

Student protests against the far-right in Australia: The fight against One Nation is a fight against the Labor government and capitalism!

International Youth and Students for Social Equality (Australia)
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University and high school students are participating in a day of action tomorrow against One Nation, with protests in capital cities. Among youth, there is widespread and legitimate hostility to the far-right party, which trades in the frothing demonisation of immigrants and refugees.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) and its parent organisation, the Socialist Equality Party, have warned that the rise of One Nation is a clear danger to the working class. Notwithstanding its populist posturing, One Nation is part of the same political establishment as Labor and the Liberals and represents the same capitalist class.

Along with its xenophobia, One Nation is bitterly hostile to democratic rights, supports the imperialist war plans of the major parties and the accompanying austerity agenda which has already included the greatest reversal of social conditions of the working class since the 1950s under the Labor government.

One Nation has been brought to the centre of political life, amid a historic crisis of the two-party system, to accelerate this agenda. Sections of the ruling elite, such as the country's wealthiest individual, billionaire Gina Rinehart, are aggressively promoting One Nation, to shift official politics even further to the right and as a battering ram against the developing struggles of the working class.

To fight the rise of this far-right formation is impossible without an understanding of its underlying cause. The IYSSE states bluntly that young people will find no answer to the question of why One Nation is on the rise, or how to combat it, from the official organisers of the rally.

The National Union of Students (NUS), which has called the protest, is a politically bankrupt organisation, dominated by aspiring Labor Party careerists and several members of the pseudo-left Socialist Alternative (SAIt) organisation.

The Labor leaders of the NUS openly defend the federal Labor government, as it joins US-led wars globally, attacks democratic rights, including of immigrants and refugees, and carries out massive cuts to social spending. The SAIt representatives in the leadership of the NUS happily collaborate with the right-wing Laborites, while providing them with a "left" cover through some pseudo-radical sloganeering.

The political line advanced by the NUS is to bring together all political parties and social forces in protest against One Nation. In practice, that means a fraudulent promotion of the Labor Party as a "lesser-evil," even as it is in government federally and in most of the states, implementing the agenda of war, austerity and authoritarianism.

This only serves to strengthen One Nation, which is able to exploit social discontent and falsely posture as a political "outsider," so long as growing social anger and political opposition among workers and youth is

subordinated to Labor, parliament and the state.

The IYSSE declares bluntly that the fight against the danger of the far right is a fight against the Labor government, all of its political defenders and the capitalist system itself. What is required is not protest actions or stunts oriented to Labor, but an independent movement of the working class based on a revolutionary and socialist perspective.

What are the causes of the rise of the far-right internationally?

A breakdown of global capitalism

Young people are living through the deepest crisis of world capitalism since the 1930s, marked by continuous political, social, economic and geopolitical upheavals. As in the first half of the 20th century, the ruling elites are trying to offset their own crisis through war. The utterly criminal US-led assault on Iran, the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine and Washington's preparations for a catastrophic war against China are not separate conflicts but interconnected fronts of a developing world war.

History shows that the first target of war is not the purported enemy, but the opposition of the population at home. That is why governments are carrying out an offensive against the working class and particularly the youth, through massive cuts to social spending to pay for unprecedented military budgets, moves to introduce conscription and the erection of a police state to suppress opposition. The Australian Labor government is an active participant in all the US-led wars. Like governments around the world, it has increased military spending to record levels, is planning a "whole-of-nation" war effort and is brutally repressing anti-war opposition, in the first instance to the genocide in Gaza.

The promotion of the far right by sections of the ruling elite is a component of this broader dictatorial drive, exemplified by the attempts of US President Donald Trump to overturn the Constitution and to establish a fascistic dictatorship in the centre of world capitalism. The fight against this authoritarianism is inseparable from the struggle against its underlying cause in the eruption of imperialist militarism and the dominance of an oligarchy represented by figures such as Musk in the US and Rinehart in Australia.

Labor and the corporatised union bureaucracy have created the

Globally, far-right parties have benefitted, not only from sponsorship by sections of the ruling class, but by pitching to social discontent with the old social-democratic and “centre-left” parties that have ruthlessly implemented the dictates of big business.

In the US, the administrations of Obama and Biden, governing on behalf of Wall Street and the CIA, paved the way for Trump. Now that he is in office, the Democrats collaborate with the fascist gangster, passing legislation not only facilitating the wars but also the assault against the population in the form of ICE attacks and the gutting of Medicare, the education department and all social programs.

In Australia, it is Labor and the corporatised union bureaucracy that have paved the way for One Nation, spearheading the assault on workers’ jobs, wages and conditions over the past forty years. The Albanese Labor government has overseen wage cutting, intolerable workloads and the slashing of social programs, the most egregious being the forced removal of 240,000 disabled people from the NDIS. The Labor government, with the support of the Liberals as well as One Nation, starts with the most vulnerable and defenceless in a war against social rights that is extending to education, health and every other area.

Labor’s pro-business offensive is inseparable from the suppression of the class struggle, through a battery of union-endorsed measures, including the Fair Work Act, which bans almost all strike action. By simultaneously inflicting a social crisis and seeking to criminalise any struggle by workers, Labor and its allies in the union bureaucracy are blocking any progressive outlet for discontent.

One Nation supports this suppression of the class struggle and exploits it to channel social anger in a reactionary direction. A warning was provided by the April South Australian election. While One Nation’s vote largely came from former Liberal-National supporters, it was also able to pick up support in the key working-class electorates of Adelaide, which were decimated by the Labor-union enforced closure of the car industry.

Labor is leading the lurch to the right

One Nation’s rise, moreover, has occurred in a toxic atmosphere characterised by a massive lurch to the right in official politics, led by the Labor government.

The centrepiece of its program is to complete Australia’s transformation into a frontline state for a US-led war against China, while supporting militarism globally, including the genocide in Gaza, the assault on Iran and the war against Russia in Ukraine.

Labor is not only the preeminent party of imperialist war but of the repression that accompanies it. It is the Labor government that has viciously attacked mass opposition to the genocide, and has passed wartime legislation, including “hate speech” laws that could be used to criminalise anti-war sentiments and even political parties.

Central to the assault on democratic rights is Labor’s offensive against immigrants and refugees. The Labor government has dramatically reduced migration numbers, while scapegoating “foreigners,” especially international students, for the social crisis that the government itself has imposed. It has consigned refugees to concentration camps on Nauru and the other Pacific states. Labor is currently preparing an even greater assault, as it competes with One Nation, with anti-immigrant measures that could affect hundreds of thousands of visa holders.

The NUS has maintained a silent complicity. But Labor’s program, of reaction all down the line, is one that is supported by One Nation and is

identical in its fundamentals.

Build a socialist movement of the working class!

The central lesson of the 20th century is that the fight against fascism requires the political independence of the working class from all the capitalist parties and the building of a revolutionary socialist movement. That is not only the way to defeat the far right. It is the only means of young people securing a future, against a capitalist system that is leading to climate catastrophe, military conscription and nuclear war.

By seeking to subordinate opposition to Labor, the NUS and all of its allies are chaining young people to a capitalist political establishment that is hurtling to the right. And they are blocking a genuine struggle against the far-right danger.

That goes for the Greens, a capitalist party that, whatever its oppositional rhetoric, collaborates with Labor continuously and defends Australian imperialism.

It also applies to pseudo-left groups such as SAlt. They do not represent the working class, but an affluent layer of the upper middle class, which seeks to advance its own privileges through the union bureaucracy and the existing political setup.

While the ruling elites and their political representatives are hurtling to the right, there is a political radicalisation taking place among workers and young people globally. Workers are entering into struggle, and they are coming up directly against Labor and the union bureaucracies. That has been shown by public school teachers in Victoria, who have twice rejected sellout deals attacking their pay and conditions by the state Labor government and the Australian Education Union, and a similar stand by nurses in South Australia.

The great task facing students and youth is to turn to the working class and build within it a political leadership based on a revolutionary and socialist perspective. The fight against war, dictatorship, fascism and the climate catastrophe are fundamentally fights against capitalism, an outmoded and bankrupt social order.

What is required is nothing less than the taking of political power by the working class, in Australia and internationally, and the reorganisation of social and economic life from top to bottom, to meet social need, not private profit. We appeal to all students and youth to join the IYSSE and take up the fight for socialism today!



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