

Condolences on the death of Dave Hyland from Australia and the US

24 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. The letters testify to the esteem in which Dave Hyland was held by comrades in the UK and internationally.

Below, we publish two of the more extensive condolences sent by comrades from Australia and the United States.

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Dear Julie, Tony and their families,

I was both shocked and deeply saddened to hear of the death of your Dad. I, of course, knew of his severe rheumatoid arthritis, from which he had suffered over many years, but one always assumed that he would be with us for a long time to come.

Comrades who participated in your founding Congress in 2010 all speak of this historic event with tremendous feeling and respect. For comrades who lived through the 1985-1986 split, one sensed before the Congress was even held that it was destined to be an extraordinarily powerful and historic event. Your dad, of course, knew this more than anyone else.

When it was reported back to the membership here in Australia about your dad's determination to attend, and then his own contribution to the Congress, we were all greatly moved.

Comrade Dave's decision to ring comrade David North in October 1985 and then align himself with the IC against the nationalist opportunists Healy, Banda and Slaughter is one

of the most important decisions ever made in the history of the Fourth International. In making that decision, he preserved the continuity of the Trotskyist movement in Britain against all those who had fought to liquidate it.

He was such a courageous, determined and principled man, representing the very best of the British working class, who had dedicated his life to the cause of socialism. The IC is truly indebted to his fight.

I have two memories of Dave that are probably not so significant, but provide a tiny glimpse of his character and determination.

In the late 1980s, Dave visited Melbourne and spoke at a well-attended public meeting. I remember Dave wore a grey suit, a nice white shirt and a black tie. I must say he didn't look all that comfortable.

As the meeting went along, Dave first removed the jacket, then the tie was loosened and taken off, and then sleeves were rolled up as he became totally absorbed in the discussion, passionately explaining the internationalist program of the party. That meeting was attended by quite a few workers who were extremely impressed by Dave's energetic presentation and still remember his contribution today. One of them rang me this week, extremely distressed after reading his obituary on the wsws.org.

The other experience is when I participated in the 1997 general election in which Blair was elected. Before driving up to Scotland, I met Dave briefly in the Sheffield office. There was, of course, the friendly welcome and his wonderful sense of humor. I remember seeing him sitting at the keyboard of a computer, and I was stunned to see how crippled and distorted his hands were from arthritis. How he was managing to write under such difficult and painful conditions was quite amazing.

I have never had the opportunity to meet your Mum Eileen, but please pass on my deepest sympathy to her. For Dave to pursue the struggle of the party with such dedication and under such difficult conditions during the split and the decades that followed is a testimony to her love of Dave and loyalty to the party. To support him during never-ending pressures requires a truly dedicated and committed partner. I

cannot imagine how difficult it must be for her to lose her life-long partner when they are both relatively young.

While Dave is no longer with us, his heritage is. Not only is his struggle now deeply embedded in the history of the party, but he has left behind you both, two cadre who represent such significant figures in our international party.

When both of you contribute to the wsws.org and speak at party meetings, you speak with so much authority, theoretical clarity and in the spirit of your dear father and comrade.

My thoughts and deepest sympathy are with you, your families and all the comrades in Britain.

Kindest Regards,

Sue P

Melbourne Branch

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Having met Dave Hyland nearly 30 years ago and closely followed the work of the British section all these years, it is with deep sadness that we mourn the loss of this comrade. He was immensely human and had the deepest integrity and commitment to the international working class and its party, the ICFI.

In the moment when each of us was grappling with the implications of the split with the WRP, its decisive character and our role within the movement, I heard him speak at the Workers League summer school following the split.

In general, Dave spoke of the revolution within our own movement, with a majority of the members having been won to the Trotskyist position of the ICFI. It was not until years later that I understood that a life-and-death struggle was being waged by the party leadership that summer around the world to win the hearts and minds of every cadre to Trotskyism, against those who sought to liquidate our movement.

And in particular, to win those of us who had been recently won to a world party—months or years prior to the split—believing it to be committed to ending capitalism and carrying out the material and spiritual liberation of humanity in a revolutionary struggle led by the working class and armed politically with an understanding of history and an optimistic vision of the future that only Marxism can provide.

I listened to Dave Hyland's passionate explanation of the political importance of the 1984-1985 British miners' strike for the international working class and its betrayal by the opportunist Healy, Banda, Slaughter clique. I came to know that an opposition within the British section had emerged, had been steadfast, and was later clarified and strengthened by documents written by David North in 1982. These documents were based on the priceless lessons of the struggle for Trotskyist principles that had been led by the

very same leadership that later surrendered and bowed shamelessly to the pressures of British and world imperialism.

He articulated from the depths of his being the aspirations of the international working class. I will speak for myself and say that I no longer asked myself, "How could this happen?" Rather, I began to understand the nature of class warfare, its language, its combatants, its casualties, its victories, and, above all else, the definitive character of our party.

We were not given guarantees at that summer school. In politics, promissory notes may as well be Trojan Horses. Far more critically, we were given a party with a history and program that had weathered crushing defeats, seen the victory of the first workers state, the horrors of wars, persecutions, the Holocaust, and many attempts to liquidate the human capital bearing the mantle of Marxism.

The victory of the first workers state is what resonated in the words Dave Hyland spoke that day. Workers, we were told, were prepared to die in the fight against the Thatcher regime despite the betrayal of the National Union of Mineworkers leadership of the strike and the WRP leadership's criminal complicity in that betrayal.

So convinced were we in these future struggles and our commitment to the party that would lead them, the ICFI, that Dave Hyland received a standing ovation. It spoke volumes about the principled revolutionary fighter that he was, despite the horrific blows levelled against him politically by the WRP leadership in the years leading up to the split, and the personal tragedies that later befell him.

I offer my deepest condolences to Dave's wife Eileen and their children, Julie, Tony, Claire, Paula and his entire family as we lay this self-sacrificing and venerable comrade gently to rest.

Phyllis



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