

THE CASE OF PATRICK SLAUGHTER

PATRICK SLAUGHTER, the son of Cliff Slaughter, a member of the Workers Revolutionary Party Central Committee, was jailed last year after a 'conspiracy' case directed against football fans in Leeds.

This jailing is being used by the misnamed International Communist Party to attack the WRP - with the slanderous charge that we defend fascists. The ICP, and the party of their guru David North, the Workers League in the United States, choose to side with the state - not to explain how the state prepared further attacks on democratic rights by its campaign against 'football hooliganism'.

This special supplement analyses the most recent activities of the ICP, and we reproduce a letter which Cliff Slaughter sent to the Leeds Trades Union Council.

IN THE latest issue of the paper 'International Worker', there appears a four-page article by Mr David North alleging that Patrick Slaughter is a fascist. North, based in Detroit, Michigan, is Secretary of the Workers League, and his article was first published in that organisation's 'Bulletin' for 7 December 1988.

Now it is reprinted by the group ('International Communist Party', ICP) led by David Hyland (a renegade from the WRP who has now set up as British representative of the fake 'International Committee' of David North.)

At the December meeting of the Leeds Trades Union Council, members of Hyland's group distributed a leaflet which referred to Patrick Slaughter as 'associating with fascists'.

This leaflet alleged that 'the Cliff-Slaughter-led WRP was campaigning for the labour movement to 'defend racists and fascists'; and it complained that a letter to the Trades Union Council with this theme had been suppressed.

Printed overleaf is the letter sent by me to the Trades Council in response to this leaflet. It was taken as a 'correspondence' item at the 26 January meeting.

At the same meeting, the agenda included a motion from Leeds NUPE No.1 Branch (the matter was raised in that Branch by ICP member Stephen Long).

It was deferred to the February meeting owing to shortage of time. The motion reads as follows (for ease of understanding, I have corrected some of Long's spelling, but not his grammar):

'This Branch notes the conviction of five youths in the Wild Boar trial held in Leeds over the summer period. The trial was widely covered in the press and by 'Searchlight' and Leeds Anti-Fascist Action. The ringleader of the youth convicted was well-known as Leeds Fascist Dave "Para" Brown.

'This Branch rejects any position that fascists and racists are defended by, or within the Labour Movement.

'This Branch therefore condemns the provocative campaign of the Workers Revolutionary Party which sets out to defend these youths and has

named to the fascists members of the International Communist Party, including a member of this branch, who covered the trial.

'This Branch further calls upon the Leeds Trades Union Council to likewise condemn the position of the WRP and oppose this reactionary campaign in the Labour Movement.'

We invite the widest possible correspondence and discussion in Workers Press on this vicious and systematic series of falsifications by North and his acolytes.

A number of facts must be added to those which have already been set down in articles and in the above letter to the Trades Council.

Outside the Leeds Trades Council, Stephen Long was asked by me if he would say, as North writes in the paper which Long was trying to sell, that Patrick Slaughter is 'a fascist'.

He refused to answer directly, saying: 'He associated with fascists.'

Pressed strongly by me and others, he repeated this evasion (which is also a lie). Placed yet again under pressure, he said: 'It's the same thing!'

A minute later, he said directly to me: 'You associate with fascists. You were in friendly conversation with Brown during the court proceedings.' (Since he had just said that to associate with fascists is the same thing as being a fascist, I drew the logical conclusion, and acted accordingly.)

The only thing that even resembles factual evidence for the whole lying campaign of the ICP provocateurs is their reference to the anti-fascist paper 'Searchlight', which carried a report before the Leeds trial on racist opinions expressed by one of the accused, Dave Brown.

They also reported that Brown had at one time shared a house with a fascist named Frank Burden.

In earlier articles against Patrick Slaughter and the WRP, North repeated a story that 'a leading Nazi from Sweden' had stayed in Brown's flat.

North now attacks me for having said in an earlier article that I knew nothing of the politics of Brown and neither did North. I do know who are the 'leading' and 'well-known' fascists in Leeds.

We have now spoken to 'Searchlight' - remember, the

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only source quoted by North, Hyland, Long and Co. - about Brown or anyone else being a fascist, 'leading' or otherwise.

The first thing we learned was that 'Searchlight' has for months been pressed persistently by the Hyland group to publish more against the defendants in the Leeds case. 'Searchlight' has not done so, for the very good reason that they have nothing more to publish!

What the Hyland group has been doing is trying to manufacture their own news in order to use it against the WRP, and against Patrick Slaughter, as 'independent' evidence!

We also learned the following: 'Searchlight' has no evidence whatsoever, and has never claimed to have, of any communication or association between any of the defendants, Brown included.

Thus, the only source for North, Long, Hyland or any of the ICP to allege such association is... the police!

And this is just the point. This was a conspiracy trial. The police framed these youth. The only evidence for any association - and it is lies - is in the notebooks and court statements of police provocateurs called 'undercover officers'.

On Brown's politics (which are nothing to do with the politics of Patrick Slaughter or any of the others convicted), 'Searchlight' says:

'Brown is well-known as a Nazi thug. He is in no organisation so far as we know. He has made his beliefs clear and has boasted of his exploits. He shared a house at one time with Frank Burden.'

I do not know the evidence on which 'Searchlight' bases this conclusion, but I have no reason to doubt that Brown (known by the Leeds United supporters I have questioned as a loudmouth who romances about his 'exploits') has expressed racist opinions.

But no-one with any intelligence or sense of proportion, will say that this, in a person not known to be in any fascist organisation, makes him a 'leading fascist'!

This is the sum-total of what 'Searchlight' knows in respect of this case.

'Searchlight' has no knowledge whatsoever of any racist or fascist opinions of any of the others sentenced, and certainly

not of Patrick Slaughter, who went out of his way to ask permission of the Court to make an open declaration there of his long-time and well-known hatred of all forms of racist prejudice.

Even in respect of Brown, let alone Slaughter, the ICP lies. We have investigated their story of a 'leading Nazi from Sweden' staying with Brown and it can be stated categorically that this is totally untrue.

Further, on the resolution brought by Long to the Leeds Trades Council in the name of his NUPE Branch:

It is stated that the ringleader of those convicted was Brown. Now it cannot be said too strongly that the only place where Brown has been said to be a ringleader was in court, by the police.

Does the ICP consider that the 'undercover operation' proved that Brown was the ringleader of a conspiracy by those accused?

Don't they know that convictions under the notorious Conspiracy Laws, used against workers and political opponents as well as against he youth, do not even require such proof?

Why did not the ICP applaud the West Yorkshire Constabulary for its commendation award to the officers involved in the case?

The motion from Long goes on to say that the WRP conducts a provocative campaign to 'defend these youths', and since these youths are 'known' to be 'associates' of 'well-known fascist' Brown, we are therefore defending fascists!

The WRP, we will say without hesitation, does campaign for the labour movement to defend the youth against police frame-ups, police raids, and undercover provocateur operations to 'fit up' football supporters for show trials.

The 'football' trials of 1988 had nothing to do with hooliganism or with justice, but only with the government's preparations for identity card schemes and increased police powers.

As in the question of the oppression of Ireland, the ruling class seeks to dragoon working-class and middle-class opinion behind a campaign against so-called terrorism and hooliganism in what is fraudulently called the public interest. In reality the purpose is to ensure and strengthen the

To: Leeds Trades Council

Dear Comrades,

I ask you to consider this letter urgently despite the fact that my trade is Leeds but to Bradford Trades Council. Consequently I must write per reason: the matter I raise concerns a vicious public campaign of vilification (Patrick Slaughter) and against me and the political party of which I am Secretary of slander is carried out by, among others, certain members of Leeds Trades Council who represent that body or the overwhelming majority of its members.

Part of this campaign, slandering Patrick Slaughter as a racist and a fascist, advocating defence of racists and fascists, was the leaflet distributed at the December meeting by Stephen Long and other members of an organisation called the International Communist Party.

This leaflet referred, among other things, to, 'the campaign led by the Revolutionary Party which calls upon Labour movement organisations to defend racists and fascists.' The leaflet then says, 'It became clear in the course of the trial that Patrick Slaughter associated with proven fascists such as ex-Falkland Islands who himself led a gang of youth involved in violent attacks against riot police, pictured in a recent edition of 'Searchlight' and identified as a well-known member of the trial Cliff Slaughter was observed in friendly conversation with me.'

I will not comment on the derisory last sentence. The main point here is that I am innocent of guilt by association. It is a favourite method of the class enemy, in the anti-working-class capitalist press. To use this method as the ICP leaflet does is to break the notorious conspiracy law by the police in this case.

I must make a number of points about the police case (and there are many more). They did not prove, and the prosecution said explicitly that it could not prove, under this law, that those charged did in fact associate in a conspiracy to commit an act of violence using the same law to imprison Des Warren and Ricky Tomlinson after they had committed the police produce a single victim of any act of violence. The only arrangement of the undercover investigation by police provocateurs, was of one of the accused, Patrick Slaughter's counsel, at his specific request, asked the police to investigate the whole operation and its preparation considered investigating the Leeds Road. They answered a very definite 'No'. The fact is that not a single person in Leeds was even investigated, let alone charged and brought to trial. A person in the labour movement who expects anything else from a police operation is a fool. One of the accused was found by the police to have copies of the National Front magazine. Even though this literature was in court as part of the exhibits, it was not used in the prosecution. This man was found not guilty.

When Patrick Slaughter's room was subjected to a dawn raid, the police took his papers. There was no right-wing literature of any kind to take (though on the shelves they could have found Hitler's 'Mein Kampf' and the autobiography 'The Making of Me' that make me?). The police did not take from Patrick Slaughter's room any right-wing and Marxist publications which it contained, nor a CND badge, nor a WRP which lay on his desk. He was not interrogated about any right-wing literature or the WRP.

The fact is that the 'Wild Boar' trial was in no way a trial of racists; it was an operation to put youth in the dock who could be given exemplary sentences in the name of the government's campaign against violence, in defence of the law and so on, with the whole thing whipped up to hysteria-point by the gutter press. These frame-ups failed in one case after another in the summer of 1988. The use of police provocateurs. It became desperately important to get co-

state oppression of the working class itself.

This is ABC to socialists, but the ICP is completely blinded to the real issues by its hysterical campaign against the WRP and its callous decision to crucify Patrick Slaughter politically for that purpose.

Now I come to the foul calumny in the ICP leaflet, repeated in Long's resolution, that we (the WRP, and I in particular) 'named' the fascists members of the ICP'.

For 'naming' and answering those who slandered Patrick Slaughter as a fascist, those who attended his trial in order to attack him and the WRP, I

am denounced as having 'named' those slanderers 'to the fascists'!

Any reader unacquainted with the facts would assume that the WRP supplied fascists with names of anti-fascists, and that we 'fingered' them in order for the fascists to recognise and attack them.

That is a deliberate and filthy lie! We referred by name to the slanderers - political opponents of ours - just as they refer to us by name, time and time again.

Anyone who calls himself a Trotskyist, acts and speaks in the workers movement, has a name, and is known. It is not

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of a nationally planned soccer hooligans, all in s 'good name' abroad,

hem depending on the in the Leeds case.

Indeed I know on the best authority that 10 Downing Street itself made direct contact with the court in Leeds, asking to be kept informed. Now it is easy to see that these operations were part of the Thatcher Government's scheme for identity cards, curfews, electronic tagging, restrictions on travel and so on, central to its wholesale attack on democratic rights.

Not only is Patrick Slaughter not a fascist or racist. He went out of his way to make a declaration to the court at the end of the 'Wild Boar' trial specifically refuting any suggestion of association with racism and all forms of bigotry, which he said he had always vigorously opposed. Against this proud and defiant declaration (does anyone know a fascist who ever made such a statement?) the paper of Long's group (the ICP) published an article by David North saying that this statement was 'obviously a lie'! Two weeks before the Trades Council meeting at which the leaflet was distributed, the same North published another article ('The Bulletin,' 7 December 1988) saying without qualification that Patrick Slaughter is a fascist (copy enclosed).

Copies were distributed by ICP members outside the Sheffield Unemployed Centre on Sunday on 8 January. It is not a small matter that the leaflet of the ICP, two weeks later, says 'only' that Patrick Slaughter associated with fascists (and I repeat that for this there is not a shred of evidence, only the assumption that the police 'conspiracy' case establishes it).

