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Fourth International

Greg Tucker: towards a tribute

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[Greg Tucker was a key and irreplaceable member of the team producing International Viewpoint. 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 only a week before his death was that we should find somebody able to take over that role.]

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/greg1.jpg>]

Greg Tucker died on April 6 2008 at St Thomas's 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.

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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 Lameth 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

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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!