

University of Michigan IYSSE and WSWS readers oppose ban on SEP (Australia) meeting

By our reporter
25 April 2015

A letter from the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) branch at the University of Michigan in the U nited States is one of many sent in the past few days to the University of Sydney and the Burwood City Council denouncing the blocking of an anti-war meeting called by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP). A selection is published below.

<http://www.wsws.org/en/articles/2014/04/18/food-a18.html>

“End the Censorship of the SEP in Australia”

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality at the University of Michigan condemns the decision of both the University of Sydney and the Burwood City Council to cancel meetings of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) opposing the rehabilitation and glorification of militarism. These decisions are nothing more than an act of political censorship carried out at the behest of the government and a narrow layer of pro-war, nationalist forces. Their aim, and that of all the Anzac Day celebrations, is to stampede the population in support for imperialist slaughter that will be paid for with the lives of the young and the working class.

Your actions are of a piece with the efforts of intellectuals and scholars who are attempting to cloak imperialism as a concern for “human rights.” Here at the University of Michigan, Professor Juan Cole, a leading commentator on the Middle East, served as a mouthpiece for the American government’s overthrow of the Libyan regime of Muammar Gaddafi by promoting the false claim that US and its allies were acting out of concern over the oppression of the Libyan people. Working with the very Islamist forces it has

claimed to be fighting in the “war on terror,” the US and its allies have plunged the region into a civil war that is resulting in the deaths of thousands and the complete breakdown of Libyan society.

In preventing the Socialist Equality Party from holding a meeting on its campus, Sydney University demonstrates that rather than being a place that has, in the words of Vice Chancellor Michael Spence, a “commitment to academic freedom, the freedom of speech, and the right to protest,” it is an institution working to suppress critical thinking and dissent. Regardless of your efforts, we will not be intimidated and we will not be silenced. We demand that you revoke your cancellation of both of these meetings.

On behalf of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at the University of Michigan, Andrea Peters, Matthew Brennan, Ray Alcaraz, and Buster Haycook

“Vigorous debate about WWI is needed amongst students, workers, youth and the middle classes”

I am writing this email to protest the cancellation by the University of Sydney of a public meeting by the Socialist Equality Party of Australia. I am a supporter of the SEP in the United States and a professor of economics in Los Angeles.

The decision of the University of Sydney to deny a venue to the Socialist Equality Party for a meeting on Anzac Day (Sunday April 26: “Anzac Day, the glorification of militarism, and the drive to World War III”) must be reversed. The principle of academic freedom at the university must be upheld.

One hundred and one years ago this August the carnage of WWI began in Europe and the Middle East. The lofty ideals used to justify that war (civilization,

democracy, the war to end all wars, etcetera) proved to be cruel pretexts for a war by the imperialist powers to divide the world. It was a war for profits.

Preparations are well-advanced for another world war, more killing fields, to be fought by young workers and students. The re-writing the history of the first bloody global conflict, is an essential aspect of the campaign by a tiny financial plutocracy to divide workers and youth from each other, against their own interests, and to create the conditions for WW III. Only this time drone killings and nuclear weapons are added to tanks and mustard gas.

It is fitting that there be a vigorous debate among students, workers, youth and among the middle classes, to unmask all the pretexts for war and state what is, the First World War was for profits as are the current wars involving the United States, Canada, Western Europe and Australia.

GB – California, US

“Refusal of the SEP meeting contradicts very important principles”

Dear Vice-Chancellor Spence,

I am writing to register a formal complaint with your office regarding refusal by the University of Sydney of an April 26, 2015, public, educational, antiwar meeting by the Socialist Equality Party.

Reportedly, the university has refused the meeting on “security advice”: to avoid “potential for disruption to activities on campus as a result of the event being held,” that “could affect the safety of staff and students.”

Refusal of the said meeting, however, contradicts very important principles stated in the publicly available “Mission-Based Compact between the Commonwealth of Australia and the University of Sydney”:

“Like any university, WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BE COMPLACENT. The higher education sector in particular, and the broader social, political, institutional and economic climate more generally, is changing rapidly. We must adapt strategically in order to thrive IN THIS VOLATILE ENVIRONMENT. [.. .] We NURTURE AND CHALLENGE talent in an environment that values FREE ENQUIRY, CURIOSITY AND CRITICAL THINKING.” (pp. 8, 39; emphasis added)

Here, the University of Sydney declares awareness

that we are living in globally violent times; the university takes a stand against world violence by seriously engaging the people with democratic ideas; and the university promises spaces for that engagement.

The public, educational, antiwar meeting by the Socialist Equality Party is completely consonant with the advocated democratic culture. By refusing the meeting, the University of Sydney is openly betraying its own principles.

I thus request that the university reverse its position and allow the Socialist Equality Party to hold the said public meeting.

AH – United States

The SEP calls for letters of protest to be sent to the University of Sydney over its refusal to hire its venue for the SEP’s April 26 anti-war meeting. Letters should be directed to Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Dr Michael Spence, at vice.chancellor@sydney.edu.au, who is responsible for the executive decisions of university management. Please CC all emails to the SEP at sep@sep.org.au.

The SEP is also calling on WSWs readers and supporters to write to Burwood Council over its decision to cancel the SEP’s hall booking. Letters should be emailed to the Labor Party Mayor of Burwood, Councillor John Faker, at mayor@burwood.nsw.gov.au and to Burwood Council management, at council@burwood.nsw.gov.au. The email addresses of all seven current Burwood councillors can be seen [here](#). Please specify “Complaint” in the subject field and CC all emails to the SEP at sep@sep.org.au.

To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>