It is clear that North made this foulest of accusations (from Detroit!) without any more knowledge than had the ICP in Leeds (the only alternative hypothesis is that the intrepid anti-fascist crusaders of the Leeds ICP 'knew' he was a fascist but decided to conceal this from the Trades Council delegates!) I urge very strongly that it would be a grave error, and a lack of solidarity, for the Leeds TUC or its Executive to regard all this as merely a squabble between two groups external to it.

The method of publishing unsubstantiated and vile slanders to discredit individuals and political groups goes beyond the limits of acceptable forms of discussion and conflict between political tendencies in the working-class movement, and is a danger to all in that movement. Those who resort to such methods deserve to be condemned.

The ICP produced not a particle of evidence, nor can it do so, for its hysterical assertion that 'the Cliff Slaughter-led WRP...calls upon Labour movement organisations to come to the defence of racists and fascists.' Let me say in response:

(a) The WRP, its predecessor the Socialist Labour League, and the Trotskyist movement throughout its history, of which I am proud to have been a member since 1957, has always conducted a principled struggle for the working class to fight racism and fascism.

For my own part, in those years and since my joining the Young Communist League and the Communist Party in 1946 (and, I may say, for a period as a delegate to the Leeds Trades Council) I have been well-known in Leeds for playing an active part in struggles against fascism. There are members and ex-members of the Trades Council, not all in the same party as me, who can, and I believe should, confirm this, and not allow the slanders of the ICP to have currency. What is done against one will be done against others.

(b) At this very time, far from the absurdly alleged 'calling on labour movement organisations to come to the defence of racists and fascists', the WRP is building up a campaign for working-class defence against the Thatcher Government's assault on democratic rights. This is very clearly shown by any recent issue of our paper 'Workers Press', and in particular by my own article in the enclosed current issue.

Patrick Slaughter is in prison and, as his slanderers well know, has limited means of speaking for himself in such matters. I therefore request that the Leeds Trades Council seek some way of allowing me to be heard in response to the unspeakable and totally unfounded allegations of 'fascist', 'defence of fascists', etc. I suggest that the least that should be done is that the Trades Council, through its officers, assure the widest possible audience for this letter in response to the ICP's slanders.

Yours fraternally,
Cliff Slaughter

P.S. It goes without saying that the decision of the Trades Council Executive Committee on this request will not be made the subject of an intervention of the ludicrous kind made by the ICP, accusing the Executive of 'suppressing' their letter.

necessary to 'name' him or her for the use of fascists. For example, fascists attacked my house four years ago. I do not suspect or accuse anyone of 'naming' me or my wife to these fascists. We are known by our activity in the pursuit of our principles.

The fact is that all the people whose names I published - such as Stephen Long, Barbara Slaughter, Andrew Wilde - are known because they were members of the WRP for years before the 1985 expulsion of Healy.

If they believe what they are saying, why do they object to their names being known.

They write in these names in their paper 'International Worker'! All this only goes to show to what depths Hyland and his friends will sink in order to slander the WRP and Patrick Slaughter.

Do they think, perhaps, that when Patrick Slaughter made a straight anti-racist statement in Leeds Crown Court he should have asked for his name to be suppressed?!

On the contrary, the purpose of his statement was to attach his name to these anti-fascist opinions. Should the 'Leeds Other Paper' and Workers Press, which published his statement, be denounced,

perhaps, for 'naming him to the fascists'?!
And yet a Mr Tony Scott, writing in the ICP paper, first denounces me for publishing the names of ICP slanderers of Patrick 'to the fascists'; and in the same breath condemns Patrick Slaughter as 'a coward'!

The same Scott, in the same letter, writes: 'Regardless of the fact that two of the names given by Mr Slaughter are fairly well-known to readers of the 'International Worker', he is playing a reactionary role here', and so on. How is it possible to discuss politically with such people?

I repeat the words of Patrick

himself to an ICP member (I do not know his name, or I would 'name' him!) during the court proceedings:

'You people are the lowest of the low'.

(footnote)

I cannot refrain from a more light-hearted footnote. I see from the same issue of Hyland's rag that he and North have a talent for farce as well as for lying and slander. They announce that, with their German friends, they are to stand in the elections for the European Parliament! Will Europe stand for them? that is the question. (CS)

North's slanders: Dot Gibson replies

'The Bulletin' (newspaper of the Workers League, USA) in its issue of 9 December 1988, devoted an 8,000 word article by David North to a vitriolic attack on Cliff Slaughter, Political Secretary of the Workers Revolutionary Party, and his son Patrick. This article is intended to whip up a hate campaign. Patrick Slaughter is actually declared to be a fascist!

The article has now been published in the January edition of 'International Worker' the newspaper of the British section of North's organisation, and his members are running around outside trade union meetings in an attempt to drum up support for the lie that Cliff Slaughter, and the Workers Revolutionary Party as a whole, supports fascists.

There is very little point in a serious discussion of the politics of North's group. The pathological nature of this group is revealed in his description of Cliff Slaughter, our Party and its members and particularly his contempt for our fight against Healy and his methods:

'The most degenerate human specimens...from hallucinating journalists, alcoholic university professors, and aging film directors of unfulfilled promise to neurotic middle class ladies who blame Trotskyism for their unsuccessful love affairs and failed marriages.

'Slaughter, the master procurer, is always on the scene to commiserate with and gently massage the bruised egos of all those who over the last 20 years have acquired personal grudges against the Fourth International'.

North cynically dismisses Healy's attacks on the members and particularly his sexual abominations. He gives away his backwardness on the question of women by referring to the men in the Workers Revolutionary Party in terms of their professions, and the women only in terms of their 'marriages' and 'love affairs'. This is bourgeois ideology of the crudest kind.

His article is worthy of nothing but the gutter press and its destination should be nowhere but the gutter. But here is the way our draft programme speaks of these matters:

'The more the Trotskyist movement fell victim to revisionism, the more did this destruction of cadres work through the bureaucracy and arbitrary subjectivism of "leaders". This was especially the case in the WRP and the International Committee after about 1970...This meant that members were treated as mere instruments of leaders' manoeuvres and demands...

'In this atmosphere the Stalinist corruption of Marxism, far from being challenged, was echoed and "refined". And women in the movement had to suffer the stinking prejudices of male supremacy, the abuses created by millennia of class oppression and daily reinforced by bourgeois culture in decay.

'The sexual abuse practised by

Healy, and the behaviour of some of his closest associates, were an extreme manifestation of these consequences of Stalinism and revisionism.

'It is no exaggeration to say that the point was reached where sections of the International Committee, including the WRP itself, became for Healy little more than suppliers of money and women.'

In 1985 Slaughter took part in the leadership of the fight in the Workers Revolutionary Party which ended with the expulsion of Healy, its leading member and leader of the International Committee of the Fourth International (of which North's organisation was also a member).

Healy was expelled for sexual abuse of female members, physical abuse of members and slander of D. North, whom he accused of being a CIA agent.

Cliff Slaughter joined the Communist Party of Great Britain at the age of 16 (his father was already a well-known member of the Party in Leeds and shop stewards' convenor at the John Fowler factory). When Khrushchev made his famous speech in 1956 exposing the crimes of Stalin, followed by the Hungarian Revolution, Cliff Slaughter became a Trotskyist and was expelled from the CPGB.

He joined the Socialist Labour League (forerunner of the Workers Revolutionary Party) in 1957, and is now its Political Secretary. He is the author of several books on Marxism and hundreds of articles on Trotskyism.

Leading

In the three-and-a-half years since then the Workers Revolutionary Party, with Cliff Slaughter always a member of its leading committees, has concentrated on the theoretical and political work necessary to carry forward the building of the Fourth International. It was the publication of the Ten Points for the Calling of an International Conference of Trotskyists for the Reconstruction of the Fourth International that led to the founding of the Preparatory Committee.

We are opposed to the method of slanders, violence and lies inherited from Stalinism. In its monthly journal 'Tasks of the Fourth International' the Preparatory Committee will conduct an international discussion for the preparation of the conference. A major part of this preparation is the fight in the whole labour movement against Stalinism and Stalinist methods.

The record of such methods is particularly vicious in the case of Balázs Nagy (Michel Varga), who is contemptuously dismissed by North as 'the old opportunist Varga'.

Characteristically, North denounces politically, without even feeling obliged to explain. We are expected to accept because North has spoken! (It is not possible to

see this without remembering the number of times Healy pronounced and expected his words to be law.)

Michel Varga has a proud record of principled struggle ever since playing a leading role in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. For all the east European comrades who have come to the Trotskyist movement, he has, since 1962 (when he joined the International Committee of the Fourth International) personified the struggle of the Fourth International to analyse and prepare for the political revolution and build the necessary leadership.

