

Message of condolence from David North

## 'He based his life on the ideals of justice, equality and human solidarity'

14 April 1999

*David North, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, sent the following message of condolence on the death of Yabu Bilyana. It was read at the funeral on April 10 by Nick Beams, the national secretary of the SEP (Australia).*

It is with great sadness that the membership of the Socialist Equality Party has learned of the death of comrade Yabu Bilyana.

Yabu was an exceptional comrade, worker and human being. He was that rare type of person who based his life on the ideals in which he passionately believed--of justice, equality and human solidarity.

When Yabu joined the Socialist Labour League in 1989, he was no longer a young man. His decision to take up the struggle for socialism was based on a lifetime of experience, as a worker and as an Aborigine. By the time he encountered the Socialist Labour League, he had already become deeply disillusioned with the two principal banes of the workers' movement--reformism and nationalism. Continually learning, he possessed the honesty and courage to draw the necessary conclusions from his discussions with the Australian Trotskyists and become a member of our movement. It is deeply significant that the events that marked the turning point in Yabu's political development and led him to join our party--the Fourth International--occurred not in Australia, but in China--the bloody suppression of students and workers by the Stalinist regime. The political impulses to which he responded were of an international, not merely national, character.

I first met comrade Yabu in 1989. During the years that followed, I had the privilege to become better acquainted with Yabu in the course of an international conference and at various party gatherings and schools

of the Australian section. A kind, gregarious and thoughtful man, he possessed a voracious interest in the history and practical work of the movement. Had he not been so tragically disabled by illness, Yabu undoubtedly would have played a major role in the expansion of the party's influence in the working class. But the memory of his life will continue to inspire a new generation.

In closing, please convey to the family of Yabu Bilyana the heartfelt condolences of the entire membership of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States and the International Committee of the Fourth International.



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