

Join the IYSSE and take up the fight for international socialism!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
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The following statement is being distributed by International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) student clubs at orientation activities marking the beginning of the university year in Australia and New Zealand.

The events of the past year have brought students and young people face to face with the brutal reality of capitalism—that your social rights, and your very lives, are to be sacrificed on the altar of profit for major corporations and the wealth of a tiny layer of billionaires.

In little over 12 months, the COVID-19 virus has infected more than 100 million people worldwide and killed nearly 2.5 million. Healthcare systems, crippled by decades of funding and staffing cuts, representing nothing less than a social counter-revolution, are unable to deal with the mounting crisis. In the name of protecting “the economy,” capitalist governments in every country have forced workplaces and schools to open against scientific advice. This murderous and anti-scientific policy of “herd immunity” has led to the catastrophe experienced by millions of people worldwide.

Comparable to the outbreak of World War I, the experiences of the past year represent a turning point in world history. The pandemic has acted as a trigger event, accelerating the breakdown of world capitalism, and heightening social, economic and geopolitical tensions.

The crisis exposes the refusal and the inability of capitalism and its political representatives to act in the interests of society. It has revealed a vast gulf between ordinary people and the ultra-wealthy minority.

COVID-19 has been used by the capitalist class as the pretext to intensify an assault on the working class, with pro-business restructuring being imposed everywhere.

While workers and their families are left in ruin and to mourn loved ones, the world’s billionaires have engorged themselves. Since the beginning of 2020, the wealth of the world’s richest 500 people has increased by approximately \$1.8 trillion, to a total of \$7.6 trillion. Combined, the wealth of Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos and Tesla CEO Elon Musk grew by \$217 billion in 2020.

This massive and growing social polarisation is most stark in the centre of world imperialism and the richest country on earth, the United States of America. The “herd immunity” policy has had devastating consequences for the American working class. With 4 percent of the world’s population, the US has almost one quarter of the total COVID-19 cases and nearly half a million deaths.

Despite the ongoing crisis, the administration of newly-elected Democratic President Joe Biden is continuing the same policies of his fascistic predecessor Donald Trump in forcing workplaces and schools to open, putting millions more lives in danger.

This program is incompatible with democracy. The ruling elite in the US, as everywhere, is acutely aware of the opposition in the working class to the drive to war and the indifference of governments to the suffering of millions amid the pandemic. Paralleling the 1930s, the capitalist class is again fomenting far-right and fascistic movements in preparation for a counter-offensive against the working class. This was most sharply expressed in Trump’s attempted coup on January 6, involving a violent assault on the US Capitol aimed at overturning the 2020 presidential election result.

Overwhelming evidence proves this was a planned and coordinated insurrection with support from the highest levels of the US state and military-intelligence apparatuses. The battle cry of the fascist mob mobilised by Trump was opposition to any lockdowns or restrictions on business activities to curb the spread of the virus. There is a direct connection between the homicidal policies of the Trump administration, aimed at ensuring the fortunes of Wall Street and resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths, and the turn to extreme right-wing authoritarian forms of rule.

Aiding and abetting Trump and his cronies at every turn, Biden and the Democrats’ spineless showing during his impeachment trial proves that they do not represent a genuine alternative to the threat of fascism in the US. The Democrats fear an independent movement of the working class more than they do the turn to fascist rule. There exists

no constituency for the defence of democratic rights within the ruling class.

The turn to authoritarianism is not a purely American phenomenon but is part of a broader dictatorial push by the ruling elite in every country.

Opposition to fascism is inseparable from the development of a worldwide movement of the working class against capitalism and for socialism.

Biden's administration has not just continued the anti-social policies of Trump, but stepped up the drive to war. The main targets of US imperialism are China and Russia, which the US ruling elite sees as the primary threats to American capitalism's post-World War II hegemony.

The entire Australian political establishment—including the Liberal-Nationals, Labor and the Greens—has backed US aggression and placed Australia on the front lines of plans for a catastrophic war against China. In recent weeks, both Liberal-National Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Labor opposition leader Anthony Albanese have spoken in favour of the US-Australia alliance and called for stepped-up cooperation against Beijing. The war drive in Australia and New Zealand has been accompanied by a xenophobic and nationalist campaign, demonising Chinese nationals and international students.

The drive to war goes hand in hand with an assault on the democratic rights and social rights of the working class.

While the pandemic has not resulted in the same level of illness and death in Australia and New Zealand as elsewhere, the ruling elite has been no less ruthless in using COVID-19 as justification for a wholesale assault on the working class. Particularly at risk are the growing number of casual workers, many of whom are young people and students, forced to navigate the “gig economy” to pay for soaring education and living costs.

The offensive on jobs and conditions has been expressed in tens of thousands of sackings and restructures at university campuses, Australia Post, Telstra and in retail. With the complicity of Labor and the thoroughly corporatised trade unions, workers around Australia are confronted with mass unemployment and job insecurity. The unions in every industrial dispute act as a police force, straitjacketing workers into accepting the demands of companies and management.

The 350 workers at Coles' Smeaton Grange warehouse, who have been locked out for three months, have experienced this first hand. In the face of determined opposition, the United Workers Union has worked hand in glove with Coles to try and force through the closure of the facility and the destruction of all or most of the jobs there.

The unions virtually ignore the plight of young workers, leaving them to fend for themselves against major

international corporations in industries such as fast food and retail.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth and student wing of the world Trotskyist movement, is fighting to break workers free from the capitalist parties and their lackeys in the trade unions. The IYSSE fights to orient students and youth to the working class in a struggle for genuine socialist revolutionary politics.

This requires a struggle against pseudo-left parties like Socialist Alternative, Socialist Alliance and Solidarity. These organisations seek to channel workers and youth behind the unions and parties of big business, including Labor and the Greens. They represent the interests, not of workers, but of privileged sections of the upper-middle class that use identity politics, based on race, gender and sexual orientation, to advance their own selfish interests within the framework of capitalist society.

The IYSSE opposes all attempts to divide workers along national or identity lines. The fundamental division is class. Socialists fight for the unity of the international working class—the only revolutionary force that can take society forward through the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of world socialism. The IYSSE is the sole movement on campuses fighting to turn students and youth to the working class.

As Marxists, we are internationalists and revolutionists. None of the major problems confronting humanity—war, dictatorship, poverty, climate catastrophe and pandemic—can be resolved within the bounds of the outmoded capitalist nation-state system.

We base ourselves on the lessons of history. Our movement traces its origins back to Marx and Engels, the founders of scientific socialism, through the 1917 Russian Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky, and Trotsky's fight against the abandonment of socialist internationalism by the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union.

To ensure a future free of war, poverty, fascism and climate catastrophe, students and young people must take up a struggle for revolutionary socialism today. The IYSSE is the only youth and student organisation fighting for this perspective. Join and build the IYSSE!



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