He is now playing a leading role in the reconstruction of the Fourth International, through the Preparatory Committee.

North's slanders against Michel Varga only echo the campaigns of calumny used by Lambert (of the French OCI) to discredit comrade Varga when he opposed Lambert's opportunist course in 1972. Lambert chose to adopt the Stalinist technique of slandering his political opponent as an agent. As in all things, North now comes forward as the continuator of all that was worst in the history of the International Committee.

The use of slander and abuse puts North and his supporters outside of the labour movement. We will not stand by and allow Cliff Slaughter and his son to be called fascists. We expelled Healy for such methods and defended North against Healy's slanders against him.

North accuses Cliff Slaughter of being 'the wounded father, whose loving son has been subjected to such cruel abuse by the "inhuman" followers of North, who care nothing about the "individual" and his "personality".' Cliff Slaughter is supposed to feel guilty because he is the loving father of a loving son. Well he does not, and should not!

Before 1985, in the old WRP, so-called 'politics' became an excuse for the most cruel, heartless, inhuman methods, alienating members of the Party from their families and subjecting them to such humiliating and degrading attacks that they lost self respect and confidence. We will never allow this to happen again. Patrick Slaughter, then a 20-year-old student and Leeds United supporter, was arrested in a dawn raid in May 1987. Over 30 undercover officers had for six months acted as agents provocateurs, drinking in the same pubs as Leeds United supporters and travelling to away matches.

Using a concoction of their notes of alleged words and actions, they brought charges of conspiracy against over 30 young men, even though most of these did not even know each other. The majority were not even brought to trial.

Patrick and two others are now serving four years in prison, and sentences of two years and of 15 months were given to two others. It was a cynical frame-up.

Hundreds of Irish prisoners of war exercise their right to silence under interrogation in the court. This right is under furious attack by the ruling class. The person's right to safeguard himself from having his own words used by the prosecution against him is a

precious and hard-won right gained centuries ago in the struggle against absolutism and its methods of torture and witch-hunting.

Torture, deprivation and the show-trial under conditions where courts sit in an atmosphere of terror whipped up by the government and the capitalist press - this is the Tory revival of authoritarian rule, the real meaning of the assault on democratic liberties.

And it is this that North and his acolytes are supporting, whether they like this truth or not, whether they vilify Patrick Slaughter or accept the police allegations against him, and condemn his exercise of the right to silence.

There is clear proof that North writes purely out of subjective hatred and without an ounce of objectivity or responsibility. When Patrick Slaughter did break his silence in the court, in order to declare his hatred for all forms of racialism and bigotry, North wrote 'This was obviously a lie!'

No conspiracy was proved. No victims were produced. Even the judge said: 'Nothing very much happened!' Patrick Slaughter was convicted solely on police evidence from undercover operations.

In January the conviction of two Millwall football supporters were quashed by the Appeal Court on the grounds that their conviction, solely on police evidence, was 'unsafe and unsatisfactory'.

Legal

North, of course, in the case of Patrick Slaughter, comes down on the side of the police and gives examples of legal cases against right wing groups like the fascist Arya Brotherhood to make his point.

Millions of youth are under state attack on their right to work and to an education. Now there are plans to bring in ID cards for football fans, and this is only a prelude to the introduction of ID cards for everyone.

It is in preparation for these attacks that the state put on a series of show trials of young football supporters, most of which collapsed - even some of the British judiciary could not stomach the brazen discrepancies in the police evidence.

Patrick Slaughter was one of the victims. North accepts the police actions and allegations, and adds his own accusation, without a shred of evidence, that Patrick Slaughter is...a fascist!

We invite all socialists and trade unionists who want to fight Thatcher and the capitalist state to read and discuss our Draft Programme printed in three issues of Workers Press (26 January, 4 and 11 February). We also ask you to come to our Public Meetings on Defence of Basic Democratic Rights against Thatcher (see adverts).

In big struggles, like the miners' strike, thousands of workers find themselves engaging in a battle with the state - the same enemy which imprisons thousands of Irish political prisoners and which attacks the youth and unemployed.

It is in such struggles and in our work to build the Fourth International that people like North and his supporters will be exposed as the 'despicable little group of provocateurs' that they are.