

IYSSE (Australia) holds lecture on the fight of Trotskyism against the pseudo-left

Our reporters
2 May 2024

Last Sunday, the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) sponsored a successful lecture, outlining the contemporary relevance of the protracted struggle of the Trotskyist movement against pseudo-left tendencies internationally. The lecture was given by Nick Beams, a longstanding leader of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia) and writer for the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The lecture followed a series of IYSSE campus meetings, which exposed the role of pseudo-left parties in seeking to misdirect opposition to the genocide in Gaza behind appeals to the governments responsible for the mass murder, including the Labor administration in Australia.

The IYSSE explained that this was a component of the broader role of the pseudo-left in seeking to prevent an independent movement of the working class, which has also been expressed in the support extended by these organisations to imperialist wars, such as the US-NATO proxy war against Russia in Ukraine.

In his lecture, Beams delved into these questions more deeply, pointing to the roots of the pseudo-left in tendencies that broke from the Trotskyist movement and rejected the revolutionary role of the working class. The lecture can be viewed in full below.

It was attended by students, young people, workers and retirees at an in-person meeting in Sydney. Youth from cities across Australia tuned in to a livestream, as did several international participants.

After the meeting, WSWs reporters spoke to some of those in attendance.

Mark, an IYSSE member in Brisbane, said Beams' lecture "did a great job of illuminating the link between the genocide in Gaza and the broader push for war by US imperialism in other regions of the world.

"The role of the pseudo-left was discussed with their support for the supposed 'good' side of imperialism, such as sending arms to the Zelensky regime in Ukraine for use against Russia. The lecture exposed the role of the pseudo-left as fundamentally opposed to the aims of the ICFI [International Committee of the Fourth International]. These

are not different groups with the same aims as us, but fundamentally irreconcilable organisations."

Mark said the lecture had an apt title, "The fight of Trotskyism against the pseudo-left." It "pointed to the history of Trotskyism and the ICFI, and the more than a century of the struggle of Marxism against revisionism. Studying that history and learning exactly about what was at stake in each of the splits can really clarify what we are fighting for..."

"The lecture raised the political questions of how the genocide can be ended and it cannot be separated from the growing trend to militarisation. That was highlighted by Joe Biden's bill, sending billions of dollars to Israel, Ukraine and Taiwan, which shows that the ruling class views these wars as three fronts of the same war.

"For the working class to fight this growing world war, it has to oppose it on all fronts, and not pick and choose, and Nick's lecture really emphasised that."

Mark added: "One point Nick made is that the Gaza genocide is not just the result of bad, immoral decisions by individual leaders. That is the line of the pseudo-left, as if it were a matter of voting out one politician and installing another. The genocide in Gaza is a product of capitalism. It cannot be stopped by swapping leaders..."

"Someone asked about joining the 'broader left.' Nick responded by saying there is no broader left. Our aims are totally opposed. A river of blood exists between the ICFI and the Stalinists, as seen in the assassination of Leon Trotsky and the purges of the 1930s when Stalin eliminated the Marxists who had led the Russian Revolution. If push came to shove, they would do the same today."

Beams spoke about "the increasing radicalisation of young people, but that it can go in various directions. He was asked about Aaron Bushnell's self-immolation. There was no doubt that Bushnell was radicalised by what he saw, as a member of the US military, but the tragedy of what happened to him raises the need for a socialist perspective and the danger if the radicalisation is not channelled that way. What Bushnell did was a very radical action. He was

outraged by what he saw. The task of the party is to channel that outrage in a socialist direction.”

There was also “a great discussion about racism and its relation to Marxism. In short, the speakers and other participants in the chat noted that our movement places class as the fundamental divider in society, and that racism is utilised as a tool to advance the interests of the capitalist class. The massacre of Aboriginal people was to clear the land for pastoral grazing. The laws of private property were incompatible with that. Racism was drummed up for that, as it was for the slave trade.

“Modern racism is a product of capitalism and should be fought. We fight for a unified struggle of workers, indigenous and non-indigenous. It was not ‘white’ people, but European capitalism that was brought into the continent of Australia. The answer is not to create divisions between indigenous and non-indigenous but to unify against capitalism.”

Hasina, a student in Melbourne, said: “It’s been a while since I got interested in Marxism, and socialism, and I saw the meeting online and wanted to see what it was about. The way Marxism explains inequality and the capitalist system makes sense to me, and I got that the economic system is really unequal, and it’s getting worse and it’s the cause of many problems in the world.

“Much of the historical analysis was new to me. For example, how Trotskyism got separated from the other socialist and communist movements was interesting. I mentioned that I thought there was less focus on race and gender, and the SEP explained that they are against identity politics. That makes sense to me, and I actually agree that most of this identity politics by the ‘left’ has been worsening the conditions of the people.”

“As the speakers in the meeting mentioned, behind all those wars are big companies that produce everything from arms to food and clothing, that’s one part of it, but the huge part of it is that imperialism has interests in the Middle East and the Orient, and the creation of Israel itself was a colonial intervention. It all goes back to imperialism and capitalism. It has its roots in capitalism and the world economic system now just enhances the conflicts.”

Tom, originally from New Zealand and now employed in the health industry, said the IYSSE meeting on Sunday was “excellent” and “gave me a lot more inspiration because it helped me understand the political crisis and what is happening globally.

“The meeting clearly outlined the drive to war and how the Australian government is not just preparing for this but encouraging it. This is frightening because it puts us all in a very vulnerable position. The meeting also made very obvious what we, as part of the working class, need to do.

This was explained very eloquently and so were the issues related to the pseudo-left.

“Speakers pointed out that not all those claiming to be left are really left-wing at all, which is very important. Of course, there’s a lot more that I need to read and understand, but these groups try to keep us tied to the Labor Party. They talk about equality, but Labor has done very little to ease the cost-of-living crisis and at the same time is backing Israel’s attacks on the Palestinians in Gaza. I remember that some time back, Albanese was giving speeches in parliament saying that he backed Palestine. Now that he’s prime minister he and his government are fully supporting Israel.

“I used to believe that that the [government-funded] ABC was reporting unbiased, fair and used a lot of educated words compared to the basic news services from the Seven, Ten and Nine networks. It provided a bit of analysis in its reports and explained why they were saying the things they did.

“The mainstream media should explain the real reasons for political events, which is what the population needs, but after October 7, I realised that the ABC was just giving us one-sided reports and oriented towards supporting Israel. This made me break away from the ABC and start reading the WWSWS.”

Referring to the anti-Gaza genocide encampment protests at American universities, Tom said: “It’s amazing that students are making their voices heard, but what’s really scary is the police response and the use of violence and brutality to try and silence them. When I first met the SEP about ten years ago, it explained that there were moves towards fascism and extreme-right politics. You now see this in the police attacks on the students.

“I didn’t see it at the time when I met the SEP but it was correct and I’m a bit disappointed in myself for not realising this back then. I could have spent that time learning more about the party’s analysis and fighting what we now have to do.”



To contact the WWSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact