

SEP (Australia) Second National Congress: Greetings by David North

David North
24 April 2014

David North, the chairman of the international editorial board of the World Socialist Web Site and national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, sent the following greetings to the Second National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia), which was held in Sydney from April 18–21, 2014.

Dear Comrades,

On the occasion of your national congress, please accept the warmest fraternal greetings from your comrades in the United States.

The national congress of the Australian SEP is being held at a critical point in the crisis of the world capitalist system. You are meeting in the midst of an escalating conflict that raises the danger of military confrontation between nuclear-armed powers. Less than four months shy of the centenary of the outbreak of World War I, essentially the same contradictions and motivations that led to the catastrophe of 1914 threaten to explode into war in 2014. One hundred years ago, it was a conflict in the Balkans that triggered the conflagration. Today, a fight over control of Ukraine has the potential to set the world aflame. In the Balkans, the fuse was lit by the assassination of the Austrian archduke. In present-day Eastern Europe, a coup d'état in Kiev, orchestrated by US and German intelligence agencies, set the crisis into motion. But now, as in 1914, the immediate circumstances surrounding the crisis are the external manifestation of more profound economic, geopolitical and social processes.

The dynamic of the global economy is in violent rebellion against the constraints of national state borders. The major imperialist powers, led by the United States, are compelled to sweep aside and rearrange existing borders to remove all restraints on their access to critical resources. As in 1914 and in 1939, a new division of the world is underway. In the present crisis, the dispute over Ukraine is only an initial skirmish in the larger battle over the fate of Russia. Neither the United States nor Germany sees any reason why Russia should occupy eight time zones, from Eastern Europe to Vladivostok, let alone be allowed to control the flow of oil

and natural gas to Western Europe. Such geopolitical and economic impertinence cannot be tolerated.

Nor will the United States allow the continuing expansion, at its own expense, of China's geopolitical and economic influence. Even in the midst of a confrontation with Russia, President Obama will visit Japan later this month to review plans with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe for the "containment" of China. Their discussions will include the escalating confrontation with China over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. The tensions in the Asia-Pacific region are no less explosive than those in the regions of Eastern Europe, the Black Sea and Caucasus.

The increasingly dangerous situation not only confirms the timeliness of the SEP's national congress, but also vindicates the political prescience of the party's analysis of the Obama administration's "pivot to Asia" and its fight against the unrestrained collaboration of the Australian ruling class in the preparations of US imperialism for war against China.

The eruption of imperialist militarism and the drive for war will have the most far-reaching effect on social relations in every country, above all in the imperialist centers themselves. As the imperatives of militarism require the intensification of attacks, economic and political, on the working class, the class struggle will grow far more acute. A process of political radicalization, affecting hundreds of millions of workers, will develop.

Marxist politics demands ruthless objectivity in the appraisal of the political situation. No progressive purpose is served by denying, in the name of a superficial optimism, the immense contradiction between the very advanced stage of the crisis and the present level of political consciousness among the masses. However, the potential for a rapid development of revolutionary consciousness, under conditions of extreme social crisis, must not be underestimated. This change will not simply emerge "out of the blue." The relentless deterioration of living conditions over the past three to four decades has steadily undermined confidence in and support for capitalism. Nor has the

staggering concentration of wealth in a small elite gone unnoticed. The wars based on lies and the continuous attacks on democratic rights have deepened the alienation of the broad mass of the people from the existing setup. The “molecular processes,” which academic historians recognize and explain, with 20-20 hindsight, in the aftermath of revolutionary eruptions, are already at a very advanced stage of development.

But there is another critical indicator of the real level of revolutionary consciousness: the development of the Marxist vanguard!

In 1914 there existed mass working-class parties affiliated with the Second International. But they had been so corroded by opportunism that their political worthlessness was exposed within the first hours of the imperialist war. It fell to Lenin, the leader of a small faction of the Russian social-democratic movement, to initiate the construction of a new revolutionary international. He was able to undertake this task because of the struggle he had waged, over the previous decade, against opportunism within the Russian movement.

The International Committee of the Fourth International is the product of more than six decades of political struggle against opportunism. This year, we must recall, marks the fiftieth anniversary of the betrayal of the Pabloite LSSP in Ceylon. In the United States, the orthodox Trotskyists who demanded discussion of the significance of this betrayal were expelled from the Socialist Workers Party and went on to form the American Committee for the Fourth International. Two years later, the ACFI founded the Workers League, predecessor of the US SEP. In Ceylon, the most courageous and politically far-sighted elements among those who opposed the LSSP’s entry into the bourgeois government of SLFP Prime Minister Bandaranaike went on to form, under the guidance of the International Committee, the Revolutionary Communist League. Notwithstanding the growing crisis within the British Socialist Labour League, the principles that had been defended in the early 1960s in the fight against Pabloism found a response in Germany and Australia, where new sections of the ICFI were founded 43 and 42 years ago respectively.

This year marks the fortieth anniversary of what proved to be a decisive turning point in the history of the Workers League: the repudiation of the opportunism of Tim Wohlforth. The fight against Wohlforth’s renegacy led to a renewal of the struggle against Pabloism and, through that struggle, the reforging of the American section’s link to the whole history of the Trotskyist movement, dating back to the founding of the Left Opposition in 1923 and the formation of the Communist League of America by James P. Cannon in 1928. The assimilation of this powerful political and

theoretical heritage was the critical factor in the ability of the Workers League to initiate the struggle in 1982 against the opportunist degeneration of the British Workers Revolutionary Party. The efforts of the WRP to isolate and destroy this opposition proved futile. In the autumn of 1985, the orthodox Trotskyist faction within the International Committee gained a decisive majority, wrested control of the IC from the WRP opportunists, and re-established the authority of Trotskyist principles within the Fourth International.

This decades-long struggle, comrades, is the essential foundation for all the subsequent gains of the International Committee—the transformation of our old “Leagues” into parties, the launching of the *World Socialist Web Site*, and the vast expansion of our movement’s influence all over the world. Lest we succumb to the sin of pride, we shall not dwell at length upon these successes. Immense challenges lie ahead. But we understand, as Marxists and historical materialists, the objective significance of our history. It represents the essential process through which the working class, in the midst of an acute crisis of leadership that witnessed not only the collapse of its old organizations, but also the dissolution of the workers’ state that emerged out of the October 1917 revolution, assimilated the experiences of the twentieth century, and prepared itself for the revolutionary struggles of the twenty-first century. We have earned the right to call upon the advanced workers of the world to celebrate May Day 2014 with the International Committee.

In conclusion, I wish to express my admiration and boundless gratitude to all the comrades within the leadership of your section who have carried on their shoulders the fight for Trotskyism for so many decades and who have played an imperishable role in the building of the World Party of Socialist Revolution as envisioned by Leon Trotsky.

With revolutionary greetings,

David North

April 17, 2014



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact