

Letters from international comrades on the death of Dave Hyland

16 December 2013

David Edward Hyland passed away on the night of December 8. He was the leader of the faction of the old Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) of Britain that declared its support for the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) and opposed the attempt of the party's leadership, Gerry Healy, Cliff Slaughter and Mike Banda, to liquidate the Trotskyist movement in Britain and internationally. Following the split of the WRP from the ICFI in 1986, he became national secretary of the British section—a position he held until he retired in 1998 due to ill health. (See: "David Edward Hyland: March 7, 1947—December 8, 2013").

Within hours of Dave's death, letters of condolence began to arrive from all over the world, sent to his wife, Eileen, and his children, Julie, Tony, Claire and Paula, and to Dave's comrades in the Socialist Equality Party of Britain. They testify to the esteem in which Dave Hyland was held by comrades in the UK and internationally. (See: "Letters on the death of Dave Hyland").

Below we publish an initial selection of letters sent by Dave's international comrades.

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Dear Eileen,

Dear Julie, Tony, Paula and Clair,

Dear comrades of the SEP,

We have all lost a great man, friend and comrade.

Dave embodied something that will prove to be of great significance in coming social developments: the self-confidence, assurance and revolutionary élan and determination of the working class.

When I visited him a few weeks ago, it was clear that his illness was far advanced. Nevertheless, his confidence in a socialist future for humanity and in the political strength of our international party remained unbroken.

We talked about the eventful and inspiring days in October 1985, during the split with the WRP, and the importance of his initiative to contact David North. For both of us, the political struggle against the opportunism of the WRP leadership was a kind of political rebirth and the beginning of a close political cooperation and friendship.

We laughed that night when Dave said that he had been an internationalist from the beginning of his political work in the seventies, and had always understood himself to be a member

of a world party. But it was only during the split that he left England for the first time ever, for a trip to Germany, only to spend about a week wandering through half of Europe seeking the city of Essen.

We talked about the difficult years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the great advances we had made in our work to build the International since the founding of the *World Socialist Web Site*. I was surprised to discover how well Dave was informed, despite the ravages of his illness. He was up to date on all the important articles on the WSWS and declared that the world was "pregnant with revolution." He was firmly convinced that the capitalist crisis would lead to major class struggles and that our fight against the reactionary policies of the unions and the fake left would gain more and more support from workers.

I was deeply moved when he—who could not move one step by himself and was confined to a wheelchair for so long—said, "I am very optimistic!"

When we hugged goodbye, we both knew it would be for the last time—a goodbye forever. Although it was hard for us to talk, Dave said quietly, "As for me, I'm prepared for anything that comes now. I feel I have carried out my revolutionary duty to my party and my class."

He was right. When a full history of our movement is written in future, Dave will occupy a prominent place. He played an extremely important role in the critical period during the break with the WRP and in subsequent years. And were it not for his devastating illness, he would be in the forefront today in our struggle to develop socialist consciousness in the working class.

An important pillar of his strength was the love and solidarity of Eileen, who supported him in such an admirable way. Over the past decades, you, my dear Eileen, were not just his partner and companion in life, but also his nurse, emergency doctor, secretary and family manager. Dave loved his family with all his heart and was very proud of them.

We mourn the untimely death of Dave, but he remains alive in our memories and will continue to be a source of inspiration for generations to come.

With my fondest regards,

Uli Rippert, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Germany)

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Dear Eileen, Julie and Tony,

Please accept my deeply felt condolences on the death of comrade Dave. Above all, I want to express my admiration for the strength and courage Eileen has shown in supporting him during the last very difficult years.

Of course, one always hopes that a comrade so resolute and full of energy as Dave would not fall victim to such a malicious disease. What remains as a consolation is that his life, although short, was full of purpose.

He represented the best element within the British working class. At a time when the WRP, which he had joined as a revolutionary Trotskyist party, became dominated by middle class elements mobilizing all sorts of subjective resentments and grievances in order to destroy it, he remained loyal to his principles and turned to the International Committee. In doing so, he was preserving the continuity of Trotskyism in Britain. It was during this time that I got to know him, and he will always be remembered for this.

You have all my sympathy on the deep personal loss you have suffered. I hope that I will soon have a chance to convey this personally to you.

Peter Schwarz, National Committee member of the Socialist Equality Party (Germany)

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Dear Julie,

We of the Socialist Equality Party of Sri Lanka are deeply saddened by the demise of Comrade Dave Hyland.

We were aware that he was unwell for some time, but even then, our hope was that he would live longer to continue his valuable political contribution to the advancement of the world Trotskyist movement to which he dedicated himself. Apart from the articles he wrote from his sickbed, we have heard of his courageous presence and contribution at the founding congress of the SEP (UK) that inspired the whole movement.

It also reminded us of the commitment and determination he expressed in taking the side of the ICFI majority in 1985-86 in the fight led by Comrade David North and the Workers League against the national opportunists of the WRP, and to found the ICP (International Communist Party) to defend the programme of socialist internationalism.

His memory will always remain in our movement.

With deepest sympathies to the family members of Dave and the members of the SEP (UK),

Wije Dias, general secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Sri Lanka)

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Dear Comrade Chris,

On behalf of the SEP (Australia) National Committee and all SEP members, I extend my deepest condolences to the family and comrades of Comrade Dave Hyland on his passing.

In the split with the Workers Revolutionary Party national opportunists in 1985-86, Comrade Hyland played an indispensable role in the victorious fight for the programme of

the International Committee of the Fourth International.

In the midst of the great confusion and disorientation created by the opportunist politics of the WRP leadership over many years, he made an imperishable contribution to the fight for Trotskyism in the British and international working class.

I know from my own personal experience of the struggle at that time that he stood like a rock in defence of the principles of our movement.

In his later years, comrade Hyland confronted the illness which eventually took his life with the same tenacity and courage, doing everything he could in his power to advance the great cause for which we all fight.

He has made his mark in history as one of the finest representatives of the British working class and of our international movement.

Comrade Dave has gone and we shall miss him. But he has helped to lay a foundation for those to come. He will live on in our memory.

Warmest revolutionary regards,

Nick Beams, national secretary of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia)

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Dearest Julie,

I send to you, and all your family, my deepest condolences on the death of your dear father, Dave, and on the loss of one of the finest representatives of the British and international working class.

I know very well the sense of shock and grief that you will be feeling now, even as you recognise that continuing to live had become impossible for Dave. I too find it hard to assimilate that this indomitable fighter for Trotskyist principles and for the socialist future of all mankind is no more. He will be remembered not only by his family, comrades and friends, but by future generations of the working class for the courageous and critical role he played in defence of internationalism, when the very future of the IC was at stake.

I salute his memory.

With deep affection,

Linda Tenenbaum, National Committee member of the Socialist Equality Party (Australia)



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