

ISSE

International Students for Social Equality

Join the International Students for Social Equality!

The year 2009 has opened with an economic, social and political crisis caused by the catastrophic meltdown of the global financial system. All the scourges of the 20th century are once again erupting—mass unemployment, poverty, repression, nationalism and inter-imperialist war—in ever more destructive forms.

This madness must stop! Great advances in science and technology, accompanied by an unprecedented global integration of economic life, have created the potential for a new era of human prosperity. Yet young people confront a world full of war and want, massive poverty and disease, pending environmental catastrophe, cultural backwardness and superstition, and assaults on the most basic democratic freedoms.

Human progress is being blocked by the social relations of capitalism, which subordinate everything to the drive for corporate profit and the accumulation of personal wealth by a tiny layer of the population. The ISSE is an organisation of students around the world dedicated to building a socialist movement that will finally realise the potential of the modern era, put an end to poverty and war, and lay the foundations for genuine freedom.

The Crash of 2008

The crash of 2008 will go down in history as a fundamental turning point in human affairs. It marked the onset of a breakdown of the world capitalist system. Almost overnight, major icons of American capitalism, including Lehman Brothers, Merrill Lynch, Bear Stearns, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac and American Insurance Group went into bankruptcy. A crisis that began in the sub-prime mortgage market in 2007 rapidly developed into a meltdown of the entire financial system, in the US and throughout the world.

By the end of 2008, approximately

\$30 trillion in share values had been eradicated from global stock markets. Credit markets froze. World trade is now slowing at rates not seen for 60 years, with the US and world economy spiraling into depression. In January the IMF predicted global GDP growth of just 0.5 percent, the lowest since World War II. Just one month later, the IMF's managing director Dominique Strauss-Kahn warned that global growth forecasts may be slashed further, declaring "the worst cannot be ruled out." According to Strauss-Kahn, the world's advanced economies—the US, Western Europe and Japan—are "already in depression".

These developments have irrevocably shattered blind faith in the "free market". For decades, capitalist politicians, whether nominally left-wing or right-wing, justified privatisation, the elimination of welfare and the gutting of public services, with the claim that free market competition was the final word in efficiency and progress. But

capitalism is now producing an economic and social disaster for billions of people throughout the world!

As in the 1930's, the spectre of mass unemployment has returned. In the past 12 months, the American economy has shed 3.5 million jobs, the biggest yearly total since 1939.

The International Labor Organisation predicts 51 million workers may be laid off globally this year, pushing the world unemployment rate to 7.1 percent. The number of "working poor", those who obtain less than \$2 per day, may rise to 1.4 billion people, or 45 percent of the world's employed. In Australia, each day brings news of mass sackings and downsizing. Treasury predictions that unemployment will rise to 7 percent are being quickly scotched, with analysts—including JP Morgan—predicting rates of at least 9 percent by 2010.

Despite various government bail-outs and rescue packages, running to trillions of



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dollars, the economic catastrophe worsens. The present crisis is not the outcome of “extreme capitalism” as argued by Kevin Rudd and other bourgeois pundits. It is the outcome of basic contradictions at the heart of the capitalist mode of production, discovered by Karl Marx more than 160 years ago.

While production is a social process, involving the mental and manual labour of billions of people throughout the world, the interests of the vast majority are thwarted by the private ownership of the productive forces and the violent division of the world into rival nation-states. These contradictions now threaten to destroy the planet.

After World War II these fundamental contradictions were temporarily suppressed as United States capitalism used its economic power to rebuild war-torn Europe and Japan, creating the conditions for a world-wide expansion of capitalism during the 1950s and 1960s. But the end of US economic dominance, a process that began more than three decades ago, has seen a resurgence of the very same conflicts that erupted in 1914. The only way out for the ruling class, whose ownership of capital is rooted in the national-state, are trade-war measures against its rivals, and ultimately war.

No to economic nationalism and war!

Israel’s murderous blitzkrieg on Gaza in January, in which hundreds of innocent men, women and children were deliberately slaughtered, brings to mind the great crimes of the 20th century, such as Guernica and the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto. Backed by the new Obama administration, and by the Rudd Labor government in Australia, Israel’s assault must serve as a warning. The breakdown of international law, the prevalence of outright criminality in the conduct of foreign policy and the routine commission of atrocities against civilian populations are becoming central features of political life.

War is not caused simply by individual politicians or their governments—such as the Bush Administration or the Howard government. It is caused by capitalism. Five years ago the US launched its invasion of Iraq, a war that has killed 1.2 million Iraqis and destroyed an entire society. Over 4,200 American soldiers have died. The Iraq war was launched to serve the deepest requirements of the US ruling class: to seize control of the region’s oil resources and to strike a blow against US imperialism’s chief



Socialist Equality Party national secretary Nick Beams lecturing in Sydney last year on the World Economic Crisis

economic rivals, including Russia, China, France and Germany. Australia’s support for this criminal enterprise was based on a dirty quid pro quo with Washington—that the US would back Australia’s own neo-colonial aspirations and military interventions in the South Pacific, especially East Timor, the Solomons, Fiji and PNG.

The same aims as those of their predecessors are being pursued by the new Obama administration in the US, and the Rudd Labor government in Australia. The occupation of Iraq goes on, while Obama has announced a 17,000 US troop surge into Afghanistan, openly repudiating the antiwar sentiments of the American people. As US power declines and the economic crisis deepens, the Obama administration—with Rudd’s support and participation—will increasingly resort to military force.

In every country, governments are meeting the onset of global recession by turning to nationalism and protectionism. Obama accuses China of “currency “manipulation”, inserting a “Buy American” clause in the Democrats’ recent bailout plan. The trade union organisations, organically rooted in the national soil, are in the forefront, calling for racist immigration controls, demanding “British jobs for British workers” or “Buy Australian Made”.

The ISSE opposes all forms of nationalism, chauvinism and protectionism, which are used to divide and weaken the working class. Ordinary people throughout the world must join together in a common struggle against war and capitalism. Young people have no interest in plunder and killing for profit. We advance

the fight for the unification of the international working class on a socialist and internationalist basis.

For social equality!

Young people today face a world more unequal than ever before. The richest 1 percent of the world’s population has an income equal to the bottom 57 percent. The richest three individuals own more assets than the poorest ten percent of the world’s people. In the US the top one tenth of one percent (300,000 people) has an income greater than the combined income of the poorest 120 million Americans.

Mass unemployment, mortgage foreclosures, the wiping out of superannuation and investment funds, is creating a social catastrophe for students and the entire working class. Students face particular problems. The majority are forced to work part-time (or even full time) just to survive, sacrificing their studies and even their health in the process. Meanwhile service sector employers, including call centres, fast-food outlets and retail chains, are laying-off casuals or cutting back on hours of employment and pay. Soaring rents, particularly in the major cities, has created a housing crisis for the young, with many forced into boarding houses and other substandard accommodation.

For graduates, prospects are dire. Companies and government departments are scaling back or axing their graduate recruitment programs. A degree in economics or commerce; a once-secure path to a career in finance or government, may offer no more

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than a three-year detour to the unemployment scrapheap.

As for public education, the academic year has opened with a major assault on universities, schools and TAFE colleges. Following decades of deliberate underfunding and user-pays, begun in the 1980s by the Hawke and Keating Labor governments, Rudd and his education minister Julia Gillard are moving one step further. Labor's "education revolution" will subject public education to the full blast of market forces, including plans for a voucher system. Under the guise of providing parents and students with "individual choice", Rudd's reforms will create a two-class system: state-of-the-art facilities for a wealthy few, with sub-standard, under-resourced conditions for the rest.

Across the globe a new period of the class struggle is emerging, fuelled by the devastating effects of the financial crisis. The eruption of youth protests, strikes and battles with armed riot police in Athens last December; mass strikes in France against government austerity; the toppling of the Icelandic government; these are harbingers of mass social struggles that will emerge in every country.

No social problem—the AIDS pandemic and other diseases, global hunger, climate change, or the vulnerability of millions of people to bushfires, floods and tsunamis—can be seriously tackled without addressing the ownership and distribution of wealth. The ISSE rejects the calls by the Rudd Labor government—echoing those by Obama in the US—for "shared sacrifice" in the face of mounting economic turmoil. Workers and young people did not create this crisis, and they should not be made to pay for the devastation caused by a bankrupt social and economic order!

For international socialism!

The ISSE fights for the rebirth of an international socialist movement, which will base itself on the experiences of the working class movements of an earlier era. The oft-repeated mantra that "socialism has failed" is a product of either deceit or ignorance. The 20th century saw great revolutionary struggles for socialism, but these were systematically betrayed by Stalinism, Social Democracy and the corrupt bureaucracies of the old labor movements. The ISSE draws its inspiration from the great intellectual and political tradition of international socialism associated with the figures of Marx, Engels, Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky.

None of the problems we confront can be dealt with on a national level. We live in a world society, and the basic issues confronting student youth in every country are fundamentally the same. For this reason, we are the International Students for Social Equality. We reject all forms of nationalism, chauvinism, racism and parochialism.

The ISSE also rejects identity politics, which is promoted by various academics, "lefts" and radicals, in order to elevate superficial differences based on race, gender or sexual orientation above the fundamental class divisions wracking society. Identity politics is aimed at blocking scientific socialism and thereby preventing a progressive class response to the depredations of capitalism.

While we are a student organisation, our aim is not to build a purely student movement. The pressing need is for an independent political movement of the working class as a whole, that is, the vast majority of the world's population. The majority of student youth today are or will be part of the working class. The particular

problems faced by students are products of the capitalist system, based on the exploitation of all workers.

The ISSE rejects the politics of radical protest, of cheap slogans, of pressuring the powers that be. This perspective, characteristic of so many groups on campus, is a hopeless and bankrupt one. Our aim is to build a mass political movement, based on a clear and comprehensive theoretical perspective, that will take power, establish a workers' government and reorganise society on a democratic, egalitarian and rational basis.

Socialism means genuine equality. It means an end to the capitalist system of exploitation and inequality. It means democratic control of the great productive resources of society, so that these resources can serve social need rather than private profit and the interests of the wealthy.

Join the fight for socialism! Join the ISSE!

The International Students for Social Equality is the student organisation of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), the Australian section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). The ICFI publishes the World Socialist Web Site (www.wsws.org), the most widely read socialist publication on the Internet.

We urge all students who agree with our manifesto to seriously study the program, history and analysis presented on the World Socialist Web Site. Make the decision to join and build the ISSE and begin your political preparation for the tumultuous period that lies ahead. Help build a branch or club of the ISSE at your university, TAFE college or school and join the fight for socialism and mankind's future!

ISSE Meetings

Marxism and the world economic crisis

UNSW

Wednesday March 18, 1.00pm
Room 209 Morven Brown
(Directly opposite the library)

RMIT

Wednesday March 11, 12.30pm
Union Board Room

University of Sydney

Wednesday March 25, 1.00pm
Reading Room, Holme Building
Level 4 (2nd flight of stairs)
Science Road

Newcastle University

Wednesday March 4, 1.00pm
NUSA office
(Near the Bar on the Hill)

Read the World Socialist Web Site wsws.org

The World Socialist Web Site is a unique web site. It features daily Marxist analysis of the major political, social, economic and cultural developments throughout the world in several languages. It provides extensive reports on theoretical, historical and scientific questions, and first-hand coverage of all the crucial struggles of the working class.

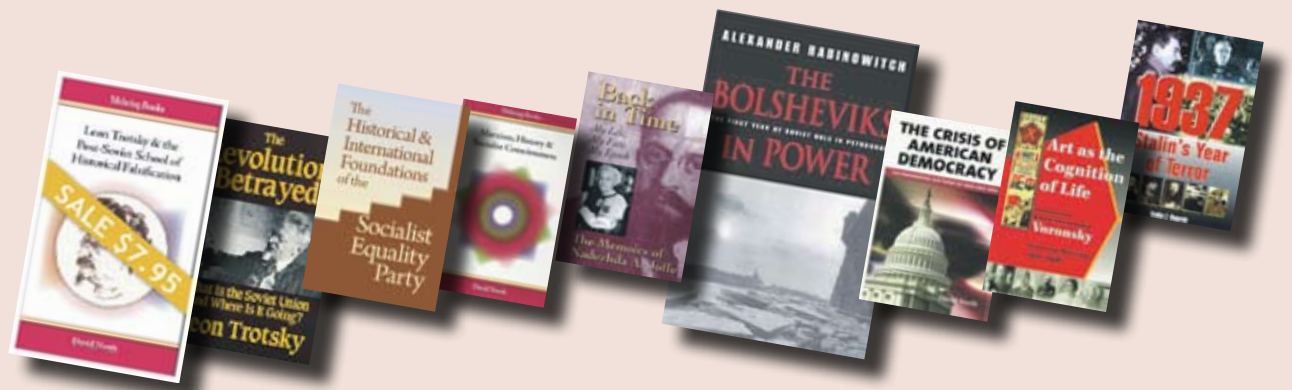


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