

“We must unite around an international working class anti-war movement to combat the growing threat of a Third World War”

Campaign for December 10 rally to build international anti-war movement reaches students across Canada

Our reporters
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On Saturday, December 10, at 1 p.m. eastern time, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and the *World Socialist Web Site* are hosting a webinar to discuss the building of a global anti-war movement to stop the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. Members of the Socialist Equality Party (Canada) have campaigned among students and workers across the country to build support for the event over recent weeks.

Canadian imperialism is playing a major role in the US-led war, which is aimed at subordinating Russia to the status of a semi-colony, plundering its rich natural resources, and extending the control of the Western imperialist powers over the Eurasian landmass. The federal Liberal government recently announced another \$500 million in military aid to Ukraine, which comes on top of \$630 million pledged by Ottawa since the beginning of the conflict.

The claim that the war began on February 24 with an act of “Russian aggression” against Ukraine is a lie. In reality, the war was provoked by decades of eastward expansion by NATO up to the borders of Russia following the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The United States, Britain, Canada, and the major European powers disregarded Russia’s security concerns and instead sought to goad the Putin regime into launching a war. Based on the reactionary oligarchy that emerged from the restoration of capitalism, Putin’s regime offers no alternative to imperialism, as shown by its invasion of Ukraine.

In 2014, Ottawa backed the fascist-led coup in Kiev that

installed a pro-Western puppet regime, and was instrumental in the restructuring of the Ukrainian armed forces over the following years in preparation for war. This included the integration into the Ukrainian armed forces of fascist militias working in the tradition of the Nazi collaborationist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, which the Canadian state helped rehabilitate after World War II.

SEP members discussed these questions with students and advanced the perspective of a global anti-war movement led by the working class at interventions in Quebec, Ontario, and British Columbia. They explained that the only way to put a stop to imperialist war is through a struggle to end the capitalist profit system that gives rise to it. Reflecting the unanimous support within the political establishment for the war, including among pseudo-left groups who claim to be socialist, many students who eagerly took leaflets from campaigners stated that it was the first time they had come across opposition to the conflict.

Toronto and Guelph

Campaigners in Ontario spoke to an Afghan war veteran, who explained his opposition to war. “This statement is great for advocating for peace and against imperialism,” he said, referring to the IYSSE statement A call to youth throughout the world: build a mass

movement to stop the Ukraine war. “With the fear, war-mongering, and hypocrisy we see around us in the world today, I find it heartening to see statements like this from the IYSSE.”

Kiara, a neuroscience student at the University of Guelph was very interested in the campaign. She expressed keen interest in knowing more about the war and its underlying causes, which prompted an extensive and wide-ranging political discussion about the role of the working class in ending WWI, and the influence of identity politics on campus, as well as the potential for art as a vehicle for political expression. The conversation underlined the latent hunger within the student body for a politically principled, anti-war movement.

Another student at the University of Guelph commented, “I’m against the war in Ukraine and I want it stopped. War is not in the interests of people in Canada or any other country. I am concerned about Canada’s involvement and worried about the war spreading beyond Ukraine.”

In discussions with students, campaigners drew the connection between the billions of dollars wasted on waging war and rearming the military, and the austerity policies that are starving public spending and slashing workers’ wages. James, who campaigned at the University of Guelph, explained, “University students in Canada today are under tremendous assault; fees have never been higher, supports have never been more difficult to obtain. The cost of living crisis is pushing students into debt and poverty, and they take their very lives into their hands just by going to the lecture hall, where all COVID-19 protections have essentially been abandoned by University Administrations. The real-life problems of students—which are urgent and pressing—are intimately bound up with the world crisis of the capitalist system, which is driving the world towards WWII. They are bound up with history. It has never been more urgent for working class students to have a socialist political perspective, oriented towards the one social force which can transform the material conditions faced by students, the international working class.”

A student at Western University in London said, “Personally I agree that students don’t have a huge interest in this war. If they do, it’s probably them being waylaid by false political ambitions. It’s great to see your movement and I hope it goes somewhere.”

At the University of Toronto, SEP members leafletted in front of Robarts Library, handing out hundreds of leaflets to students and also passing cyclists. Campaigners also

put up posters at York University in Toronto and the Université de Montreal in Quebec. Jake, who campaigned at the University of Toronto, commented, “There was strong enthusiasm for stopping the war, with a number of students approaching us for a leaflet after overhearing me make my appeal to ‘Build the fight to stop the war’ after originally turning it down, then doubling back to take one.”

Simon Fraser University

SEP campaigners spoke to students at Simon Fraser University in Burnaby, British Columbia. In discussing the war, one student pointed to the complicity of all the political parties in supporting imperialism. “There are no major differences between the major political parties. The US Democrats, the Liberals, and the New Democrats talk differently, but their policies in the end are the same. If we want real change, we need different political parties and organizations for any meaningful progress,” said Cali, an undergraduate student.

Liam, a recent graduate from British Columbia, stated, “We are constantly told there is no money for debt-relief, for national infrastructure plans, or for building the welfare state. There does however seem to be limitless amounts of money for proxy wars and regime changes. The United States and their European allies having long plotted a confrontation with Russia and enacted provocation after provocation, have now found limitless money for war and arms shipments to combat Russia in Ukraine. We as students must recognize that while Putin’s regime is reactionary and offers no positive social change, it cannot be combatted by the imperialist efforts of the United States and Europe to prop up an oligarchical regime in Ukraine. Rather than reactionary social patriotism, we must unite around an international working class anti-war movement to combat the growing threat of a Third World War. The WSWS and SEP are the only political organs that offer a comprehensive program to resist this march toward a new world war.”



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