

The Fight for Socialism Today conference held in Ann Arbor

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On Saturday and Sunday, the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), International Students for Social Equality (ISSE), and *World Socialist Web Site* held in Ann Arbor, Michigan the first of three national conferences, “The Fight for Socialism Today.” Further conferences will be held in Los Angeles on April 16 and in New York City on April 30.

The conference discussed and advanced a program for the working class to fight back against the attacks that are being leveled against it by ruling classes in the US and all over the world, and to build a new socialist leadership in the working class to lead the struggles ahead.

Five resolutions were presented, and, after discussion and debate, each was passed unanimously. These were entitled, “The attack on the working class and the fight for socialism,” “For the international unity of the working class!,” “No to imperialist war in Libya! Withdraw all troops from Iraq and Afghanistan!,” “Defend democratic rights!,” and “Socialism is the way forward for young people.”

About 150 delegates attended the conference from many states, including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kentucky, Texas, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, New York and West Virginia. International delegates brought greetings from Germany, Great Britain, Australia and Canada.

Delegates represented broad sections of the working class. A number of workers came from Detroit and other economically devastated cities in the Midwest. Many students and young workers came, several of them attending their first socialist meeting. Present were teachers, manufacturing workers, nurses, unemployed workers, librarians, service workers,

professionals, and retired workers.

SEP National Secretary Joe Kishore delivered an opening report that reviewed the scale of the attack on workers, including the budget agreement reached the night before by the Obama administration and Congress. He also discussed the attacks on social programs being planned for next year and the actions being taken by state governments, whether led by Democrats or Republicans, to cut education, health care and other social programs.

Kishore also presented slides documenting the staggering concentration of wealth in the hands of a tiny few in the US, individual fortunes that dwarf the budget deficits in all 50 states that are being used as a pretext to impose massive cuts.

The events of the first three months of 2011—including the revolutionary upsurge in the Middle East and the class struggles in Wisconsin and other US states—demonstrated that the working class was prepared to fight back, he noted. However, these struggles only made more clear the need for a new revolutionary leadership based on a socialist program.

In discussing the resolutions, which were motivated by leading members of the SEP and ISSE, conference delegates reviewed and debated the fundamental issues facing the working class, including the nature of the Democratic Party as a political instrument of the ruling class, the role of the official trade unions in enforcing the attack on workers, and the need for an independent socialist movement of the working class to fight back. Many workers and youth rose to speak on the resolutions or to offer amendments that will be incorporated in the final documents.

A special presentation by SEP National Chairman David North Saturday evening reviewed the nature of the war in Libya and the geostrategic interests involved.

He critiqued “left” intellectuals who were seeking to give a humanitarian justification for the imperialist intervention. North noted that in launching the war in Libya, the Obama administration was advancing a new doctrine to justify intervention whenever there was a perceived threat to US “interests or values,” a formulation that goes beyond the preventive warfare doctrine of the Bush administration.

On Sunday, several speakers reviewed the experiences of the working class this year. *World Socialist Web Site* writer Jerry White gave a report on the lessons of the mass struggle of workers and youth in Wisconsin against the anti-worker bill advanced by Governor Scott Walker. White and many other delegates who participated in the struggles reviewed the background of the struggle and how the trade union executives and their supporters worked to subordinate it to the Democratic Party.

SEP Assistant National Secretary Larry Porter discussed the work of CAUS, the Committee Against Utility Shutoffs, in Detroit. A number of CAUS members attended the Ann Arbor conference.

Among the speakers from the floor was Sylvia Young, a Detroit mother who in March 2010 lost three children in a house fire hours after energy corporation DTE cut off her electricity. She explained that in the wake of her tragedy authorities tried to take away her four surviving children. “But the Committee Against Utility Shutoffs stood up for me, and we fought back. CAUS says utilities should be a right, not a luxury,” she said.

A letter of support was also read from Jennifer, a member of the rank-and-file committee of Indianapolis autoworkers that last year fought against efforts by the United Auto Workers union to impose wage and benefit cuts on a General Motors stamping plant purchased by a corporate raider.

Speaking toward the end of the conference, North and Kishore stressed that the conference was the essential preparation for the developing struggles of the working class, and that the SEP and ISSE would intervene aggressively to provide political leadership for the class battles to come. Kishore concluded, “We must take the success of the conference and turn outward, to build a new socialist movement of the working class.”

The WSWS urges its readers in the US to make plans to attend one of the remaining conferences in Los

Angeles (April 16) or New York (April 30). For more information and to register, click here.



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