

Two American high school students demand Sydney's Macquarie University end censorship of anti-war IYSSE club

Our reporters
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Statements are continuing to be sent, from across Australia and the world, opposing the refusal of Macquarie University in Sydney to affiliate an International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) club, despite it having met all the stipulated requirements.

The university management has claimed that the IYSSE has the same “aims” as the Macquarie Socialists and thus cannot be affiliated. But the IYSSE has extensively documented the unbridgeable gulf that separates it from this pseudo-left outfit. And the Macquarie Socialists themselves have issued a statement acknowledging the fundamentally opposed aims of the two organisations.

The university, its falsifications having been exposed, has retreated behind a veil of silence. It is ignoring the many letters being sent demanding an overturn of the ban on the IYSSE and affiliation of its club. The university claims to “strive for the extraordinary by challenging convention and embracing different views.” But in its cowardly silence, it is functioning as an entirely conventional censor, hostile to “different views.”

The IYSSE will continue its campaign until management reverses its false decision.

That is not only to defend the rights of the IYSSE. It is also because the attack at Macquarie is part of a broader onslaught on anti-war opposition, especially targeting those who speak out against the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine. The aim is to suppress a socialist alternative to war and to enforce a climate of militarist conformism.

The letters to Macquarie University underscore that this will not succeed. There is a developing

radicalisation of students and youth which finds expression in many of the letters that have been sent. That is especially so in the case of the letters below, from two socialist-minded high school students in the United States.

Dear Sirs and Madams,

My name is Landon and I'm an IYSSE member and high school student in the United States, specifically in Allentown, Pennsylvania.

I'm writing to demand that you re-affiliate the IYSSE club at Macquarie University.

The university might claim that Socialist Alternative and the IYSSE are the same, but there are fundamental differences down to the most simple political questions.

Socialist Alternative endorses views which have nothing to do with left-wing politics and are nowhere near those of the IYSSE.

While Socialist Alternative has endorsed the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine, we oppose this war. While their politics are pragmatic and opportunist, we consistently apply Marxism to uphold not just historically accurate foundations, but also principled politics. Their support for the Greens and Labor Party also shows Socialist Alternative's goals are entirely different from ours and that they don't seek an independent working class movement such as we do.

They orient towards the ruling class while we orient towards the working class. They attack us and say we're “sectarian” or “dogmatic” but refuse to even defend our democratic rights in the face of censorship. By contrast, we defend basic democratic principles such as the presumption of innocence, a legal and democratic principle that dates back to ancient Rome.

From that, it isn't difficult to tell the major differences

between our group and the Socialist Alternative. While we're Socialist, they're pseudo-left. While they're pragmatic and focus on the "right now", we're optimistic and focus on the past, present and future.

To deny club status to the IYSSE is a denial of the most basic democratic rights of students to express their thoughts and organize. These basic and fundamental rights date back to the Enlightenment and were upheld in the Declaration of Independence. Now, these rights are a joke to the ruling class, a piece of history that they disband with to pursue their interests against the working class. Australian imperialism has demonstrated as much in the central role it has played in the US-led war preparations against China, which are taking place behind the backs of workers and students.

There is absolutely no excuse for denying students the right to organize and fight for their future and socialism amidst this war plotting. Therefore, I, along with every IYSSE member in the US and throughout the world, demand re-admission of the club to the university, no strings attached and declare full solidarity with all students and workers in Australia.

Landon,
Allentown, Pennsylvania

To the administration of Student Groups:

Your decision to not affiliate the IYSSE at Macquarie University is a blatant assault on democratic rights and it merits contempt from youth and students all around the world, which I personally share in. The underlying motivations for this decision, which give rise to the inanity of your justifications, are not difficult to deduce: the transformation of universities in Australia, the US, and the other Western imperialist powers into imperialist think tanks requires the abolition of critical thought. Nonetheless, I find it necessary to point out some of the more glaring contradictions or "oversights" within your rationale in the interests of the rigors of democratic debate, which you have sought to sidestep, if not openly repress.

1) You claim that the primary reason for refusing to affiliate the IYSSE club is that it is not "unique," and that it would hamper your "team's ability to serve all student groups." In reality, this is a targeted attack that is based on the fact that the IYSSE is the youth movement of the only tendency which opposes the US-NATO proxy war in Ukraine from the left.

2) Supposing that this was not the direct intention of university management—which requires near credulity to believe—their application of the generally anti-democratic rule falls on our group particularly heavily precisely because of our unique position, which can be found nowhere in the mainstream media.

Either the management did not perform due diligence in attempting to understand the principled differences between our program and that of the pseudo-left Macquarie Socialists; or it is well aware of them and chooses to repress democratic discourse.

Though your attempts to restrain freedom of thought and of discussion, particularly of the Marxist perspective, do have damaging effects to our work, compelling us to respond with a campaign against your decision, it will ultimately backfire for university management. It provides us an opportunity to expose the anti-democratic machinations of the imperialist war machine and rally about us all progressive elements in a political landscape where no other opposition to war and dictatorship exist. The energy and enthusiasm of youth will be drawn to the ICFI as the sole outlet for their democratic and socialist aspirations and the former will animate the latter in our struggle for a truly equal society without war, authoritarianism, poverty, or disease.

I express my solidarity with my comrades at Macquarie and reiterate the call of the WSWs for "all other student clubs at Macquarie University, as well as student groups across the country and internationally to oppose the suppression of the IYYSE and to demand our affiliation, together with academics and staff who defend civil liberties."

- IYSSE member in Texas

We call on all readers to support the fight to defend the IYSSE at Macquarie University by sending letters of protest over the rejection of the IYSSE's affiliation to the Student Engagement, Inclusion and Belonging division of university management at studentgroups@mq.edu.au, and CC iysse.macquarie@gmail.com.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact