

Pseudo-left club at Australia's Macquarie University slanders IYSSE amid affiliation struggle

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A statement posted on Facebook on June 28 by the Macquarie Socialists club at Sydney's Macquarie University has exposed the fraudulent character of university management's claim that the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) shares the "same aims and purpose" as the pseudo-left club affiliated with Socialist Alternative. This false assertion has been used by management to reject the reaffiliation of the IYSSE club at Macquarie University.

In their Facebook post, the Macquarie Socialists write that they "reject the claim that we share the same aim and purpose as IYSSE."

On May 29, the Student Engagement, Inclusion & Belonging division sent the Macquarie IYSSE club executive an email stating that the club would not be affiliated despite the IYSSE meeting all requirements to affiliate a club. The sole reason cited was that the IYSSE shared the same aims with the Macquarie Socialists. The IYSSE had been an affiliated club from 2010 to 2022, before being deregistered in a bureaucratic purge that resulted in widespread disaffiliations.

On June 17, the IYSSE contacted Macquarie Socialists requesting information as to whether or not management had been in contact with them about the IYSSE's affiliation and calling on the Macquarie Socialists to publicly defend the IYSSE's right to form a club on the basis of an understanding that the two organisations do not have the same aims.

Macquarie Socialists' published a statement on Facebook nearly two weeks later. Its concluding paragraph said:

"Macquarie Socialists reject the claim that we share the same aim and purpose as IYSSE. Fundamentally, we reject the premise that left-wing political organisations should not have the right to independent clubs on campus. There are substantial political differences between the IYSSE and our own club, and under no circumstances do we accept that our affiliation as an independent club should impact on theirs or any other club's attempt at affiliation."

The bulk of the brief statement, however, is given over to intensely hostile comments denouncing the IYSSE. These include significant falsifications.

That is the antithesis of a principled approach to the defence of democratic rights. There is a long history in the socialist and left-wing movement of unconditionally opposing such attacks

regardless of differences with the organisation being targeted.

The IYSSE and its parent organisation, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), have repeatedly defended Socialist Alternative when it has been attacked by state and corporate forces. For instance, when two of its student members were suspended by the University of Sydney earlier this year for their participation in a protest, an IYSSE/SEP statement declared:

"The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) has irreconcilable and well-documented political differences with Socialist Alternative. This, however, is a basic question of democratic rights. The SEP unequivocally condemns the suspensions of Godwin and Clarke and demands that university management reinstate their right to study immediately."

Above all, the statement highlighted the fact that the suspensions were an attack on the democratic rights of the student body. And it made the logical conclusion that this demonstrated the need for all students, regardless of political differences, to demand the reinstatement of the suspended students.

The Macquarie Socialists' statement is very different. The phrases "democratic rights" and "civil liberties" do not appear. Nor is there any call for students to defend the right of the IYSSE.

Instead, the bulk of the 229-word statement is composed of dishonest attacks on the IYSSE.

Under conditions in which the IYSSE is under attack from university management, the Macquarie Socialists attempt to slander the IYSSE. The aim is to discourage students from taking up a fight to defend the IYSSE, and the outcome is to provide management with new grounds for the IYSSE's censorship.

Macquarie Socialists refer in their statement to the SEP as a "political sect," implying that the SEP stands outside and is hostile to the interests of broader sections of the population. This "sectarian approach," they claim, includes "routine denunciation" of other organisations.

The IYSSE and SEP provide a political analysis on our website, the WSWs, of the program and orientation of different political organisations. At no point have Socialist Alternative elaborated where the characterisations of other political tendencies have been incorrect.

They say that the IYSSE and SEP argue for political positions which they deem "unacceptable." The inference is that it would be permissible to accept the censorship of the IYSSE's

“unacceptable” positions.

Among these “positions” is the claim that the IYSSE and SEP engage in “abstention from and denunciations of trade union work.”

This is demonstrably false. In fact the IYSSE and SEP are constantly intervening within the trade unions. We fight among rank-and-file workers for a rebellion against the bureaucratic leaderships that have enforced decades of cuts to pay and conditions.

The role of the pseudo-left in the unions is to provide political cover for the union apparatus, which acts as the industrial police for management, strangling and suppressing workers’ struggles.

