

Messages condolences and memories of Bill

Greg Dropkin	Anne & Harry Rothman	Babs Hennessy
Rob Davies	Greg Quiery	John Davies and Alison Down
Anna Hunt	Jim Smith	James Quinn
Ken Loach	Terry and all the Abbott Family	Eddie and Gale Roberts
Pat Ayers	Sean Matgamna	Cliff Slaughter
Marg McAdam	Derek Mortimer - Australia	Elizabeth - Argentina
Joao - Brazil	Polaco - Brazil	Cecilia - Brazil
Rose – Brazil	Alicia Sagra - Buenos Aires, Argentina	Cilinha
Jan Talpe – Belgium	Phil Sandford - Australia	Gabriel Massa - Argentina
Simon Pirani	Mike Dooley	Paul Cosgrove
Stuart Carter	David Esterson	Steve Zelter
Des McConaghy	Steve Ballard	Gerry & Marina
Hussein Al-alak	International Workers League	Wilson Honario da Silva - Brazil
Martin Ralph	Workers International	

Greg Dropkin, I first encountered Bill in the Mountford Hall shortly after moving back to Liverpool. It was a public meeting in response to the US invasion of Grenada in Oct 1983. One of the speakers was from the African National Congress. When the meeting opened to contributions from the floor, Bill stood up. I'd never seen or heard of him. I don't think he mentioned Grenada. Like a greying bolt of lightning, Bill tore into the ANC and the South African Communist Party for their conspiracy of silence over the emerging independent trade union movement in South Africa. I don't know what the audience made of it, but Bill was very well informed on a topic close to my heart. Steve White told me “that's Bill Hunter”.

We met again in 1984 with the Liverpool 8 Miners Support Group. Celia says it actually began life as the Dingle Miners Support Group, which she and Bill took into L8 against the opposition of some who feared to turn up in Granby on that basis. The response from L8 was stunning, political and financial and beans. In the summer we were collecting in town with some Notts NUM miners. Bill went over to one of the miners who was standing at the side and asked him why he was not joining in. “No, I'm just here to give the speeches at union meetings.” Bill grabbed him by the collar, shook him and told the man “I'm not doing this for you pal. I'm doing it for my class.” The other Notts men fell about and couldn't stop telling each other “he's doing it for his class”.

We argued bitterly over the demand “the TUC must call a general strike”. I thought it was obvious they wouldn't, so the demand was a diversion from the problem of organising solidarity strikes, from below.

I saw how Bill was genuinely interested in anyone who crossed his path, as long as they were part of the fight. He was not trying to recruit them, he was engaging in a sustained discussion and actually wanted to know what they thought, and then to persuade them of his views. To be fair, most of our talks came after the WRP exploded, but I think this was deep in Bill's nature.

He was always learning, and the title of his autobiography "A Lifelong Apprenticeship" reflected that. At a meeting in Manchester, he shared a platform with Alan Thornett, who pointed out that the degeneration of the WRP had been clear much earlier, and that if Bill had supported him over the lack of internal party democracy in the 1970s, things might have been different. Bill said something along the lines of "you're right" and regretted his failure. I do not know if Bill ever questioned the early history of the Russian Revolution. Simon Pirani's book came too late, but there were plenty of clues earlier – Victor Serge for one. But I think Bill didn't go there and we didn't discuss it.

After Rae's death, there was a memorial in the Trade Union Centre. It was a non-sectarian, non party event. Eddie Roberts spoke warmly of Rae. Afterwards, we went downstairs to the bar, the Flying Picket. We sat quietly, talking and remembering. Then the barman John Cooke came over to throw John Owens out. He'd been barred for life after picketing the visit of Neil Kinnock to the Trade Union Centre, amongst other things. John Owens refused to leave. Cooke called the police, who turned up begging anyone to tell them what this was all about. Bill was holding back the tears. Cooke was a Stalinist, but this was way beyond a political argument. It was outrageous. But in the end, Bill smiled. "We gave her a proper send off".

Bill had huge knowledge of labour history and had written the wonderful little book "They Knew Why They Fought", about the blue union on the docks in the 1950s, mainly in Liverpool. This was the anarcho-syndicalist history and context for the fights in 1989 and 1995. In the midst of the Iraq war in 2003, the Merseyside Fire Brigades Union wanted an article on strikes during wartime. Bill pulled 4 books off his shelf and showed me the newspaper of the 8th Army, produced in 1943 when they were under pressure to call on workers back home to end their strike wave. The 8th Army headline said it all: "The Right to Strike is one of the freedoms we fight for".

And now, the Tories are preparing to effectively outlaw strikes across the public sector – health, education, fire, and rail services – with the requirement, unachievable in many sectors, of 50% turnout and 40% of all those eligible to vote actually voting for industrial action in order for it to be legal. They have their Trade Union Bill. We have ours.

Anne & Harry Rothman, Anne & I were sorry to hear of Bill's death. He had a long life and influenced many, including us; though we parted company politically 40 years ago we always remembered him fondly - for he was a very decent man. Unfortunately because of a prior engagement we will not be able to travel to the funeral. With fond wishes,

Babs Hennessy, On behalf of Liverpool UNISON (Local Government) Branch, we were deeply saddened to hear about Bill Hunter. Bill was a dedicated fighter for his class, his commitment to the principles of solidarity and justice were an inspiration. Bill's books celebrated other class fighters and educated new generations of socialists. And as for Bill's work in bringing Edward Rushton to the fore – wow, without Bill's efforts Edward Rushton would have been a forgotten hero. We will celebrate Bill's memory with gratitude.

Branch Secretary, Liverpool UNISON (Local Government)

Rob Davies, I first met Bill Hunter in Newcastle upon Tyne in 1962. He was selling the Newsletter at a CND demonstration. It was just after he had recovered from his terrible car accident. In the following two years I spent a lot of time with him as we were both involved in the Socialist Labour League. In fact, I can remember seeing you and your brother on at least one occasion. All though Bill and I did not always agree on many things I learned such a lot from him which prepared me to be a convenor in the car industry. A great man of integrity and determination, his wisdom and humour are still in my mind.

Greg Quiery, I was very sorry to hear about your dad. I am also sorry I will not be in Liverpool for the ceremony, but my thoughts will be with you on the day. I have seen the message you have circulated and will be making a contribution. I don't think I ever met him, but I am one of the very large number of people who have read and enjoyed his terrific book on Rushton. I have always admired the whole project: his initial interest in Rushton, his understanding of Rushton's importance and his centrality in the events at the time - not just locally but nationally and beyond - the research involved and the completion and finishing of the book - not easy to do as anyone who has ever tried can testify. To initiate and carry out such original discovery and research is a remarkable thing in itself, which only very few can ever claim to have done. A great achievement, which has sparked much more further research and activity, and which will of course, remain as an iconic document for many years to come. I am proud to be a member of that loosely constituted group - 'Liverpool historians'. Bill stood tall amongst them, and remains an inspiration to us all. May he rest in peace.

John Davies (and Alison Down), My first memories of Bill come from my time in the Healyite WRP, hearing him speak once or twice. At that time, many of the public faces of the WRP were not people with roots in the working class, and it was obvious that Bill was different. During the split and its aftermath, Bill's warmth and humour and his background in workers' struggle were very apparent. Although differences developed, with Bill's group joining the LIT, these differences were not generally characterised by the spite and vitriol of earlier faction fights, and I am sure that Bill's dignity and warmth were one of the reasons for that. I got to know Bill a little better after I moved to Liverpool. Others will write about his deep roots here in many struggles, particularly on the docks. I remember talking to him about Harry Constable, for whom he had great admiration. But my experience of him was largely as a result of his work in unearthing the figure of Edward Rushton. I have wondered what drove Bill to spend so much time on the research for his *Forgotten Hero* book about Rushton. There was no obvious 'political capital' in it for Bill's organisation, and that is very often the criterion which drives those on the revolutionary left. But Bill felt a very strong affinity with someone who was an internationalist, an anti-racist and who fought most of his life for revolutionary causes - and he probably felt a sense of injustice too, for someone who was 'one of us', and who had been overlooked by history. Bill, too, was 'one of us'.

Anna Hunt, We are very sorry to hear of Bill's death and would like to offer our condolences to you. As a group we have benefited much from his militant experience and appreciated his work. Thank you.

Workers' Fight

Jim Smith, I met Bill through politics on a few occasions. (I joined the WRP after Healy's expulsion.) I have his books *They Knew Why They Fought* and *Lifelong Apprenticeship*, and he once stayed at my house when he was in London. I can't say that I knew Bill well, but I know he was a very principled person and class fighter, also with a great appreciation for literature. He mentions the local library in *Lifelong Apprenticeship*, and when he stayed at my house he mentioned how much he got out of reading Milton's *Paradise Lost*, which he got from the library. I see from his website that he was also a gifted painter.

Bill's death is a big loss to socialism, a cause to which he was a massive contributor.

James Q, I met Bill back in 1982 at a large meeting at the AUEW Hall on Mount Pleasant when he spoke with extraordinary passion - and sold me a copy of Volume 38. He always struck me as a warm-hearted comrade - unspoilt by his anger and the sectarian excesses of many around him. A proper fighter. A top bloke. R I P.

Ken Loach, I was very sad to hear the news of Bill.

There can be few people who have lived such a long life that was so consistently dedicated to the struggle for socialism, not only its day-to-day battles but to understanding the history of past struggles. I first met Bill when working with Jim Allen in the late Sixties on a film about a fictional occupation of Liverpool Docks. Jim said at the time that Bill was the man to speak to on political matters in Liverpool. Good advice.

Perhaps Bill's greatest legacy is to have kept the core socialist analysis alive at a time when it has been betrayed by so many who claim to be on the left. The ideas are as clear and unequivocal as ever. One day there will be a generation who will bring them to fruition.

Rest in peace, Bill.

With good wishes to Bill's family and friends.

Terry and all the Abbott Family, Sorry to hear the news Bill was a real working class hero who we all learnt our socialist values from.

Eddie (and Gale Roberts), There is no doubt that people of many differing political preferences will share the sadness that Bill is no longer amongst us, but his impact throughout the TU and Labour Movement will forever remain.

Bill always retained a modern outlook; willing to cross fresh frontiers whilst doggedly retaining his passionately held and truly lived Socialist beliefs.

You know only too well how he and I related back in the 60's when he or your Mum would regularly arrive on my doorstep in 52 Selborne St selling the papers to me and accompanying this with a dialectical debate whether I wanted it or not!

He was a fixture at every and any meetings, demos or events throughout those years and more than once succeeded in emptying the hall if he was unable to persuade the attendees to his particular line! Despite his passionate; even angry addresses, always in the aftermath the humour, friendship and respect for the views of others always remained.

Our deepest condolences to Sue, your brother and yourself Ritch and no doubt there will be other occasions arising that will enable us to participate in the well-deserved commemorate events that I can envisage will take place in the coming years. Make it a great day; our thoughts will be with you.

In unity

By the way Ritchie I forgot to mention that your Dad was my deaf sister Linda's union rep at Lucas CAV where she took part in the action there when the place closed. I spent yesterday at the Marina Dalgleish unit at Aintree Hospital where Linda is receiving chemotherapy treatment she was saddened to learn of his passing as we had only recently spoken of him and she recalled him fondly. What you didn't know perhaps is that she said he was very mischievous and always puckered his lips for a kiss from her those days as she was quite a looker! She only mentioned this yesterday and was chuckling over the memory of his less serious side. Ed

Pat Ayers, Of course the loss of anyone we love is always very hard but the life your dad chose to live – indeed felt impelled to live – had meaning way beyond the personal relationships he cherished and demanded a level of commitment that sometimes - perhaps when younger quite often - qualified the actual time he was able to spend with his children and I recall him telling me that this was something he regretted. Of course, given the opportunity to live his life over again, he would have walked the same path because he could never have separated the responsibility he felt to towards those closest to him from the belief embedded in every fibre of his being, in justice for all and the creation of a fairer world for all children to grow up in.

It's difficult to imagine a world without Bill Hunter in it – the space he leaves is so much bigger than the sum of his parts. Whatever human frailties beset him as he aged, he was always a giant of a man, his very essence shaped by the will to endure while there were still goals to pursue and in the absolute certainty that you, Sue and all those who love him shared his intolerance of injustice – what greater gift could any family give their father? Bill's intellect, the power of his words, his integrity refusal to cower or compromise made a real difference to so many lives. His quiet, dry humour, love of children pride in you, Sue and your family and steadfastness in the face of personal challenges persist in your memories of him and commitment to carrying on the message he brought. I am sure you know that he would have walked through fire for any one of you.

My son, a musician and profoundly dyslexic, had a painfully copied piece of text by Woody Guthrie among his belongings - I think you will hear your dad's voice in it. I hate a song that makes you think you aint any good. I hate a song that makes you believe

you were just born to lose, no good for nobody, no good for nothing because either you are too old, or too young, or too fat, or too thin, or too ugly or too this or too that. Songs that run you down or poke fun at you on account of your bad luck, or hard travelling. I am out to fight those songs with my very last breath or air and my last drop of blood. I am out to sing songs that will prove to you that this is your world and if it has hit you pretty hard and knocked you down or it's rollin' over you, no matter what colour or what size you are or how you are built, I am out to sing the songs that will make you take pride in yourself.

Your Dad sang those songs all his life. I am more sorry than I could ever say for your loss. All my thoughts are with you at this time.

Sean Matgamna, Insofar as it is possible to separate personal qualities from politics, Bill Hunter was a model revolutionary: selfless, dedicated, always striving to be "objective" -- that is, not to let personal feelings intrude on political attitudes and decisions -- willing to pay whatever personal price his politics demanded of him. When I first encountered him, early in 1960, I thought he looked the part, with a long ascetic face (after a near-fatal car crash in 1962, his face had to be reconstructed) spare frame and general air of driving political seriousness. Without these qualities no revolutionary movement is possible. They are not enough, of course. Bill's political life was a tragic proof of that. But this is not the place to discuss our political differences. I have a fond memory of Bill from the early 60s. I came upon him in Manchester waiting in the little van he drove -- he was Lancs-Cheshire organiser for the SLL -- deeply engrossed in "The ABC of Communism", the early 1920s book by Bukharin and Proebroshinsky. It was perhaps the 6th time he'd read it, he told me: he reread "The Books" of the movement frequently. He'd been a Trotskyist then for at least 20 years. The title he put on his autobiography, "Lifelong Apprentice" summed up his attitude. It was the right attitude. Good bye, Bill Hunter.

Cliff Slaughter, Bill Hunter will be remembered and his memory saluted far beyond Liverpool and beyond the shores of Britain. Others here will speak of his personal and family life, but I met him and knew him, like many, many others, in politics. Everyone knows Bill was all his life involved in politics. But forget politics in the everyday sense of party politics, parliament and the rest. Bill was given to saying, 'I have built my life around a programme'. That meant he was an intrepid and unwavering fighter for the working class and for internationalism, and this was the basis of my and many others' relationship with him. He was a man of complete honesty and integrity, with no personal ambitions, and was incorruptible (as everyone knows, these are not particularly common virtues among people in politics).

