

Further condolences on the death of Dave Hyland

20 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” and “More letters from international comrades on the death of Dave Hyland”).

Below we publish a third selection of letters sent by Dave's comrades.

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Dear Julie, Eileen and the Hyland family:

Nancy and I would like to express our sincere condolences to you on the death of our friend and comrade Dave Hyland. Although we knew that Dave's illness was terminal, one could never discount his dogged sheer will when he pushed them back more than once.

Dave was, without question, a wonderful and unusual man. He had wit and charm, tenaciously determined and principled, a man of remarkable gifts as an organizer and not afraid to take on his adversaries when he thought he was right. He was, in my opinion, one of the finest representatives of the British working class in the Trotskyist movement.

I met Dave for the first time in September 1985, after Banda brought David North and I to your home for a meeting of miners. Banda had called David North and said, “It was time to renew the alliance,” a backhanded

acknowledgment that he had betrayed his earlier agreement to oppose Healy's retreat.

While I was there, your Dave challenged Banda, who then gave your father a copy of David North's critique of Healy. Banda said, “Read this. It explains what has happened in the WRP.”

After he read the documents and called to arrange to say he wanted to speak to David North, we knew this was big. It was a turning point in the struggle against the betrayal of the principles of our movement by Healy, Banda and Slaughter. I was with David North when he received word of the call. We sensed that the isolation of the IC from the party had come to an end, and that the difficult struggles in 1982 and 1984, when the American section agreed to avoid a split by not pressing our differences, were correct.

Well, as we all know, after the discussion Dave gave everything he had in the fight against the national opportunism of the WRP leadership. This struggle was decisive not only in England but internationally.

It is one thing to be a leader of workers in the party. It is quite a different challenge to become a Marxist leader of a national section in the fight for internationalism against those you had respected and who had enormous resources. Dave took the high road, the one that is the most difficult to take. Fairly quickly it was shown that principles were more powerful than the massive resources of the WRP.

I'm proud to have known Dave as a friend, fighter and comrade. He will always have an honored place in the history of our movement and our lives.

With warm regards,

Larry Porter

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Dear Julie,

Please accept my condolences on the death of your father and our comrade, Dave Hyland, and extend my deepest sympathies to Eileen and the rest of the Hyland family.

Like so many others in the International Committee of the Fourth International, I first heard the name Dave Hyland during the fall of 1985. It was a tumultuous introduction: One that gave the measure of the man—as a political figure

for whom principles were paramount, but also as a courageous, self-sacrificing, and intellectually inquisitive personality. In the struggle against the WRP renegades, Dave emerged as a true internationalist and fighter for Trotskyism—as the leader of a revolutionary proletarian tendency.

His contribution to the defeat of the national-opportunists of the WRP—a victory which resulted in the Trotskyists reasserting control over the International Committee of the Fourth International and laying the basis, thereby, for the renaissance of Marxism that resulted in the founding of the World Socialist Web Site and the SEPs—was immense.

That Dave, despite debilitating illness, fought in the last years of his life to make a significant contribution to the work of the WSWS and the British SEP was both gratifying and a huge inspiration.

I last met Dave at the first national convention of the British SEP in November 2012. Although confined to a wheelchair and in need of constant medical attention, he was as ever indomitable, combining warmth and humour with a fierce determination to clear the road for the revolutionary mobilization of the working class by freeing it from the political-ideological influence of the bourgeoisie, and especially the petty bourgeois pseudo-left.

It was a great honor to be Dave's political collaborator and comrade.

Revolutionary Greetings,

Keith Jones

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Dear Julie,

I am sending deepest condolence to you and your family on the death of Dave Hyland. He was a very courageous leader who led the faction supporting the international committee against the WRP central leadership in 1985.

Unfortunately, I never met him. But any day I could not forget his courageous political contribution done for the world Trotskyist movement.

We all knew he was in a critical health situation, but it was very sad to recognise that our principled comrade was no more. I know that you will be feeling shock and grief.

But coming generations will never forget his principled fight.

My warmest regards to you and your family.

Vilani Peiris

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I just learned about the sad news of comrade Dave's death and would like to express my deepest sympathy to all of you, your family and all the members of the British section of the ICFI in relation to this great loss.

All comrades in the German section will never forget the absolutely important and decisive role comrade Dave played

during the split with the WRP in 1985-86 and the following years, when we struggled to defend and reconquer the perspectives and heritage of the Fourth International based on the preparatory political and theoretical struggle by Comrade Dave North and the Workers League.

The years from 1985-86 on have been the most politically fruitful for our international movement and the close political collaboration internationally and between our two sections has been absolutely decisive to clarify and overcome political problems from the past, as well as those arising from the challenges of today.

I was very happy to meet comrades Dave and Eileen again at your founding conference in autumn 2010, where Dave made a very powerful contribution, as well again in 2012, and also to read with great interest the contributions he made to the World Socialist Web Site.

When I had a chance to talk to Dave on the telephone three and a half weeks ago, he expressed his strong confidence—as well as in his letter to Bettina—that he has made, through his life and his political struggle, a very important contribution to the struggle for the world socialist revolution and the liberation of mankind. And this is absolutely correct!

Warmest regards also from all comrades in the Ruhr region.

Elli Zimmermann

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Dear Julie and Tony,

Please accept our deepest condolences for the loss of your dad, Dave Hyland. We had the privilege of knowing him.

He was, as all the tributes have said, an inspiring and noble man, imbued with the principles of the Trotskyist movement. His courageous defence of those principles in the 1985-86 split against the Healy, Banda and Slaughter renegades, and his forthright response in leading the fight to build the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International made an imperishable contribution.

You must be extremely proud of the messages coming in from all over the world, including from new comrades who never had the chance to meet him, but who have become well acquainted with his role through the documents of the split, as well as Dave's always piercing articles on the World Socialist Web Site.

Warmest regards and best wishes to you, Eileen and your family.

Mike Head and Mary Kerr



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