

Memories of Greg Tucker — Speeches and condolences

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Hundreds came to London to celebrate the life of Greg Tucker, a central leader of the Fourth International and one of Britain's outstanding trade unionists. The speeches at his funeral, and messages of condolence from around the world, came from many of Greg's comrades and loved ones.

My partner, my lover, my comrade, my best friend

Thank you all for coming. For those of you who don't know, my name is Joan Twelves. Greg was my partner, my lover, my comrade, my best friend. We shared our lives for 32 years.

The last week without him as been very strange, not being able to talk to him, planning all this for him and not being able to argue with him about it, not to hear him say that Tim's artwork's too cluttered and that we've picked the wrong version of Dark Star...

Greg knew he was dying. I knew he was dying. But no-one, not him, not me, not his doctors, expected it to happen so quickly, to happen when it did.

We were making plans. He had new books, new films, more Grateful Dead CDs on order from the States, the second half of series 4 of the Wire to watch... He was working out how we'd get to Marc and May's wedding next month... Awaiting delivery of a new computer...

In his last months, however, he did manage to do a few of the things he especially wanted to do - and doing them meant so much to him. He got back in touch with Kathy and Kris. He visited his parents. On his last weekend he attended the ISG conference - even got re-elected to the Central Committee - and, just three days before he died, he managed to get to Waterloo RMT's branch meeting to say his farewells as branch secretary. I know he felt so honoured at being greeted with such warmth and camaraderie by his workmates, his comrades and his friends, and hated the fact that he couldn't express his gratitude to you all himself. And I know he would have felt even more honoured, indeed totally embarrassed, by the way people have reacted to his death, coming here today, writing such marvellous tributes in articles and blogs...

Just a couple of weeks ago I said to Greg that we'd done more in our years together than most people ever dreamt of. Not only had each of us achieved a certain fame, if not notoriety, because of our political activities - it always amused us how first one and then the other of us became famous for having the same red front door - but we both felt we'd achieved something. We might not have brought about the utter destruction of the capitalist system and ushered in the socialist revolution, not even in our little patch in Lambeth, let alone the whole world, but we tried and often succeeded in making life better for ordinary people - whether it was by saving their jobs, improving their living

standards, or getting them a decent home to live in – and that meant something to him, as it does to me.

For us, for over 30 years, life was a challenge, a challenge to be met head on, even when the challenges were ones we didn't want.

We probably experienced more crises than most. Homelessness, poverty, illness, a string of arrests – in the early years, no not just the early years, even into his 40s, Greg couldn't go on a picket or demonstration without the cops getting an irresistible urge to nick him for something or other, obstruction, affray, you name it – court appearances, witch-hunts, victimisation by both the Labour Party and his employers – most of you here know of his successful Employment Tribunal against South West Trains, what you probably don't know is that it wasn't the first time Greg had won an unfair dismissal case. He made a habit of it – or rather, employers made a habit of making the mistake of thinking they could sack Greg – starting with Tate and Lyle back in the 70s. And it wasn't just employers Greg took on. He was just 18 when he won his first court case, when Balliol College tried to evict him and Kathy from the house they were squatting in Jericho.

As most of you know, Greg was not good with authority. Typically, he was on a final warning when he went off sick at the beginning of last year, for refusing to take his train out. How he escaped being sacked for that one I still don't understand!

One of Greg's strengths, one I could never match, was the pragmatic way he handled such threats. An attack or defeat that I'd take personally he saw as a natural part of the life of a revolutionary, that he wasn't doing his job properly if he didn't get up the boss's nose!

So, while we had hard times, we also had many triumphs – against landlords, bosses, government agencies, the Tory government during the 80s – he compiled a pub quiz question once about the laws he'd contributed to getting changed (actually, if truth be told, most of them were ones introduced to stop him doing something...).

And we had fun.

Both Kathy and Sandra have told me how life with Greg was an adventure. And I hope this ceremony reflects Greg's enjoyment of life. Yes, he could be a dry, dogmatic Trot, a boring old fart even, but he was also a paid-up member of what I used to call the RMT's Dining Club, those leading members who'd seek out the best fish restaurant in whatever town the Annual or Grades Conference was in – over the past year, when he was suffering from lockjaw, the thing he really wanted more than anything else was to be able to go out for a proper meal; he loved travelling – in the past few years, courtesy of South West Trains, we had some fantastic holidays and he was always the first to volunteer to attend a European conference; he loved to drive his train through the New Forest on a spring morning; and he loved music, insisting on visiting the Sweetwater Saloon to pay homage to the Airplane and the Dead when we were in California. Despite being a great fan of current world music, I reckon he never got much past 1972 in his musical tastes...

I first met Greg in the mid-70s, at a Claimants Union conference. He was a skinny, longhaired, dungaree-clad, rather shy youth who looked much younger than the 21/22 he must have been at the time. He'd just moved down to London from the Midlands. I learnt later that this move was just the latest of many moves. In fact, all his life until we moved to Lambeth in 1980, he'd been moving around from town to town, relationship to relationship.

An Air Force brat, he had a peripatetic childhood, frequently changing schools, most of which as an exceptionally bright child he found intensely boring. By the time he left home at 17, he had a clutch of A levels and a place at Oxford to study Pure and Applied Maths.

The fact that Greg was a mathematician informed much of the way he was. That's why he always demanded logical thought, why he couldn't abide waffle, why he was so pedantic, why he was often seen sitting in the Mess Room doing puzzles, and why when we went to Montreal a couple of years ago he made a beeline for the Buckminster Fuller geodesic dome. He'd started building his own mini-geodesic dome with plasticine and toothpicks just a couple of weeks ago...

But the young Greg quickly decided that a maths degree was not what he was searching for. One term at St Cats was all he could take before he dropped out. A radicalised teenager during the upheavals of the sixties, a young father to Kris and then Madeleine during the turmoil of the Heath years, times when the words 'class struggle' and 'solidarity' and 'the working class', 'justice', 'socialism' and 'marxism' were not dirty words, when new forms of organisation were sprouting up, times when we didn't just believe we could change the world but were actually doing so, Greg found that there was no way he could accept the compromises Oxford's entrenched class structure demanded - where grown men had to call him 'sir' while they waited on him at table - and that he got far more satisfaction from challenging the system, whether by representing others through the Claimants Union and later, when he was in work, through his Trade Union, battling as part of the squatters movement for the right to decent housing, standing shoulder to shoulder on picket line after picket line, or becoming a headbanging streetfighter during the anti-fascist battles of the mid to late 70s.

When I first met Greg he was a Maoist. He'd sent off to the Chinese Embassy for his very own Little Red Book in his early teens - mainly I've always thought to annoy his father. And he wasn't just any old Maoist. He was one of the lot who supported Enver Hoxha in Albania. The tributes to Greg have noted how unusually unsectarian he was in the sectarian world of the far left. I'm not sure that's true, but if you'd spent as many nights as I did in those early days repeatedly pointing out that goats had more legal protection and status in Albania than women then you'd know why he had to learn to act unsectarianly, even if it wasn't what he was really thinking. It was a long battle but he eventually conceded that maybe, just maybe, I had a point and that the goats might just need downgrading. And that if I was right about the goats then maybe I was right about a few other things - so Greg renounced Maoism and joined the IMG and the Fourth International. Greg's line was that he always did what I told him - eventually. Not true, but he liked to say it.... He had a sense of humour.

When Greg first moved to London he spent time unemployed, hence his involvement in the Claimants Union, and then had a string of jobs in East London - at a lead factory, at Tate & Lyle on the Isle of Dogs, as a street sweeper and then on the dust.

Politically, he quickly became involved in the battles to stop the National Front selling papers in Brick Lane and attacking the local Bengali community. And it was one of his arrests in Brick Lane that led directly to us moving to Lambeth. His bail conditions involved a ban on him going back to his flat in Whitechapel. I'd been at university in Colchester (a very different university experience to Greg's at Oxford) for the first three years of our relationship, but by now I was back in London, about to be evicted from a squatted prefab down the road in Stepney. The local Labour Council refused to rehouse us in the borough, but representations from the Trades Council, who'd organised the demo on which Greg had been arrested, led to the GLC agreeing to transport us south of the river. People forget what a big thing it was to finally get the keys to a council flat in those days... Mind you, it's not surprising they've forgotten when council flats don't exist any more...

So, that's how we came to be in Lambeth, and, because Greg could hardly continue emptying Tower Hamlets' bins from here, how he came to go to work on the railways. He'd worked on the P-way in East Anglia a few years earlier, during his peripatetic period, so going up to Waterloo and asking for a job was an obvious step to take.

Going to work on the platform on Vauxhall was a long way from the Maths student going up to Oxford. But he never looked back. Apart from once. He enrolled for a Maths degree at what was then North London Poly, but didn't last a fortnight. It was boring, too easy, easier than his O levels, he said.

Others are going to speak about more recent years, so I will close by saying I loved Greg and I will miss him so much and to thank you all for your support and love today.

Joan Twelves

His belief in industrial trade unionism was central to all that he did.

My first memories of Greg are when we were both on the picket line outside of Waterloo station as part of the NUR (for runner union to the RMT) 6 one day national strikes over pay and collective bargaining in 1989.

Greg became a train driver the following year and fought and won the right for Waterloo RMT drivers to elect a safety representative.

And it was on safety grounds that he refused to drive trains during the RMT signalers strike of 1994, when managers were used to run the signal boxes. He was suspended from duty and it took the intervention of the General Secretary to get Greg back to work.

He refused to cross ASLEF picket lines during their pay dispute in the mid 90's; and local ASLEF reps covered for him by saying he was one of their members.

Greg was elected to the RMT Council of Executives in 1997. During his time on the Executive he remained Waterloo Branch Secretary while I was branch chair and RMT drivers safety representative.

In 1998 we took on SWT (South West Trains) over their plans to introduce DOOP (Driver-only operation on passenger trains). This would mean the loss of hundreds of guards' jobs, as well as having serious safety implications. It was a difficult one to stop. The DOO platform equipment was already up, and the national union were reluctant to fight after having lost previous disputes on the issue.

Greg organised the 'Train Crew against DOOP' campaign, held an open meeting for all SWT train crew, and then bombarded the membership with publicity. They voted overwhelmingly for strike action, which forced SWT into a humiliating defeat. Greg insisted the Managing Director sign a legal affidavit saying that DOO was withdrawn. I celebrated the victory with SWT guards who chanted the name of the RMT as if it was their beloved football team.

But as Greg wrote in *Victimised Whistleblowers*

'The world does not stand still however. Our bosses do not take lightly to union reps costing them millions in lost profits'.

For in the space of 18 months after the DOO victory, I had been sacked and Greg was demoted. The victimisation began in 1999 when we were both accused of the heinous crime of not signing in the visitors' book when recruiting members in Clapham yard.

Then early in 2000 SWT sacked me on a series of trumped up charges, Greg wasted no time in

getting the campaign for my re-instatement underway. The first thing he did was to organise a rally at Waterloo. About 200 people gathered outside of the station and then marched along the roads around it, then through Victory Arch on to the concourse. We then did several circuits around the station chanting 'Health and Safety under attack, we won't rest till Sarah's back'. Bemused rush hour commuters were handed leaflets explaining the reasons for our march and rally. TV and radio covered the event. Despite the hard work Greg put into running my re-instatement campaign, I did not get my job back.

So Greg took over as RMT drivers' safety rep. This role began to seem like a poisoned chalice as in summer 2001 they demoted him on a series of bogus safety related charges. The union campaigned for his re-instatement. His tribunal was wonderfully entertaining. I attended when John Hendy QC cross examined Cook - the manager who took the first stage of Greg's disciplinary hearing. He denied knowing Greg was a union activist and said he hadn't seen him on the front page of the Evening Standard during the red waistcoat dispute, or any of the other recent disputes at Waterloo. In reference to Cook's evidence the tribunal panel wrote 'We prefer to draw a veil over that unedifying spectacle'. They told SWT to re-instate Greg to his driver's job.

Greg was a supremely intelligent representative and branch officer who gave unstinting support to the members. His belief in industrial trade unionism was central to all that he did. It was a pleasure to have worked with him. He will be sorely missed.

Sarah Friday

Greg Tucker the Lambeth Councillor

I joined Joan and Greg as the third Councillor for Larkhall Ward in 1990. I realised quickly that I had drawn the short straw; Joan had succeeded Linda Bellos as Leader of Lambeth Council to which she gave her full time, from very early morning till after midnight, though to be fair, most late evenings were enjoyed over a few pints in the Lambeth Social Club, a basement melting pot of the great, the good and the downright shocking; members of Lambeth staff, their trades union reps and councillors; councillors who never quite felt at ease with being bosses, but thought naively that they could continue to command the loyalty and support of a workforce of 10,000, which had pledged, three years earlier to go without wages to defeat Margaret Thatcher's rate cap. Greg had been Chair of Economic Development and in the new Group became Chair of Management Services, which as the name suggests, was all about managing; managing work processes, managing recruitment; managing terms and conditions and managing industrial relations. It is odd now to think of Greg chairing the Joint Council Trades Union Committee sitting on the employers side, just as it's amusing to recall that most of the directors were strong NALGO members and very good they were at negotiating their own terms and conditions. He also earned a living; at that time, remember, councillors did not enjoy the level of allowance they now collect. Joan and Greg were enormously professional as colleague councillors and Joan was a strong but pragmatic leader. But I did wonder what the arguments were like at home, especially given the combined efforts of the District Auditor and the New Labour to close us up, it was incredibly stressful especially for these two people. The Poll Tax, the fight in High Court to keep County Hall for the return of London Government, the regeneration, yet again, of Brixton, a major child protection scandal, the self-inflicted wound of the Gulf War debate and the consequent expulsion of Greg and other valuable members from the Labour Party was a battering that we could not survive. It was Fortress Lambeth and we were surrounded and we were infiltrated; at least a third of the Group were New Labour plants with offshoots in all three Lambeth Constituencies.

I suppose, looking back on it that I found Greg difficult to understand or fully appreciate. He wasn't a career politician, he didn't posture or make memorable speeches, although he was always a competent speaker. He didn't seek popularity; he didn't expect to be loved. He was driven by his convictions and he was in it for the long haul. A man of profound integrity he stuck to his word and his word was always based on his socialist principles. That kind of uncompromising integrity doesn't sit well in our current political climate, and we are the worse for that as we are the worse for the loss of this brave comrade.

Anna Tapsell

He was committed to the politics of the FI

I first came across Greg thirty six years ago, in 1972, when he was an 18-year-old student in Oxford. He was living in a squat threatened with eviction and I was a convenor of shop stewards in the Oxford car industry. Greg came to us for support for the squat and when we compared notes on this many years later he generous enough to say that the support we were able to give was a factor in the successful outcome of the struggle.

He clearly saw the organised working class as his first port of call even in those early days.

In more recent years of course Greg was a strongly committed member of the ISG. He attended the ISG conference a week before he died, by an act of sheer willpower.

Greg's first political reference point, however, was the Fourth International. He was a member of the ISG in the first instance because it was its British section. He was committed to the politics of the FI and in particular to the concept of internationalism which it represented.

He was a member of the International Committee of the FI and he followed the fortunes of its sections in great detail. In recent years he worked closely with the rail fraction of the LCR in France - since organising with them around the European Social Forums.

At the ISG conference I made the point, that from the point of view of the ISG, as with the wider movement, Greg was not only a huge loss but that he was an irreplaceable comrade. This is because Greg represented something which it is very hard to replace. He combined a world-view informed by Marxism with tireless campaigning, in both the political and trade union fields.

In recent years with the looming ecological crisis Greg, along with the ISG and Socialist Resistance, became increasingly involved in the battle against climate change, and to regard himself not just as a socialist but as an ecosocialist.

He was a Trotskyist train driver with a view on everything. You could go to him and I frequently did I have to say for an invaluable opinion on everything from the history of the workers movement, the application of Marxist principles on a range of issues, international politics, the situation in the unions or the tactics of the most recent election campaign. In fact he always had the most detailed views on any current election campaign.

His trade union contribution has already been the subject of moving tributes from within the RMT. But the contribution Greg made to militant, principled, political trade unionism has yet to be fully evaluated.

He always saw the problems of the trade unions today, and the crisis of working class

representation, as having a political as well as an industrial solution. This is why he had been active in the Socialist Alliance and then of Respect and Respect Renewal.

It is in this area at the interface between politics and trade unionism where Greg will be most sorely missed and where he made his greatest contribution.

Alan Thornett on behalf of the Fourth International

A leading socialist activist for over 30 years

RMT members learned with great sadness of the untimely death on Sunday 6 April 2008 of Greg Tucker, secretary of RMT's Waterloo branch since 1993 and of the union's National Conference of Train Crews & Shunting Grades since 1992.

Greg had suffered a malignant throat cancer diagnosed over a year ago and was admitted to St Thomas' Hospital on Saturday afternoon where he died some hours later.

As well as being a leading socialist activist for over 30 years, including a period in the 1980s when he served as a local government councillor as part of the ruling Labour group in Lambeth, south London and subsequently following expulsion from the Labour Party when he became a founding member and parliamentary candidate in Streatham for the Socialist Alliance in 2001, Greg Tucker played a crucial role in the emergence of RMT as a democratic, fighting, industrial trade union following the NUR-NUS merger in 1990. "I am proud of the role that I have played in building one of the best parts of one of the most progressive, fighting democratic unions in this country" - Greg Tucker, 31 March 2008

Greg joined British Rail as a member of Platform staff at Vauxhall station in 1980 later becoming a Guard first at Clapham Yard and then at Waterloo depot. Following the 1988 Traincrew Agreement between BR and the trade unions Greg became part of the first tranche of Guards to become Train Drivers. Along with several of his generation who cut their trade union teeth as Guards in the 1980s, Greg maintained a fierce loyalty and commitment to industrial trade unionism through the NUR and from 1990 the RMT.

In 1992 Greg was elected Secretary of RMT's newly formed National Conference of Train Crews & Shunting Grades, which merged the former Locomotive Grades with the Guards & Shunters Grades Conference. In a recent letter addressed to RMT Conference delegates less than a week before his death, he wrote: "I am proud of the role that I have played in building one of the best parts of one of the most progressive, fighting democratic unions in this country."

Greg Tucker believed strongly in the common interests of all workers, but specifically in the need for Train Drivers to defend Guards' safety and operational responsibilities against the encroachment of Driver Only Operation train services as BR sought to slash jobs and wage costs in preparation for privatisation.

Already a leading figure within RMT as a delegate at numerous AGMs during the 1990s Greg campaigned against rail privatisation. In 1999 Greg Tucker stood as candidate for General Secretary of RMT. Although unsuccessful this was an indication of the prominent position on the left that he occupied within our union. Greg was elected onto RMT's Council of Executives for the period of office 1997-1998 where he distinguished himself by winning a successful strike ballot by RMT

Guards and Driver members against plans by South West Trains to introduce Driver Only Operation trains on their suburban services.

Following SWT's climb down and promise to withdraw DOO equipment, which they had recently purchased and begun installing at great expense, RMT's General Grades Committee at Greg's insistence forced SWT's Managing Director to sign an affidavit to the effect that the DOO plan was withdrawn, a humiliation which SWT always remembered. It is Greg's great legacy that SWT train services remain DOO-free with a Guard on every train in passenger service today.

On 10 June 2001, following his return to work after standing for the Socialist Alliance in a parliamentary General Election campaign in Streatham against sitting Labour MP, Keith Hill, Greg became the latest victim of SWT management who sought to sack him as a Train Driver and permanently exclude him from any safety-critical position. Greg fought the victimisation and triumphed at his Employment Tribunal, which found: "the dismissal was part of a concerted manoeuvre involving several influential members of the Respondents' management". Commenting on the veracity of the SWT managers the Tribunal noted: "Like that of Mr Cook, and in striking contrast with the frank and straightforward testimony of the Applicant [Mr Tucker], we found much of Mr Marsden's evidence incredible, and some of it risible."

At the 19th National Conference of Train Crews & Shunting Grades held in York on 1-3 April 2008, delegates unanimously and with acclaim carried the following resolution:

Recognition of Brother Greg Tucker

"This Conference thanks Brother Greg Tucker for his long-standing service as Secretary of the Train crew & Shunting Grades Conference. "Greg is a tireless advocate for the members we represent, a proven fighter for our class and a good friend to us all. This Conference pays its deepest and most sincere thanks for his contribution and commitment to our movement and we send our best wishes to him and his family. "We agree to hold a minute's applause in appreciation of the role Greg has played in our trade union. Furthermore we agree to send flowers to Greg and Joan. "Viva Greg Tucker!"

Alex Gordon

RMT mourns the loss of tireless activist Greg Tucker

April 8, 2008 - BRITAIN'S BIGGEST rail union today expressed its sadness at the untimely death of Greg Tucker, a key activist among RMT train crew.

Greg, who died on Sunday a year after being diagnosed with throat cancer, was the long-standing secretary of the union's train-crew and shunting grades' conference, and secretary of the Waterloo branch for the last 15 years.

"RMT is a close-knit family and I know that members the length and breadth of Britain will mourn the untimely loss of Greg, and our heartfelt condolences go out to his partner Joan," RMT general secretary Bob Crow said today.

"Through three decades working on the platform, as a guard and as a driver, Greg organised tirelessly for the industrial union he was fiercely loyal to, representing members at every level." Greg fought against privatisation, and his leadership while a member of the union's executive helped to

win a decisive battle against the introduction of driver-only operation on South West Trains.

“When SWT tried to get their revenge by firing him he was exonerated at an industrial tribunal which found that he was the victim of ‘a concerted manœuvre involving several influential members of the Respondents’ management’.”Greg was a fighter to the last, and managed to attend a special branch meeting with his closest colleagues and friends at Waterloo only last Thursday.

“Greg was unable to attend the train-crew and shunters’ grades’ conference a week ago, but delegates expressed their deepest and most sincere thanks for his commitment and gave him an emotional standing ovation,” Bob Crow said.

RMT

Workers of the World Unite

As an RMT member from Manchester South Branch, i would just like to add the condolences from the branch.

I met Greg at the Guards and Shunters conference in the Eighties. This later became the Traincrew and Shunters conference which brought together drivers, guards and shunters. We have lost a real class fighter in Greg, who always stood up to the boss class. A person who was quietly spoken but always got his argument across. His argument was always clear, Solidarity, be organised, Internationalism and Workers of the World Unite. He didn’t just argue for this, he lived it. GREG TUCKER NEVER FORGOTTEN COMRADE.

Steve West

Condolences to all concerned

Sad news, I knew Greg was ill but didn’t expect this. Could you pass on our condolences to all concerned, from the branch, RMT LGBT Advisory Committee and Conference.

Mark Beresford

A remarkable person

Could you please pass on our condolences to Greg’s family and Branch. A remarkable person deeply missed.

Jim Philp Fife & District Branch Secretary

He will be sadly missed.

Sorry to hear about Greg. Please pass on North Clyde’s Condolences to Joan. I met Greg on several occasions and he will be sadly missed.

Janet Cassidy

I will never forget

I read this with shock - he was so young. We twice spent two whole days together as fellow delegates at guards' conferences in the early eighties, and it was an experience I will never forget. RIP Greg, a great loss to the movement.

Helena

Our comrade, our brother.

Dear Comrades

We were very sad to learn of the death of our comrade Greg Tucker. Our paths crossed several times, in particularly during the strike on SouthWest trains in which Greg was involved. In France we organised several solidarity actions with Greg, in particular attacking the involvement of the French national railway, the SNCF, in the break up of the British railway system. Greg came several times to speak in LCR public meetings in Paris, Toulouse, Bordeaux or in the Pyrénées during our annual summer university.

We then took advantage of the success of the Ken Loach film "Navigators" to organise public initiatives. Greg explained to in a clear and pedagogical way how the privatisation of the railways had been carried out, giving a political explanation.

Capitalist globalisation attacks workers throughout the world with violence and reminds us to what point solidarity between the world's exploited is a vital necessity. Our relationship with Greg, over and above his natural friendliness, was part of this solidarity.

He was our comrade, our brother.

We won't forget him and want to offer to his family, his friends, workmates and comrades our friendship.

The railway workers of the Revolutionary Communist League, France

Chers camarades,

Nous avons appris avec tristesse le décès de notre camarade Greg Tucker. Nos chemins se sont croisés à plusieurs reprises, notamment lors de la grève de la South West Train (SWT) ou Greg était impliqué. Nous avons, en France, impulsé plusieurs initiatives de solidarité avec Greg, dénonçant notamment l'implication de la SNCF dans le dépeçage du réseau ferré britannique. Greg était venu à plusieurs reprises animer des réunions publiques de la LCR à Paris, Toulouse, Bordeaux ou dans les Pyrénées lors de notre université d'été annuelle. Nous profitons alors du succès rencontré par le film « Navigators » de Ken Loach. Greg nous relatait avec précision et pédagogie comment la privatisation s'était accomplie, en lui donnant toujours une explication politique. La mondialisation capitaliste attaque les travailleurs de par le monde avec violence et nous rappelle à quel point la solidarité est plus que jamais une nécessité vitale entre les exploités du monde entier. Nos relations avec Greg, en plus de sa sympathie naturelle, s'inscrivait dans cette solidarité. Il était notre camarade, notre frère. Nous ne l'oublierons pas et nous souhaitons apporter à sa famille, ses proches et amis toutes nos pensées amicales.

Les cheminots de la Ligue communiste révolutionnaire

Sincere condolences

My sincere condolences, with this death the international working class has lost one of its most faithful fighters.

See you soon, Fabien Villedieu, member of SUD-rail trade union federation, Paris

A profoundly sincere comrade

Many times every day, I think with sadness of Greg.

I only learnt very late that he was so ill.

I didn't know him that well and sometimes I didn't understand what he was saying. But the 4 or 5 times that I met him he always gave me the impression of being a profoundly sincere comrade, of great modesty and politeness.

I still recall with pleasure when he told me that he had put my interview online about the struggle against redundancies at MobilCom.

I can't physically be there on Wednesday unfortunately, but I am there with all my heart with you and those close to Greg.

Alain Baron (SUD-PTT trade union)

The best memorial to Greg is to continue the fight for socialism

Dear Comrades,

It was with very great sadness that we heard of the death of our comrade Greg Tucker. We knew of course that he was ill and the outlook was not good but that does not attenuate the shock and sadness of the loss.

We saw and admired the courage with which he struggled to remain active despite the effects of his illness right to the very end, meeting him at the ISG conference just a week earlier.

We know that Greg was a central and important member of the leadership of the British section bringing a contribution and experience that will not easily be replaced, but his comrades and colleagues in Britain know that far better than we do.

But Greg was also important for us in the International where he brought his experience to the discussions of the international leadership. As a leading trade-unionist among railworkers he made every effort to build links with railworkers elsewhere in Europe, notably in France which he visited several times. The railworkers of the LCR are particularly saddened to hear of his death.

He was also a key and irreplaceable member of the team producing International Viewpoint, the

Fourth International's English-language magazine. The move to producing it as an online magazine only would have been impossible without Greg who, despite his many other commitments, conceived and built the site and right up to his death continued to be the central webmaster. One of his primary concerns at that last meeting was that we should find somebody able to take over that role.

To those of us who knew him personally he was also a good friend, who will be sorely missed both politically and personally.

We extend our sympathy and solidarity to all Greg's comrades, colleagues and friends, with a particular thought for Joan and Tim.

We are sure that all will agree that the best memorial to Greg is to continue the fight for socialism on all terrains and in all its aspect, as he himself did so unremittingly.

Long live the Fourth International!

Penny Duggan, on behalf of the Bureau of the Fourth International

We have lost an irreplaceable comrade

Greg Tucker died on April 6 2008 at St Thomas ' hospital following an arterial bleed. He was 54. Greg had been ill for some time with throat cancer and had a first arterial bleed in October 2007 which landed him in intensive care and left him seriously weakened. Greg had learnt in recent weeks that the cancer had spread and knew he was dying. No one expected the end to be so quick but his quality of life had been badly affected by his illness.

In what was to be the last week of his life Greg attended the national conference of the International Socialist Group and the Annual General meeting of his union branch, Waterloo RMT. He was determined to get to both even though he was very frail.

We have lost an irreplaceable comrade. He was a bolshie trade unionist, a tireless activist, Trotskyist train driver, a committed internationalist. He lived with Joan since 1976 and our thoughts are with her and Tim in the days and weeks ahead.

Greg first became politically active as a squatter in Jericho in Oxford in 1971. Moving to Birmingham and then London he became involved in Tower Hamlets around 1976 and was active in the claimants union, in anti-fascist activity and in the Trades Council.

Greg joined the Fourth International in 1979 and died a member of its International Executive Committee as well as of the Central Committee of the International Socialist Group, British section of the Fourth International.

Greg began working on the railways at Waterloo in 1980 when he and Joan moved to Lambeth. The story behind that was that Greg had to leave Tower Hamlets after he was arrested on an anti-fascist demonstration in Brick Lane and his bail conditions preventing him living in his home!

In 1992 Greg was elected Secretary of RMT's newly formed National Conference of Train Crews and resigned from this role only just before his death. In his letter of resignation, read to conference delegates by Alex Gordon he said: "I am proud of the role that I have played in building one of the best parts of one of the most progressive, fighting democratic unions in this country."

Delegates carried the following resolution unanimously and with acclaim:

Recognition of Brother Greg Tucker "This Conference thanks Brother Greg Tucker for his long-standing service as Secretary of the Train crew & Shunting Grades Conference. "Greg is a tireless advocate for the members we represent, a proven fighter for our class and a good friend to us all. This Conference pays its deepest and most sincere thanks for his contribution and commitment to our movement and we send our best wishes to him and his family. "We agree to hold a minute's applause in appreciation of the role Greg has played in our trade union. Furthermore we agree to send flowers to Greg and Joan. "Viva Greg Tucker!"

He became branch secretary of Waterloo RMT from 1993 and resigned only last week when he knew that his illness prevented him carrying on. He battled to attend the branch meeting in person and told me this was a very emotional occasion for him, taking leave of a role that was very close to his heart. He received a life time service award from the President of the union, John Leach.

Greg took on many other roles in the union. He was keenly committed to building links with other transport workers across Europe in particular and saw the importance of the union using the European social Forum process to strengthen such links. He sat on the National Executive from 1997-1998 where he distinguished himself by winning a successful strike ballot by RMT Guards and Driver members against plans by South West Trains to introduce Driver Only Operation trains on their suburban services.

On 10 June 2001, following his return to work after standing for the Socialist Alliance in a parliamentary General Election campaign in Streatham against sitting Labour MP, Keith Hill, Greg became the latest victim of SWT management who sought to sack him as a train driver and permanently exclude him from any safety-critical position.

Greg fought the victimisation and triumphed at his Employment Tribunal, which found: "the dismissal was part of a concerted manoeuvre involving several influential members of the Respondents' management". Commenting on the veracity of the SWT managers the Tribunal noted: "Like that of Mr Cook, and in striking contrast with the frank and straightforward testimony of the Applicant, we found much of Mr Marsden's evidence incredible, and some of it risible."

Greg served as a councillor for Larkhall ward in Lambeth between 1986-1994. He was suspended from Labour Group in 1991 for opposing cuts in services, the poll tax and the first Gulf War. He was subsequently expelled from the Labour Party.

Greg was active in the Socialist Alliance for whom he stood as a Parliamentary candidate in Streatham and also for the GLA. He was active in Respect and then a supporter of Respect Renewal although his illness prevented him becoming more involved.

Greg was active in so many different places it is impossible to recount them all here. He seemed to have boundless energy before his illness and a huge commitment to encouraging people to stand up for their rights, especially in the work place.

At the same time he enjoyed life.

He liked to eat well and I remember him rushing away from meetings and conferences to cook the fish he had left marinating before he went to work. I remember ringing him up to talk through an issue of political tactics and him going off for a minute to turn off or down the piece of music he was relaxing too (often while updating a website at the same time).

I remember sharing a drink together and him waxing lyrical about Belgian beer. I remember walking through a park in Amsterdam together and getting lost because we were too deep in conversation -

or was it argument? I remember being imprisoned by the police in on May Day for hours on end - and there being plenty to talk about. I am angry and sad that there will be no more such moments to share.

Greg is deeply missed by many people with whom he worked in different capacities over the years. One of the telling things is that even though the blogworld can be pretty cruel, almost all the comments I have seen - even those from people with whom he had deep political disagreements - are positive remembrances.

His wish was that his funeral would be a testimony to the ideas he fought for. We do mourn, but we will also organise!

Terry Conway, Socialist Resistance

A selfless fighter for the working class

It is with shock and deep sadness that we heard the news of the untimely death of our comrade Greg Tucker. Our thoughts and sympathies go first to his immediate family and friends and to his comrades in the International Socialist Group. His passing is a loss not only to them but to ourselves. We hope they gain some small comfort from the enormous respect with which he was held by the members of our organisation and the sense of loss we feel that Greg is no longer standing with us in our common struggle.

It is at times like this that we all become aware of our own mortality. We look at our own lives and seek meaning for our existence. It is clear that in the last days of his life Greg had the opportunity to do this and to declare what was important to him. No doubt his family and friends will know the depths of love with which they were bound together. For ourselves we can only say this: that he chose to continue his fight for the working class and socialism right to the end is an inspiration to us all.

We mourn the passing of a selfless fighter for the working class. He was our comrade in life. He is still our comrade.

'Life is beautiful' Trotsky said, in his last testament, 'Let the future generations cleanse it of all evil, oppression and violence, and enjoy it to the full.' Greg lived these words. For this his Irish comrades will always remember him.

Joe Craig for Socialist Democracy, Ireland

A very prominent figure of the British working class

It is with very deep pain we send you our condolences for Greg Tucker's death. We did know him in the last years and we think he was a very prominent figure of the British working class and of our history and our engagement to change this world. Please extend the condolences of the Italian section of the FI to his family and all the British comrades.

Salvatore Cannavò for the Italian comrades of the FI
Long live Socialism!

We were obviously surprised and shocked by Greg's death. I remember him well, his enthusiasm and his commitment.

On behalf of the APSR (Associação Política Socialista Revolucionária, revolutionary socialist political association) we would like to send our condolences to Greg's family, friends and comrades. We share your grief and we pay tribute to a longstanding trade-unionist and socialist. Long live Socialism!

Alda Sousa , Porto, April 15th, 2008

The absolutely untiring promoter of International Viewpoint

On behalf of the Norwegian sympathising group (FIN) of the Fourth International we want express our deep sorrow and grief over the passing away of cde Greg Tucker.

Many of us met Greg at the Institute in Amsterdam. We loved his charm, his clear formulation of his own views, his deep respect for others.

We also came into contact with Greg as the absolutely untiring promoter of International Viewpoint, politically, economically and technically. It was always a pleasure to be in contact with him.

His death is a great loss for the cause of human liberation and the Fourth International.

Anders Ekeland on behalf of the Norwegian group.

He will be deeply missed.

I am very sad. It was good to see Greg at your conference last week despite his illness. He will be deeply missed. I kiss you.

Leon Cremieux

We would like to express our sorrow, and also our rage

We would like to express our sorrow, and also our rage, at Greg Tucker's untimely death. Some of us had met him at international events or meetings; others knew something of his activities, especially on the railways, at second hand through articles and reports.

As Terry Conway suggests in her extremely moving tribute: there's every reason to mourn... and every reason to organise. We are with you on both counts.

Espacio Alternativo and Revolta Global, Spanish state

A fiery spirit who hated injustice

We were so saddened to hear of Greg's death. I had the pleasure of getting to know Greg a little when he came to Brum to help out with the student work. As you say he was a true bolshie, a fiery spirit who hated injustice in all its forms and was resolutely committed to the fight against it. His trade union work was exemplary and he will leave a gap in the RMT that will be very hard to fill.

Lynn Gregory, Birmingham Socialist Resistance

A dreadful loss

Kathy and I are away so will not be able to make the funeral. It is a dreadful loss. Condolences to all.

Phil Hearse, Socialist Resistance

A comrade and friend

Celia and I are away tomorrow on a family holiday and so can't come. Please could you forward our condolences to Joan and his family.

He was a comrade and friend that we both knew for over two decades and his death comes as a terrible loss. He's one of those people who will always be remembered very positively - putting smiles on faces and keeping comrades going in the thick of it.

Piers Mostyn, London Socialist Resistance

Condolences from Edinburgh

Sad to hear that. Poor Greg. That is the cancer my Granda died of too. Sending you lots of love and condolences from Edinburgh.

Catriona Grant, Edinburgh SSP

Stay strong

All your comrades in Scotland are thinking of you and friends and family of comrade Greg. Stay strong.

Eddie Truman, Edinburgh Scottish Socialist Party

A tireless comrade working for the organisation

During the years of Socialist Resistance's existence I remember Greg as a tireless comrade working for the organisation, participating in its meetings as well as meetings of other left organisations and joining in the discussions. At a Respect conference when I had to move a resolution, Greg came up to me beforehand with some reassuring words.

Finally, I will remember him for the courage he exhibited during the last few months of his life doing all he could to promote the interests of the organisation.

Norman Traub, Socialist Resistance, Southend

A thoughtful and committed comrade

Very sorry and shocked to hear about Greg's passing. I met him a few times and he was a thoughtful and committed comrade. I have fond memories of spending an afternoon in Madrid with him browsing for Basque folk music and enjoying a nice beer in a sunlit square.

Alister Black, Edinburgh SSP

A sad loss to all who knew him

Please pass on our condolences to all comrades and friends of Greg Tucker. His passing is a sad loss to all who knew him and to socialism and the labour movement in this country.

Mark Butcher and Alastair Stephens, Southwark Respect Renewal

Very caring, loving and committed

I met Greg in Birmingham in 1971 where he was taking a year out, in-between finishing his 10 'A Levels' and going up to Oxford to read Pure and Applied Maths.

Between 1971 and '72 we worked as volunteers helping to set up the 'Saltley Action Centre' where Greg loved to be actively involved in the 'Claimants Union' and other community activities. Greg and I offered our services as advocates for those claiming benefits and those with housing problems. Kristian was born in February 1972 and we were married in July of that year. Greg being just 18 years old and I was just 19.

In August we moved to Oxford but with no suitable accommodation to be found Greg enlisted the help of local squatters cooperative in Jericho who helped him find a house and furniture for us. By September we had transformed it into a very cosy home and Greg even had an office! His desk was an old door supported by bricks, but he was very happy with it.

Greg became an active member of the squatters cooperative while commencing his studies at St Catherine's Collage. He was always busy with the cooperative, supporting me (suffering from post natal depression) helping to look after Kristian and trying to cope with his studies too.

Latter that year Balliol Collage took legal action to evict us from their properties but with the help of a law student we presented a good case and the Judge threw the claim out as the proper procedures to notify us had not been taken. This was the first time we had ever been to court and it was probably the first legal victory Greg and I experienced. Little did I know that challenging authority was going to be a common occurrence for Greg who was not in the least phased by it at all, even at the age of 18.

At St Catherine's Greg was finding it difficult to fit in as a student. He must have seemed rather odd with his shoulder length hair, floor length overcoat and brightly patched jeans. He was not in the least bothered about how he appeared to others but he not comfortable with the class structure at the university and found it intolerable that grown men were waiting on him at table calling him 'sir'.

By the end of the first term he decided he could no longer continue his studies there and combined pressures eventually contributed to our separation shortly after this.

Greg moved to London in 1973 and lived in the very organised squat in Clissold Road, Stoke Newington. He met Sandra later that year at a party in Cambridge; she was just 17 and lived with her parents in Felixstowe where Greg and I had mutual friends. He eventually persuaded her to come and live with him and she became pregnant giving birth to Madeline in February 1975. We continued to remain friends and in January 1975 Greg, Sandra (heavily pregnant) 3 year old Kristian and myself lived in a squat in Alum Rock, Birmingham. There was an attempt to forcibly evict us from this house while Kristian and I were at home alone. The police were called and eventually persuaded the 'heavies', throwing our furniture and belongings out on the street, that they needed a court order to get us out. But we never felt safe there again and left soon afterwards

we went our separate ways.

Greg continued his very active involvement with the claimants union in Birmingham but he and Sandra split up when Madeline was just 9 months old.

Greg never shirked his responsibilities towards Kristian and continued to look after him in London taking for holidays and continued to offer support to me both practically and emotionally when needed for many years.

'I have always had a great respect for Greg who has highly developed principals even as a teenager and was prepared to stand up for these principals to defend the rights of others who were in need. He was afraid of no one and nothing phased him no matter how great the opposition.

As a young man I remember him as being very self assured and 'grounded'. He steadfastly held to his own beliefs and never felt the need to convince others that his view was right and theirs were wrong.

He was a rare individual so comfortable in his own skin that he did not need to seek the approval of anyone else through argument, manipulation or debate. Indeed he disliked anger and discord in his personal life but would readily deal with it squarely to defend the rights of others.

He was always a very caring, loving and committed father and husband in our short time together and remained there for us as whenever we needed him. As time went by he became so involved with his political commitments that he had less time to spend with his children but he was always there if needed and willingly helped in any way he could.

It is sometimes easy to say of the dead that they were 'thoroughly decent people' but I can assure you that this man was, in my opinion, the most caring, committed and principled man I have ever met and we will be hard pressed to find his like again. He leaves a tremendous legacy in his personal and private lives and will be very greatly missed by all who knew him.'

Kathi Burrell (nee Kathy Tucker 1972 -1974)

Greg will be missed by an awful lot of people

When I met Greg in 1973, we were both young hippies out to change the world! I was 17 and I think he was just 20. I suppose he was just beginning to evolve politically and at that time was involved in Squatters Rights and Claimants Union. When we first came to Birmingham in January 1975 we were squatting in Alum Rock with Kathi and Kris. Our daughter, Madeleine was born in February 1975.

Greg and I had quite a few adventures in the short time we were together, here's a some of the memories which now make me smile a lot....

We used to get around the country a lot, mostly by hitching, before Madeleine arrived. On one of these occasions we were picked up by police and searched. Greg had been taking Ginseng which he used to stir into his tea. Unfortunately it was in the form of white powder and was in an unmarked resealable bag....

They arrested us for possession (!) and held us in cells all afternoon at Chelmsford Police Station, they let us go that evening after they'd got the tests back and it was proved that it was Gingseng. I

must admit though it did look very suspicious but it really was Ginseng!

Another time we got a lift with a very scary bloke who had a telescopic sight rifle in the car, we were chased by the Police, blue lights, sirens the lot (they were chasing him not us) and when he dropped us off he said 'When you get home tell your friends you had a lift with one of the Cosa Nostra boys!' We didn't know what Cosa Nostra was, when we got back home someone told us it was a Mafia family.....! It was a very freaky ride!

Another time we were living on a houseboat and it sank! It was the middle of the night, two weeks before Christmas 1973, (freezing!!!) and we had to swim for it in a North Sea river estuary....that was scary.

I wasn't with Greg for very long, around 2 years I think, but during that time we lived in London, Felixstowe, Cambridge and Birmingham. We packed quite a lot onto those two years, it was great fun and I remember those times with fondness. Greg will be missed by an awful lot of people. My love goes out to Joan and the family.

Sandra Forsdike

A hero of mine

Oh my goodness - I had no idea he was even ill. How sad! What a great fighter he was. I recall bumping into him a few years ago at a ticket barrier at Clapham Junction - he had been disciplined and demoted from driving trains to doing the barriers. He was full of how he planned to get his job back. And this, just a few weeks after he had been vilified yet again by the Evening Standard in another major "expose" of Trotskyist railworkers "bringing London to its knees" etc etc.

He was a bit of a hero of mine, in truth. I remember defending him at the ISG conference, when they expelled him for his alleged "transgressions" as a Lambeth councillor. I think I managed to get him the grand total of one vote other than mine. I always thought it was absurd - he was more of a class fighter than the vast majority of those who voted to expel him.

What I liked about him was that he was prepared to take responsibility for his actions at the cutting edge of our work - he was thrust into a real leadership position as Joan Twelves' partner, leading Lambeth council at the height of the London Labour councils' fight against the Tories. He may not have been perfect but he took on the responsibility and did his absolute best. I always admired him for that.

Davey Jones, Brighton

He fought against victimisation

I just received the news that comrade Greg Tucker passed away this morning after months of battling throat cancer. Greg was one of the first political activists that I worked with in Britain as a member of Socialist Resistance. In 2002 he fought against victimisation by the rail bosses and won his job back after being witch-hunted while a train driver for South West Trains and was one of a number of militant RMT activists who participated in the founding of the National Shop Stewards Network (NSSN). It is always sad when we lose one of our own and Greg was certainly one of the most active members of the trade unions and far left in Britain

Tami Peterson, Labour Representation Committee NC member

A good comrade

I'm sorry I never knew. I have been out of politics for long time. Greg was a good man and a good comrade. Love and peace

Paul Wilcox, Glasgow

A loyal supporter of the miners' strike

I met Greg briefly during the 84-85 strike, he was a loyal supporter of the miners' strike and helped supply pickets and raise funds on behalf of the NUM.

I am sorry to hear of his passing, and on behalf of the NUM I salute him.

Vencermos

Brian Lawton

A very good comrade

Very sad news about Greg Tucker. He was a very good comrade and activist

Louise Whittle

He embodied the best of our movement

Greg Tucker was a superb example of selfless dedication to the causes of socialism and trade unionism. I have known Greg for nearly 30 years from the days he was a rank and file activist campaigning in support of the Labour Left on the GLC, through the ratecapping campaign and the miners strike and onto his excellent work representing the RMT. Greg was one of those comrades who was always there if you needed support no matter how difficult the issue and whatever flack we were coming under. He embodied the best of our movement, a thinking, extremely well read, and determined socialist. Because he was such an effective representative of RMT members he was an automatic target for management victimisation but he stood up courageously to everything thrown at him. Greg would not allow anything to stand in the way of serving his members and our movement. The real heroes and heroines of our movement are those that quietly without thought of reward devote their lives to our cause. Greg was one of those heroes whom I am immensely proud to have known.

