitution to cast aside any constraint on the pursuit of Japanese imperialist ambitions through military might. While the US and Japan are currently allies, their conflicting interests could easily transform them into enemies, as occurred in the years prior to World War II.

ANZUS and the role of Australian imperialism

9. The decision by the Australian ruling elite to support the US "pivot to Asia" has played a critical role in the preparations for war against China. The strategic relationship between the two countries began in 1941, in the midst of World War II, when the Curtin Labor government shifted its allegiance from Britain to the rising imperialist power, the US, and transformed Australia into a key staging post and ally in the war in the Pacific against Japan. For decades, the ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, United States) Alliance, signed in 1951, has been underpinned by ever-expanding corporate and investment links, along with US protection and support for Australian imperialism's neo-colonial interests throughout the South Pacific region. In return, the alliance has provided the framework for Australia's active backing of US foreign policy and its involvement in the intrigues, massacres and wars orchestrated by the CIA and the Pentagon in Korea, Vietnam and Indonesia in the 1950s and 1960s, and in the Middle East over the past 25 years. To this day, American satellite, communications and spying bases in Australia have been critical for US imperialism in conducting its global operations and wars, including the provision of targeting information for its nuclear weapons.

10. Australia is at the very forefront of US planning for a major war. In 2011, just prior to President Obama's announcement of the US "pivot" to Asia in the Australian parliament, then Secretary of State Hillary Clinton declared that relations between the two countries would be escalated from "a Pacific Partnership to an Indo-Pacific one, and indeed a global partnership." In its review of the "pivot" in 2016, the US-based Center for

Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) declared, in its report to Congress: "As Australia's own influence expands and Australia's geopolitical position becomes more central to US strategy, Washington's expectations of Canberra are growing."

11. The Pentagon is stationing 60 percent of its air force and navy in the Asia-Pacific region and fully integrating Australian military forces with its own. It plans to regularly operate American long-range, nuclear-capable bombers from northern Australian airfields, while warships and submarines will increasingly operate from Australian ports and naval bases. With the country's strategically vital proximity to key sea passages between the Indian and Pacific Oceans, the Australian military is being re-equipped to participate in the Pentagon's AirSea Battle plans for devastating attacks on the Chinese mainland and an associated naval blockade of sea lanes to strangle the Chinese economy. The 2016 Australian Defence White Paper commits to increasing the defence budget from \$A32 billion in 2015–2016 to \$59 billion by 2025–26. Total military spending will be at least \$495 billion over the next decade. These immense resources, which could be used to address urgent social needs, will be squandered on jet fighters, warships and submarines and the upgrading of ports and airfields across the north of the country and on Cocos Islands in the Indian Ocean, for expanded use by Australian and American forces.

12. The 2016 White Paper, begun under former Coalition Prime Minister Tony Abbott and finalised under Prime Minister Turnbull, sets out the predatory interests of Australian imperialism in the Asia-Pacific region, which it is defending through its alignment with the US. Australia, it declared, would act militarily to ensure that Papua New Guinea, East Timor and South Pacific nations did not come under "increasing influence by actors from outside the region with interests inimical to ours"—that is, China. It would seek to prevent "instability in South East Asia, whether internal to countries or between countries," with an emphasis on preserving so-called stability in Indonesia and against Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea. It would protect "Australia's sovereignty over the Australian Antarctic Territory [Australia claims 42 percent of the entire continent] and its sovereign rights over its offshore waters." A report issued by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute in February stated: "Australia has benefited from Antarctic research cooperation with its Chinese counterparts, but we must prepare for a possible future where national interest trumps friendly cooperation."

13. The scale and potential consequences of this military build-up have the most dangerous implications for the working class, not only in Australia and the Asian region, but the entire world. Australian imperialism is a critical component in the drive toward World War III. Every effort is being made—by the major political parties, the Greens, the pseudo-left tendencies and the state-owned and corporate media—to conceal this fact from the vast majority of the population. The ruling elites in both Australia and the US fear the eruption of mass anti-war sentiment, and for good reason. Since a generation of youth was sent off to be slaughtered in World War I, the opposition of Australian workers and youth to war has been expressed in referenda and elections, and in mass anti-war protests against the Vietnam War in the 1960s and the Iraq War in 2003. There exists no significant support for militarism among workers and youth, let alone for war with China.

14. As it seeks to prevent opposition from below, the Australian ruling class faces a growing dilemma over how to respond to escalating tensions between US imperialism, its longstanding diplomatic and military ally, and China, its most important trading partner. Unprecedented Chinese demand for Australian raw materials, above all iron ore and coal, was the primary factor enabling the country to escape the severe recession that hit the economies of the US and Europe after the 2008–2009 financial crisis. As recently as 2004–05, China accounted for just 10 percent of Australian merchandise exports. By 2010, only five years later, it accounted for more

than double that amount—22 percent—supplanting Japan as Australia's largest export market. By 2014, the figure was 37 percent, the highest of any major economy. Sections of big business and the political establishment fear that Australia's backing for Washington's provocative actions towards Beijing could trigger Chinese economic retaliation.

15. The Obama administration and the Pentagon rely on an extensive and seasoned pro-US network embedded within the official establishment—in the Labor Party, the Liberal and National parties, the trade unions, the media, assorted think tanks and in academia—to maintain Canberra's alignment with their war plans. It was “protected sources” of the US embassy among Labor members of parliament and union leaders who orchestrated the overnight political coup against former Labor Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2010 and installed his replacement, the US-vetted Julia Gillard. At the very point that the confrontational “pivot” was being prepared, Rudd had angered Washington with his proposals that the US make an accommodation to China in the Asia-Pacific region.

16. Following Rudd's ousting, the Gillard Labor government committed itself unconditionally to Washington's agenda and invited Obama to announce the “pivot” on the floor of the Australian parliament in November 2011. After Labor lost office in September 2013, the Liberal-National Coalition under Abbott escalated Canberra's diplomatic and military role, in the region and internationally. Since Malcolm Turnbull became prime minister in September 2015, the strategic dilemma has only escalated as the danger of war escalates, while Australian corporate relations with China continue to grow.

The US-Australia pro-war propaganda campaign

17. Preparations for war are proceeding not only on the military, but also on the ideological front. An array of strategic think tanks, such as the Defence Department-funded Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the Lowy Institute—one of a number that operate out of leading universities—has churned out a series of studies and reports, intended primarily for the military-intelligence apparatus and selected politicians and media commentators. These portray China as an expansionist power and advocate ever-greater Australian support for US hegemony in the region.

18. The most ideologically focussed of these think tanks is the US Studies Centre (USSC) at the University of Sydney. The USSC was founded in direct response to the mass anti-Iraq-war protests of 2003 and surveys registering widespread popular opposition to US-led militarism and Australia's participation in it. The Centre's remit is to develop propaganda centring on the indispensability of the US alliance to Australia's “national interests.” In 2014, Alliance 21, a research group within the USSC, warned: “Demographic and generational changes in the two countries [the US and Australia] mean young and immigrant populations are less attached to the alliance ... Careful attention to the relationship is needed across government, business and social sectors in both countries, with an eye to demonstrating the value of Australia-US ties.” It stressed the need for “educational components at schools and institutions of higher learning on the history of shared values and commitments between Australia and the US, as well as the meaning of the alliance today.”

19. The USSC's aims dovetail with those of the campaign initiated by the Gillard Labor government in 2011—involving all the parliamentary parties, the media, academia and the arts—to promote militarism and patriotism through the commemorations of the centenary of World War I. The multi-million-dollar “celebrations,” which glorify Australian military exploits and falsify their motives, have been focussed particularly on the schools. Youth are being subjected to state-directed lies and propaganda, which present World War I, and every subsequent war involving Australian armed forces, as necessary for the defence of “freedom” and “our way of life.”

