

Workers and young people speak at book launches by David North in Australia

Our reporters

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Over the past week, David North, the chairman of the *World Socialist Web Site* international editorial board and of the Socialist Equality Party in the US, addressed events in Sydney and Melbourne. The meetings were the Australian launch of North's latest publications, *The Logic of Zionism: From Nationalist Myth to the Gaza Genocide* and *Sounding the Alarm: Socialism Against War*.

A report of the meetings and clips from North's remarks can be viewed [here](#).

After the meeting, WSWS reporters spoke to a number of attendees.

Jessica, a young hospitality worker who attended the Sydney meeting, said: "I thought it would be a really good opportunity to hear David North speak and to get more in-depth knowledge around the two books. I've only been affiliated with the IYSSE since July so I'm still getting a grasp on things. I wanted to be more involved.

"What particularly struck me in the discussion on the book launch was the emphasis on the urgency to pave a new way forward for the working class internationally because the alternative is just catastrophe.

"Another thing was the idea put forward by a Stalinist that the past doesn't matter, that we should put history behind us and all who call themselves socialists should let bygones be bygones and all work together. Yes, everyone in the working class should be working towards revolution but the policy and the way that it's done is crucial and history shows that because any straying from the path does lead towards Stalinism, Maoism and the pseudo-lefts as well. Stalinism was the program of socialism in one country, while Trotsky called for the policy of permanent revolution and that is vindicated by our present context of globalised trade. Socialism in one country was like isolating yourself from the global economy and you wouldn't be able to fund all the needs of society, healthcare, education.

"Another thing discussed was the publication saying that Trotskyism is in its twilight, that reform of capitalism was a viable alternative. Well, in my lifetime, I'm 26, I haven't seen any sort of social change that has happened. The environment is getting worse, conflicts and tensions and war is getting worse, wages are not matching increases in inflation whatsoever. When you compare the price of housing to wages, it is comparable to the Great Depression.

"The discussion around *Time* magazine calling Trump the person

of the year was very important. It is shocking but I suppose it also isn't when you look at the direction towards right-wing elements and fascists. It can only be called dystopian. The trajectory that the American government is heading towards is clear. As David North said, in 1938 *Time* had Hitler as the person of the year!

Dominic, a 21-year-old part time worker from Newcastle, made the trip several hours south to the Sydney meeting. He commented: "The future is uncertain and scary, the possibility of a future global conflict, economic instability, these are serious conversations we're going to have as young people, as everyone. There are not going to be easy solutions to these questions. But through meetings such as this I believe we can solve these problems.

"I believe a socialist perspective is needed because the western liberal order is cracked, broken, no one is following the rules. This is exemplified in the Gaza genocide supported by the US and NATO. Every nation is breaking the rules and has some form of hypocrisy."

Asked about the central themes of North's remarks, Dominic said: "If you want to understand why present conflicts are happening you need to understand history, particularly the writings of Trotsky.

"The Stalinists engaged in the revisionism of the history of the Soviet Union, they had to kill Trotsky and demonise his legacy. Trotsky was exiled, but he made many analyses, theses, prompted many discussions. In his literature he predicted the fall of the Soviet Union due to the Stalinist bureaucracy.

"Trotsky warned that Hitler was going to be a threat to the working class, but under Stalin the workers state became complicit in the crimes of Hitler, they shook his hand, they partitioned Poland, annexed Baltic states... the aggressive pragmatism and the level of cynicism to work with Hitler, is what enabled the Nazis.

"Through Trotsky's writings we can understand what went wrong, what were the processes that gave rise to the bureaucracy? We can develop a perspective that isn't East vs West, not identity politics, it is revolutionary theory, the working class struggle. Through this we can understand a new future can be built from the learnings of the past, through the writings of Trotsky."

Shantay, a student, stated: "I thought the meeting was insightful, it got straight to the point, no sugar-coating because this is the reality of the world we live in. I liked that David North brought up critiques of the Trotskyist movement and debunked them. He answered them in a very thorough way."

“I had some questions myself. The possibility of socialism has been on my mind. I understand the effectiveness of socialism, but I’ve been thinking, can we really do it and how we’re going to get there. I liked the way North emphasised that there is an objective and intellectual way to do it, and that history is really important. I also liked that rather than being influenced by identity politics or spiritual politics, class is the main issue.”