John McDonnell MP

A great loss for the left

I've only just heard, via Martin Wicks, about the tragic news about Greg. I'm so sorry. I had actually thought he might have stabilised recently (not sure whether I heard this or just wishful thinking on

my part). I'm sorry not to have seen Greg over the last few months. Chris and I were talking about him on the train down to no one is illegal only ten days ago.

It is a great loss for the left – I have almost always found myself in agreement with Greg, in almost every one of the various left-re-grouping organisations that we were in together.

My condolences and comradeship to all.

In solidarity and sadness

John Nicholson, former Deputy Leader of Manchester City Council, worked with Greg particularly in Labour Party Socialists and Socialist Alliance.

He had the sort of enduring commitment on which our movement

Personally, I was also shocked to hear of the premature death of RMT activist and former Lambeth Labour Councillor, Greg Tucker. A heartfelt personal obituary is online here. I first knew Greg as a Councillor during one of the few genuinely leftwing Council administrations for which I have ever worked. I last recollect talking to him a while ago when he was helping initiate the National Shop Stewards Network. He had the sort of enduring commitment on which our movement depends in order to survive.

Trade unionism and socialist politics are lifetime commitments – and we can none of us know how long a lifetime is.

Lambeth UNISON observed a moment's silence for Greg at our Branch this week - unusually we knew Greg as an employer (!) in his time as a leading Councillor. Greg was widely respected by those who remember him from his time as a Councillor and as a comrade on the Trades Council. He is a great loss.

Jon Rogers, Lambeth Unison (Jon was long time branch secretary of Lambeth NALGO/UNISON and is currently a member of UNISON's National Executive Committee)

Viva GST!

A whole life to the class struggle.

Viva GST! He lead and spent oh so many hours in the background fighting for socialism. I cannot begin to say how much this man gave in the struggle.

Steve French

A decent man who gave no quarter to the class enemy

I knew that Greg was unwell but was stunned when I heard the sad news. I sincerely hope that you and your comrades can draw some strength from Greg's passing because he represents something that is so lacking these days - the ability to put an argument, stick to it and never waver in defending the interests of working class people. He was a decent man who gave no quarter to the class enemy. A big loss for all

Steve Nally, Lambeth Socialist Party

A class fighter who was prepared to go all the way

It was with great sadness that I learned of Greg's passing.

My best memories of Greg are from the times I was privileged to serve alongside him as a Lambeth Councillor from 1990 - 1994. I remember him as a real dyed in the wool socialist who was prepared to fight for his ideas, a good example of this being the way he refused to pay his poll tax and refused to vote for cuts in Council jobs or services. When he voted against cuts this was deemed to be a "crime" by the Tory government and he was duly fined - his real "crime" being, in their eyes, to stick to his socialist principles and stick up for the working class people of Lambeth who had elected him.

I have always had the greatest respect for Greg - I learned a lot from him, but I liked him a great deal too. I also remember his great sense of humour which helped to make some of those long meetings in the Council Chamber far more bearable. Greg was a class fighter who was prepared to go all the way, and a very astute tactician.

His passing is a great loss to the labour movement. My sincere condolences to Joan and those who loved him.

Anne Hollifield

The fight for equality lives on.

Greg was far too young to die, and yet it happens. I speak of him and you often when I recall our days fighting for socialism on Lambeth Council. We did not always agree but we remained comrades - fighters for socialism and justice. What I remember most vividly was a bit of a row with Greg when I stormed out as Leader after I got turned over about the sacking of John George the then Chief Executive, Greg was furious with me and came after once I had stormed out of the Labour Group meeting. I cannot remember his exact words but the gist of which was that I should not resign and my reply that it would have helped to have had his support. At the top of our lungs we both shouted our views about how best the interests of working class people could be served. We did not agree but it would be fair to say we had a frank exchange of views.

What I never doubted even as I disagreed with him was that Greg Tucker was as committed to socialist, as was I. He died a socialist and will I. I salute a brave comrade. The fight for equality lives on.

Linda Bellos, former leader Lambeth council

"Venceremos"

I was so sorry to hear the sad news about Greg. As you know, I have known Greg for many years - during his days as a Lambeth councillor and throughout countless struggles for the movement. He had total integrity and was never afraid to speak up for those in need of support.

My abiding memory of him was meeting you both during the Poll Tax riot in Trafalgar Square: you were sitting on a bench using a hankie to mop Greg's brow which was streaming with blood from a police truncheon's blow. You were pleading with him to go to hospital but Greg was totally uninterested and just wanted to get back into the fray. I had lost touch with him for a number of years but it was no surprise to discover him working as an activist within the RMT and when we met up he was just the same as ever.

Greg's early death is a sad day for everyone who knew him, and of course especially for you, but it also gives us cause to reflect on and celebrate a lifetime's commitment to others. Very sad not to be able to make the funeral. Greg was a really good comrade and a smashing guy and the struggle will be all the harder without him - but as Greg would say "Venceremos".
Best wishes and all my love,

Simeon Andrews

Skill, patience and time

It is with great sadness that we report the death of RMT and NSSN activist Greg Tucker on Sunday 6 April. It was Greg who set up this website for the shop stewards network and maintained it as long as he was physically able. He devoted a great deal of time to setting it up despite his illness and often wearing industrial problems on the job as a union rep. None of the rest of us on the committee as it then was had the skill, patience and time to do this job.

National Shop Stewards Network

A life-long trades unionist

Greg Tucker died at 8am this morning, Sunday 6th April.

Greg had been very ill for some months with throat cancer.

Greg supported the NSSN from its origins as part of the debate on working-class political representation within the RMT. He was a key member of the initial steering committee, and its acting organiser. Had it not been for his tragic illness, Greg would, I am sure, have remained a key officer of the NSSN during its first year.

He had recently become well enough to help to organise a national RMT Grades Conference, so, fittingly for a life-long trades unionist, was active until the very end.

I am asking Martin Wicks and Pete Firmin, the two NSSN activists who I believe will have known Greg longest politically, as well as Unjum Mirza, Glen Burrows and Andy Littlechild, RMT members of our national committee, to consider penning tributes which I can then circulate.

Dave Chapple, National Chair Shop Stewards Network

Greg had great intelligence, ability, commitment and dedication, energy, and honesty.

The many Briefing readers who knew Greg will have been deeply saddened to learn of his death on Sunday 6th April, after having suffered from throat cancer.

Greg was a Trotskyist almost all his adult life; he joined the International Marxist Group (IMG), the British section of the USFI (a Trotskyist International), in 1979 and became a leading member of it and its descendants (now the International Socialist Group) and latterly a member of the USFI's International Committee.

In 1980 Greg began working on the railways at Waterloo, first on the platforms, later as a guard and from 1990 as a train driver.

Also in 1980, Greg and his partner Joan Twelves moved to Lambeth and became very active in the Labour Party there. The borough was one of the few places where the Party and the Labour council were trying to resist the Thatcher government's attacks on local councils and services. In 1986 Council leader Ted Knight, and nearly the entire Labour group, were disqualified from office for refusing to set a rate. Joan and Greg were among those selected to continue the struggle and became new councillors as Labour was re-elected.

In 1989, Joan became Leader of the Council and Greg a Committee chair. This was the time when there was massive opposition to Thatcher's poll tax, and Lambeth's Labour group and Constituency parties were divided as to whether the Council should be part of that opposition. Joan and Greg were amongst those who argued that the Council should resist the poll tax, but they faced hostility from the national and London Party leadership (Neil Kinnock was then leader) and from the minority in the Labour group, and it was a difficult period for them.

In 1991, Greg and Joan were among 13 Labour councillors suspended from the Labour Group for refusing to pay their poll tax, opposing cuts in services and opposing the first War on Iraq; Greg was subsequently expelled from the Labour Party.

Later, Greg became a leading member of the Socialist Alliance and stood as a Socialist Alliance candidate against Labour's Keith Hill in Streatham in the 2001 General Election. He was subsequently a leading member of Respect.

Greg was elected as Secretary of the RMT's National Traincrew Conference (covering train drivers, guards, and shunters) in 1992, and Waterloo branch secretary in 1993, posts he held until just before he died. He was elected onto RMT's Council of Executives for 1997-1998 (Executive members have to stand down after one period of office). In 1999 Greg was chosen as the left candidate for General Secretary of RMT. Although unsuccessful in the election against the incumbent, the late Jimmy Knapp, he fought a good campaign and got a third of the vote.

He was keenly aware of the need for Marxists to be involved in local industrial issues, and throughout his time as a guard and driver he was a leading force in a long-running campaign that has stopped his bosses, South West Trains (SWT), getting rid of guards on their suburban services and bringing in driver-only operation (DOO).

It is a mark of how effective he was that this is one of the few rail companies in which the RMT and its members have successfully resisted DOO. In 2001, in a clear case of victimisation because of his Union activities, SWT disciplined Greg and moved him out of the driving grade into a revenue post. With the support of the RMT, Greg fought this at an Employment Tribunal and won his job back. In an unusually clear ruling, the ET decision said that "in striking contrast with the frank and straightforward testimony of [Greg], we found much of [the managers'] evidence incredible, and some of it risible."

