Nick Beams retires as Socialist Equality Party (Australia) national secretary

The Socialist Equality Party (Australia)
27 February 2015

After three decades as national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) and its predecessor, the Socialist Labour League (SLL), Nick Beams formally retired from the position at the party's National Committee meeting last weekend. A well-known authority on Marxist political economy, he has been a leading figure in the Trotskyist movement for over 40 years.

Comrade Beams, who turns 67 this year, had discussed his decision to retire with leading comrades in the ICFI and the SEP before making the announcement. He will continue to work on the international editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and remains a member of the SEP National Committee.

"It is time for me to step down as national secretary and for the younger generation to take the position," he told the National Committee. "This is not a negative development, but recognition that we are taking in both hands the conscious renewal of the party and its leadership. It will enable me to focus more directly on work that I am equipped for, which includes numerous theoretical and political issues."

Following his announcement, SEP National Committee members paid tribute to the significant contribution that comrade Beams had made to the ICFI and the struggle for Trotskyism in Australia over many decades.

Born in Britain and raised in Tasmania, Beams was radicalised during the international upsurge of workers and youth that erupted in 1968 and was attracted to the historic struggle waged by the British Trotskyists and the ICFI against Stalinism and Pabloite opportunism. He played a key role in the political battles that led to the establishment of the SLL in April 1972, and its affiliation to the ICFI several months later.

Beams served as editor of *Workers News*, newspaper, in the years between 1974 and 1985. He was elected SLL national secretary in April 1985. Six months later, the political conflict erupted inside the ICFI between the internationalists led by David North and the Workers League in the US, and the national opportunist leadership of the Workers Revolutionary Party in Britain.

Comrade Beams played a significant role in that struggle—internationally and within the Australian section—and in the renaissance of Marxist theory and the fight for proletarian internationalism during the decades that followed.

David North, national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States and chairman of the WSWS International Editorial Board, sent the following greetings to Beams last weekend:

> Dear Nick,
>
> On the occasion of your formal retirement from the post of national secretary, permit me to express the appreciation of your comrades within the United States and throughout the International Committee for the extraordinary work you have done over three decades as the leader of the Australian section.
>
> While the Socialist Labour League, predecessor of the SEP, was established in 1972, it was under your leadership that the Australian section was placed on a solidly Marxist, Trotskyist and, therefore, internationalist programmatic foundation.
>
> Almost exactly 30 years ago, in late October 1985, we met in London in the midst of the crisis of the Workers Revolutionary Party. In

© World Socialist Web Site

that struggle against the WRP leaders' betrayal of Trotskyism, you played an indispensable role.

Within Australia, upon your return from the tumultuous meetings in Britain, you rallied your section in support of the International Committee. In the years that followed, your voluminous political writings and, in particular, lectures on Marxian political economy, have contributed immeasurably to the education of the ICFI's cadre.

Fortunately, you are retiring only from a position. Now that you are freeing yourself from the often onerous burdens of organizational and administrative responsibilities, you will be able to concentrate on the theoretical work that becomes ever more critical with the deepening of the global crisis and the expansion of the class struggle.

And so, Nick, having taken appropriate note of your retirement from the post of national secretary, your international comrades urge you, on this Sunday afternoon (Australian time), to sit back, relax, take time to smell the roses, and, come Monday, GET BACK TO WORK!

David

Last weekend's National Committee endorsed Beams' decision to step down as national secretary and, in particular, his emphasis on the necessity of generational change for the future development of the party. The committee unanimously voted for comrade James Cogan as national secretary.

James Cogan, 45, joined the Trotskyist movement in 1991, motivated by agreement with the ICFI's analysis of Stalinism and opportunism, and opposition to the first US-led war against Iraq and the Hawke-Keating Labor government's attacks on the working class. He moved to Sydney in 1994, where he served as a branch secretary and then as Sydney's area secretary. In 2012, he was elected as the party's assistant national secretary.

Cogan has written extensively for the WSWS on the US-led invasion and occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq, and on Australian participation in these and other imperialist crimes. He has also contributed detailed analyses of Australian involvement in Washington's "pivot to Asia" and the dangers of war against China. As one of four SEP candidates, he will head the party's intervention into the March 28 NSW state elections, standing in the inner-west seat of Summer Hill in opposition to war and austerity, and in defence of democratic rights.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site