

The struggle against climate change, the pandemic and war requires a revolutionary socialist perspective!

IYSSE (Australia)
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On Friday, thousands of high school students across Australia will join demonstrations opposing the refusal of governments to take any action to address climate change.

The protests occur under conditions of a massive crisis of capitalism. The COVID-19 pandemic, the environmental disaster and the mounting threat of a nuclear war are interrelated expressions of the same basic fact: the profit-system is leading humanity to an abyss.

After decades of ever-greater carbon emissions, presided over by capitalist governments everywhere, the consequences of climate change are being felt already. Temperatures are increasing, sea levels are rising, and there is an ever-greater frequency of catastrophic weather events, from bushfires to droughts and flooding.

The urgency of the crisis is demonstrated by the warnings of scientists that if emissions are not drastically reduced by the end of the decade, the effects of climate change may be irreversible.

Despite the seriousness of the situation, not a single government or official politician anywhere in the world has a viable perspective to avert the catastrophe. All of them oppose any measure that would impinge in the slightest on the fortunes of a tiny corporate oligarchy that dominates every aspect of social and economic life.

The experiences of the past year demonstrate that this state of affairs is not limited to the climate. The coronavirus pandemic represents a breakdown and failure of the capitalist system not seen since the 1930s. The disastrous consequences of the disease have less to do with its biological structure, than with the social relations of capitalism, within which the medical catastrophe has unfolded.

For decades, governments have refused to allocate funding to combat pandemics, despite urgent warnings from medical experts of their likelihood. When COVID-19 spread across the globe, the response of all capitalist governments was to hand trillions of dollars to the corporations and the banks. Since the bailouts of March–April last year, they have done everything they can to lift safety restrictions, including lockdowns, as quickly as possible.

Everywhere, the mantra of the ruling elites has been to “reopen the economy,” regardless of the spread of the virus. Millions of workers have been forced into unsafe factories and workplaces, and students and teachers have been pushed into the classrooms. This campaign has been dictated by the insistence of the corporate elite that nothing be allowed to get in the way of its profit-making activities. It has been conducted under the homicidal banner of “herd immunity,” i.e., of deliberately allowing the virus to spread.

As a result, even by the vastly under-stated official statistics, some 600,000 people are dead in the United States, the centre of world

capitalism. Almost a million have perished across Europe, and globally almost 3.5 million have lost their lives. Far from the disaster being over, 2021 is predicted to be worse than the horrors of 2020. The pandemic is raging out of control in large swathes of the world, including India, where the healthcare system is overwhelmed.

The *World Socialist Web Site* has described the pandemic as a trigger event that has deepened all the social, economic and geopolitical crises of the capitalist system that have developed over decades.

Governments have responded by dramatically intensifying militarism and war. The carnage being inflicted by Israel on the Palestinians, with the full support of the US, Australia and the other major powers, is only the sharpest expression.

American imperialism, under the Biden administration, has stepped up its confrontations with China and Russia. Almost every day, diplomatic, political and military provocations are carried out that could result in a major war. US generals have declared there will likely be a military conflict with China in the next five years.

The drive to war is being accompanied by a war against the working class at home. While trillions of public funds have been handed to the corporations, public healthcare and education are under assault, and the ruling elite is going on the offensive against the jobs, wages and conditions of working people. Indices of unemployment and poverty are at record highs.

The massive growth of social inequality and the plans for war are incompatible with democracy. Everywhere, governments are turning to increasingly authoritarian forms of rule to suppress mounting social and political discontent. The attempt of Donald Trump to overthrow the US election result, in the failed coup of January 6, is a sharp warning that fascist forces are back on the scene, with the encouragement of powerful sections of the ruling elite.

Australia is not exempt from the global crisis. State and federal governments, Labor and Liberal alike, have presided over the same profit-driven response to the pandemic. They have repeatedly lifted coronavirus restrictions at the behest of big business, leading to deadly outbreaks; done nothing to improve the public healthcare system amid a pandemic; and presided over shambolic hotel quarantine and vaccine rollout programs.

Labor and the Liberals have placed Australia on the frontlines of the US war drive against China, exemplified by the recent declaration of one senior government official that the country must be prepared “to send off, yet again, our warriors to fight.” The entire political establishment is stoking tensions with Beijing and promoting the lying

“human rights” justifications for US aggression, while waging a McCarthyite and racist campaign against supposed “Chinese interference” inside Australia.

On the social front, governments, backed by the unions have handed more than \$400 billion to the corporations and the banks. Now, they are enforcing a sweeping pro-business restructuring, aimed at boosting big-business profits even further, at the expense of the working class.

We are living through a period of wars, revolutions and political upheavals. All the horrors visited upon humanity by capitalism in the first half of the 20th century are once again rearing their heads.

Under these conditions, the claim that a single issue facing workers and young people can be addressed by pressuring capitalist governments, or electing other parties of big business and the banks, is worse than a delusion. It is a political trap that serves to direct young people behind the very forces responsible for the climate catastrophe and all the attacks on social and democratic rights.

The announcement for today’s protests, issued by the national organisers of School Strike 4 Climate, sums up this bankrupt perspective. The statement does not say a word about what is taking place in the world. The pandemic, the growth of militarism, and massive social inequality do not rate a mention.

The statement notes that the Morrison government is promoting gas exploration and other fossil fuels. This is “lining the pockets of multinational gas companies, which are fuelling the climate crisis.” But then it declares that the purpose of the strike is to “tell the Morrison government that if they care about our future, they must stop throwing money at gas.”

This is truly mutiny on one’s knees. The statement absurdly proclaims that “The Morrison government could be protecting our climate, land and water,” developing renewables, etc. Who do the organisers think they are kidding? Morrison’s government represents the interests of the banks and the corporations, including the fossil fuel companies. He is the prime minister who infamously responded to the 2019–2020 bushfire crisis by holidaying in Hawaii and refusing to take any action as the country burned.

The statement is silent on the record of Labor and the Greens. As in the past, speakers will doubtless present these organisations as “lesser evils” that would enact progressive policies if allowed to form government.

Labor, no less than the Coalition, is a pro-war party of big business, with a reactionary record on the environment, and every other area. The Green-backed Labor government of Julia Gillard introduced a carbon tax that, according to its own modelling, would result in an *increase* in carbon emissions for the foreseeable future. At the same time, it kicked hundreds of thousands of single parents off their benefits, aligned Australia with the US war drive against China and viciously persecuted refugees.

For their part, the Greens defend capitalism and appeal to the major parties at elections for the formation of a coalition government, either with Labor or the Liberals. The various emissions trading schemes, promoted by the Greens, have not led to any reduction in emissions where they have been introduced in Europe, instead creating a new and lucrative financial market.

The situation in Australia is mirrored globally. At innumerable world summits, capitalist politicians make token and utterly inadequate pledges to reduce emissions, which they have no intention of fulfilling. Various environmental organisations hail these exercises in deceit as a “victory” and insist that only a little more pressure is required.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) rejects these bankrupt claims. The issue facing young people is not to appeal to capitalist governments, but to build a political movement of the working class to abolish the profit system.

Under capitalism, every social question is subordinated to the profit-making activities of the corporate elite. A handful of billionaires and giant corporations control the economy, the major political parties, the parliaments, the media and every other official institution of society. Not a single step forward can be taken, on the question of climate change, or any other issue, without breaking the vice-like grip of this oligarchy over society.

And nothing can be resolved within the framework of the capitalist nation-state system. The issues confronting young people and humanity are global in scope. Their resolution requires an internationally-coordinated and planned utilisation of the world’s resources and productive capacity. But at every turn, this is blocked by the division of the globe into antagonistic nation-states, representing the interests of rival capitalist cliques.

The IYSSE states the truth: the only alternative is the fight for international socialism!

The major banks and corporations must be placed under public ownership and democratic workers’ control. Trillions of dollars must be allocated to the climate crisis, and to guaranteeing the social rights of working people the world over, to decent, well-paid jobs, high-quality public education, healthcare and housing. The resources for such a development exist. They have been created by the collective labour of the international working class.

But such a program can be carried out only through the construction of a revolutionary movement, uniting workers around the world in a common fight for the abolition of capitalism and the establishment of a world socialist society, based on meeting social needs, not private profit.

The IYSSE appeals to all students and young people: take your place in this fight Join the IYSSE!



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