

Australia: University of Melbourne IYSSE holds successful AGM despite anti-democratic measures

Our correspondent
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) club at University of Melbourne (UofM) held a successful online Annual General Meeting on October 16, with over 30 people joining the event.

Called by the youth wing of the Socialist Equality Party, the meeting had in attendance workers, youth and students from UofM, Victoria University, RMIT and La Trobe universities, as well as regional areas of the state of Victoria.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) exceeded the quorum of 15 students, fulfilling the IYSSE club's affiliation requirements for the fifth time since 2016, despite overwhelming hostility from the UofM's student-union run Clubs and Societies Committee (C&SC).

For over two and a half months preceding the AGM, Melbourne was in the middle of a deadly COVID-19 wave, and a "stage four" lockdown, making physical political campaigns and discussions impossible. Yet the C&SC refused to grant concessions on affiliation requirements on campus clubs.

Following the AGM, club president Evrim Yazgin explained: "The reaffiliation of the IYSSE at the University of Melbourne for a fifth consecutive year is of immense importance. Like all clubs, we were forced by the student union's Clubs and Societies Committee to hold online AGMs with 15-plus students in attendance despite the worst pandemic in over 100 years."

"The IYSSE spearheaded the opposition to this anti-democratic requirement from the standpoint that it would only serve to disaffiliate smaller and alternative clubs. We won broad support from other clubs and

students in this campaign, but we refused to be intimidated, and built our successful AGM."

Yazgin commented: "Our successful meeting is the product of two interrelated global processes. On the one hand, the growing radicalisation and leftward shift among broad layers of youth and students. And on the other, the deepening influence and interventions of the IYSSE and the world Trotskyist movement more broadly."

After a new club executive was elected, Yazgin delivered a report on the Marxist revolutionary Leon Trotsky, which was received warmly. Yazgin referenced aspects of a six-part series by WSWs international editorial board chairman David North on "Trotsky's Last Year."

Yazgin briefly reviewed Trotsky's role in the 1917 Russian Soviet Revolution and his analysis of the period leading up to World War II, including the rise of fascism and Stalinism—the counterrevolutionary movement that ultimately assassinated Trotsky 80 years ago.

A lively discussion followed the report, with questions on the difference between Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution and the Stalinist doctrine of "socialism in one country," the role of the revolutionary party, and the rise of fascist movements.

Yazgin noted: "The discussion at our AGM was significant and showed a thirst among young people to tackle the big political and historical questions. It is no coincidence, amid the COVID-19 crisis, the drive to war, increasing poverty and joblessness, and the threat of fascism, that the program of international socialist revolution is increasingly attractive to ever larger numbers of workers and youth around the world."

Aditya, an international student from Pakistan, echoed these sentiments, saying: “I think the substance of the report stuck out because it was about an assassination [of Trotsky], which is a life and death event. Ironically it brings life to these figures of history. They didn’t just write things down, but fought for them, and it brought attention to things that were so important that they were killed for it.”

Speaking of the US elections, Aditya said: “I’m not in the least bit surprised that Donald Trump would be open to the idea of Democrat governors being the target of planned violence. He’s apologised for white supremacists and terrorists. It’s just more of the same... It doesn’t seem like much of a secret either that Trump has a plan for what he will do if he loses the election, to remain in power anyway.”

On the US Democrats, Aditya said they “can’t incite too much of a response against Trump, because the majority of the American people would have the same problems with them as they would with Trump.”

Kimberley, a politics student, said the topic of internationalism was important. “I’m all for that. I think it’s so much more compassionate. I think when you have nationalism it gives room for imperialism to play out. Internationalism for me is about collective solidarity around the world.”

Kimberly said she had learned a lot in a short amount of time, including about the role of pseudo-left groups such as Socialist Alternative. “I just started attending [the IYSSE’s] discussions three or four weeks ago. I’m really interested in the historical side of how the Russian Revolution came to form. The discussions are really helpful.”

On the US election, Kimberly said it was showing that Trump is a fascist. “I read an article on the *World Socialist Web Site* and I totally agree with it. It’s so blatant, what’s happening. Trump is putting forward the view of capitalism and white-supremacy.”

Antoinette, a Botany student, said the AGM was “a really, really good discussion.” She also had been following the US elections. “Trump is totally going to start stacking the Supreme Court and is not going to give up the election if the popular vote is against him...”

“And the Democrats don’t seem like they are going to do anything about it. I read the whole thing about in 2000 Al Gore standing down to Bush even though he won. I was reading about that and what actually

happened and I found that very interesting.

“I knew very little about politics before I started [attending IYSSE meetings] and now I know a lot about politics. I have definitely learnt a lot. I basically started off as being kind of person ‘like come on, I wish I could just go live up a tree somewhere and not have to deal with politics,’ you know? But if one cares about the state of the world, you can’t not get involved in politics. It’s kind of impossible.”



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