

Australia: IYSSE campaigns at meatworks plant for anti-war movement of the working class

Our reporters
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Last week, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in Melbourne, Australia campaigned at the JBS meatworks facility in the working-class western suburb of Brooklyn. IYSSE members spoke to workers at the plant about the necessity to build an international movement of the working class and youth to stop the Israeli genocide in Gaza and the danger of nuclear war.

JBS, a Brazilian-based transnational corporation, is one of the largest global food processing companies. Its abattoir in Melbourne is the biggest in the state of Victoria, employing in excess of 1,200 workers. Much of the workforce are migrant labourers, largely from the Pacific Islands, brought into Australia on limited visas for cheap labour.

The JBS Brooklyn plant was notably the site of a work stoppage in July 2020, when workers demanded the implementation of COVID-19 safety measures to stop the spreading virus, which had infected over 80 employees. The workers' independent action was opposed by the union covering the facility, the Australasian Meat Industry Employees Union, which sided with JBS management in forcing workers to continue work under unsafe conditions.

IYSSE members and supporters campaigned outside the plant's entrance as workers ended their shift, with a table of Marxist literature, banners, and placards calling for the freedom of Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk. They handed out articles from the WSWs and won an enthusiastic response from workers.

The IYSSE explained that the fight to stop imperialist war requires the full mobilisation of the working class, independently of the trade union bureaucracies, which have lined up entirely behind the Albanese Labor

government's full-throated support for the Gaza genocide and the US-led drive to war against Russia and China. This requires the building of a new revolutionary leadership.

To that end, campaigners urged workers to join the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) as electoral members. This is part of the SEP's campaign to get on the ballot at the next federal election and provide workers with a genuine alternative to the capitalist, pro-war political establishment in Australia.

Junior, a worker from the Solomon Islands, told the IYSSE: "War is about the governments' systems around the world. It is a political issue—this is why there is both war and corruption, that is why so many people are being killed around the world.

"I definitely think that a war between America and China must not happen. We need to stop war, have peace, and have unity in our world—that's all."

Another, **Mervin**, said: "I feel very bad about Gaza. There are many civilians killed, most of them are homeless and hungry."

One young worker, as she passed the IYSSE table, called out: "Free Palestine!"

Tone, also from the Solomons, who is on a four-year work visa, said: "The war on Gaza should be stopped. If a government supports the war, the people should protest."

She expressed opposition to NATO's proxy war against Russia in Ukraine. "America supports Ukraine," she said. "If their government continues involvement in that war, how can every worker in the world stay in peace with no war?"

A taxi driver, originally from India, who transports workers to and from the plant, approached the IYSSE

campaigners to show his support for an anti-war movement. After brief discussion, he signed up as an electoral member of the SEP and invited his fellow driver, from Somalia, to do the same.

He spoke on Israel's crimes in Gaza: "It's horrible. These Palestinians are human beings, innocent people. Their families and children are being killed. I have five kids and I work for them, so I don't know how these people are coping through this.

"The whole world is feeling sorry for the people of Gaza. I hope it stops as early as possible. But the governments in America and Australia support Israel to wipe out the whole country and kill innocents. This has to stop." He added, "Your party is against the genocide, so I believe it must stand in the election for Australian people to choose."

Workers also spoke on the cost-of-living crisis and the daily struggle to maintain themselves and their families.

Jill, a worker of African background who has been at the JBS plant for over a decade, described her living conditions. "I live with my adult son in a house that we can't afford to rent anymore," she explained.

"The cost of food, and everything else, is going up and money is getting tighter. I can't drive a car to get to work, because I can't afford to pay for lessons, they're too much! So instead, I have to pay around \$560 every month on taxi fares to get to work here. For people who have money, life is good, but what about the rest of us? We need the government to help, but instead everything is being done to prepare for war."

As workers were leaving the plant, Morgan Peach, president of the IYSSE's club at the University of Melbourne, spoke to them on a megaphone: "US imperialism and its allies, including Australia, are engaged in the redivision of the globe through war. There is a real danger of nuclear war. The source of this is the capitalist system. To stop war, workers must take up a fight against capitalism and for socialism!"

Peach also explained why workers must come to the defence of Bogdan Syrotiuk. "The spearhead for any anti-war movement today must be the fight to free Bogdan. He is in prison for providing a socialist perspective to Ukrainian and Russian workers, against their governments. He is in prison for opposing the war in Ukraine, which is a proxy war by the imperialist powers against Russia. He stands for the interests of the

world working class, which has no interest in nuclear war."



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