

Australian students and youth: “We need an anti-war movement because otherwise we won’t have a future”

Our reporters
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A number of students and young people in Australia responded strongly to a global anti-war webinar held on December 10. That event, called by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality, called for the development of a worldwide movement to end the conflict in Ukraine.

It explained that the war there was not an isolated regional conflict. Instead, the Ukraine war, instigated by the US and NATO against Russia, was the opening stage of an imperialist redivision of the world. Only the mobilisation of the working class, the revolutionary social force in society, could prevent the development of a nuclear catastrophe.

Antoinette, a botany student from the University of Melbourne, said: “I was struck by how close we are to World War III. It’s very easy to forget how horrible war is when it’s not on your doorstep but being reminded of how many people died in all the conflicts and world wars makes you feel the urgency of the situation.

“The webinar was internationally grounded. The fact that this movement fights for an international struggle, rather than just within one country is important. This was seen in the immense amount of anti-war unity with people across the world, including the little snippets of young people around the world saying, ‘We don’t want war!’

“It also provided a unique perspective to end war. There is this view that the only way to solve problems in another country is for major powers to come in with guns and deal with the government. But the IYSSE is saying ‘let’s help the working class in that country overthrow their own government, let’s all help each other overthrow our own ruling classes.’”

Duncan, an education student at Victoria University in Melbourne who also works as a house painter, said: “It was striking how international the whole event was, there were speakers from all sorts of countries. I was impressed with how clear and concise the perspective was of the Russian speaker.

“He was talking about making the distinction that Putin represents the bourgeois oligarchy, and that their involvement in the war wasn’t out of any interest for Russian workers, or Ukrainian workers for that matter.

“They launched the invasion, but they were goaded into doing so by NATO expansion, which is trying to encircle Russia and ultimately China. Since then, you’ve had a massive humanitarian crisis. Millions of people have left Ukraine, hundreds of thousands have been conscripted on both sides, all dying for a stupid war.

“The Sri Lankan speaker spoke about protests by teachers and nurses in that country, which I hadn’t heard about before, so I had to look it up afterwards. You don’t hear much out of Sri Lanka here, but there is a lot going on; the people overthrew the Rajapakse government and forced him to leave the country.

“The Australian government is more explicitly anti-China even than the US right now. I spoke to a Labor Party supporter about the Solomon Islands during the election last year. They claimed Scott Morrison carried out a great betrayal by allowing the Solomon government to enter a security pact with China, that was why you shouldn’t vote for him—not because of any of his other policies, like his assault on the conditions of Australian workers. They were saying that China is the real enemy. I don’t see that at all. Australia is being completely hawkish in its foreign

policy.”

Zach, an IYSSE executive member from Western Sydney University, said: “What stood out to me was how each speaker from the different countries, speaking about opposing war and the conditions facing the working class, seemed to echo each other.

“Whether it be one of the lowest economies, or one of the wealthier countries, in reality no one can escape the horrors of capitalism. After years of silence, the labour movement has resurged and we're seeing strikes in country after country. Workers are paying attention to what's happening to their brothers and sisters and neighbours.

“As Barbara Slaughter pointed out, there's been no greater time for the building of an anti-war movement. Capitalism has no answer to the needs of the population. All it has is austerity policies. The US, in particular, is driven to offset its economic decline through war.

“An important lesson from the webinar was that war isn't started by who fired the first shot. There is a history. Since 1991, the US has been seeking to break up Russia and take control of the Eurasian landmass. US capitalism now needs more than ever to encircle China, its key economic rival.

“Andrei Ritsky, the Russian speaker, explained that the US and its allies backed the right-wing Ukraine coup in 2014, which was painted as a popular revolution to overthrow the government and establish a ‘more accurate’ representation of the Ukrainian people. In fact, this was a right-wing government.

“The pseudo-left attempt to paint this war as Putin's drive for hegemony; this is blatant propaganda. They are covering up and apologising for the crimes of NATO and the US over the last 30 years.”

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Grace, also an IYSSE executive member at Western Sydney University, said: “We need an anti-war movement because otherwise we won't have a future. The threat of nuclear war is closer each day that this war escalates. All life on earth could potentially be wiped out if this happened.

“The rally explained the importance of socialism and being a part of the IYSSE. The movement makes you connected to others. You don't feel like you're alone in this fight.

“In waging war, the ruling class is making people pay for it. Instead of taxing the rich, they make everyone pay by attacking working conditions, living conditions and inflation, which increases cost of living like food and petrol. Everything becomes harder. Workers bear the cost.

“I also learnt more about the pseudo-left and their pro-war role. They don't have a way forward or an alternative. They put forward the imperialists as the liberators, but they are giving lethal aid to criminals and fascists. The war in the Ukraine will only be used to further US war aims into other countries like China.”

Youp, a chemistry student at the University of Newcastle and an IYSSE member, stated: “Importantly in finding the cause of war one shouldn't be concerned with who fired the first shot, but of the larger, vested interests involved, particularly from the United States.

“The US has played its pieces such that Russia was put in a position to either invade Ukraine or accept weapons on its borders, something which I know the US would find intolerable... Ultimately the US is intent on breaking Russia up as a country.

“Another emphasis of the rally was on internationalism, that the country that you come from doesn't make you any different. What matters is class. We can all be united; the only reason national divisions exist is because of bourgeois profits. Internationalism is the only real way to stop war.”



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