

50 Years of the International Committee of the Fourth International

Public meeting of the Socialist Equality Party in Australia

28 November 2003

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Speaker:

Nick Beams, WSWs International Editorial Board member and national secretary of the SEP (Australia)

Sunday December 21, 3:00 p.m.

University of Technology, Sydney
Building 5C, Ground Floor, Room 31
Quay Street, Haymarket
Tickets: \$5 & \$3 concession

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) will be holding a public meeting in Sydney to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI), publisher of the *World Socialist Web Site*. The meeting is one of a series being conducted in different parts of the world by the sections of the ICFI.

The ICFI is the only political movement that is capable of reviewing its entire history and establishing the organic connection between its present practice and perspective and the principles and ideals upon which it was founded.

The meeting will trace the origins of the movement to the founding of the Left Opposition by Leon Trotsky in 1923 to fight the growing Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union. Against the nationalist perspective advanced by Stalin, Trotsky fought for socialist internationalism—the perspective upon which the Bolsheviks had led the Russian Revolution of 1917.

After the defeat of the German working class in 1933 as a result of the betrayals of Stalinism, Trotsky concluded that it was impossible to reform the Soviet bureaucracy or the Communist (Third) International. A

new international party had to be built in the international working class. Five years later, in 1938, the Fourth International was founded.

In the face of massive political persecution, at the hands of both Stalinism and imperialism, Trotskyists fought for the construction of a new internationalist and socialist leadership—the necessity of which was confirmed by the murder of hundreds of thousands of socialists in Stalin's purges and the horrors of the Second World War.

After the war, the cadre of the Fourth International came under new pressure to abandon a revolutionary perspective. The SEP meeting will review the split in the Fourth International in November 1953 between the orthodox Trotskyists, led by James P. Cannon, the founder of the Trotskyist movement in the United States, and an opportunist faction led by Michel Pablo and Ernest Mandel, then the principal leaders of the International Secretariat of the Fourth International in Europe.

At stake in the 1953 split was the very existence of the world party. Adapting themselves impressionistically to the post-war stabilisation of capitalism on the one hand, and the consolidation of the Soviet Union and its satellite states in Eastern Europe on the other, Pablo and Mandel argued that sections of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union would undertake a gradual process of self-reform that would eventually lead to socialism.

Likewise, the Pabloites advanced highly exaggerated and fundamentally false estimates of the revolutionary capacities of the national bourgeois leaderships in the Middle East and Latin America, of the Chinese revolution and of the social democratic and Stalinist parties in the advanced capitalist countries—including

Australia.

Trotsky's insistence on the counter-revolutionary role of Stalinism, and on the unique role of the Fourth International in the struggle for world socialism was, they claimed, no longer relevant in the "new reality" that had emerged following World War II.

At the heart of Pabloism was the rejection of the revolutionary role of the working class and its hegemonic role in the socialist revolution. The struggle to build independent parties of the working class based on the theory and program of Marxism was to be abandoned in favor of "integration" into the "really existing mass movements."

Five decades on, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the complete prostration of the national bourgeois leaderships, as well as the Labor and Stalinist parties, before the dictates of world imperialism have vindicated the stand taken by Cannon and the orthodox Trotskyists, and fully substantiated the analysis advanced in the "Open Letter".

By virtue of its ongoing struggle against all forms of opportunism, and its intransigent defence of internationalism, the ICFI is today laying the foundations, through the *World Socialist Web Site*, of a new international revolutionary movement against global capitalism. The growing international opposition to the eruption of US militarism and the unprecedented levels of social inequality in every country requires an alternative perspective. This can only be based on an assimilation of all the strategic experiences of the twentieth century—embodied, above all, in the history and program of the ICFI.

We urge WSWS readers in Australia to attend the anniversary meeting and participate in the discussion on these vital historical and political issues.

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