Bill knew that there had to be a better world, a better future than the one we are told to accept. And he knew that that future will be achieved only through the struggle of the working class in every country. Yes, he gave his whole life's work on the basis of Karl Marx's discovery: 'the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself'. On that principle he worked ceaselessly to build the movement we all need.

In my far-off younger days I learned more from Bill than from anyone. I mourn his death deeply, but at the same time let us celebrate his life, and now salute his memory. As the man said, they don't make them like that anymore...

Marg McAdam, *Since the sad news was sent around about Bill there have been many many tributes received from across the world. Below are some quotes from some of the dozens of messages received.*

Derek Mortimer - Australia, *"I was going to say how sorry I am that Bill has died but then I realised that sorrow is not the feeling, the feeling is one of admiration and inspiration for a man who never stopped fighting for the working class and socialism".*

The first time I met Bill was on Merseyside when I came in contact with the then SLL. The last time I saw him was a number of years ago when I visited him in his flat in Liverpool. We have lost a great voice and a great fighter.

Elizabeth - Argentina, *"Now we are facing new challenges ... new battlefields are crying out for leaderships ... we need many Bills and many Raes to lead us in the oldest battle ever: the battle of the oppressed and the exploited against the oppressors and exploiters.*

*Join you in Bill's cry: **Long live the struggle for socialism** and in the traditional Argentine manner: "Compañero Bill Hunter, Hasta la victoria siempre"*

Joao - Brazil, *"His life was and is an example. I am profoundly proud to have had the opportunity to meet him, to be in the same organisation (national and international) as him, and I hope to have learned something from him. I know his example motivated me and motivates me still to, within my limits, continue trying, continue fighting. He will continue with us for as long as his legacy will, and his legacy is our program and our struggle, and we will carry to victory, for as long as it takes."*

Polaco - Brazil, *"I remember once, at his home, was a very hard discussion after a meeting. there was shouting and passion. But that was possible because Bill always gave a framework of openness, fraternity and respect ... after bitter controversy with him it was possible to continue a friendly conversation and to take that delicious tea with a little milk, He always had at home.*

Proudly I wear the funny nickname "Electric Mouse" that once Bill gave me, because of how I move around. Thanks a lot Bill for everything you taught us to give our life for the revolution! I will remember You Bill, by building the International until my last breath like You!"

Cecilia - Brazil, *"I'm very sad; Bill was a great and sweet person, a true revolutionary until his last days of life. An example for us. I had the pleasure to meet him in Liverpool, living in a little but pleasant room, for the meetings of the ISL. These meetings were always ended with a nice cup of tea and cookies and the expressive voice of Bill singing English songs of miners".*

Rose – Brazil, Sorry for just writing today, but I was very sad. I knew when I was there that Bill was going. I will miss him too much.

Alicia Sagra - Buenos Aires, Argentina, He has been a part of the history of the world labour movement. And he left a lot, in his books, in the memory of his comrades, not only of the ISL, but of the IWL-FI The comrades of Argentina will never forget that he led the only political current in Britain that had a principal policy during the Malvinas (Falklands) war, which denounced the aggressor character of English imperialism.

I do not forget his strength in the battle that we took against the revisionism at the worst times of the crisis of the IWL-FI or the pride that I felt when I saw the way the Liverpool dock workers, in the middle of their conflict, received him as a valued friend and leader. In the same manner his humour, his stubbornness and the warmth with which welcomes us in his Liverpool, loaded with stories of the labour movement and world Trotskyism comes to my mind,

To his family, his friends and comrades of the ISL all my solidarity.
Comrade Bill Hunter, until socialism always!

Cilinha, I'm very sad; Bill was a great and sweet person, a true revolutionary until the last days of life. An example for us. I had a pleasure to meet him in Liverpool, living in a little but pleasant room, with Margaret and Martin Ralph for the meetings of ISL. These meetings

were always finished with a nice tea and cookies and the expressive voice of Bill singing English songs of miners. Goodbye Bill, you're an example of a revolutionary for who the Leninists principles for a firm construction of the party always stay with our LIT-CI (it is that we expect).

Jan Talpe – Belgium, A beautiful end of a very, very beautiful life!! Going to sleep, and stopping to exist, but remaining alive, more than ever, in our memory.

Our newer comrades didn't have occasion to know Bill. But I know, comrades of the first years of the pre-history of the LCT were at the time really very well impressed to have contact with him. I remember Matthieu, for instance, listening attentively to what Bill had to transmit about our struggle, in the early years of 2000 here in Brussels, in our flat in Anderlecht.

The traditional words of "condolence" sounds too formal.

Please transmit my greetings to his family.

As Moreno said, there is no god that has established that we cannot be victorious in the struggle for socialism. It's ours to fight for that, as was Bill's! Hasta la victoria siempre!

Phil Sandford - Australia, *Bill was uncompromising on questions of principle and at the same time warm, generous, humorous and interested in all aspects of life, as reflected in his book about poet Edward Rushton.*

With the passing of Bill Hunter the international workers' movement has lost a giant.

Bill gave his life to the workers' movement and to the fight for Marxism and Trotskyism. On any issue he always fought to bring out the basic historical and theoretical questions, the basics of Marxism and historical materialism.

In 1985, after decades in the Trotskyist movement in Britain, Bill and his wife Rae broke with the degeneration of Trotskyism that had developed in the Workers Revolutionary Party under Gerry Healy. They joined the International Workers League, spending several years in Argentina to assist in building the international, and continued to fight for a Marxist perspective.

Bill was uncompromising on questions of principle and at the same time warm, generous, humorous and interested in all aspects of life, as reflected in his book about poet Edward Rushton.

His books, including his powerful autobiography "A Lifelong Apprenticeship", and his numerous articles and polemics, are an imperishable contribution to Marxism, and his life is a powerful inspiration to everyone fighting for a just and socialist world.

Gabriel Massa - Argentina, I had the honour of meeting Bill, along with Ray, many years ago in Argentina. It was an enormous experience learning of the traditions of the British working class and its struggles of which they both were part. Comrade Hunter is present in our memory as an example for all of us.

Condolences and solidarity to his family and to all of you

Simon Pirani, I've tried and failed a couple of times to write something coherent to you about Bill. My memories of him are very good, very warm. But when I was actually in Liverpool and first got to know him (1979-81) it was politically and personally a really difficult time in my life - and I think his too to some extent. The WRP really was in a screwed-up state by then. What I've been thinking about over the last few days is how Bill reacted to the 1981 riots - instinctive sympathy for the oppressed, unlike many in the trade union milieu at that time. He absolutely wasn't bothered that it was all kicking off literally right outside his front door. He was very supportive to the work that I did with another WRP member, Martin Beveridge, around the campaigns against police violence, associated with the names of Jimmy Kelly (the Huyton man who was beaten to death by the cops) and Michael Kavanagh (a young lad in Kirkby who they beat, but didn't kill - he lost a kidney). Bill moved a resolution on the trades council calling for a workers' inquiry into police violence. This brought the wrath of the idiotic Healy machine down on his head and to a lesser extent on mine, and that's the really hard part to think about. Ugly and disgusting. More generally, Bill and Rae were personally very kind to me and to others close to me at that time.

The other time we were working quite closely together was in 1985-86 after the split in the WRP. We went to Argentina together, and of course we ended up disagreeing about whether the way forward was to join the LIT. He thought it was, I didn't. We weren't so close after that.

He lived through some of the most difficult times for the workers' movement and came through it all with dignity and humility, unlike some of the great Trotskyist "leaders".

Mike Dooley, I want to send my condolences and warmest wishes to you and the family. He was a wonderful guy and I loved listening to his passionate talks about class, unionism and fighting for social justice.

I met Bill Hunter, when I was part of a Labour History Group, which met and operated from the old M. T.U.U.R.C.

The group worked on a couple of exhibitions relating to some quite well known 'highlights' of workers' struggles such as The General Strike and the 1911 Transport Strike.

It was Bill, however who introduced me to Edward Ruston. If you don't know about him read Bill's, book!

Bill, researched and produced a fine exhibition on Rushton, which illustrated the influences upon Ruston, and how he took these ideas and manifested them in a campaign against slavery. A tough struggle indeed in a town which had its economy from exploitation.

Some years later, I attended the launch evening of Bill's book. It was quite a hilarious experience as the star of the show – the book had not arrived from the printers.

Thankfully, there were numerous people at the event to ensure it was a memorable evening.

Thanks Bill, without your work I would not have become aware of Edward Rushton, and his significance to your adopted city.

Where there is darkness let there be light



Paul Cosgrove

Stuart Carter - Bury, Lancs, I was in the WRP from 1977 until my expulsion in 1985 and I spent a year or so working for the party full time in Liverpool during which time your dad gave me encouragement and some wise advice (not all of which I followed). His lifelong dedication to the socialist cause was and will always be an inspiration

David Esterson, I send you my sympathies following the death of Bill.

I met Bill when I came to Liverpool with a Colombian oil workers leader, Fredy Pulecio. Fredy was speaking to the Liverpool dockers. I already knew of Bill because I had read his book about the dockers (a must read for every serious socialist activist in the workplace). My grandad Charlie Aylward and his brother Bert were London dockers and very active in the Blue Union. I believe Bert Aylward was national organiser during the 1955 strike for recognition so Bill must have worked with Bert a lot.

You must be very proud of Bill and all he did in his life. I believe Bertolt Brecht's description of people like Bill remains the most pertinent:

"There are men who struggle for a day and they are good.
There are men who struggle for a year and they are better.
There are men who struggle many years, and they are better still.
But there are those who struggle all their lives:
These are the indispensable ones."

