

The election of Donald Trump, the danger of war and the political tasks facing young people

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
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As students and young people begin class in 2017, they confront a world that has profoundly changed. In the past three months, an extreme right-wing administration, unprecedented in American political history, has come into office.

Donald Trump's cabinet is composed of billionaires, fascists and ex-military generals. Domestically, it is committed to the destruction of the last vestiges of public education, healthcare and social services, along with the implementation of major tax cuts for the corporate elite. Internationally, it is committed to war.

The new government's first domestic action was to institute a sweeping immigration ban that recalls the worst crimes of the 1930s and underscores the repressive measures being prepared against the entire working class. In a warning of the plans for authoritarian rule, Trump officials have denounced the courts, and asserted the president's unchallengeable right to issue whatever edicts on migration he wishes.

On the global front, the administration is trashing all the old diplomatic arrangements, alliances and international institutions set in place after World War Two. Trump's program of aggressive "America first" nationalism means economic, trade and military war against any nation that challenges, in any way, the geo-strategic, financial or economic interests of the US oligarchy. This is a measure, not of the strength, but of the historic economic and political decline of US imperialism. Trump has already named China, North Korea and Iran as targets.

The danger of a new world war is real. While Trump's administration and its Republican backers accelerate their war preparations against Beijing, major sections of the military-intelligence apparatus, backed by the Democratic Party, are refusing to allow their own years-long preparations for war against Russia to be stalled. Within just a month of Trump's presidency, a virtual civil war has broken out within the American state over whether China or Russia should be attacked first, both with incalculable consequences for the American and world population.

At the same time, Trump's regime faces ongoing demonstrations by millions of American workers and young

people hostile to its repressive, anti-working class policies, specifically aimed at persecuting immigrants, refugees, Muslims and undocumented workers. As our sister organisation in the US, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), has made clear, this movement must make a political break from the Democratic Party, whose opposition to Trump is not to his vicious social programs but is aimed at intensifying the war drive against Russia.

How could such an administration come to power? The official explanation, advanced by the world's media, the Democratic Party and its political backers in the various pseudo-left organisations, is that the "white working class" was responsible.

This is lie and a slander. Far from a shift to the right among ordinary people, the defining feature of the 2016 US election was the collapse in support for the entire political establishment, and especially for the Democratic Party, which is reviled as the party of the intelligence agencies and huge investment banks.

Responsibility for Trump's election lies first and foremost with the political bankruptcy of Hillary Clinton and the Democratic Party. Impervious to the mass discontent among millions of ordinary working people, their campaign insisted that "America is already great," under conditions where eight years of President Obama had produced mass poverty, unemployment and unprecedented social inequality. Clinton, whose record as a war criminal is well known, focused on hysterical denunciations of Russia, in preparation for war, and gender-based identity politics, aimed at suppressing the major class questions.

Second, was the role played by Senator Bernie Sanders, whose fake claim to being a "socialist," conducting a "political revolution against the billionaire class," won him 13 million votes in the Democratic primaries against Clinton. But Sanders' aim was to divert this highly significant political radicalisation, especially among young people, and their striving for a genuine socialist alternative, back behind the Democratic Party. It was Sanders who nominated Clinton, as the Democratic Party's candidate for the presidency, on the

floor of its convention.

Since the inauguration, the Democrats have fawned before Trump. Sanders and others have pledged to work with his administration and have openly supported his attacks on immigrants.

But Trump is no aberration. His administration represents the true face of the capitalist oligarchy that rules the US. It is the outcome of previous administrations, both Democrat and Republican over the past decades, committed to carrying out unending war abroad and a social counter-revolution against the democratic and social rights of the working class at home. Trump's predecessor, Obama, was the first president in US history to be at war for two full terms. And Obama deported a record 2.5 million immigrants.

Nor is the new US administration the product of domestic factors alone. What lies behind the unprecedented crisis in the US are the fundamental contradictions of world capitalism—between global economy and the division of the world into rival nation-states, and between socialised production and the private ownership of the productive forces. These same contradictions, which have given rise to two world wars in the past 103 years, are now propelling the major powers towards a third world war.

In every country, the defining feature of political life is mass disaffection towards the entire official political establishment. That is the source of the crisis of the Liberal-National government of Malcolm Turnbull in Australia, as it seeks to implement the demands of the corporate elite for austerity cuts to healthcare, education and every aspect of social spending, in the face of deep hostility from millions of ordinary working people. It is also the source of One Nation's re-emergence, along with other right-wing outfits, which seek to replicate Trump's success by using populist demagoguery to divert mass social anger and distress into nationalism, chauvinism and xenophobia.

The Greens are playing a particularly pernicious role, utilising Sanders as their model. A capitalist party with a nationalist, pro-war program that expresses the interests of layers of the affluent middle class, the Greens are suddenly deploying phony "left" rhetoric. Their aim is to shore up their flagging support and to trap increasingly politicised young people and workers within the existing parliamentary set-up.

One needs to recall that the Greens were responsible for propping up the Gillard Labor government as it aligned Australia with the US plans for war against China, behind the backs of the population. Moreover, the Greens have invariably supported Australia's own imperialist interventions and intrigues in East Timor, the Solomon Islands and throughout the Asia-Pacific region.

For their part, the pseudo-left organisations, such as Socialist Alternative and Socialist Alliance, have aligned themselves with US imperialism by backing the US-inspired regime-change operation, in collaboration with extreme right-wing

Islamist forces, in Syria, and by denouncing China as imperialist. In Australia, they work to prevent any development of an independent political movement of the working class against the slashing of jobs, wages and conditions, and the gutting of social services, insisting that every struggle be subordinated to Labor, the Greens and the thoroughly corporatised, anti-working class trade unions.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality, the youth movement of the Socialist Equality Party and the world Trotskyist movement, fights for a socialist, revolutionary and internationalist perspective in opposition to austerity, the assault on democratic rights and the preparations for nuclear war.

The IYSSE seeks to orient students and young people to the working class, the only revolutionary force in capitalist society. We fight for the unity of workers of all countries, regardless of nationality, skin colour, gender, religion, or sexual preference, in a common struggle against global capitalism.

We urge all students and young people to study the lessons of history, above all, of the major social upheavals and revolutionary struggles of the 20th century. These occurred under conditions that bear striking resemblance to those we face today—imperialist war, political repression and social exploitation.

This year marks the centenary of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the first time the working class took political power. That revolution, which ended the horrors of World War One, transformed global politics, winning mass support in every country, including Australia.

Most importantly, the revolution proved the critical role of political leadership. It demonstrated that, led by a revolutionary, Marxist party, which had clarified the major theoretical and political issues, the working class was capable of overthrowing the moribund capitalist system, establishing a workers state and beginning the transition to a socialist world.

The same contradictions of capitalism that are giving rise to war are also creating the conditions for socialist revolution. We appeal to students and young people who agree with our perspective to join the IYSSE, help build our student clubs, and establish new branches among working-class youth, at schools, TAFES and at universities across the country and throughout the Asia-Pacific region.



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