20. The key role of Australian universities in the development of

militarist strategy and propaganda is underscored by their efforts to censor the most conscious opponents of militarism—the Socialist Equality Party and its youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE). The University of Sydney, host to the USSC, refused to hire a venue to the Socialist Equality Party to hold a meeting, on the weekend of the April 25, 2015 Anzac Day centenary, devoted to opposing the glorification of World War I and the drive to World War III. At the University of Melbourne, another “sandstone” bastion of the corporate and financial elites, the student union has refused four times, between 2014 and 2016, to affiliate the IYSSE as a club, on spurious and anti-democratic grounds. The IYSSE has also faced politically-motivated censorship from administrations and student unions at other universities across the country. The aim, in each case, has been to suppress revolutionary socialist opposition among students to imperialism and war.

21. Over the past 15 years, the primary pretext for the massive build-up of the repressive apparatus of the state to suppress political opposition has been the “war on terror.” Manufactured hysteria over domestic “terror threats,” assisted by a thoroughly complicit media, has been utilised by successive governments to justify expanding the intelligence agencies and police, shredding democratic rights, stoking xenophobia and racism and denying tens of thousands of desperate refugees their right to claim asylum in Australia. At the same time, the working class as a whole is being subjected to ever-greater intimidation and violence at the hands of militarised police and private security companies, on the fraudulent grounds of combating crime and “anti-social behaviour.” Incidents of police killings and tasings are soaring, as is the rate of imprisonment and deaths in custody. While the most vulnerable social layers—refugees, Muslim immigrants and the poorest sections of the working class, particularly indigenous communities—are currently the main victims, this state build-up is being undertaken in anticipation of mass struggles by workers and youth against war, austerity and social inequality.

The objective impulses toward revolution

22. The perspective of the ICFI and SEP is based on the scientific understanding that the same contradictions driving the capitalist elites toward world war are generating the objective impulses propelling the international working class towards revolution. Economic, political and social conditions are maturing, in Australia and around the world, for the resurgence of the class struggle and the development of a mass anti-war movement, driven by the ongoing breakdown of capitalism that began in 2008–2009. The growing combativeness of the working class has already been revealed in the revolutionary events in Egypt in 2011, the mass strikes and protests against austerity in Greece and across Europe, the struggle of American autoworkers in 2015, the growing strike wave in India and China and the protests in France against the state of emergency and anti-labour laws. In the United States, millions of workers and young people have supported the campaign of self-proclaimed “democratic socialist” Bernie Sanders, in the mistaken belief that he represents the fight for social equality and socialism. The rise of socialist sentiment in America, which has been the bastion of anti-communism for decades, is an indication of the changes that have taken place in the consciousness of workers in every country.

23. Australian capitalism is plunging into a historic economic and political crisis. The “mining boom” that began in the early 2000s, based on rising exports to China, has ended in a crash, with commodity prices and investment collapsing during the past three years. As corporate revenues and share values plunge, and unemployment grows, the balance sheets of the four major banks are being threatened by the likelihood that a property bubble, upon which two-thirds of their record profits have been based, will burst. Faced with this rapid reversal, the financial elite is demanding that savage new austerity measures be imposed on the backs of the working class. Treasury Secretary John Fraser lectured the political establishment on January 28 this year: “For the longer-term, we need to

look for substantial structural savings across the board—including transfer [welfare] payments.” Hailing the devastating policies imposed against the working class in the US, Britain and Ireland, Fraser declared: “Expenditure restraint played a key role in all these countries in improving their fiscal situation.”

24. Conditions of life for large sections of the Australian population are already dire. At least 40 percent of the workforce and the majority of young workers have been reduced to part-time, casual or short-term contract employment—the product of decades of economic restructuring, imposed by successive Labor and Coalition governments, aimed at achieving “international competitiveness.” Working-class suburbs and regional towns, where millions depend on irregular, low-paid work or on below-poverty-level aged pensions and welfare payments, are plagued by deprivation, endemic youth unemployment, a mental health crisis, homelessness and intractable social problems such as substance abuse and suicide for which no solutions are provided. High housing, child care and utilities costs; overcrowded, underfunded hospitals and health clinics; substandard public schools; and dysfunctional road and public transport systems add to seething frustrations over the level of social inequality and deepen the alienation of millions of workers and youth from official politics.

25. At the same time, the political attitudes of millions of people have become more critical due to the lies that surrounded the illegal invasion of Iraq; the corporate criminality revealed in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis; the exposure of US-led war crimes and diplomatic intrigues by WikiLeaks; and the revelations by Edward Snowden of US and allied government spying around the world. The mass anti-war sentiment that erupted in 2003 has not diminished, despite years of pro-war state propaganda, and the political establishment is viewed with distrust and disgust.

26. As a result, the two-party parliamentary system dominated by Labor and the Coalition—which has formed the basis of political stability for more than a century—is wracked by crises and instability. Unrelenting US pressure on Canberra to step up its direct involvement in provocations against China, at the potential expense of major sections of Australian business, has created tensions within and between all the bourgeois parties. Every government confronts the same political quandary: how to pursue a militarist foreign policy and impose austerity on the backs of millions of hostile workers and youth and survive even one term in office. Traditional political allegiances are collapsing. Official politics is becoming increasingly volatile, with each election result more unpredictable than the last. In the 32 years between 1975 and 2007, there were just four prime ministers. Since the defeat of John Howard’s Coalition government and the election of the Rudd Labor government in 2007, the position of prime minister has changed five times. Three—Rudd, Gillard and Abbott—have been removed outside the electoral process through backroom factional conspiracies within their own parties. Numerous state-level leaders have suffered the same fate, prompting the British Broadcasting Corporation to dub Australia “the coup capital of the world.”

27. As the political establishment moves ever further to the right, anti-capitalist sentiment is growing among workers and young people, fuelled, above all, by intense hostility toward social inequality. At present this shift takes an inchoate form, but its content and significance are unmistakable. Historically, the objective basis for the subordination of the working class to capitalism and the two-party system was the material prosperity of Australia—the so-called “lucky country”—where social reform was possible and each generation could expect to improve on the conditions of the last. The experiences of the past three decades, during which the ruling class has embarked on an ever-intensifying social counter-revolution, are shattering these illusions. For the first time since the Great Depression of the 1930s, today’s youth cannot look forward to a living

standard higher than that of their parents. Rather, they are being brought face to face with the reality that Australia is not “exceptional” and that their future is one of rapidly worsening economic and social prospects.

28. The crucial factor in determining the outcome of the economic and political crisis is the extent to which the Socialist Equality Party develops its roots in the working class and educates the most advanced layers in the theory and program of scientific socialism. The fight to win the working class to the revolutionary strategy of the ICFI requires, above all, the demarcation of a genuine internationalist and socialist perspective from every pro-capitalist party, organisation and tendency. At the centre of this demarcation is the struggle against all forms of nationalism. The working class must be imbued with the understanding that its legitimate anger over the destruction of living standards needs to be directed into an international struggle against the capitalist profit system, not against “foreign competition,” which pits workers of one country against those of another in an endless race to the bottom. Workers of all countries must grasp the lessons of history: economic nationalism, one of the toxic products of the global crisis of capitalism, invariably becomes the prelude to war.

29. A critical political task of the SEP is to clarify the need for the working class to draw the necessary lessons from its bitter historical experiences with Laborism and to make a complete political and organisational break with the nationalist and pro-capitalist Labor Party and trade unions. Labor is the linchpin of political reaction in Australia and the primary party of war, nationalism and class collaboration. During World War I, the Depression and World War II, it subordinated the working class to the interests of Australian imperialism, demanding “sacrifice” for the “nation.” In the 1980s, in response to globalised production, Labor, with the full support of the trade unions, imposed devastating economic “restructuring” to meet the requirements of the corporate and financial elites for “international competitiveness.”

30. The unions have become major corporations in their own right, operating labour-hire and “consultancy” companies and controlling billions of dollars in superannuation funds and property. In the interests of the corporate elites, they have suppressed strikes and other industrial action to the lowest levels in Australian history. The Labor Party and unions are at the forefront of campaigns to blame Chinese competition for the economic crisis, and have become vociferous advocates of military confrontation with China, in alliance with the United States. Labor Defence spokesperson Stephen Conroy has demanded that the Australian government carry out a “freedom of navigation” operation in Chinese-claimed waters, an action that could lead to an armed clash.

The tasks of the SEP

31. The SEP will stand candidates in the forthcoming 2016 federal election to further the fight to build an international anti-war movement of the working class on the basis of socialist internationalism. Our election campaign will be international in character and addressed to the working class throughout Australia and the Asia Pacific region. It will be carried out in the closest collaboration with our co-thinkers in the ICFI and the election campaigns being waged by the Socialist Equality Party (US) and the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit in Germany, as well as the fight of the SEP (UK) for an active boycott in the Brexit referendum. In conjunction with the SEP in Sri Lanka and the Socialist Equality Group in New Zealand, as well as our members at large in Asia, we will seek to expand the political influence of the ICFI across Australia and throughout the region.

32. The “double dissolution” election takes place under conditions of the mounting danger of world war, and major attacks on the social position and democratic rights of the international working class. For the Australian political establishment this election is one of deep political crisis, amid the advanced decay and break-up of the two-party system. None of the parliamentary parties, groupings or so-called independents

represents the interests of the working class or opposes the agenda of war, austerity and attacks on democratic rights. The SEP is the only party fighting for the political independence of the working class and advancing a socialist, anti-war and anti-capitalist program. Our campaign will wage a relentless political struggle against all the parties of the official political establishment—the two longstanding parties of big business, Labor and the Liberals—and the Greens.

33. The Greens are a bourgeois political formation committed to the defence of the Australian nation state, private property relations and the capitalist market. While they seek to win support as “defenders” of the environment, the Greens reject any struggle against the greatest barrier to any decisive action over the danger of climate change: the subordination of economic and social life to the accumulation of profit and the division of the planet into antagonistic nation-states. The Greens speak for layers of the upper middle class who are preoccupied with their own lifestyles and are deeply hostile to the working class. Their support for the 2010–2013 Gillard minority Labor government—which signed up to the US “pivot” against China, slashed welfare spending and condemned refugees to indefinite detention in squalid Pacific Island camps—underscores, yet again, the fraudulent character of their “anti-war” and socially progressive pretensions. Since then, the Greens have moved even further to the right, promoting themselves as the party of “stability,” prepared to enter into coalition with either Labor or the Liberals.

34. At the centre of our election campaign will be an ongoing political and theoretical struggle against the pseudo-left organisations, such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, which seek to channel mass disaffection and political alienation back behind Labor and the Greens and serve as political adjuncts to the trade unions.

35. The pseudo-lefts are advocates of imperialist war, and have aligned themselves with the foreign policy of Australian imperialism on every major international question. Since 2011, they have supported US-backed factions in the civil wars in Libya and Syria and the imperialist-sponsored, fascist-led coup in Ukraine. In order to legitimise imperialist interventions, the pseudo-left invoke “humanitarian” pretexts, particularly by supporting pro-capitalist separatist movements among ethnic and religious minorities, and their demands for “national self-determination” against states such as China and Russia. The pseudo-left have suppressed any discussion of the Australian government’s key role in the US preparations for war with China, including the vast expansion of basing arrangements and full integration of the Australian military and intelligence apparatus into the US war machine.

36. The positions of the pseudo-left are not the product of theoretical mistakes. Rather, their political orientation is determined by their class character. They are neither “left” nor “socialist,” but speak for privileged sections of the upper middle classes that have a vested interest in maintaining capitalism, and whose material position has been boosted by the growth of financialisation and parasitism, one of the key features of imperialism and capitalist economy over the past three decades. This has rested on two foundations: imperialist domination of the world economy and the suppression of any independent struggle by the working class. That is why, amid mounting signs of working-class resistance and growing fears in ruling circles over what such resistance portends, the pseudo-left have become ever more strident in their attacks on Marxism and its embodiment in the International Committee of the Fourth International.

37. On the theoretical level, the pseudo-left have waged an ongoing offensive against the fundamental scientific conceptions of revolutionary Marxism: the revolutionary role of the working class and the vanguard role of the Marxist party in bringing scientific socialist consciousness into the working class. Their promotion of identity politics is used to elevate race, gender and sexual preference above the fundamental class divisions wracking society, including the massive growth of social inequality. They

base themselves on the subjective-idealist and irrationalist nostrums of post-modernism, which have disoriented generations of students and young people in schools and universities over the past four decades. Driven by fear of the revolutionary potential of the working class, the pseudo-left denounce the fight to build a revolutionary party as “elitist” and anti-democratic. Their attacks express the deepest needs of the bourgeoisie.

38. The working class can only break from the ideological influences of the bourgeoisie and prosecute the fight for its independent class interests, by developing a scientific understanding of the objective contradictions of capitalism and of the strategic experiences of the 20th century. Over the past three decades, since the 1985–86 split with the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain, the International Committee of the Fourth International has carried out an unprecedented offensive for classical Marxism, elaborating the independent standpoint of the working class on every major issue it has confronted. In the wake of the liquidation of the Soviet Union in 1991, the ICFI launched a counter-offensive for historical truth against the post-Soviet school of historical falsification, establishing the ongoing contemporary significance of the 1917 October Revolution as the harbinger of the world socialist revolution.

39. Basing itself on the decades-long struggle waged by Leon Trotsky and the Fourth International against Stalinism, the ICFI established that the collapse of the USSR was the product of the bankruptcy of the Stalinist program of “socialism in one country,” under conditions of an unprecedented globalisation of economic life. Far from refuting Marxism, the dissolution of the Soviet Union established the unviability of all national programs and the necessity for the working class to turn to the revolutionary internationalist program of Trotskyism to defend even its most immediate interests. Amid the slaughter of the first Gulf war in 1991, the ICFI warned that the same processes that had led to the dissolution of the Soviet Union—above all the heightening of the contradiction between world economy and the division of the globe into antagonistic nation-states—were ushering in a new period of imperialist war and socialist revolution. A quarter century later, that prognosis has been vindicated.

40. On the basis of the decades-long political and theoretical preparation of the Trotskyist movement, the Socialist Equality Party fights to win the leadership of the working class in the struggle against war, social counter-revolution and the accompanying assault on democratic rights. This will involve many practical initiatives, campaigns and interventions within the working class in Australia and throughout the region. The SEP’s youth movement, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), will develop the fight for historical truth, critical inquiry and vigorous intellectual debate among students, against all attempts to curtail or censor its activities by university student unions and managements. Above all, the party faces political and theoretical tasks, requiring that it continually develop its analysis and bring to bear the entire heritage of the Marxist movement in response to all developments. Lenin, in the years preceding the 1905 Russian Revolution, emphasised that the entry of the working class into major social and political struggles heightened the necessity for “consciousness in the theoretical, political and organisational work” of the party.

41. The SEP will continue to develop its contribution to the *World Socialist Web Site*, the organ of the International Committee of the Fourth International. As the central vehicles for the development of revolutionary consciousness and its dissemination around the world, the theoretical polemics, historical and political analyses and commentary on the WSWS are the basis for the expansion of the party’s influence and political authority. The web site is the concrete embodiment of the Trotskyist movement’s internationalist perspective, and it will play the central role in unifying workers in Australia with their class brothers and sisters internationally in the common struggle against war. The highest

expression of this common struggle is the recruitment of workers and youth into the ICFI. The SEP will fight to expand its ranks, assist in the development of new sections of the ICFI throughout the Asia-Pacific region, and train a new generation of socialists in the history and theoretical heritage of Marxism and the world Trotskyist movement.



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