In solidarity and respect

Transport Workers Solidarity Committee Statement On the Death Of Working Class Fighter Bill Hunter

Steve Zelter, Bill Hunter, a working class leader and militant, passed away on July 9, 2015. His life was one of struggling not only in the British working class but in international working class movement. As a socialist, artist and intellectual, Bill joined the Trotskyist movement in the 1950s. His struggle for internationalism is one of the critical factors that led him to Trotskyism in Britain. Despite serious splits and problems within the Trotskyist movement, Bill continued to fight for Marxism and the building of a working class party not only in Britain but internationally. He was never a sectarian and fought to defend all workers in their struggle for justice and human rights.

He and his comrades were also critical in helping to build international solidarity for the Liverpool dockers. In 1995, holding high the fundamental principle of trade unionism, older dockworkers refused to cross a picket line of young dockworkers and scab on them. As a result they were attacked by the Mersey Docks and Harbour employers. Traitorous national union officials of the TGWU and the TUC refused to back their strike using the phony excuse of the anti-labour Thatcher legislation being enforced by the capitalist lap dog Labour Prime Minister Tony Blair. These betrayals of the trade union bureaucracy and the Labour Party led the Liverpool dockworkers to take the fight internationally. Bill and his comrades were critical in supporting this critical struggle against the neo-liberal capitalist

onslaught of privatization, casualization and union busting. By helping to publish the Dockers Charter for the Liverpool dockworkers, they forged and reinforced links with workers in Britain and throughout the world.

This was shining example of the kind of new working class leadership need in Britain and internationally. Some union militants later to organize the Transport Workers Solidarity Committee of the San Francisco Bay Area set up a picket line in 1997 to stop the scab-loaded Neptune Jade from discharging cargo in the port of Oakland. ILWU Local 10 and Local 34 longshore workers honored the picket line and refused to work the ship. This act of international solidarity against the Neptune Jade was subsequently repeated in Vancouver, B.C. and Yokohama, Japan giving fright to the shipowners and port operators of the potential of internationally co-ordinated strikes. Such actions, inspired by the Liverpool dockers, occurred in other ports by militant dockworkers around the world. Clearly, Liverpool dockers sparked the birth of International Dockworkers Council (IDC) to fight capitalist attacks.

Bill intransigently fought for the independence of the working class and was involved in workers struggles such as the Shrewsbury picket and the frame-up of Des Warren. Throughout his life he sought to develop a Marxist analysis of the class struggle and teach younger workers as seen in his autobiography, "Lifelong Apprenticeship".

The Transport Workers Solidarity Committee salutes the record and struggle of Bill Hunter. We honor his contributions. His loss will be felt by many working people around the world.

For Working Class Power!
Victory to the International Working Class!
Transport Workers Solidarity Committee

Des McConaghy, My sincere condolences. And my apologies! At the last minute I find I will not be able to attend your father's funeral due to a very aggressive and painful hernia.

As you may recall Bill - and your mother - were ground floor neighbours of the Canning Cooperative flat that I shared with my son - at 25A Falkner Square - roughly 1978-1988. And very good neighbours they were! Bill told me a lot about his earlier work in London and I enjoyed hearing about his experiences there. Together we also had a ringside view of many stormy local eruptions - including the 1981 Toxteth riots when, for some anxious moments, our front door seemed to mark the front line between police and rioters. Of course that was entirely fortuitous!

But both your mother and father were the kindest possible neighbours at what was a difficult personal time for my son and myself. I will always be grateful and will always remember both with the greatest gratitude and affection. I am sorry I cannot be present on this occasion.

Steve Ballard, I first met Bill Hunter about 50 years ago, when I joined the Young Socialists. Bill was at the fore-front of the struggle for principled trade-unionism all his working life, an example that still inspires me.

The talents he developed in the struggle for our emancipation from wage slavery were the ability to study, write and orate. In order to challenge the careerism of unprincipled Labour and trade union bureaucrats, Bill studied the history and writings of other leaders committed to the struggle for social justice. He used his studies to inform the countless newspaper and journal articles he wrote, and his books about forgotten heroes who devoted their lives to changing the world.

His written work will secure him a well-deserved place in our roll of honour, but what must also be celebrated is his oratory. I joined the Young Socialists as a chemical engineering student, under the tutelage of Cliff Slaughter and Geoff Pilling, who taught at Bradford University. They were both leading scholars in the Trotskyist Fourth International, which I joined. I agreed with their analysis of the bureaucratic corruption of Marxism by Stalin, and the importance of being able to explain to others that humankind's survival is conditional on the critical repudiation of all bureaucratic corruption, especially the bureaucratic corruption of those claiming to be Marxists.

Like Marx, all Fourth International leaders including Bill recognised that the only force capable of ending wage slavery is the proletariat, the urban masses who, having been forced to leave the land they worked to meet their needs, adopted the compassionate principle of 'an injury to one is an injury to all' and the socialist method of distributing the means to sustain life 'from each according to ability, to each according to need'.

But Bill's public speaking always inspired me more than Cliff's or Geoff's, partly because he came from Liverpool, but mainly because of his working experience as a trade union activist, whereas Cliff's and Geoff's experience was as scholars. Bill's speeches were rousing because he knew how workers think, and he was determined to embolden and empower young activists, including me, with the courage to stand up for what they believe in, even if that means sometimes standing alone.

Bill spoke in public and in conversation with authority and humour but without the slightest condescension. He used Liverpool's rich oral heritage in the service of those who shaped it, its labouring masses. Although he played a leading part in all the major trade union and anti-war struggles since the Second World War, I only really knew him in the years between the 1973 Shrewsbury trials and the 1995 Liverpool dockers' lock-out, by which time the Soviet Union and the Fourth International had disintegrated.

Bill claimed some credit for converting convicted Shrewsbury picket Des Warren from Stalinism to Trotskyism, and helping Des write his book *'The Key to My Cell'*. Although Bill was a significant figure throughout the North West area, and Des will have heard Bill speak and talked to him many times, Bill is not mentioned in Des' book. Nevertheless, Bill's claim is not without merit. Sadly, I never heard Des speak, but like Bill, Des certainly knew how to use his working experience to argue the case for social justice. In his book, Des analyses how Labour and trade union bureaucrats turned their backs on social justice and the Shrewsbury pickets for seats on company boards or in the House of Lords. Terry Renshaw, another convicted Shrewsbury picket, tried to discredit Des and his book by claiming Des hadn't written it, insinuating it was written by Bill. Renshaw was a supporter of UCATT bureaucrat Alan Ritchie, who was up for re-election. Ritchie was being challenged by Mick Dooley who, together with Ricky Tomlinson, Arthur Scargill, Mike Abbott, Dave Ayre and Garry Davis, prompted the formation of a new Justice for Shrewsbury Pickets' national committee in 2006, though of them only Mike joined the committee. Renshaw undermined the

national committee by claiming falsely that the committee was interfering in UCATT affairs, and urged others not to support it.

To repudiate Renshaw's insinuation, freelance journalist Chris Corrigan put on record how it was written. By the time Des was ready to write his book, he was so ill with Parkinson's disease he could no longer hold a pen. For about 6 weeks, Chris recorded in Pitman's short-hand what Des said, and typed-up his short-hand notes onto proofs each evening for to Des edit. Occasionally, at Des' request, Chris checked key dates, or dug out court reports or newspaper articles. Although the Parkinson's tremors brought on by his prison-administered-Largactyl prevented Des from writing, his mind and memory were still sharp. Chris confirmed that apart from his secretarial assistance, Des' book was all his own work, including the title, *'The Key To My Cell'*. Whilst it is undeniable that Bill influenced Des' development as a critical thinker and writer, the insinuation that Bill used Des as an uncritical mouthpiece is an unprincipled insult to Des and Bill.

The 28-month dockers' lockout was led by another great Liverpoolian trade unionist and orator, Jimmy Nolan. Jimmy maintained the vital unity of the locked-out dockers by calling weekly open meetings, which Bill frequently attended as a supporting speaker, and I occasionally attended as a member of the London support group. Building on the initiative of the Miners Wives, the Women of the Waterfront learned their organising skills and passionate oratory from dedicated practitioners like Bill and Jimmy, upholding the best traditions of proletarian struggle in the noblest of all causes – the emancipation of humankind from its exploitation by all manner of mercenary cliques that use armed force to expropriate for themselves and their bureaucratic cronies an unfair share of the means to sustain life.

Gerry & Marina, *"Life is not an easy matter. You cannot live through it without falling into frustration and cynicism unless you have before you a great idea which lifts you above personal misery, above weakness, above all kinds of perfidy and baseness."* (Leon Trotsky)

Your Dad was lucky to hold on to a great idea to the end.

Hussein Al-alak, I am writing to express my deepest sympathy, at hearing the news of the passing of Bill Hunter.

Bill was an extraordinary person, with the greatest level of empathy towards the Iraqi people and the news of his passing has been received with sadness, to everyone at the Iraq Solidarity Campaign.

Bill's life has left a legacy, which we can only strive to emulate, one which has been governed by the most heartfelt principles and dedication to the welfare of people world-wide.

Please accept our deepest condolences and send our thoughts and prayers to his family.

International Workers League Leadership, This is an irreparable loss of a leader who dedicated nearly eighty years of his life to the British working class and the construction of internationalism.

All who knew him will remember his gentle treatment and his good mood when talking of the countless episodes he was part of in the history of the working class struggles and Trotskyism. We received the news of Bill's death during an International Workers League leadership meeting, in which he participated for many years. Standing, with some furtive tears in our eyes, we greeted the veteran revolutionary: ***Bill Hunter, fighting for socialism forever!***"

Written by International Executive Committee of the International Workers League Fourth International

We lament the news that Bill Hunter has died, 95 years old, from a brain haemorrhage in Liverpool, England.

This is an irreparable loss of a leader who dedicated nearly eighty years of his life to the British working class and the construction of Trotskyism internationally. He will be remembered by dock workers in Liverpool as a historical cadre and organizer. As a worker activist, he was present in the great strikes in that sector, and was respected even among adversaries.