In Melbourne, **Tim**, a young worker in event operations, said: “I found the talk very insightful, it’s really important to have figures like David North come to Australia. To be in the same room and hear his ideas on current geopolitical conflicts around the world—it gave me a real boost of confidence to go into the future and help build a socialist movement.

“World War III is already here, meaning that the conditions are set for such a war to arise from the actions of the imperialist powers. It’s just a matter of time. So we as the working class need to organise to halt the momentum that’s currently building in power structures playing out in real time. We need to collectively object to what’s about to happen.

“What stands out to me about Trotskyism is the struggle for a rank-and-file movement in the unions. The way forward for workers is not through the current unions that exist, because they’ve become an extension of the capitalist state.”

Omar attended from Broadmeadows, a working-class suburb of Melbourne. He responded: “I think everyone should listen to these ideas—socialism solves a lot of the issues capitalism has. Many people have a lot of assumptions about socialism that are not true, coming to this meeting gave me a better understanding of what the ideas behind socialism are. I’d like to do a bit more reading about socialism to understand a bit more, especially about economics. But in terms of humanitarian issues and supporting the working class, I’m definitely for all the socialist ideas I’ve heard here today.”

Phil said: “That’s the first I’ve been exposed to any sort of Marxist theory. I feel like I had a lot of questions around why this hasn’t worked previously? It does make sense, and I can see the alternative to capitalism. My father told me capitalism is built to fail—it is built to fail. It’s like a Ponzi scheme, like an upside down pyramid. You describe it as having no stability at the bottom because you keep chopping out people who are supporting the top. So, this makes perfect sense. So then how do you mobilise? I’m going to have to do lots of reading now, I’ll have to get around some of the theory, so I’ve got a better understanding of it.”

James, a longstanding SEP supporter, said: “I’ve seen David North intermittently, every few years, he is a serious intellectual, a serious historian, who has dedicated his life to analysing social forces and is someone who is really worth listening to. Obviously, the analysis here is that the only way forward is through a unification of the working class. I think the important point David made, quoting Trotsky, was that people may react differently to an argument, but they will react the same to a red hot poker—when it gets to that point, I would like to think that I will be on the right side of history.”

Hillary, and her mother **Gloria** attended together. Hillary said: “I have heard David North speak before and because he is so thorough, I wanted to come again today to hear what he had to say

about the contemporary situation. I read the WSWS regularly. I thought the session was very good, it covered a lot of ground, and it shows that he is very well read and very knowledgeable and well considered. It makes you feel like you want to step up and contribute or be involved, makes you think how can I participate. I think he presented the pressing need to do that well. I feel like there is an existential crisis—there are so many things attacking society on so many different levels. It just feels like quicksand, what is going to happen? Where are we going? It’s alarming.”

Gloria, a retired history secondary school teacher, added: “I have never heard David North speak before so this was a new experience for me and I was very fascinated. I listened intently to what David had to say and it was very interesting, very well informed and very clear. I think he handled the question that came from the audience very well too. It was very interesting and informative. If you take a historical perspective and you consider the context of contemporary issues, I think we are living in an extremely dangerous time and I think a lot of people who are leading the world at the moment don’t have sufficient perspective and depth of knowledge to be as wise as they ought to be.”

Daniel, who works as a bartender, said: “I thought the main point of the meeting was the need to step up the fight for socialism against global capitalism. Capitalism is unable to respond to the social crisis it generates. It has to keep an under-class of workers in poverty to maintain its profits.

“I think there is a turn to the extreme right because of huge dissatisfaction among masses of people and they initially turned to the right without another way forward. The capitalists turn to fascism because this will protect their interests. The social movements of workers are frightening them so they need these types of forces.

“In order for capitalist powers like the US to maintain their hegemony, they need to grab resources from around the world. This is leading to wars. It was interesting that North said that World War III has begun, its initial stages are Ukraine, Gaza and Syria.”

Donna, a health care worker in Melbourne, said: “I really liked how David North ended up on a positive note—that was important to me. In order to deal with nationalism, Zionism, and capitalism we need to deal with any pessimistic outlooks, all the doom and gloom that get people down. David also spoke about the dark side of identity politics, and people get so caught up with how they identify, whether it’s by their gender and so on, they forget about the dangers we confront.”

She added: “The working class is the majority in the world and they have power. To me, we always talk about revolution as if it is something exceptional, and it shouldn’t be exceptional, it should be common sense. There are more working-class people than anybody else, and I think the working class are more unified than people realise.”



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