

# To stem climate change, capitalism must be ended

The IYSSE (Australia)  
22 November 2018

Over the coming weeks, high school students across Australia will join “walk-outs for climate action,” and rally in capital cities and regional centres alike. Thousands of students have shared and promoted the action across Facebook, reflecting a developing politicisation of young people.

Today’s young people have grown up amid relentless environmental destruction, unending wars, continuous cutbacks to healthcare, education and social spending, and the destruction of basic democratic rights. In Australia and internationally, there is a growing recognition that the official political set-up has nothing to offer this generation but further calamities and crises.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth wing of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the world Trotskyist movement, welcomes the widest protests among students and youth against the environmental crisis and climate change.

The critical question, however, is what political program and perspective is required to halt and reverse environmental destruction, and establish a decent world free of war, inequality and dictatorship?

The starting point is to recognise that the fundamental problem is the capitalist profit system and the division of the planet into competing national-states. Capitalism prevents any rational, global plan being implemented to carry out the necessary drastic and rapid reduction in carbon emissions, while protecting the living standards of the world’s population.

At one international summit after another, capitalist governments, whether they claim to be “left” or “right,” have rejected any serious action to stem climate change. This is because they oppose measures that impact on the profitability of “their” nation’s corporations and major businesses.

Emissions trading schemes and other measures touted by Labor, the Greens and environmental groups as “market-based” solutions to climate change are a fraud. They have succeeded only in establishing lucrative opportunities for “green businesses” and creating new markets based on financial swindling and speculation.

Innumerable climate scientists have made clear that marginal emissions reductions will do nothing to halt the existential threat of climate change. Their findings have demonstrated that nothing less than the reorganisation of the global economy, in the interests of social need, not private profit, will resolve the climate crisis.

This will be accomplished only by building an international movement of the working class, aimed at the socialist transformation of society worldwide.

Under socialism, the vast productive forces and technological capacities developed by the working class would be harnessed to resolve all social problems, including climate change. Trillions of dollars would be allocated to ensuring the rapid reductions in carbon emissions required to halt climate change. The technologies for carrying this out, which already exist, would be developed on the basis of the collaboration of scientists from all over the world. The subordination of scientific work and research to the profit demands of the corporate oligarchy would be ended.

Far from being unrealistic, as claimed by the defenders of capitalism, this revolutionary socialist perspective is the only means of guaranteeing a future for humanity.

The destruction of the environment is just one manifestation of a systemic breakdown of the capitalist system.

Amid the deepest crisis of capitalism since the 1930s, young people confront all the horrors of the first half of

the 20th century. Governments in every country are carrying out a social counter-revolution, slashing public health care, education and welfare, while turning to authoritarianism and promoting anti-immigrant xenophobia and outright fascist movements.

Above all, the ruling elites are spearheading a revival of militarism that threatens the eruption of nuclear world war.

The United States, which has sought to overcome its relative economic decline through 25 years of continuous warfare, is escalating its confrontation with nuclear-armed powers, including China and Russia. In the Pentagon, and think-tanks connected to the US government, discussions are underway on waging war against China to prevent it threatening American imperialist dominance.

Australia is on the front line of these military preparations. Labor and Liberal-National Coalition governments have supported every illegal US-led war over the past 70 years. They have made clear that Australia would take part in a catastrophic US-led war against China, which would almost inevitably involve nuclear weapons.

In 2011, the Greens-backed Labor government of Julia Gillard aligned Australia with the “US pivot to Asia,” a vast American military build-up throughout the region in preparation for conflict with Beijing. The current Coalition government has deepened the line-up with Washington.

Successive governments and the establishment media have done everything they can to ensure that the population at large, and young people in particular, do not know about these plans for war. Those in ruling circles are well aware the war preparations will provoke mass opposition.

But, despite all the efforts to prevent a movement against the failure of capitalism and its consequences, the depth of the crisis is propelling workers and young people into mass social and political struggles around the world.

The emerging movement of the working class, however, can go forward only if it is based on a genuinely revolutionary, international and socialist perspective—not diverted into futile appeals to the powers-that-be to change their policies.

The danger of war, like the climate change crisis, is a product of the irresolvable contradictions of capitalism.

These are firstly, between a unified, global economy, and the division of the world into antagonistic capitalist nation-states, each representing the interests of its own ruling class. And secondly, between the socialised production process, involving the labour of billions of workers around the world, and the private ownership of society’s resources by a tiny corporate and financial elite.

In a 2016 statement, the International Committee of the Fourth International, the world Trotskyist movement, outlined the fundamental principles upon which a movement against war be based. They are no less relevant to the fight against climate change:

- 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 put an end to 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.

We urge students to contact the IYSSE and take up the fight for a socialist future.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**