IYSSE holds rally at Texas A&M University against Trump’s efforts to establish a dictatorship

Our reporter
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On Thursday, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Texas A&M University (TAMU) held a rally titled “Oppose Trump’s dictatorship! Mobilize the working class against the government of the oligarchy!” at Rudder Plaza which drew around 200 people from the university, including students, graduate students and some academics, as well as from workers and a few retirees in the surrounding Bryan County area.

An IYSSE member led the crowd in chants at the start of the rally helping set the tone. Josh Andrews, the president of the A&M IYSSE club, emceed the event introducing the IYSSE as well as the other groups present, and gave the first speech.

“This rally has been called in opposition to the Trump administration’s gutting of every essential government agency and social program,” Andrews said. “Trump has declared war on the working class and the world.”

Andrews made the connection between the war on democratic rights and the Constitution, the attacks on social programs and jobs, and the drive to world war. “Students and immigrants are the initial target of Trump’s attacks but a precedent is being set for how strikes and all other opposition will be handled.

“Trump is saddling the population for war. He has threatened to annex Canada, Greenland, the Panama Canal and Gaza. His tariffs are aimed at reversing the economic decline of the US at the expense of both China and its European ‘allies.’ The logic of his policies is war.”

Socialist Equality Party member Chase Lawrence delivered a speech focusing on the recent IYSSE statement denouncing the ongoing mass deportation campaign against international students and explaining its origins, significance, as well as how to stop it. At the time of the speech, 500 had already had their visas revoked, including 15 at Texas A&M, as Lawrence noted.

“This is not only unprecedented—it is criminal,” Lawrence said. “This is not about enforcing immigration law. It is about silencing political opposition and enforcing imperialist war.”

The fight for free speech required independence of workers and youth from the Democratic Party. “The campaign of repression began under the Biden administration. Biden labeled opposition to the genocide in Gaza ‘anti-Semitic’ and oversaw the expansion of surveillance on student protesters. His administration stood by as university officials enforced censorship and discipline against those who spoke out.”

Lawrence stressed the Democratic Party is a partner in Trump’s attacks on the working class and that their only objection to his policy is a tactical one “over how best to achieve US domination of the globe at the expense of the working class” as Andrews put it.

During the open mic portion of the event speakers from the unofficial campus club Aggies Against Apartheid spoke as well as the local branch of the Party for Socialism and Liberation.

In closing the rally, WSWS writer and SEP member Tom Hall spoke on the Democratic Party’s complicity. The crowd denounced the Democrats’ role in keeping Trump’s budget running, shouting “shame!” in opposition to this as well as the phony grandstanding of Democratic Senator Corey Booker, and in particular his vote against restricting military aid to Israel directly thereafter.

Hall also spoke on the pseudo-lefts such as Bernie

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Sanders and their complicity in the attacks on international students and immigrants. Hall referenced an ABC interview in which Sanders said Trump did right in "cracking down on fentanyl and making sure our borders are stronger" and that "nobody thinks that illegal immigration is appropriate."

Hall explained: "They want you to think you can oppose fascism at home while supporting its immigration, economic and foreign policy. They promote the fiction that anything can be done through the Democratic Party and the bankrupt perspective of begging on one's knees and applying so-called pressure."

He explained the complicity of the union bureaucracy in both the gutting of federal jobs and in siding with the tariffs and layoffs, including that of "Shawn Fain of the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Sean O'Brian of the Teamsters are "overseeing tens of thousands of layoffs in auto and UPS through sellout contracts. Yet they claim that tariffs will supposedly save American jobs which they have helped to destroy."

Hall urged the formation of workers' rank and file committees to stop Trump's dictatorship, and for students and youth to join the IYSSE and turn out into the working class. His remarks were well received with a round of applause from the crowd.

The speeches also called for the freedom of Ukrainian socialist and anti-war activist Bogdan Syrotiuk, whose imprisonment for the "crime" of opposing the US-NATO war against Russia in Ukraine was the start of the international campaign of repression against anti-war activists.

The vast majority of rally-goers attended the whole rally, with many staying afterwards to have political discussions with over 20 signing up to learn more about the IYSSE. One of the most asked questions was "when is your next event?"

The rally, which is the first the IYSSE has held at the university, is significant for a number of reasons. It is the first rally held in Texas by the Trotskyist movement in many years.

TAMU was also the site of a protest in March against Trump's fascist assault on immigrants in which hundreds of students participated.

TAMU has longstanding and extensive ties to the military and the intelligence agencies. Its current president, retired General Mark A Welsh, sits on the board of Northrop Grumman and served as a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. The university has the oldest Reserve Officer Training Corps program, and a massive state of the art weapons testing range, the George H.W. Bush Combat Development Complex at the RELLIS campus.

A pro-war lecture was held on campus the day after the rally under the fraudulent title "Defending Democracy." The lecturers included notorious war criminals and arch-reactionaries such as retired general Wesley Clark, former Supreme Allied Commander of NATO, who committed war crimes while directing the bombing of Yugoslavia in 1999, and former Republican speaker of the House Kevin McCarthy, a far-right bigot who supported Trump's January 6, 2021 coup attempt, passed billions to the Zelensky regime and helped lead the attack on antiwar students.

That the IYSSE put forward an explicitly anti-war socialist program and received a significant hearing shows that the support for war, dictatorship, and fascism is extremely limited, while opposition is growing among workers and youth.

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