

David North lecture tour

More than 100 attend meeting at MIT on anniversary of the Fourth International

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More than 100 students and workers attended a lecture Wednesday evening at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge to mark 80 years of the Fourth International. The MIT Forum invited David North, national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party (US) and chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS), to speak on the topic “The Class Struggle, Socialism, & Revolution in the 21st Century.”

The lecture was part of a tour of a **dozen cities** across the country. They follow a series of lectures around the world organized by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) to celebrate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Fourth International by Leon Trotsky in 1938.

North spoke on the lessons of the 20th century, the attack on Marxism and the fight for socialism today. North stressed the conflict between rationalism and irrationalism and the need to base a socialist movement on the defense of objective truth. These issues take on a particular urgency at MIT, a world center of scientific education and research.

North stressed that the post-modernist approach is pervasive throughout academia and is aimed at undermining any rational, scientific conceptions.

He emphasized the lessons of history, particularly that the struggle against fascism required the revolutionary mobilization of the working class against capitalism, stressing that class was the essential division in society.

“As you know, in science there are no easy answers,” North said, “and that it is very hard to find simple truths. And in politics there are no easy answers. The experiences of the 1930s are once again becoming all

too real. In the 1930s, Trotsky said that popular fronts and fascism are the last political resources of imperialism in the struggle against the proletarian revolution.”

North appealed to students to commit to socialism: “In making such an immensely significant decision to commit yourself to revolutionary politics, you have to study, you have to read, you have to familiarize yourself with the whole history of the Marxist movement, the greatest and most profound movement that has ever existed. Masses of people are trying to find their way to socialism, but they have to learn what it is.”

In the discussion period following the lecture, important questions were raised from the audience, including on the nature of the unions, the history of the Chinese Revolution and the current situation in China. Dozens of students remained after the lecture for informal discussion and left their names to be contacted about forming a chapter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality at MIT.

Brett, in his mid-twenties, majored in music and audio engineering. He came to the meeting to see David North speak and has been following the *World Socialist Web Site* for a few years. Brett said that he felt the most important part of the meeting was North’s critique of post-modernism.

“For me there have been different stages that I have gone through politically, each of which has been shattered through my experience, and through education. The first was liberalism. When I was in high school I attended the rallies against the Iraq War, but I was young and didn’t fully grasp everything at play. I knew that I was against things like war, the Patriot Act,

the militarization of the police force.

“I saw the effects of some of these things even in my home town in New Hampshire, where the police force started to be more and more heavily armed, when the worst thing that ever happens there is a traffic ticket. But those protests ended, and I became disengaged until the Sanders campaign.

“After seeing what the Democratic Party did to his campaign, and then his concession to Clinton, I realized what the Democratic Party really was and everything I thought I knew about politics changed.

“I started reading critical authors such as Chris Hedges, which led me to Marx, Engels, Trotsky and others, which then led to me to the *World Socialist Web Site*. But I was still influenced by post-modernism. That was the next political conception that would be shattered.

“I think tonight’s meeting really solidified my understanding of the WSWS critique of post-modernism. I really agree with what was said tonight, and I am eager to get involved.

“I think the other really critical element is the exposure to internationalism. Understanding the origins of the idea of socialism in one country, for example, is not something you are taught in school. I have found some of the most valuable readings on the WSWS to be the material on the Russian Revolution.”

Nick, a young worker from the South Shore, said, “First of all, this kind of information is definitely needed in this area. What North hit on is that there’s a real trend in official left politics of irrational and identity politics. We desperately need a Marxist analysis and perspective on the dangers of these theories.

“Among my generation, people know there’s something wrong, but this provided a way to fight against so many of these crackpot philosophies. It was explained in the lecture clearly and concisely a condensed history of the 20th century. So many experiences of the 20th century have been made inexplicable by post-modernism.

“This lecture debunked all that. The dangerous philosophy of the pseudo-left gives no historical context, can’t understand the current struggles. If we can’t understand them, we can’t do anything about them.”

Dylan, an MIT student who studies artificial

intelligence, said, “I came to the meeting because there is a growing interest in socialism and I wanted to hear from people in the know. I like David North’s emphasis on history and his idea that society and the divisions within it must be defined by a rational and empirical understanding as opposed to artificial labels of convenience.

“Racism and the oppression of women are real issues, but identities based on race and gender are weaponized. North said that class is the most important issue. I saw a recent political cartoon. It had a Republican saying that 10 people should control all of society’s wealth. The Democrat said, ‘Yes, but five of them should be women.’ “

Enrico, an MIT student from Italy, said, “The lecture was very interesting, and David North did a good job of connecting a historical perspective with the present political situation from Trump to the fake left.

“In Italy, the working class has been betrayed by the heirs of the Stalinist Communist Party. They dismantled the welfare state, implemented horrendous labor ‘reforms,’ and aided the US in its wars. The so-called left did the job that the right could not do. The right wing tried and failed after provoking so much opposition. Then the ‘left’ did the job.

“The US has 60 hydrogen bombs in Italy. How is that acceptable?”

“I am very interested in the history of Trotskyism. There is a rise of nationalism among the so-called left in Europe and the emergence of ‘Red-Brown’ coalitions. The European Union is oppressing workers throughout the continent, but the answer isn’t nationalism. It’s uniting the working class across the national borders in a true socialist movement.”



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