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3rd October 2017

Rodney Bickerstaffe
Former General Secretary UNISON

On behalf of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign in the UK we would like to offer our deepest sympathy to Rodney's family, colleagues and friends.

Rodney was a wonderful friend to the people of Cuba. As General Secretary of UNISON, he was one of the key protagonists in the Trade Union movement here that helped bring the issue of solidarity with Cuba in from the cold and to the forefront of trade unionism in this country. Working alongside his friends and fellow trade union leaders Ken Gill and Ken Cameron amongst others, Rodney made it clear that the issue of solidarity with the blockaded people of Cuba was an issue of principal that should not be stopped by right wing elements here and in the United States determined to keep up the 'cold war' divisions within the international workers movement.

When the Cuba Solidarity Campaign looked to broaden the Trade Union support in the early 1990s, Rodney played a critical role in supporting UNISON's affiliation to the Campaign as well as assisting us immensely, helping open the doors to other trade unions who were wary of support for socialist Cuba. Rodney was General Secretary when he facilitated the first crucial UNISON delegation to Cuba to meet with Cuban trade unions. The ensuing report made clear that the Cuban Trade Unions within the CTC were truly representative and that the so called 'independent trade unions' were little more than a US sponsored sham. The report became a crucial reference point in defence of Cuba at a time when the United States stopped at nothing to demonise the island and its mass organisations.

Rodney supported the Cuban people and their struggle for national self-determination free from the constant aggression of US interference in their affairs. He was a patron of the Cuba Solidarity Campaign and spoke at many CSC events up and down the country. He championed the UNISON regions twinning with Cuban regions; he spoke in Trafalgar Square at the national Hands Off Cuba demonstrations; he chaired numerous CSC fringe meetings at the TUC; he supported the influential European Trade Unions for Cuba conference where trade unionists from 20 countries came together in London in support of Cuba, and he spoke at the US embassy protest vigils for freedom for the Miami Five who were imprisoned in the United States for between 13 and 16 years.

Rodney recognised the value of international solidarity and saw that Cuba offered a real alternative to the cuts and austerity led agenda which so marred the lives of millions of working people here and saw the ongoing assault on public sector provision.

Rodney will be missed by all of us at the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. His passing will be mourned in Cuba.

Rodney worked throughout his life for the betterment of humankind. Our tribute must be to strengthen our struggle for an end to the US Blockade and for Cuba's right to follow their chosen path. In doing so we will continue to support Cuba's right to develop their society built on human cooperation and solidarity, principals for which Rodney worked all his life.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "R. Miller".

Rob Miller
Director

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob Oram".

Bob Oram
CSC Executive Committee