

“We feel deeply indebted to Comrade Helen and the political fight she waged for over 50 years to build the ICFI”

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We are publishing here the tribute to Helen Halyard written by Tony and Tania Hyland, long-time members of the British Trotskyist movement. Helen, a leading member of the American and international Trotskyist movement for more than 50 years, died suddenly on November 28 at the age of 73.

To comrade Dave and members of the Socialist Equality Party (US),

We are deeply saddened by the passing of Comrade Helen, a politically inspiring leader who dedicated her life to the principled fight for Trotskyism and the cause of international socialism in the working class.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family and comrades in the US, who will be feeling the shock and grief we all share, but even more acutely.

As your appreciation explains, the priceless attributes of her character were intrinsic to the politics she devoted a conscious struggle to take forward—integrity, kindness, an all-round empathy and a warm sense of humour. They helped shape the culture of the Party and the calibre of its cadre.

You know that having met and worked with Comrade Helen, you had been fortunate and your life and world outlook had been enriched and strengthened. It is a terrible loss of a comrade who clearly had so much more to contribute, but she leaves behind a tremendous political legacy.

Helen was a tenacious political fighter and moving, thoughtful and compelling speaker. It was clear from our own discussions with her that she was the best of a generation to come out of the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam War movement who were won to Trotskyism.

This was based on a deeply rooted conviction that the fight against capitalism and imperialism meant a

rejection of all forms of nationally based radical politics and race over class, in the struggle to imbue the international working class with an understanding of its world historical role. The Workers Revolutionary Party in its opportunist degeneration had denigrated this principled type of fight to build the Party in favour of short cuts and a recrudescence of Pabloism, reneging on the fight for the political independence of the working class.

The work with Helen and other leading comrades in the Workers League was a real political re-education in an orientation to the working class based on the foundational principles of the ICFI.

We were also inspired by her recounting of the earlier experiences in the fight waged by the Workers League during the union-busting operations of the Reagan administration against PATCO, Hormel and other major class battles. The fight against the sabotage of these struggles by the union bureaucracy and its subordination to the Democratic Party was the forerunner to the work now conducted by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees. The resurgence of the class struggle internationally is bringing the working class into direct conflict with the nationally-based labour bureaucracies, with the Party taking on a leading role and fighting to shape mass consciousness in a socialist direction.

It was this partisan and unflinching fight to educate and raise the level of the working class and cadre in a historically grounded international perspective that Helen embodied and that shone through in all her political work.

We would add that Helen also understood that the emancipation of the working class required a broader

understanding of a wider range of cultural questions and the defence of all past achievements by humanity that are under threat by capitalist decay and reaction. She had a keen interest in a broad range of music, theatre and literature, and encouraged that engagement among all the cadre.

We feel deeply indebted to Comrade Helen and the political fight she waged for over 50 years to build the ICFI. She has been a great example to us all and leaves behind a political inheritance to the next generation that we will fight to take forward.

Fraternally,
Tony and Tania



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