After his retirement, he continued to support the struggles, and was always received in the manner the proletariat uses to show to its great leaders. During the strike of the dock workers at the port of Liverpool in 1995, his speech was cheered three times in a national meeting.

He is in the memory of those who fought for Trotskyism in recent decades. He was part of British Trotskyism since the founding of the Fourth International in 1938. He was one of the main union leaders of the Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP) for decades.

In the 1980's he faced the degeneration of the party led by Gerry Healy and, in 1988, he joined the International Workers League, and was part of its reconstruction in the 90's. Bill was, for many years a member of our international leadership and then of the International Moral Committee, contributing in these tasks with the experience of a long-time worker leader. He wrote numerous texts, including the books "They Knew Why They Fought", a history of the dockers' struggles in Liverpool, "Forgotten Hero", about the life of the Liverpool's blind poet Edward Rushton and "Lifelong Apprenticeship," his autobiography.

Even when his health weakened in recent years, he never abandoned the coherence with which he dedicated his life to the cause of world revolution. Whenever he could, he wrote, gave his opinions and participated in the political life of the ISL (International Socialist League), the British section of the IWL-FI.

All who knew him will remember his gentle manner and his good mood when talking of the countless episodes that he was part of in the history of the working class struggles and Trotskyism.

Bill Hunter joins our traditions. He is an example for all new revolutionaries who are now coming into political life. As Trotsky said, "Yes, our party takes each one of us wholly. But in return it gives to every one of us the highest happiness: the consciousness that one participates in the building of a better

future, that one carries on his shoulders a particle of the fate of mankind, and that one's life will not have been lived in vain".

We received the news of Bill's death during an International Workers League leadership meeting, in which he participated for many years. Standing, with tears in our eyes, we greeted the veteran revolutionary:

Bill Hunter, fighting for socialism forever!

Martin Ralph, This is from the IWL and is published on litci.org/en. There have been tributes from four continents to Bill. He was a member of the IEC of the IWL for about 7 years from I think 1991 or 2 up to 1997 or 8. He was also on the editorial board of the IWL's political/theoretical magazine Marxism Alive and wrote some articles for that publication, I think up to the very early 2000s.

It was in the IWL congresses in the 1990s that he made a huge impact and that is why all the participants remember him, not only the delegates but the translators (interpreters), for his determination, Marxist, Trotskyist and workers knowledge. In the early 1990s the ISL formed the Trotskyist Tendency that won support from Sweden, Spain and other countries.

When he was in Argentina he worked a lot with many comrades including Alicia (whose tribute I sent you).

All this explains why that when the IEC who was meeting in Brazil when Bill died, stopped the discussion and started paying their tributes to Bill.

I remember for example when Rae was in hospital he left the IEC and returned, travelling with an Italian comrade who told me later that Bill had given him the history of the British Trotskyist movement in the 11 hour journey on the flight back home.

Wilson Honario da Silva, Race and Class (interpreter) - Brazil, "I cannot think of a single speech of his that did not start with striking examples of episodes of class struggle, with quotes from theoretical writings and references from organisations and Marxist leaders of different periods and positions.

Bill was an experienced, serious, permanently worried militant who was pure sweetness and generosity. A figure who aware of my fears, immediately conveyed the security that I lacked. He held an eternal curiosity about the fights against oppression and racism for which he gave great importance. As you can see in his paintings and the biography he wrote about the writer, poet and slavery abolitionist Edward Rushton. A history of struggles for almost eight decades dedicated to the construction of the world party of the revolution. Thank you, Bill! Until the victory!"

WORKERS INTERNATIONAL

To Rebuild the Fourth International

PO Box 68375, London, E7 7DT

30th July 2015

Dear Dave, Ritchie and Family,

It is with great pride that we join you on this day to celebrate Bill's life. He may have called himself a "Lifelong Apprentice" but he was a Master, who taught us so much.

Representing Workers International, we bring greetings from comrades who were forced out of Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Serbia for standing up to Stalin and Stalinism and learned about the Fourth International from Bill and other Trotskyist fighters. We also bring greetings from our comrades in Namibia who, after many years of isolation and persecution by the Stalinist-trained SWAPO are now being joined by workers all over the country standing up to the SWAPO government and fighting for their basic rights to jobs, homes and pensions

Bill's tireless struggle for Marxist principles throughout the decades, his refusal to be side-tracked in his constant seeking for the truth and the way forward at every stage in workers' struggles – be it on the world stage or as an engineering shop steward in the Lucas factory or alongside his docker friends and comrades.

Bill is no longer with us, but his work continues and we will do all we can to assist in publishing his historic writings. Bill's political struggle and the way he lived his life are now the firm base to encourage young people worldwide to understand the lessons of history, the importance of the working class to build its own party in its own interests.

We remember a principled, stubborn, generous, funny, warm comrade and friend, who loved life and loved his family even more than he could say in words.

Comradely greetings,

Bob Archer

Dot Gibbs

ON BEHALF OF WORKERS INTERNATIONAL
