

# Growing interest in socialism at Chicago meeting on 80th anniversary of Fourth International

The IYSSE at University of Illinois at Chicago  
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UPS, FedEx and Ford workers along with students from the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) were among those in attendance for the lecture, “Eighty Years of the Fourth International (1938-2018): The class struggle, revolution, and socialism in the 21st century,” given by David North Monday night at the University of Illinois at Chicago. The meeting was part of an international series which began in Sri Lanka in October.

North, chairman of the International Editorial Board of the *World Socialist Web Site* and the national chairman of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States, emphasized that a revolutionary socialist movement must be based on the study of the immense revolutionary struggles of the twentieth century which led to the Russian Revolution and later to the founding of the Fourth International by Leon Trotsky.

“History and politics are extraordinarily connected. The issues which led to the Fourth International in 1938 remain very much with us,” North said during the meeting.

“Were Trotsky alive today and suddenly he were to walk into this room, it would not be very difficult to describe events today that would be pretty much understandable to him. And not just Trotsky. Your grandparents would understand it. They would understand very well. You could take the average worker, describe what’s happening at work, what’s happening at the factory to them: ‘Oh, they’re screwing you’ they would say.

“They would recognize this world, they would recognize a world of wars, of oppression, as very much the one they were familiar with.”

North went on to say that today masses of people are

dissatisfied and angry at the state of the world and that this “growing dissatisfaction finds its expression in the hunger for an alternative.”

Students and workers spoke to *World Socialist Web Site* reporters after the meeting.

“I’ve been trying to get more politically involved,” Marcel, a student at UIC, told WSWS reporters on why he attended the meeting in Chicago. “Ever since Trump was elected, I took it upon myself to get more aware and to get more involved in the political sphere, whether it’s internationally, nationally or within the city sphere, and especially within the university. I just wanted to put my money where my mouth was and fight for something I believe in.”

Marcel agreed that young people must study the lessons of the revolutionary struggles of the twentieth century to wage a genuine struggle for socialism today: “I think that’s very important. I am of a huge believer that without history, we’re doomed to repeat it. We can clearly see that with the rise of Trump and the return of Nazism in America of all places, where we thought it was some shiny beacon away from fascism. It’s really important especially when talking about socialism to make sure we don’t repeat what Stalin did to the USSR.”

He added, “I’m happy to see socialism is making a comeback, especially in this country. I’m glad to see that the working class is realizing just what kind of a hole we’re in and what we have to do to dig ourselves out of it.”

Another student, born and raised outside of the United States, who wished not to disclose his name, stated he attended the meeting because he identified as a “part of the working class and my family is part of the

working class. I'm here because I'm looking for an alternative and socialism is that alternative that workers need."

Isaac, a UIC student said, "socialism interests me because it benefits the majority of the lower class. Capitalism is not working. I really liked the charts [North] showed of the growth of inequality and how it's been going on for thirty years, starting with Reagan. People like Bezos are getting too wealthy and he's trying to monopolize the industry. He's barely raised the minimum wage for his workers."

He spoke out against the Democrats and Trump's attack on immigrants. "Obama didn't really do much for us. I was very glad [North] brought up the Honduras coup. That's why we have the caravan of refugees traveling here. Trump calling for troops to the border is completely unnecessary."

"I also had no idea of the fascists in Germany," added Isaac, who learned from North about the growth of fascistic, anti-immigrant protests in Germany. "It's mind-boggling that we have this happening today."

"I learned a lot at this lecture," said Matt, a UPS worker. Currently, the Teamsters, who represent tens of thousands of UPS workers, have been working with UPS to enforce sellout contracts against the entire workforce and prevent the outbreak of any genuine struggles. At one point during the lecture, North showed a clip of the Teamsters strike of 1934, led by the Trotskyist movement. "The Teamsters strike in Minneapolis—I didn't know about at all. I think that history should be reintroduced."

Connor, a FedEx worker who also attended the lecture, chimed in about the massive profits made by corporations. "FedEx is making even more in profits than UPS. It's the largest logistics company in the US. They talked about how Donald Trump cut taxes but we didn't get anything. We are still waiting for another 18 months for a standard of living raise. The wealth is not being properly distributed to us."

He added, speaking to the relevance of the lecture to workers like him, "If more people watched lectures like this, and are exposed to information like he presented today, there would be more things happening in the working class."

Matt said he wanted to study the history of the Fourth International: "I think the study of the Trotskyist movement is important. There's that quote that those

don't know their history are doomed to repeat it. History like that is so stifled."

Connor agreed: "These kinds of meetings by the Socialist Equality Party are very important to bring that history to the working class. The grounds for political unrest are there today as he talked about. But revolution is not guaranteed, if history has shown us anything, from Napoleon to Stalin. This is why education is so important to help build a leadership of the working class."



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