

Steve Hedley chooses puritanism over picket lines

Steve Hedley, a former leader of the RMT, no longer wants to work with the Spartacist League in its campaign to defend picket lines—an urgent and crucial task for the workers movement. Why? Because we oppose laws that make consensual sex illegal based on an arbitrary age limit. A fine demonstration of how bourgeois morality is used to attack the workers movement.

The reformist left and trade union bureaucracy are clear that they want nothing to do with the principle of “never cross a picket line”. Instead of openly stating that they oppose the fight initiated by the SL on this question, they attack us on other grounds, in this case appealing to puritanical moral values. Hedley capitulated to this, pulling back from a just fight in order to look respectable in the eyes of those in the labour movement who lawyer for scabs.

This only highlights the importance for revolutionaries of opposing the moral code of the ruling class. Sexual morality, racial prejudice, patriotism, reverence for the monarchy and the “United Kingdom” are all used to whip up reaction against the workers movement and the oppressed. Any concession to these reactionary morals can only divide and weaken the working class. Trade unionism is defenceless against such attacks because it wages the class struggle without breaking the rules set by the ruling class. Hedley took a stand with us against the monarchy when the Queen died and for picket lines but dropped all of this because we cross the line set by Christian morality. His sad case is only the latest among countless other instances of labour leaders capitulating before the spectre of sexual “deviance”: from the “Black Diaries” campaign against Roger Casement to the trumped-up rape charges against Julian Assange.

We communists are adamant that the state has no more place in the bedroom than in the union movement. The laws regimenting sexuality according to age have the same moral basis as the laws regimenting homosexuality or gender. Today, opposition to trans rights is the rallying cry of reaction, including against Scotland’s national rights. The fight for the social and economic emancipation of the working class must march hand in hand with the fight for sexual freedom against religious obscurantism. Hedley has provided a pathetic but instructive lesson proving this point.

—Spartacist League Central Committee
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