

# Dr. Coley P. O'Doherty

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It is with great sadness that the *World Socialist Web Site* reports the recent death of Coley P. O'Doherty, a member of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) for over a decade.

Comrade Coley, 46, died on May 29 in Omaha, Nebraska after courageously fighting a more than two-year battle against colon cancer, which included undergoing various rounds of chemotherapy treatment.

He is survived by his wife Laura, two young children Gabriel and Rhiannon, his parents Michael and Nancy O'Doherty, his oldest sister Shannon, a younger brother and sister, Jerry and Colleen, and numerous nieces, nephews and a large extended family.

Coley joined the Socialist Equality Party in 2005 and remained loyal to the fight for socialist principles until his death.

He first came into contact with the SEP by reading the *World Socialist Web Site* in 1998. Coley was always very sympathetic to the plight of the oppressed masses internationally, and he strongly identified with the struggles of the working class and the fight for social equality.

In 2003 and again in 2004, Coley attended two major international conferences organized by the *World Socialist Web Site* and SEP to oppose the intervention led by US imperialism to carry out war in Afghanistan and Iraq, countries that have since been devastated by endless military interventions.

It was shortly following those conferences that Coley made a decision to join the SEP and dedicate himself to the building of an international Trotskyist movement. Even though he was a young medical resident in Detroit at the time with one small child, Coley studied the history of the international socialist movement and worked actively to win workers and youth to the program of the SEP before moving back to Omaha. In

2008, Coley attended the founding congress of the SEP.

In Omaha, Coley served as an internist at Alegacy Creighton Bergen Mercy Medical Center. His death was noted in several web sites, including the *Omaha World Herald*, which wrote: "Coley O'Doherty, a doctor for many years in the metro area, is remembered by his family as an intelligent man with a 'wicked sense of humor' who loved to help people, patients and family alike."

Originally from Omaha, Nebraska, Coley completed his medical training at A.T. Still University of Health Sciences in Kirksville, Missouri, the founding school of osteopathic medicine.

Coley was deeply opposed to the profit motive in the American health care system and fought for health care as a social right. As a doctor, he understood first hand that many health care problems are rooted in social inequality, something that has been clearly borne out in recent statistics on the class differences in longevity throughout the United States.

Coley grew up in Omaha, located in the Great Plains and Midwestern United States, the scene of militant class battles going back to the strike of rail workers in 1877. Coley's father Michael retired from Union Pacific Railroad. He was a leader in the union and told the family many stories of the class battles waged by railroad workers and other sections of workers to secure basic rights.

"Between Coley and my dad," Coley's younger sister Colleen told the WWS, "they got me interested in working class issues, and Coley was like a natural at explaining things. Being a member of the SEP and watching it grow meant the world to Coley. He thrived from this political connection and patiently answered any question that I had."

Before joining the SEP, Coley had actively supported

many working class struggles, including those of autoworkers in Detroit. Through his study of the historic experiences of the 20th century, he came to see the need to build a revolutionary party to fight for socialist consciousness and to break workers from a trade unionist outlook, which subordinates them to the capitalist system.

Coley's main political activity was in the city of Detroit, where he worked closely with Comrade Eddie Benjamin before he died in 2009. They held many discussions on the struggle to unite black, white and immigrant workers in the fight against racism and all forms of discrimination. Coley would review the way in which racism was used as a tool in the early struggles of the working class in Omaha as workers were fighting to build industrial unions.

Shortly before he died, Coley expressed excitement that the SEP would run Jerry White for president and Niles Niemuth for vice president to fight for a genuine socialist perspective in opposition to Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders and all those who try to keep the working class tied to the Democratic Party and capitalist politics.

Even when he was deeply ill, Coley took an interest in winning a new section of workers and young people to the perspective of international socialism. An avid reader and supporter of the *World Socialist Web Site*, Coley wrote scores of comments on articles right up to three months before his death.

In one of his last, a comment on the article, "Trump backed by fascists, quotes Mussolini," Coley pointed to Trotsky's analysis of the rise of German fascism in the 1930s, which was facilitated by the betrayals of Stalinism and Social Democracy.

Pointing to the tasks of Marxists in the present situation, Coley wrote: "It's vital to 'patiently explain' as Lenin described our approach to the working class and raise both their understanding of the crisis and their fighting spirits." He added, "Trotsky's opening remarks in the founding documents of the 4th International are still our most pressing task: 'The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of leadership of the proletariat.'"

The WSWS and SEP extend their deepest condolences to the family of Coley, who was compassionate, a man of many cultural interests and a

courageous fighter for the working class to the end.



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