

IYSSE holds anti-war meeting in Sydney, Australia

Our reporters
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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) held a successful meeting at Sydney's Macquarie University on Tuesday evening, opposing the US and NATO-led war in Ukraine and advancing a socialist perspective to prevent a global nuclear catastrophe.

The meeting was one of a series being held worldwide by the IYSSE, entitled "The war in Ukraine and how to stop it." As with the event in Wellington, New Zealand, also on Tuesday, the Sydney meeting was subjected to online attacks by far-right and pro-war Ukrainian nationalists.

But it proceeded successfully, with several dozen attending on campus and via the livestream. Participants came from Macquarie University and Western Sydney University, where the IYSSE has a club. Workers, retirees and students in other parts of New South Wales and Australia took part online.

Chairing the meeting, Socialist Equality Party (SEP) Assistant National Secretary Max Boddy outlined the world Trotskyist movements assessment of the war in Ukraine. While opposing the reactionary and nationalist Russian government and its invasion, Boddy explained that the US and NATO had instigated the conflict and were actively stoking it. This was bound up with longstanding plans for war with Russia, aimed at ensuring American imperialist hegemony.

Above all, Boddy emphasised the significance of the major struggles of the working class, erupting around the world, currently epitomised by the explosive strikes taking place in France. This incipient movement, he stated, provided the basis not only for a fight against government austerity, but also for an internationally-coordinated struggle against war and its source, the capitalist nation-state system.

Elle Chapman, the IYSSE coordinator for the Sydney area, delivered the first report. She detailed the deepening social crisis facing young people, including mounting hunger, the impact of the soaring housing crisis and the growth of insecure work. Chapman noted that this situation, resulting from government austerity measures, intersected with the preparations for war.

She detailed the recent "Red Alert" series published by the *Sydney Morning Herald*, which had called for Australia to participate in a US-led war against China within three years, to station nuclear weapons in northern Australia and to impose mass conscription. This was a warning, Chapman said, of what capitalism has in store for young people.

But there was widespread and growing opposition. Chapman cited polls showing that a majority of young people, in the US, Australia and elsewhere, prefer socialism to capitalism. The critical issue was transforming this latent sentiment into a mass political movement, oriented to the working class, fighting for socialism and based on the lessons of history.

In his report, WSWS writer Oscar Grenfell placed the war in Ukraine in its broader historical context. The eruption of conflict marked the beginning of a new period of imperialist war, aimed at the redivision of the globe.

Grenfell explained that the US and NATO had provoked the Russian invasion, and were exploiting it, in line with decades-long plans by the Pentagon for a confrontation with Russia and China. This had nothing to do with human rights, as demonstrated by the decades-long horrors perpetrated by the US and its allies in Central Asia and the Middle East. Rather, it was aimed at ensuring the hegemony of American imperialism.

The speaker noted that there was widespread opposition to war. But the critical issue was political perspective. Grenfell polemicised against tendencies that claimed war could be opposed by pressuring national governments or appealing to the moral conscience of official politicians. That perspective had derailed the mass protests against the invasion of Iraq in 2003.

Instead, the new anti-war movement had to be based on the revolutionary principles outlined by the IYSSE and the world Trotskyist movement. These included internationalism and the fight for the political independence of the working class from all of the capitalist parties.

The reports provoked a lively discussion. One of the first questions was from an attendee, who asked what the

speakers would say if they were to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin or Ukrainian leader Volodymyr Zelensky.

Grenfell emphasised that the IYSSE had no interest in meeting with either figure. Putin represented the Russian oligarchy spawned by the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union. Zelensky was functioning as the frontman for a US-NATO campaign that risked world war and had already resulted in more than 200,000 Russian and Ukrainian deaths.

Grenfell said that the IYSSE was oriented to building a movement of the working class, against all of the governments. The Ukraine conflict would not be ended, he said, by peace talks or appeals for them, but by a unified struggle of Russian and Ukrainian workers.

Another questioner asked how the “seductive” character of war could be combatted. In reply, Boddy noted that workers, young people and students were overwhelmingly hostile to war. The real constituency for war was in the upper middle-class, whose interests were tied ever more directly to the stock market and to imperialist plunder. Their political spokespeople, in various pseudo-left organisations, had explicitly supported the US-NATO war effort.

Others asked questions about the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the basis of the IYSSE’s perspective of socialist revolution, the consequences of any attempt to introduce conscription and how to involve broader layers of young people in the socialist movement.

Following the meeting, the IYSSE spoke to Will, an education student, who said: “What stood out for me was the notion that with political clarity comes great action. The fact you have to understand what the political leaders are actually saying. For example, with the \$368 billion submarine deal, is all in the guise of doing it for a greater cause. But when you have clarity, you realise they are trying to propel forward war.

“Prior to the meeting I knew there was some dissatisfaction with the relationship with China from the Australian government, but I didn’t know there was an active push towards war, an active antagonising of China.”

Will was asked how the meeting explained this active push for war, “America, with its dwindling scope in the world, has an imperialistic urge to attack other nations. It is similar to what it did in Iraq and Afghanistan, trying to gain their national resources and expanding the US’s reach. However, those countries were much smaller than China and Russia.

“We the workers and students are the legs of the imperialistic regime, so if workers and students especially, don’t want war, they can’t do anything but force people to fight it, like through conscription. That was outlined in the Red Alert series in the *Sydney Morning Herald*.”

Sharon, a science student who attended online, said: “After

being invited to these meetings I’m trying to educate myself more and look into these things. Beforehand I didn’t know that there was a website like the WWS full of all these articles that I could just read and I didn’t know it was accessible to find these other articles and perspectives.

“At the meeting, the speakers were talking about how with a lot of anti-war movements, a lot of these groups don’t really understand the root cause of war. They mentioned that war is a product of the capitalist system. That contributes to having political clarity, understanding the economic system that we are in and all of the downstream effects of that as well. It is good to bring awareness to people.

“Even for myself I’m still trying to become more aware of these things and I’m looking to buy the book that they recommended, *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony 1990 – 2016*. Another aspect I really liked about the meeting is that this is an international group and they really emphasise it can’t just be one society or club that is fighting for this. It has to be all over the globe to make a difference. I feel like this is necessary.”

Brett, who works in the construction industry, commented: “I really liked the meeting, particularly the point made by the meeting chairman, and throughout, that war can only be understood by fully explaining its historical context. Without that there is no understanding and therefore no appreciation of what must be done.

“None of the discussion in the media on the war in Ukraine, or the rapidly moving preparations for military conflict with China, provides any serious explanation of how we’ve got to this point and the insane consequences for humanity.

“Finland is being rushed into membership of NATO and yet there’s no debate in the media about what this will mean. We’re just presented with this, and the other military build ups going on, as a *fait accompli*. And then there’s constant barrage of Australian military recruitment advertising, especially on social media. I’ve particularly noticed that on Twitter recently, and it targets young people.

“It’s crucial that young people, and everyone else for that matter, discuss the questions raised in the meeting on Tuesday. There needs to be much, much more of this.”



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