Watch: IYSSE (Australia) meeting opposes US war drive against China

Our reporter
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Australia and New Zealand held an online public meeting last Saturday, reviewing the escalating US-led war drive against China, and putting forward a socialist and internationalist perspective for the working class to prevent such a catastrophe.

The event, which can be viewed below, was attended by students from a host of universities in Sydney, Brisbane, Newcastle, Melbourne and Adelaide, working class youth and high school students, and international participants, including from the Philippines, Sri Lanka, India, the US, Germany and Britain.

Chairing the meeting, IYSSE (Australia) convenor Oscar Grenfell pointed to some of the indications of the war drive, including statements by senior US admirals forecasting a conflict, and a series of recent provocations, centering on Taiwan. He noted active discussions underway within the ruling elite, over the use of nuclear weapons in such a war.

Evrim Yazgin, a leading member of the IYSSE and the president of its club at the University of Melbourne, delivered a report detailing Australia's integration into the US preparations for conflict with Beijing. He explained that this was initiated by the Greens-backed Labor government in 2011 and had been deepened by each of its successors. A host of military and basing arrangements had been established behind the backs of the population, while universities across the country were involved in both the technological and ideological preparations for war.

Yazgin spoke out against an anti-China campaign, by the political and media establishment, that has particularly targeted the universities. He explained that the IYSSE was oriented to the working class, and was seeking to build an international anti-war movement based on a socialist program.

WSWS correspondent and Socialist Equality Party National Committee member Mike Head gave the main report. He placed the danger of another world war in the context of the deepening breakdown of world capitalism, intensified by the disastrous coronavirus pandemic.

Head reviewed the analysis of the pandemic, developed on the WSWS, as an historic trigger event akin to World War I. The dramatic spread of the virus was a consequence of the pro-business policies of governments everywhere, aimed at "reopening" the economy to boost corporate profits.

All the existing geopolitical, economic and social crises that had developed over the previous decades were being greatly exacerbated. This included the protracted attempt by the US ruling elite, to offset the decline of American imperialism through confrontation with potential rivals, especially China and Russia.

Head stressed that war, like the continued spread of the pandemic, was not inevitable. "History has shown that the same capitalist crisis that produces the insanity of war also generates the impulse for social revolution, which is the only way to stop war, just as the October 1917 Russian Revolution ended World War I," Head stated.

"Today, there is growing anger and opposition among billions of people around the world—to war, to staggering levels of social inequality, and to the threat of fascism and other authoritarian forms of rule. Strikes and mass struggles by workers and young people are developing again, after the initial shock of the pandemic."

What is required is a political movement of the working class, based on the lessons of history and a revolutionary perspective directed against the source of the crisis, the capitalist system.

The reports provoked lively discussion. Questions were raised about the extent of Australia's military spending, and its plans to begin missile production; how the pandemic could be brought under control; the attitude of socialists to religion, and the growth of social inequality over the past year.

A series of questions was raised, relating to the possibility of halting war.

In response, Head and Yazgin stressed that there is widespread anti-war sentiment and developing struggles by the working class. Head reviewed the experience of the mass demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq in 2003. The largest protests in human history, they had been unable to prevent the US attack, because they were politically-subordinated to the pro-war parties of big business, including Labor in Australia and the Democrats in the US.

A new anti-war movement will need to be based on the principles elaborated in the International Committee of the Fourth International's 2016 statement, *Socialism and the fight*

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against war. It insisted that such a struggle could only go forward if it were international, independent of the capitalist political establishment, based in the working class and fighting for international socialism.

The speakers encouraged participants to attend the International Online May Day rally that is being held this weekend. [link]

A number of attendees gave comments to WSWS correspondents, expressing their appreciation for the meeting.

Kobra, a student of Afghan descent at Sydney's Macquarie University, said: "The meeting was an imperative one for me because it helped clarify my understanding of some of the principal tenets of socialism. By addressing my concerns it further strengthened my resolve to educate myself, and the people around, me on the topic.

"As someone who has had to flee their home country because of an ongoing inhumane and unnecessary war, I am completely opposed to the US and Australian government's war preparations against China. This is why I support the IYSSE's efforts to oppose the war drive. before it is too late."

Elias, another Macquarie University student, explained: "I attended the IYSSE meeting as I was interested in a different perspective on the war effort from what I would get from mainstream news sources, which focus on how China is wielding its power, which is not healthy for the global economy or global society. The US has military authority through its hegemony. It has used threats of war, and war itself. So it is not surprising that the US is advancing war against China."

Elias agreed that the war drive was going hand in hand with an onslaught on the social position of the working class. "When it comes to problems of scarcity, distribution is a big deal," he said. "People are being disenfranchised faster than social safety nets are put in place. People are worse off from the pandemic. Social relations are being restructured using the coronavirus as a pretext. There's a move to Amazon-style work. That won't go back. During a crisis, the grip tightens, but after the crisis the grip loosens only a little."

Mark, a young worker in Sydney, said: "I attended the meeting so that I could hear the next generation of leaders. It is heartening to know that there are young revolutionaries who are eloquent and knowledgeable. Among other things, I learned that the integration of the universities into the war drive is well advanced and that wholesale resources have been devoted to the domestic manufacture of weapons.

"The mainstream media is, as usual, cheerleading for war, poisoning public opinion and generally doing a disservice to humanity. The liberal and conservative press each seek to outdo the other in lurid and unsubstantiated claims of Chinese human rights abuses, repeating the now well-worn formula of the big lie.

"By contrast, the WSWS is a unique no-nonsense resource, which can 'clarify the issues of the day,' as one presenter put it. What makes the site so reliable is its unparalleled analysis, which events have borne out time and again (just read through the archives.) There is a burning necessity to build a party of the working class. Anything less will fail to halt the ongoing medical catastrophe, social disaster, and impending war.'

Scott, a hydraulics worker in Newcastle, attending his first IYSSE meeting, agreed that the official response to the pandemic had been criminally-negligent. "The ultimate goal for governments is profit," he said. "It drives all their decision-making.

"It was interesting to be part of the meeting, understanding the 'why' and the 'how,' whereas the government and the media just repeats, 'tensions with China are rising'. As I understand it, it is our own government and the US that are concocting this situation.

"For instance, the economic deals between China and Victoria were recently scrapped. It wasn't China that did that! We backed out of the deal, citing 'national security.'

"The meeting made me understand more about the need for internationalism, and for workers to cooperate against the drive to war."

Zach, a member of the IYSSE at Western Sydney University, said: "I attended the meeting because the drive to war is going to affect all of us, as have wars of the past. I think it was an incredibly important meeting with regards to the constant hair triggers and flashpoints in the world right now.

"One of the main points from the meeting is that there is actually an anti-war movement. If you are isolated from the revolutionary party you would think there were no anti-war movements at the moment, that virtually every section of society was supporting this war drive. But that's not the case. There is a genuine alternative to war that can be pursued through a socialist perspective.

"What I took out of the meeting was a greater understanding of history, of China, and US imperialism over the past three decades. And not just me, I think a lot of people would have left with a greater understanding of current events, including the war preparations being made against China and Russia.

"The meeting made it clear that it was necessary not to be passive. It's not simply a matter of saying 'no to war.' We are seeking to mobilise a movement, an anti-war movement, not simply to promote an anti-war sentiment.

"The International Workers Alliance of Rank and File Committees, announced in the lead up to the international May Day rally, will be a critical part of our fight. We need the political independence of the workers. If we don't, then we have the trade unions or the so-called workers' parties, like Labor, which support the war drive."

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