

Support builds for IYSSE anti-war Toronto meeting in face of right-wing censorship campaign

Our reporter
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Take a stand against the state-led censorship of opponents of the US-NATO war against Russia! Sign the petition opposing the far-right campaign to cancel the IYSSE's anti-war meeting in Toronto. All of our readers and supporters in the Greater Toronto Area should also show their support by attending the meeting this Sunday, June 4, at 2:30 p.m. EDT at the Toronto Public Library—Lillian H. Smith Branch, 239 College St Auditorium (basement level), Toronto, M5T 1R5.

Support among workers and young people in Canada and internationally is building for an anti-war meeting organized by the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) on Sunday, June 4, in Toronto. The event, entitled “The war in Ukraine and how to stop it,” has come under a vicious state-led attack spearheaded by the far-right Ukrainian Canadian Congress, which is seeking to prevail on the Toronto Public Library to cancel the IYSSE’s room booking.

The public denunciation of the meeting, which will provide an analysis of the historical origins of the US-NATO war on Russia, was launched on Wednesday by the Toronto branch of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC) and Marcus Kolga, a notorious right-wing operative associated with the pro-war Macdonald-Laurier Institute.

The campaign was joined by Ontario Minister of Labour Monte McNaughton, who gave the Progressive Conservative Ontario government’s stamp of approval for the shutting down of the event by slandering the IYSSE as supporters of Russian President Vladimir Putin. He was also joined by Toronto mayoral candidate Brad Bradford, who enjoys semi-official backing from the provincial government and former New Brunswick Education Minister Dominic Cardy.

These right-wing and far-right forces feel emboldened to act so aggressively because the war is enthusiastically supported throughout the political establishment. The Trudeau Liberal government has sent over \$8 billion in military and other aid to the far-right regime in Kiev since the US-provoked Russian invasion. The trade unions and New Democrats, which are propping up the minority Liberal government, also fully endorse the war.

In a statement posted on the *World Socialist Web Site*, the

Socialist Equality Party explained the international significance of the direct state involvement in the campaign to censor opponents of war:

The open intervention of a government minister in the campaign to shut down an anti-war meeting organized by the IYSSE marks a new stage in the efforts of ruling elites around the world to censor opponents of imperialist war.

It follows an unsuccessful attempt by the UCC in March to block an IYSSE meeting at the University of Waterloo, also in Ontario, and efforts by far-right Ukrainian nationalists and their supporters in Australia, New Zealand, Germany and the United States to disrupt IYSSE meetings held to lay the basis for the building of an international anti-war movement led by the working class.

The petition launched by the IYSSE urging the Toronto Public Library to stand by its commitment to allow Sunday’s meeting to go ahead obtained over 550 signatures within the first 24 hours. Statements of support from workers and young people have also poured in to the *World Socialist Web Site* since the attempt to shut down the event was first reported.

Faced with a powerful counter-offensive to their attempts to censor opponents of the US-NATO war on Russia, the far-right UCC has doubled down on its slanders and historical lies against the IYSSE. On Friday, the UCC’s Toronto branch posted multiple tweets comparing Leon Trotsky, the co-leader with Lenin of the Russian Revolution who paid for his struggle against the nationalist and counter-revolutionary Stalinist bureaucracy with his life, with the dictator Joseph Stalin. “Stalin = Trotsky. Two fascist leaders and genocidal maniacs,” the UCC wrote.

Responding to this vile attack, SEP National Secretary Keith Jones, who will give the main report at Sunday’s meeting, declared in a statement posted on Twitter, “In labelling Trotsky

a fascist, the far-right nationalists of the UCC are in fact echoing the Stalinist regime and its infamous Moscow frame-up trials. ... Trotsky's name will forever be associated with the fight against fascism, especially Hitler. In a series of penetrating analyses of the nature of Hitlerite fascism that have never been surpassed, Trotsky sought to summon the German workers to meet the Nazi threat. But the bureaucratic workers' parties, the KPD and SPD, fatally underestimated the danger and desisted."

The UCC is the political descendant of the fascist Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), which collaborated with the Nazis during World War II and was complicit in the Holocaust. The UCC continues to laud OUN leader Stepan Bandera as a national hero and hail the 14th Division of the Waffen SS as brave freedom fighters.

Workers and young people have spoken out powerfully in defence of the IYSSE's right to hold its anti-war meeting in opposition to the threats and intimidation from the far-right UCC and its allies within the Canadian state.

Malcolm from British Columbia wrote, "Attempts by the UCC and their supporters, including the politicians such as Monte McNaughton and Brad Bradford, to pressure the Toronto Public Library into cancelling the IYSSE anti-war public meeting reveal the deeply anti-democratic and reactionary character of these individuals and groups.

"They are intent on spreading baseless smears and lies against the IYSSE, the SEP and the WSWs purely to prevent any meaningful discussion about the nature of the war among the working class.

"This war will not be stopped by appeals to capitalist politicians and governments. The intimidation unleashed against the IYSSE event makes clear that these state actors will not tolerate any discussion about their goals and methods.

"This is not an academic exercise. The war in Ukraine has escalated relentlessly for the past year and a half. It is a conflict which involves multiple countries with massive nuclear arsenals. It is not hyperbole to suggest that the fate of humanity may well hinge on the international working class asserting its historic role and duty, overturning capitalism and imperialism, and putting an end to this bloodbath. For these reasons, the event must proceed."

Greg from Ontario wrote, "We need to stand up to creeping fascism and the heavy hand of the state to allow the historical truth to be told."

Mark said, "Critically analyzing the social and material conditions which led to the war in Ukraine should not be a controversial issue, and it's clear that Canada's involvement is purely political in nature. What is also clear is that those who would try and stop this meeting are doing so for political gain. Their principal purpose is to remove from us our charter rights to freedom of speech, freedom of association and the right to peaceful assembly. Why are these agitators afraid? Why is it acceptable for them to protest our rights and actively try and

cancel them?"

Ken, an educator from the York region, said, "I am both disgusted and concerned by the behavior of not only the UCC, but also Toronto's mayoral candidate Brad Bradford and the Ontario labor minister. The position they all express of trying to shut down democratic debate on NATO's proxy war against Russia is very concerning. At a time when families struggle to make ends meet, our politicians and, let's be honest, the openly fascist Ukrainian Canadian Congress are trying to take away our rights at home while preparing for World War III abroad. I support the IYSSE meeting in Toronto. We need to hear their perspective. Their voices must not be silenced."

Vasili commented, "This is not a war for freedom or democracy. Nor is it about Putin's 'ambitions,' or Ukrainian 'sovereignty.'

"The attempt to cancel the IYSSE meeting in Toronto flies in the face of the claims that this war is about 'democracy.' The demand to censor this meeting, which is spearheaded by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, is reactionary and violates our rights to freedom of expression. The IYSSE is not taking an apologist view of the war, as stated, and attempts to stifle alternative views is dangerous and hypocritical."

The petition was signed by leading members of the International Committee of the Fourth International around the world.

Christoph Vandreier, chairman of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, which the German government is seeking to criminalize for its opposition to militarism and advocacy of social equality, wrote, "We protest in the strongest terms against the attempts to censor the IYSSE event in Toronto against the proxy war in Ukraine. That the government, in collaboration with the political descendants of Nazi collaborators, is trying to censor an anti-war event itself shows the reactionary nature of the NATO war against Russia. Denigrating opposition to the war as enemy propaganda is a familiar tool of warmongering. The IYSSE are clear and declared opponents of the reactionary Putin regime, but it shows how the war is systematically provoked and escalated by NATO in order to impose its own imperialist interests on the backs of the Ukrainian population. This position needs to be able to be discussed at the Toronto Public Library."

We urge our readers to continue to circulate the petition and make plans to attend Sunday's meeting if you live in the Greater Toronto Area.



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