

To end climate change, war and the pandemic, take up the fight for world socialism!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
24 March 2022

Students and youth around Australia are taking part in rallies March 25–28 as part of a global strike to demand action to halt climate change. Previous school strikes have involved tens or even hundreds of thousands of students in cities, towns and regional centres across the country, indicating young people’s anger at government inaction and a willingness to take up a fight for their future.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) welcomes the broadest participation in the strikes against climate change.

The perspective advanced by the organiser of the events in Australia, School Strike 4 Climate, however, is a political dead end. The announcement of Friday’s rallies declares: “We will be sending a clear message to voters as [sic] this election, we are asking people to stand up to our politicians and #VoteForOurFutures.”

The School Strike 4 Climate organisers say that young people need to “send our politicians a clear message demanding Climate Action.” In line with this perspective, the Sydney rally was relocated at the last minute to the prime minister’s residence in one of the most affluent areas of the city.

The IYSSE insists: you cannot pressure capitalist governments or politicians to act on climate change. They represent the ruling class and the profit system which is responsible for the climate crisis.

The strike this month comes amid stark expressions of the dangers that climate change presents in Australia and around the world.

Unprecedented flooding in recent weeks has devastated the east coast of Queensland and New South Wales (NSW). The flood crisis is the direct result of the subordination of society to the interests of the profits of the capitalist class. For decades, Liberal-National Coalition and Labor federal and state governments alike have presided over a decimation of flood mitigation and social services.

Like the 2019–20 bushfire catastrophe and the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the floods have laid bare the inability of capitalism to protect the lives and livelihoods of ordinary people. So far, 23 people have died in the flood crisis.

And what has been the government response?

Visiting the northern NSW working-class town of Lismore earlier this month, Prime Minister Scott Morrison said the government would do nothing for residents in Lismore and other areas ravaged by flooding. Morrison contemptuously declared: “In any natural disaster... the suggestion that it is only the governments that are involved in an emergency response, I don’t think the community agrees with that.”

Morrison’s statement only sums up the line of the entire political establishment. Whether it is mounting poverty and social inequality, the surge of COVID resulting from the pro-business “let it rip” policies, or the climate catastrophe, Labor, the Liberals and the whole parliamentary set-up insist that working people are on their own.

Flood victims in Lismore were left to rescue one another, and have been given just a pittance in government aid. Tens of thousands in that city, and throughout the flood-affected regions, face destitution and homelessness.

While there is no money for them, the government and Labor are throwing almost limitless funds at the military and its war preparations.

Some \$38 billion are earmarked to increase the Australian Defence Force (ADF) by 20,000 to 80,000 over the next 20 years, on top of more than \$500 billion in funding this decade.

The same capitalist system that is destroying the environment is threatening humanity with the catastrophe of a nuclear world war.

The outbreak of war in Ukraine highlights the dangers. The conflict is a proxy war between the US–NATO and Russia, both of which possess nuclear weapons.

The IYSSE unequivocally opposes the reactionary invasion by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s government. However, the war was deliberately provoked by the US and its allies, who are exploiting it to intensify longstanding plans for conflict with Russia. The aim is to stem the historic decline of the US through the use of its overwhelming military might. The primary targets are Russia and China.

Australia is on the frontlines. The weaponry being sent by the Australian government to Ukraine will be handed to that

country's fascistic militias, for use against Russian soldiers. At the same time, the Australian political and media establishment is whipping up a hysterical wartime atmosphere, based on anti-Russian chauvinism.

All of the official parties, including the Greens, have aligned Australia with a vast US military build-up throughout the Asia-Pacific, aimed at preparing for war with China.

There is not a sliver of difference between Morrison, Albanese, or for that matter Greens leader Adam Bandt. Albanese is insisting that Labor would be better placed to oversee Australia's frontline role in the US war drive. Bandt has campaigned for expanded sanctions against Russia, while saying nothing about the US-NATO aggression that has provoked the war.

The political establishment is similarly at one in blocking any measures aimed at addressing the climate crisis.

It should not be forgotten that the Greens-backed Labor government of Julia Gillard did nothing to reduce carbon emissions while in office from 2010 to 2013. Australia's emissions actually increased under its carbon tax policy. That government's own modelling showed annual emissions would have grown from 582 to 621 million tonnes from 2012 to 2020 had the tax remained in place.

In this, like every other election campaign, Labor and the Greens' "climate policies" will all centre on cash subsidies to big business, and "market-based" solutions, which have failed to reduce emissions wherever they have been implemented, while enriching the financial elite.

Likewise, the Greens are again signalling that they will work with Labor after the elections. A Greens-backed Labor government would intensify Australia's involvement in US-led wars, force the working class to pay for the deepening economic crisis and would respond to the climate catastrophe with only window dressing, while serving the interests of the banks and corporations driving emissions.

The various international agreements and conferences, like last year's COP26 summit in Glasgow, provide only false promises and posturing over national commitments, which even if met, would not end climate change. All of the governments that attend, represent their own nationally-based capitalist interests, each of which determined that no action can be taken which impacts upon profit-making operations.

Decades of scientific research, moreover, shows that climate change cannot be addressed on a country-by-country basis. Nor can it be ended within a system dominated by corporate and financial interests. Environmental destruction can only be averted on the basis of a rational, international program, harnessing the productive and scientific capabilities of humanity as a whole.

This is likewise demonstrated by the COVID pandemic.

Once held up as COVID "success stories," governments in Australia and New Zealand have adopted the murderous "live with the virus" policy of capitalist governments around the

world. All scientifically-determined public health measures to stem the spread of COVID-19 have been junked because they cut across the profit-making ability of the capitalist class. Students are being herded back into dangerous schools and universities as part of the "return to normal" where they are at risk of contracting COVID and spreading it to family and friends.

Climate change, like the other existential threats confronting humanity, is not merely a question of understanding the science. It is fundamentally a political question.

We insist that climate change, and the severe weather events and misery that come along with it, can only be stemmed by getting rid of the capitalist system which places the profits of the tiny, wealthy financial and corporate elite ahead of the interests of the working class, youth and the planet.

War and social counterrevolution are the ruling elite's response to the fundamental contradictions of capitalism. These are between private ownership of society's resources by a tiny minority of capitalists, and the socialised nature of a production process that involves billions of people around the world. And also between the global economy and the outmoded division of the world into antagonistic capitalist nation-states.

The IYSSE calls on students and youth to link the struggle against climate change with the broader struggles against all the existential threats confronting humanity, above all imperialism's relentless march toward a catastrophic nuclear war.

To do this, young people must turn to the international working class as the only social force capable of overthrowing capitalism and replacing it with a world socialist system based on social need, not private profit.

The working class produces all of society's wealth. As the only international class, its interests are for the ending of the nation-state system and the unification of humanity. And the objective logic of the struggles of the working class are directed against the private ownership of society's resources and the dominance of the corporate-financial elite.

The deepening global crisis, expressed in the pandemic, the threat of war, the soaring cost of living, and massive social inequality, will propel workers into struggle.

Students and youth must take up the fight for a socialist perspective within these struggles and in the working class. The major political issues of the day will not be resolved through futile appeals to capitalist politicians, but through the development of a revolutionary and international movement, aimed at reorganising global society to meet human need, not private profit. Join the IYSSE and take up this fight!



To contact the WWSW and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact