

Letters on the death of Dave Hyland

14 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) 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. They testify to the esteem in which he was held by comrades internationally.

Below we publish some of the letters sent by Dave's comrades in the UK.

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My dear Eileen,

I have only just received the news that Comrade Dave died last night. Please accept my deepest sympathy and condolences at this sad time.

I know that you, Dave and the whole family have known for some time that he only had a short time to live, something which he faced with tremendous courage. But I think that nothing could prepare you for the terrible realisation that someone you have loved and cared for, for such a long time, has ceased to live, breathe and think.

What is remarkable to me is that he continued to fight for the cause of Trotskyism to the very end. It is only a couple of weeks since John and I came to see him. I really appreciated the time we spent together. He used every opportunity during that conversation to stress the importance of the history of our movement and the necessity to train the new layers of the working class that are coming forward, and will come in much greater numbers, in the lessons of the struggle of the Fourth International. He was determined to use every available moment as productively as possible, and he certainly did.

It seems to me that Dave died at a time of his own choosing. He decided not to have further surgery, even though that was an option, because he was aware that this would place an even greater burden on you and the rest of his family.

Dave devoted the whole of his adult life to the struggle for the emancipation of the working class and, as we all know,

played a crucial role in the struggle against the WRP renegades. He will have an honoured place in the history of our movement.

With warmest regards to you and your family,

Barbara Slaughter

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Dear Eileen,

I was extremely saddened to hear of Dave's passing away. My thoughts have been with you ever since.

Dave was unique and embodied within him the very best that exists in the British and International working class--a spirit and sensitivity which was rooted in a profound understanding of the struggles and conditions of the workers and oppressed and how to change them.

He fought to the bitter end, and this would not have been possible without the love and care you unconditionally gave day in day out. You have played a big part in this throughout his life.

A willingness to fight against all odds, to speak the truth and state things as they really are, is the Dave we will remember.

Above all, Dave will be remembered for the heroic struggle he took up against Healy, Banda and Slaughter alongside the IC, and the insistence for the historical perspective of the ICFI.

I must say, it was daunting at times having Dave in the branch, but I really appreciated his political collaboration and contribution and admired his resolve to write as much as he did under very difficult circumstances.

I know things must be very painful and numb at present. This will only ease with the passing of time.

Dave's unstinting resolve lives on in you as it does in Julie, Tony, Clare and Paula.

My warmest regards to you and your family

Colleen

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Dear Eileen and family,

Please accept my condolences on Dave's death.

I was saddened to hear the news--he sounded so full of energy and determination when I spoke to him a couple of weeks ago.

We all feel full of pride and gratitude that Dave came forward in the 1980s and gave such a strong lead in response to the IC's call for a return to the internationalist principles of the Trotskyist movement and a break with the nationalist degeneration of the WRP.

Most of us got to know Dave through the process of establishing the WRP (I) and then the ICP.

I believe Dave had some of the great qualities that Healy had when he was a Marxist--he was full of determination that the party should rise to the tasks set for it by history.

I also believe that Dave was rightfully proud of the gains we made on the basis of the solid foundations laid when he was national secretary.

The cadres in Britain are what they are today in no small measure due to the leadership given by Dave in a period of enormous confusion--caused first by the renegacy of the WRP leaders and then by the dissolution of the USSR. In that sense, a bit of Dave lives on in all of us.

With deepest sympathy,

Tony J

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Dear Eileen, Julie, Tony, Claire, Paula and family,

Please accept my most sincere condolences. It is with immense sadness that I hear that Dave has passed away.

Although we were all expecting something like this happening, he was such a great fighter and had so many successful fights during his life that you always hoped he would win in the end. But I felt he knew he wouldn't win this one the last time I spoke to him on the phone a few days ago. And yet, he never lost his optimism and political commitment, as he was telling me about the book review he was writing and discussing the political situation. He has carried his unbelievable burden with courage, stoicism and dignity to the last moment. One small consolation is that he has stopped suffering.

We are all proud of his role in the party, and particularly his leadership in the fight against the WRP renegades and his revolutionary determination that they would not destroy the section of the ICFI in Britain. He will live forever in the history of the Marxist movement and will remain an example for future generations of fighters for socialism.

With love and sympathy

Vicky

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Dear Eileen,

It has taken some time to come to terms with the news of Dave's passing.

Condolences to you and your family at this very painful time.

In all the sadness--when we lose one of our own--surely there is no greater measure of the time and space we have taken up in the world than the love and care we have for our family, the contribution we have made to liberating the working class, in putting an end to the suffering, and in striving to place the highest achievements in science and culture at the service of humanity.

For those workers who become conscious, this is often under the most difficult conditions--and always means sacrifice and struggle.

Chris' tribute to Dave and his life is moving and inspiring. Dave's leadership at one of the most important times in my life, and that of many other people, is as fresh in my mind today (and clearer) as ever.

With all due respect to Dave, to you and yours, Eileen.

Kath

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Dear Eileen,

I am sorry to hear of Dave's death last night.

Others will speak of his vital and enduring role during the split with the WRP and the founding of the ICP.

But my enduring memory of Dave is from 1978, when I acted as his election agent in the Wealdstone election shortly after I joined the WRP. I looked on in awe at this vigorous and respected Kodak workers' leader speaking in his firm but engaging manner at public meetings and on the high streets.

I can't imagine how Dave felt after leading such a full and inspiring life, to find himself so disabled in his later years. But when I last met him he still retained his optimism and pride in the expanding influence of the *World Socialist Web Site* and his determination to keep writing for it.

At the moment, only a few know who Dave was and what he did, but in the future millions will come to know his role in the history of the Marxist movement.

All my best to you, Julie, Tony and your family.

Paul S

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Eileen and all connected to Dave,

Mark and I were saddened to hear the news of Dave's passing yesterday and wanted to let you know that you're in our thoughts at this very sad time.

Although we only met Dave once or twice, his contribution to the history of the SEP UK speaks volumes of his principles--the lifetime's commitment that he made to the SEP will always be remembered by new and old members.

We are proud to have met Dave, and his legacy lives on strong within the party, not only through Julie and Tony, but in all of the members who learn of the foundations of the SEP UK and come to understand the brave and principled position taken by Dave. We hope you find some comfort at this very difficult time.

Love to you all and warm regards,

Kelly and Mark

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Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>