Also, in their statement, Macquarie Socialists refer to the IYSSE and SEP’s “defence of high profile figures accused of sexual assault and description of #MeToo as a ‘witch-hunt’” as “repulsive.”

The IYSSE defends the right of an accused party to a fair trial. #MeToo campaigners openly attack the presumption of innocence and the right to a trial before a jury of one’s peers. In place of these legal norms, #MeToo aims to whip up a lynch mob or witch-hunt atmosphere. The IYSSE’s opposition to #MeToo is based on its defence of fundamental democratic rights.

While the falsifications of the IYSSE’s positions on the unions and #MeToo presented in the Macquarie Socialists statement are revealing, what is perhaps even more telling is what is left out.

That Macquarie Socialists are silent on the major question of the day, the issue of war is not accidental.

The IYSSE opposes imperialist war, including the US-NATO imperialist proxy war against Russia in Ukraine, which threatens global nuclear catastrophe. It also opposes the bankrupt and reckless invasion by Russia in February 2022, which has served to confuse and divide the Ukrainian and Russian working class.

On April 4, the IYSSE held a successful anti-war meeting at Macquarie University as part of an international series. At the event, the IYSSE advanced the fight to build an international anti-war movement based on a unified struggle of Russian and Ukrainian workers as part of an international movement directed against the source of war: the capitalist nation-state system.

For this anti-imperialist stand, the IYSSE at Macquarie University came under attack by far-right Ukrainian nationalists who contacted university management in a bid to shut the IYSSE’s meeting down before it took place. Rather than defend the IYSSE’s inalienable right to hold its meeting, management presented the solitary email sent by a Ukrainian far-right sympathiser calling for the meeting to be cancelled as legitimate.

This attack by the pro-Ukrainian far right has not just been levelled against the IYSSE in Sydney. IYSSE events in New Zealand, Germany, the US and Canada have also come under threat from organisations linked with the Ukrainian far right who campaigned for the events to be cancelled and attended them to stage provocations.

Macquarie Socialists’ silence on this plays into the hands of the far right and management, who do not want an anti-war presence on campus. This is because Socialist Alternative themselves support the US-led imperialist war in Ukraine and are among the chief propagandists for it along with the pseudo-left

internationally.

Socialist Alternative publication *Red Flag* enthusiastically supported NATO weaponry being sent to Ukraine as part of its supposed “self-defence” in July last year. It stated that Russia’s “invasion cannot be defeated by pacifist methods. Western military supplies went some way to preventing a rapid Russian military victory and the imposition of a puppet government in the early stages of the war.”

The war in Ukraine has nothing to do with the defence of the Ukrainian people. The US and European powers have shown shocking indifference to the lives of ordinary Ukrainians who have been sent into slaughter by their thousands in the interests of imperialist geostrategy.

The fundamental political differences between the Macquarie Socialists and IYSSE are borne out of diametrically opposed class and political tendencies.

Socialist Alternative represents the interests of a privileged stratum of the upper middle class preoccupied with advancing its own material interests within the framework of the profit system.

The pseudo-left is deeply hostile to an independent and united movement of the working class. They seek to disorient and railroad workers behind the corrupt trade unions, and reactionary and divisive identity politics based on race, gender, ethnicity and sexual orientation.

As the youth and student arm of the world Trotskyist movement, the IYSSE is fighting to build an international socialist revolutionary movement of the working class against the capitalist system.

In the IYSSE’s 12 years of club affiliation at Macquarie University, it has held numerous meetings on many topics, including the threat of nuclear war, the COVID-19 pandemic, the political crisis in every country and the resurgence of the class struggle.

The fight for the IYSSE’s right to affiliate at Macquarie University is key to the defence of all democratic rights on campus and more broadly. If the university management’s decision is allowed to stand, it would set a precedent for silencing anti-war and left-wing voices on campuses across the country. Defenders of civil liberties should join the IYSSE’s fight against this anti-democratic assault.

Macquarie Socialists have made clear that they are not among such principled fighters for democratic rights.

Get in touch with the IYSSE to find out how you can be involved:

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To contact the WSW and the
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