In 2006 the RMT hosted a conference of trade unionists to try and start up a national shop stewards movement. They said that if this movement was to grow it would have to be run by lay trades union reps and not full-time union officers; Greg was the obvious and undisputed choice of the conference to be its Secretary, and one of the last achievements of his life was getting this movement off the ground.

Greg had great intelligence, ability, commitment and dedication, energy, and honesty. His involvement was never about self-advancement, but, on the contrary, his concern was with trying to take the struggle for socialism forward. He was a loyal member of the USFI, but never sectarian. The many tributes that have been paid to him are an indication of how much he was respected and liked across all sections of the left in the labour movement, regardless of whether they agreed with him politically.

Greg wasn't just about political activity - he was well-read, loved music, and was always good for a laugh. Never patronising he was always willing to assist those new to the movement and offer advice.

Gems like Greg are rare in our movement, especially today. He will be sadly missed by many, especially those of us who counted him as a friend.

Greg was devoted to Joan, his partner of over 30 years, and their family, and Briefing extends our sympathy to them.

Jeff Slee and Pete Firmin, Labour Briefing

His passing is certainly a loss to the RMT and the left

I had intended to write something this evening, but Alex Gordon's contribution from the Bristol RMT 'site covers the key points. Still, I will add a few words.

Political differences aside, Greg was an incredibly hard-working and committed activist on the rail for more than 25 years. He stood against the union's then incumbent general secretary, the late Jimmy Knapp, in (if memory serves) 1999 and captured a third of the vote. I seem to recall he withstood a grilling from Jeremy Paxman on Newsnight during the contest and much as I wanted him to come out there and then and say, "Look, I'm a revolutionary socialist", he acquitted himself rather well.

A couple of years later Knapp himself was dead and Bob Crow scored a resounding victory as the left's candidate for general secretary of the union.

In 2001 Greg mounted a quixotic general election challenge to Keith Hill, the very Blairite MP and transport minister, in the South London constituency of Streatham on behalf of the ill-fated Socialist Alliance. He only captured some 900 votes, but waged a doughty campaign with good humour.

Ironically, the "Evening Standard" waged a witch-hunt, in equal parts nasty and stupid, against Greg as he was fighting an ultimately successful battle against the management of South West Trains over his victimisation. One particular editorial evinced the paper's incomparably high journalistic standards. It attacked Greg for being a leading member of the Socialist Alliance, led by Arthur Scargill! (For readers not familiar with the background, the ex-miners' leader had established the Socialist Labour Party in 1996 and would not touch the Alliance with proverbial barge pole).

Undoubtedly, Greg would have taken a leading role in the National Shop Stewards Network for which he was the initial organiser, but his ultimately fatal illness prevented that.

Without a doubt, we had sharp differences, but I would be hard pressed to recall many occasions when those disagreements were anything other than comradely, and his passing is certainly a loss to the RMT and the left of the labour movement more generally

George Binette, Permanent Revolution

An eye on bringing people together

Living outside of London, we are often quite cut off from the “left scene” which is very much centred on life in the capital. I hadn’t even realised that Greg Tucker was ill and it came as a massive shock to hear a couple of days ago that he had died.

Now that I’ve got five minutes to write something by way of a tribute, I find that everything I would have written has already been said by others; people who knew him better or longer than I did.

I didn’t know him well. We were in different unions, he’d been expelled from the Labour Party I think before I even joined it, and we were in the same political organisations or campaigns only sporadically. But the few times I met him Greg was always that rare thing on the left: a clearly principled and determined socialist, yet someone who would speak calmly and thoughtfully with an eye on bringing people together rather than concentrating on disputes. He played an important role in both political and industrial struggles, and was both a willing organiser and a principled leader.

The left, and the entire trade union movement, is poorer without him.

Nick Holden, Alliance for Workers Liberty

He won respect. He also won some arguments.

It is very sad news that such a tremendous class fighter has died so young. I knew Greg for many years in South London, but only in that way so many socialists know each other - as someone you always see at the meetings and on the demos and who you often have a quick joust with on some political dufference of the day.

However, I got to know Greg properly during the period of the Socialist Alliance. I used to give him a lift home after meetings. Or rather I used to give him a lift home after Greg, myself and Rob Hoveman (then of the SWP) had sat in the pub after the meetings talking till closing time about the ins and outs of the SA.

In getting to know him properly I discovered a man of vast experience in the movement, someone with a sharp eye for the absurdity of the left’s posturing (including in his own organisation) and a comrade who was prepared to argue his corner in an honest and meticulous way. He won respect. He also won some arguments.

But even when I felt he was wrong and lost the argument he never lost my respect. Far from it. He used to insist to Rob Hoveman that he was far closer politically to me (and Workers Power which I was in at the time) than he was to the SWP. This confused Rob who felt that Greg should really be in the SWP and that he was miles from the “ultra left” positions that I was banging on about.

Greg told Rob the opposite was true. That while he didn’t agree with me on everything he agreed with me on far more things than he did with the SWP. And to demonstrate this wasn’t just pub talk Greg was featured as part of the SA Party Election Broadcast in the general election - a broadcast that I felt the SWP were controlling too tightly and watering down too much.

So did Greg - and in a piece on the railways he took the opportunity to explain clearly and coherently why the Socialist Alliance stood for workers’ control on a renationalised railway. It was miles better than any of the other contributions to the broadcast which were kept within the confines of left reformism. It stood out quite sharply on the broadcast. And it is a memory that I will cherish of Greg in the light of his untimely death and of me not seeing more of him before that death since my move to Liverpool. Condolences to his friends and family.

Solidarity forever.

Mark Hoskisson, Permanent Revolution

He always took his viewpoint from a global perspective

On behalf of the Provisional Central Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain I wish to express our sorrow at the death of comrade Greg Tucker. He died at St Thomas's hospital on April 6 after suffering from malignant throat cancer for over a year.

Greg was a leading member of the International Socialist Group and an outstanding trade union militant, first in the NUR and from 1990 in the merged RMT.

The comrade gained a degree of notoriety in the 1980s, when as a Lambeth councillor, he was expelled from the Labour Party along with 12 other 'hard left' rebels.

As part of the 'turn to industry' Greg got himself a job on British Rail in 1980, working first as a member of platform staff at Vauxhall station then becoming a guard. In 1988 he was part of the first tranche of guards to become train drivers.

Throughout his time on the rails he remained a firm advocate of industrial unionism. He was at the forefront of many high-profile disputes with the employers. He was, for example, sacked in June 2001 on bogus charges by South West Trains and after a long campaign reinstated by an employment tribunal. In 1999 he stood for the post of RMT general secretary, gaining around a third of the votes.

CPGB comrades got to know Greg during the time of the Socialist Alliance. We were glad to support him as an SA candidate in the 2001 general election. Greg spoke from the platform at our annual Communist University on a number of occasions.

Invariably, our comrades found him friendly, refreshingly frank, with a genuine working class partisan's lack of sectarian narrowness in his dealings with those from political trends different to his own. He always took his viewpoint from a global perspective. In many ways he was more a member of the Paris-based Fourth International than its affiliate in Britain.

We send our heartfelt condolences to his comrades in the ISG, RMT and the broader movement, as well as to his friends and family. He was a fine communist and his death is a real loss to the whole left -

Mark Fischer

'An unreconstructed figure of the hard left'

"Mr Tucker represents all that is wrong with the RMT. An unreconstructed figure of the hard left, and a fanatical supporter of Arthur Scargill's Socialist Alliance, he was ejected from the Labour

Party some years ago. He, along with several other RMT leaders, is a throwback to the trade unionism of the 1970s - an era that must never return. If we are ever to see a modern railway service in this country, sooner or later there will have to be a showdown with the mindless militants of the RMT." Editorial in the *Evening Standard*, 4 January 2002

Greg Tucker - who died yesterday from throat cancer - was no stranger to hostile media coverage; it'll be interesting to see what some of the mainstream press obituarists come up with. But he never had any difficulty with being described as 'an unreconstructed figure of the hard left', because that is essentially what he was.

Greg and I got to know one another in the South London branch of the International Socialist Group in the early 1990s, and later worked together in the London Socialist Alliance. In the 2001 general election, he stood as a Socialist Alliance parliamentary candidate, polling 906 votes against Keith Hill in Streatham.

He also served as a Labour councillor in Lambeth throughout the period in which that local authority was controlled by the hard left, achieving a certain amount of notoriety, including this mention in the House of Commons by a Tory former cabinet minister.

As Michael Heseltine made clear, Greg lost his council seat not because he was voted out by the voters or democratically deselected by Labour Party members, but because he was deemed unacceptable by the Walworth Road machine:

Mr. Heseltine : But there is a consolation prize for the Labour party. It will win the vote of no confidence that was passed today in its Labour candidates in Lambeth. The House is entitled to the latest up-to-the -minute information. Today the Labour executive kicked out 13 of Labour's councillors in Lambeth. The Labour leader, Joan Twelves, is out. The mayor, George Huish, is out. The deputy leader, John Harrison, is out. The chief whip, Julian Lewis, is out. Greg Tucker, Mrs. Twelves's partner, is out. I leave it to my right hon. and hon. Friends to interpret that for themselves ; whatever he happens to be, he is out on his ear. As all those great luminaries of the Labour establishment get the chop, they have given a new political significance to the meaning of the Lambeth walk. [Interruption.] It is a long way to Tipperary and it is quite a long way to Sheffield as well.

As if all of this didn't keep him busy enough, Greg went on to achieve notoriety all over again for his activism in the RMT transport union, playing a leading role in several strikes. In 1999, he stood for the position of general secretary on a rank and file ticket, and picked up around one-third of the ballot, a highly credible vote for a revolutionary.

The *Daily Telegraph* headlined one story about him 'Left-winger at the heart of the dispute'. It's almost a pity that Greg will be cremated rather than buried, because that would have made the perfect epitaph. Condolences to Joan and to Greg's son by an earlier relationship

Dave Osler

Represented all that is positive

Was totally gutted when I heard this, Greg was a totally sound bloke and represented all that is positive about the workers' movement.

Lawrie Coombs

A steel core of political principle

Bad news. I knew Greg in the latter days of the IMG-SL and the early ISG. Since then our paths have diverged and in recent years we were no more than nodding acquaintances. But I will remember him as one of the calmest and most stable of leftists, and as someone who, though always friendly and collaborative in his approach, had a steel core of political principle. A great loss to the movement as well as to his family.

Mike Macnair

A fighter in the socialist movement

Greg Tucker will be missed. He was always a fighter in the socialist movement and the trade unions. His calm reasoned approach in the face of many political attacks was an inspiration to me and many others. Condolences Joan and his family.

Garth Frankland, Leeds

Sound, principled and conscientious

I got to know Greg Tucker when we were both on Lambeth TUC some years ago. He was a likeable bloke, always a sound, principled and conscientious member, and I believe that would also have been true of his work as a local councillor. Lambeth had more than its share of problems to cope with, and the councillors took a lot of stick both from the Tory parasite press and some shifty elements purportedly on the "Left". Councillors like Greg opposed the Gulf war -how dare they! So when they tried to probe corruption in the council's affairs the dirty press and it seems the Labour leadership tried to blame them for what they were trying to stop.

The ignorant ("Scargill's Socialist Alliance"!) and malicious press attacks on Greg both on his political record and his union activity are a tribute. They do this whenever they sense that someone won't sell out. Talk to any of his fellow workers and you hear nothing but respect for the guy.

Charlie Pottins

A most principled and courageous man

Bloody hell! I didn't even know he'd been ill. This is terrible news. We can ill afford to lose principled socialist industrial militants like Greg. He was obviously a very bright, able articulate guy who had made a conscious decision to "stay with the class" by remaining in the rail industry rather than seeking out some more comfortable job in academia or as a full-time official (either of which he could easily have done if he'd been willing to compromise his principles).

Although I didn't know him very well and was often on the opposite side of political arguments, I always found him personally friendly and unsectarian. He was clearly a most principled and courageous man, and personally always very friendly and polite, even to factional opponents like me I'll certainly miss him. My condolences go to his friends, family and comrades.

Jim Denham, Alliance for Workers Liberty

A badge of honour

Every socialist should consider it a badge of honour to really get up the noses of the class enemy.

Doug

Always an honest broker

I'm very saddened to hear of Greg's passing. For a little while the Socialist Alliance in London looked like a going concern with Greg Tucker as secretary. I was LSA chair at the time and Rob Hoveman was newly active in the executive for the SWP.

I remember attending a meeting of the European left in Paris with Greg and Rob. Greg and I shared a flat of an LCR comrade and had dinner together at a restaurant near Bastille, aptly named Sans Culotte. I think I had the duck.

Greg was always an honest broker in the Socialist Alliance and seemed genuinely interested in a unity of the Marxist left and not merely forming a fishing pool of disgruntled Labourites from which to recruit to the one-true-sect.

He was a committed father from what I know of many chats with him on many train trips up and down to Socialist Alliance executive meetings, demos and the sort. He was a widely read communist and open to working with political currents on to his left and right.

Of course, partly due to his membership of what I consider the opportunist ISG, we differed on many issues of politics, but we could always return to good humour.

His only problem was that for someone with a council flat so near to The Oval in Kensington, he had absolutely no interest in cricket. I offered to swap with him.

He was a great fighter for the London train drivers and will be greatly missed.
Red salute Greg.

Marcus Strom, Sydney

A real good egg

I remember meeting Greg at a Stop The War fringe meeting of some random RMT conference in Manchester. I gave some random speech about the school students strikes (this was a few months after "Day X") and he came up to speak to me afterwards to ask for more details.

He said that he found people like me heartening, not only involved in the anti-war movement but also getting back into the trade unions.

I never met him since, but he always seemed like a real good egg. I have often heard about his militancy in the RMT.

My condolences go out to his family and comrades

Kit

Always a very nice fellow

Sorry to hear about Greg Tucker. I remember meetings round the prefab he shared with Joan Twelves in Bow about thirty years ago. Always a very nice fellow. And we really need militants in public services now. RIP.

Sue R

A man who understood

A man who understood the importance of being in the same trench as the working class if you are to gain their respect and support. A great loss, condolences to family, comrades and friends.

Mick Hall

Smart and considerate

A terrible way to go, throat cancer is nasty. He was still young when I run across him about 25 years ago, smart and considerate, shame there were not more like him.

modernityblog

I have good memories of him

I'm sorry to hear about the demise of the comrade. I have good memories of him from the Socialist Alliance, in particular. I offer my condolences to his family and friends

Southpawpunch

A great loss to the movement

I am so shocked to hear this news. Greg was a lovely man and is a great loss to the movement. I always found him to be extremely easy to work with, very comradely even in the middle of major political rows! I worked with him in the Socialist Alliance and we were GLA candidates together. Anyway, what can I say except to express my condolences to his partner, family friends and comrades. Unfortunately as I live in Cork now I cannot come over to his funeral but my thoughts are with all those close to him.

Anne McShane

Greg was a great guy

Please pass on my condolences to Joan Twelves as I do not have her email address. Greg was a great guy and will be sadly missed.

Dorothy Macedo, Wellington NZ

I still owe Greg a debt of gratitude

Greg was a great guy as I have said before on this blog and although we were politically separated many years ago, 1991, I still owe Greg a debt of gratitude to recruiting me to the SL in 1983, for introducing me to many people I still consider friends even though our paths have diverged considerably. I was just saying to Luci it is difficult to think he has gone from among us.

Mike Calvert, Assistant Branch Secretary Islington Unison

He gave much hope and great inspiration

I am shocked and very saddened to hear about the passing away of Greg. I never knew him but was always impressed, whenever I heard him speak or read what he wrote, by his careful, thoughtful and stimulating contributions and perceptive and thorough analyses of vital political issues of concern to those involved in the struggle for Socialism.

He will be sorely missed but will be forever valued and remembered by many. He gave much hope and great inspiration to Socialists, trade unionists and activists for a better future, a Socialist future. That struggle continues albeit weakened by his tragic loss but strengthened by his eternal spirit of defiance and determination. Thank you Greg.

P Black

His arguments were always thoughtful

I was very sad to hear the news of Greg's death. I of course remember Greg very well when I too was a member of the ISG, whatever position he took his arguments were always thoughtful and his actions comradely. He will be missed.

Andrew Berry, Assistant Branch Secretary Islington UNISON

Greg's commitment was life long, whatever the conditions of the moment

I did not know Greg very well on a personal level, although I worked with him on and off for 20 years, mostly in the RMT. Greg was a prominent activist within the RMT as a guard and then train driver. He was Secretary of the Train Grades conference of the RMT, and had been a member of the union's lay Executive Committee. He stood as a candidate for General Secretary against Jimmy Knapp (for the absence of anybody else prepared to do so), receiving around a third of the votes. We were delegates together on a number of occasions to the RMT's AGM and involved in the various left formations.

A similar age to him, we were part of a generation which suffered a long series of defeats. Many of the people we knew and worked with were personally defeated and demoralised, and dropped out of political and trade union activity. Some abandoned their earlier political convictions. But Greg's commitment was life long, whatever the conditions of the moment.

Greg could have had a 'career' but chose instead to organise workers as a lay activist in the workplace, where anybody who held positions of leadership was a natural target for management. Like many left wing activists he suffered victimisation (at the hands of South West Trains), though he, his members and the union eventually won his job back. He considered such attacks to be an inevitable overhead of the struggle.

Although his politics changed to some degree over the years, Greg remained true to his youthful convictions and carried on his trade union and political work despite the depressing conditions under which we had to work for so long.

The other thing that can be said about Greg was that he was someone who was widely liked and respected, despite operating in a movement in which sectarianism was exacerbated by defeats. In this environment some left activists lost a sense of proportion, treating people close to them on the political spectrum as if they were enemies. Greg in contrast was never personal or objectionable with people with whom he had disagreements, even sharp ones. He faced political abuse (directed at him) with a wry smile. The small-mindedness and narrow sectarianism of many on the left was alien to him.

His experience, good humour and gritty determination will be missed by RMT activists and members, and his political associates. His departure too early, in his 50's, is a reminder to those of us of his generation to make the most of our time.

Martin Wicks, Solidarity

P.S.

* From Socialist Outlook : SO/15 - Summer 2008, on ISG website: