

# The British working class and the 2005 general election

Statement by the Socialist Equality Party (Britain) 12 April 2005

12 April 2005

Statement by the Socialist Equality Party (Britain)  
12 April 2005

The fundamental question facing the working class in the May 5 general election is to formulate an independent political response to the Labour government's policies of imperialist militarism abroad and social attacks at home.

Since it was elected in 1997 on the back of a wave of popular opposition to the Conservatives, the Labour Party has sought to neutralise growing discontent with its own right-wing agenda by warning that failure to support the government would only allow the Tories back in.

But, as the last eight years have made clear, there is no significant difference between "New Labour" and the Conservatives on any issue of principle. Both compete against one another to advance policies best able to fulfil the demands of big business.

Labour is seeking a third term in office just two years after having led Britain into an illegal war of aggression against Iraq. Every day brings new threats against Syria, Iran, North Korea and other states that are being targeted for regime-change, in what has been rechristened by Washington as an international "war against tyranny," behind which the US ruling elite intends to press ahead with its drive for global domination.

Accompanying the drive to war has been Labour's systematic assault on longstanding democratic rights. This is aimed at suppressing all opposition to Britain's participation in a new era of neo-colonialism and the government's ongoing efforts to reshape economic and social relations in the interests of a financial oligarchy at the expense of the broad mass of the population.

The Socialist Equality Party is not calling for a vote for Labour. The time has long since passed when the Labour Party could be portrayed as a political representative of the interests of the working class. The proclamation of "New Labour" by the clique around Prime Minister Tony Blair was the culmination of a long process in which the party leadership and its backers in the trade union bureaucracy disassociated themselves from any connection with policies that claimed to oppose capitalism.

Labour's old programme of securing reforms in Parliament to place limits on the exploitation of the working class by big business was abandoned three decades ago, when then-party leader James Callaghan justified wage freezes and other major social attacks demanded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Britain's major creditors, famously insisting, "We used to think that you could spend your way out of a recession and increase employment by cutting taxes and boosting government spending. I tell you in all candour that that option no longer exists."

Today, Labour makes no pretence of standing as a party of the working class, and makes no apologies for its unswerving loyalty to big business.

Within official politics, moreover, there is no genuine opposition to Labour's right-wing nostrums. Previously, the Liberal Democrats sought to position themselves to Labour's left, but they are moving ever further to the right in order to compete with Blair for corporate support.

Neither do any of the groups that have emerged in recent years claiming to provide a socialist alternative to Labour offer a new political home for working people. While they seek to attract support from those hostile to Blair and his war-mongering, their policies are little more than a rehash of the reformist policies that have manifestly failed to defend the jobs and social conditions of the working class.

This has left the working class disenfranchised, with no political mechanism through which to articulate their independent interests.

Widespread public opposition to Blair will guarantee an unprecedented number of protest candidates and parties. But nothing progressive will emerge from such "single issue" politics. It is not enough to register anger at the government. The drive to war and the attacks on workers' living standards and democratic rights can be successfully opposed only by tackling them at their root—in the capitalist profit system.

The essential question raised by these elections is the urgent need to build a new party, armed with an internationalist and socialist programme, and dedicated to the mobilisation of the working class against war, colonialism and the growth of social inequality. The Socialist Equality Party, British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, advances such a perspective.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, US imperialism has set out to finally realise its goal of unchallenged global hegemony.

The Bush administration cynically exploited the terror attacks on the World Trade Center in September 2001 as a pretext for the invasion and subjugation of Afghanistan and an illegal war of conquest against Iraq. This has provided the US with a stranglehold on the Caspian Basin and the Middle East—two of the most vital oil producing regions in the world.

This turn to militarism and colonial conquest is not simply the product of the subjective intentions of the Republican gang in the White House. Things would not proceed fundamentally differently whoever was in office. The drive to war is the product of the irresolvable economic and social contradictions of US capitalism. The violent eruption of US imperialism is an attempt on the part of the bourgeoisie to overcome the fundamental contradiction between a globally-integrated world economy and the division of the world into nation states, by establishing the dominance of one nation—the United States—over all others.

Through the reckless assertion of its military superiority, America hopes to counter its economic decline and the challenge of its Asian and European rivals. Along this road there is no turning back. Since the re-election of President George W. Bush for a second term, the previous rhetoric pledging a war against terror has been replaced by an even more all-encompassing promise to wage "war against tyranny." Under this new

flag of convenience, Washington is able to target whomsoever it chooses without needing to concoct connections with Al Qaeda or an imminent threat from weapons of mass destruction, as it did prior to the Iraq war.

“Regime-change” has nothing to do with establishing democracy. It is aimed at imposing the untrammelled rule of the major transnational corporations and banks over the oppressed masses. If the intimidation of existing regimes or the cultivation of US-backed opposition movements fails, a compliant government will be installed by force of arms.

Blair has been the foremost accomplice in this turn by US imperialism. By ingratiating himself with Washington, he hopes to secure a share of the spoils of war for British imperialism and strengthen its hand against its major European rivals, Germany and France.

His government has echoed every twist and turn of US propaganda. Any pretext will suffice for Blair to line up behind US aggression: the false claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, a nuclear programme in Iran and North Korea, Syria’s occupation of Lebanon, or governmental corruption in any number of African countries.

Whilst Blair’s policy has secured him the backing of the dominant sections of the British bourgeoisie, it has provoked dissent within parts of the establishment who fear that too close an alliance with the US endangers Britain’s own national interests. But amongst these circles there is no coherent strategy opposed to that of Blair. His stance expresses the dilemma facing Britain’s imperialist bourgeoisie, in that they need to establish closer economic relations with Europe and a place within the European trading bloc, but have come to rely on their “special” political and economic relations with the United States to leverage Britain’s interests against those of their major European rivals, Germany and France.

The need to maintain this balancing act imparts a tactical and entirely unprincipled character to the criticisms from within the political establishment of Blair’s participation in the Iraq war. The Liberal Democrats and dissenting voices within Labour’s ranks such as Robin Cook and Clare Short are far from being opposed to militarism and the subjugation of small nations. They have simply argued that the government should support the efforts of European powers to utilise the United Nations to restrain Washington’s unilateralist ambitions, and thus better secure Britain’s own interests in strategic areas of the world. In the end, most of Blair’s nominal opponents have abandoned their criticisms and fallen into line.

An alliance with Berlin and Paris and/or support for the UN is in no sense more progressive than Blair’s favoured pact with Washington. It is just a different path towards militarism and war. Indeed, while seeking to maintain his close alliance with the US, Blair himself has attempted to establish a place for Britain within a European trade and military bloc. For their part, Germany and France have vacillated between echoing Britain’s efforts to appease Washington and seeking to build up their own military capabilities in order to strengthen their hand in the drive to re-divide the world’s resources and markets.

The turn to militarism has already extracted a terrible price. An estimated 100,000 Iraqis have been killed as a result of the conflict. Some 9,000 British soldiers are stationed in Iraq, and more will be pledged to any other action Washington decides to take. This has already cost the lives of over 1,500 US and British soldiers and left almost 11,000 injured, whilst brutalising countless others. The war is expected to cost British taxpayers more than £7 billion.

Even this appalling picture fails to adequately describe the impact of Blair’s war-mongering. If a “war on tyranny” were to be directed against those most deserving of it, the Blair government would be a prime target.

In the last period, Labour has utilised anti-terror rhetoric as an excuse to trample on civil liberties. Not only is the government directly implicated in the detention without trial of hundreds of people at Guantanamo Bay, and in the atrocities committed at Abu Ghraib prison and Camp

Breadbasket, but the same contempt for democracy is evidenced at home.

In order to legitimise an unprovoked war of aggression, the entire apparatus of government, the state and the media was mobilised to systematically deceive the British people. In pursuit of pre-determined war aims, no lie was considered too bald. Whilst Blair sought to terrorise the British public with wild claims that the country faced an immediate threat from Iraq, behind the scenes the security services were charged with concocting dossiers to justify war by resort to plagiarism and doctored intelligence.

Despite this unprecedented propaganda offensive, many working people refused to be taken in and millions demonstrated in record numbers against a war they viewed as unjust and unnecessary. In response, Blair declared that he would not be bound by the popular will. In a statement that confirmed the extent to which any semblance of democratic accountability has been vitiated, Blair declared that he alone would decide what was best for Britain.

These were not simply the actions of a corrupt administration. The Iraq war and its aftermath have confirmed that inside the British establishment there exists no significant constituency committed to the preservation of democratic rights. With only a token protest, Parliament endorsed Britain’s participation in the attack on Iraq and then rallied behind the war effort. As the tissue of lies used to justify the war unravelled, repeated inquiries—most notably that led by Lord Hutton into the death of former arms inspector Dr. David Kelly—proclaimed Blair’s government innocent of any wrong-doing.

Crucial to this development is the eviscerated state of the official labour movement, which palpably failed to mount any challenge to the government. Labour Party and trade union branches were virtually absent from the mass anti-war demonstrations, whilst the Trade Union Congress came out officially against the protests. Subsequently, both bodies have lined up to defend the occupation of Iraq.

This has emboldened the government to press ahead with its plans to destroy legal freedoms won in the process of bitter class struggles over hundreds of years.

Over the last period, Labour has removed the right to silence, allowed a person to be tried twice for the same offence, declared both hearsay evidence and evidence of previous convictions to be admissible in court, and eroded the principle of jury trials. Most significantly, evidence extracted under torture has been declared acceptable in the “war against terror.”

Habeas Corpus and other rights enshrined in British constitutional law are being abrogated with scarcely any opposition. Anyone can be locked up or imprisoned in his own home without trial on the say-so of the home secretary or a judge. The mere suspicion of criminal intent can be cited as justification for an unprecedented curtailing of civil liberties. There is nothing preventing the government from utilising measures pushed through on the basis of combating Al Qaeda against ever broader sections of the population.

This election will be utilised by the government to promote a climate of fear, in the hope that it can emulate the success of Bush in securing another term in office. For their part, the opposition parties are competing with Labour over which of them is “tougher on terrorism” and is more committed to law-and-order, greater discipline in schools, and clamping down on immigrants and asylum seekers.

It is a measure of Labour’s disgraceful record in office that the Conservatives are centring their election efforts on whipping up opposition to immigration. They claim to be harder than Labour because they want to place an absolute upper limit on entry into Britain, but in truth the Tories owe a debt to the Blair government for helping create the climate of fear and xenophobia they now seek to exploit. For years, the newspapers have been filled with a constant stream of articles attacking asylum seekers, immigrants and gypsies in vile and incendiary terms,

scapegoating them for all manner of social problems.

To this Labour has responded by boasting that it is forcing greater numbers of asylum seekers into detention centres, speeding up deportations, and denying benefits—and that it too is committed to tough measures on immigration. Its attacks on asylum seekers have been used again and again to push through a general offensive against civil liberties and justify Labour's claim that vital social services are overburdened and must be rationed.

At first glance, the extent to which the threat of terrorism has been exaggerated and the scale of the attack on democratic rights appear irrational. But there is an underlying political and class logic to the course now being pursued by the government.

Firstly, the ruling elite understands that its drive to re-impose colonial style domination is provoking resistance internationally and domestically. To defeat such opposition requires repressive measures that are incompatible with previous legal norms.

Secondly, the same economic imperatives that drive the major powers to colonial conquest also demand a massive increase in the level of exploitation imposed on the working class at home. This imparts a potentially explosive character to class relations.

All the concessions that the ruling elite was forced to make during the 1950s and 1960s are now being clawed back through the dismantling of the welfare state, the deregulation of the labour market, and a shift in the burden of taxation away from business and onto the backs of the working class.

Even the pro-Labour Institute of Public Policy Research has said that all aspects of social and political life in the UK under the Blair government have become polarised “according to class and wealth.”

The richest one percent of the population now enjoys a greater share of national income than at any time since the 1930s. Britain's wealthiest 1,000 people have added £150 billion to their fortunes since Labour took office—a 152 percent increase. There are now 40 billionaires in the UK, the highest on record.

The Blair government has made London a haven for this layer, which has increasingly become its social base. A recent *New Statesman* article commented, “London is said to have 40 billionaires, 13 of whom are foreign. There is no place in the world like it. They are welcomed with open arms. The capital has become the world's most significant tax haven. There is a parallel world, in which the purveyors of yachts, private jets and other accoutrements cannot keep up with demand. Where else in the world could you acquire a diamond-encrusted swimsuit for £15m?”

In contrast, many workers can no longer afford to live in the capital and its surrounding suburbs. The same process of social stratification is repeated in all Britain's major cities.

The reasons are not hard to find. The bottom 50 percent of the population have seen their share of collective wealth cut in half from 10 percent in 1986 to 5 percent in 2002. Under Labour, the introduction of the minimum wage and other changes to the taxation system touted as anti-poverty measures are directed at subsidising employers and helping create a low-wage economy. As a result, the extent of poverty has widened under Labour to encompass what is now called the “working poor,” whilst more than one-third of children grow up in households officially classed as poor.

Britain now has one of the most regressive taxation systems in Europe. Measures to lower the base rate of income tax have only marginally benefited the poor, while the rich now pay less income tax than at any time since 1945. The shift towards indirect taxation, such as a value added tax (VAT), more heavily impacts the poor, with the bottom 10 percent of the population paying around one-third of their overall household income of less than £6,000 per annum in indirect taxes, compared with around 10 percent for those earning over £84,000.

The only factor masking the collapsing income of the working class is

the explosion in personal credit and debt. Last year, personal debt reached £980 billion—double that of 10 years ago. With new loans increasing at the rate of £10.7 billion a month, personal debt is set to breach the 1 trillion pound mark—£1,000 billion—this summer. This means that personal debt will exceed the UK's annual national income from its production of goods and services for the first time. To put it in an international context, the personal debt of Britain's 58 million people is greater than the entire external debt of Africa, Asia and Latin America combined.

Most debt is secured against the family home, rather than against earnings. In many cases, property mortgages are at rates four to five times annual wages. With the collapse of pension funds and share prices, the family house is most people's only substantial asset—and is viewed as their retirement nest egg. Any collapse in the property market would, therefore, drive millions into bankruptcy and leave them bereft of any security, while having a devastating knock-on effect on the entire economy.

Accompanying the general growth in poverty and indebtedness has been a systematic assault by Labour on vital welfare and social services. These policies have extended the Tories' drive for privatisation and other measures to enrich big capital into areas of the state sector previously considered taboo.

Labour's education policy is opening up schools to the private sector. It allows state schools to raise capital from business with measures aimed at facilitating pupil selection according to ability, thereby exacerbating social divisions.

Under the banner of local democracy, schools will be allowed to determine their own curricula—a measure that has already led to an increase in religious-based education and the teaching of Creationism as a legitimate subject.

Just as insidious for the longer-term welfare of working people is the creeping privatisation of the National Health Service through the creation of so-called Foundation Hospitals and the extension of the “internal market” established by the Tories. Every opportunity is being used to justify rationing health care based on cost.

The fabulous increase in the wealth of a tiny stratum of society has little or nothing to do with the actual performance of the British economy. Rather, it is the outcome of the drive, intensified under the Blair government, to create a form of protectorate for the super-rich through a combination of property and stock market speculation and the impoverishment of the working class.

Official politics is now the exclusive domain of the most privileged social layers, whose further enrichment is tied to the increasing globalisation of the economy. It is Labour's readiness to preside over such an unprecedented polarisation that has secured it the continued support of a financial oligarchy.

Such historically unprecedented levels of social polarisation are incompatible with the maintenance of democracy in any real sense of the term.

Parliamentary rule depends on the ability of the ruling class to secure the support of broad sections of working people for parties that, whatever their specific policies, unquestioningly defend the capitalist profit system. This form of rule depends ultimately on the ability and willingness of the ruling class to ameliorate social divisions and raise the living standards of significant sections of workers.

Today, however, the vast majority of the population, including large sections of professional and white-collar workers, face economic insecurity and mounting debt. It is not possible to secure a popular mandate for measures that enrich a tiny elite at the expense of the broad mass of the population. Indeed, the entire political process must be divorced from any form of popular control if government is to do the job demanded of it by its big business masters.

Labour's political evolution is the consummate expression of these

social processes. Enjoying lower levels of popular support than any previous administration, the Blair government owes its office to having won seats in previous Tory heartlands. According to the *Financial Times*, the nation's wealthiest constituencies are now more likely to vote Labour than Tory.

More than ever before, elections have become media events in which everything depends on securing the support of the tabloid newspapers and whipping up fear and prejudice on issues such as crime and immigration. From the so-called "mainstream" parties to right-wing extremist organisations such as the British National Party and the UK Independence Party, the essential themes are played out wholly on the right of the political spectrum.

The net result is the exclusion of the class interests of the broad mass of the population from any genuine political representation.

None of the parties or groups claiming to stand to the left of Labour represents a genuine alternative. The essential basis of the politics of groups such as the Socialist Workers Party, the Socialist Party and the Socialist Labour Party is their opposition to the development of any independent political movement of the working class based on a genuinely socialist programme that sets out to abolish capitalism. The more that workers have become alienated from the old labour organisations and sensed correctly that the reformist policies these organisations once championed have failed, the more insistent are these "left" groups that the only possible road for workers is to pressurise the Labour and trade union bureaucracy to readopt a limited programme of social reforms and take a stand against Blair.

This is most graphically revealed in the response to the mass protests against the Iraq war. Those organisations grouped around the Stop the War Coalition argued that raising explicitly anti-capitalist policies would only alienate those who did not consider themselves socialists. This was a recipe for the abandonment of any form of politics based on the working class in favour of the advocacy of cross-class alliances based on minimal democratic and social demands.

This rightward trajectory has found its most finished expression in the formation of Respect, spearheaded by the Socialist Workers Party and headed by long-standing Labour functionary George Galloway. Its focus in the election is aimed almost exclusively at seeking to win the votes of Muslims, by combining vague anti-war sentiment with a wholesale adaptation to ethnic- and religious-based politics.

Respect is not alone in substituting identity politics for class politics. The Scottish Socialist Party differs from its English counterpart only in the degree to which it openly espouses nationalism as the basis for a political strategy. Both groups claim that the capitalist state can be used to combat the depredations of the global corporations in the interests of the working class. Such a policy is only a degenerated manifestation of the old reformist programme of Labour.

The reasons for the right-wing evolution of Labour cannot be sought in the subjective actions of individuals such as Blair. Only profound changes at the very base of society can account for the degeneration not simply of the Labour Party and the trade unions in Britain, but of the official labour movement in every country.

The old social democratic and Stalinist organisations dominated the workers movement under conditions where economic life was still largely organised on the basis of nation states. They confined workers in the advanced countries such as Britain to a combination of trade unionism and efforts to secure parliamentary representation so as to pressurise the ruling class into granting reforms.

The long-term effect of the domination of these opportunist and nationalist bureaucracies has been to undermine the political consciousness of the working class. This left the working class unprepared for the decisive changes of the 1980s and 1990s, which saw the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe and the

wholesale abandonment of reformism by the social democratic organisations in the West.

Underlying the outright betrayal of the working class by its old organisations was the development of globalisation—the organisation of all aspects of production, distribution and exchange on an international basis—which stripped the ground from beneath the nationally-based labour organisations.

The labour bureaucracies could no longer combine their defence of the profit system with the advocacy of limited social reforms. Globally organised capital, manifested in the form of huge transnational corporations and financial institutions, was able to shift production around the world and dictate policy to national governments. To a hitherto unprecedented degree, economic success in the advanced capitalist countries now depended on the need to attract international investment and ensure competitiveness on world markets by slashing public spending and driving down wages and working conditions toward the levels in Asia and Eastern Europe.

The development of Blair's "New Labour" and the transformation of the unions into appendages of corporate management represent the labour bureaucracy's response to these demands of capital.

It is not possible to answer the decay of the labour movement by seeking a return to the past. Calls for national economic regulation are as reactionary as they are impotent. They cannot combat the rapacious demands of big business and only serve to divide the international working class.

The Socialist Equality Party bases itself on a fight to unify the working class in every country and across all national borders, irrespective of language, nationality or skin colour. This provides the essential foundation for combating the drive towards militarism and war.

We advance a programme for the complete reorganisation of society in the interests of working people. To this end, we advocate the creation of a new social and economic order, based on the needs of the vast majority, not private profit. Only this provides the basis for utilising the extraordinary human and technical resources that are now available to end poverty and provide decent living standards and a safe environment for all.

#### **\* End the occupation of Iraq. For the United Socialist States of Europe**

The SEP unequivocally opposes the renewal of colonial oppression. We demand the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of British, US and all foreign troops from Iraq and an end to the illegal occupation of the country. We call for the release of all prisoners taken in the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, including those now incarcerated at Guantánamo Bay and at other US prisons and detention camps around the world.

We further demand the immediate withdrawal of all British and foreign troops from Ireland, the Balkans, Afghanistan, Africa and throughout the world.

The essential basis for an effective struggle against militarism and the destruction of social conditions is the development of a unified political movement of the European working class.

The economic and political life of the European continent has already undergone a dramatic process of integration. But this has been carried out exclusively in the interests of the bourgeoisie and at the expense of the working class.

European unification for the bourgeoisie is conceived as the creation of a vast internal market capable of effectively competing for trade and investment against the US and Asia. The European Union functions as an instrument to free the transnational corporations from any restraint, to eliminate social protections, drive down wages and develop Europe's combined military capability.

The Socialist Equality Party opposes the European Union, but it opposes as well all those who seek to channel opposition to the right-wing policies

of the EU into a defence of the institutions of the nation state, based on claims that they are more “accountable” or “democratic.” Under conditions of globalised production, confining the activities of the working class to the national arena is a recipe for disaster.

The progressive unification of Europe can be undertaken only through the independent political activity of the working class. The United Socialist States of Europe is the only conceivable form through which working people can advance their independent social and democratic interests. It would enable the elimination of outmoded national borders and the rationalisation and planning of production to meet essential social needs.

Moreover, it would provide a powerful basis on which to mobilise a genuinely anti-imperialist counterforce to US militarism that would not only inspire millions of workers in the oppressed countries, but strengthen American workers in their own struggle against the Bush administration and the Pentagon war machine.

#### **\* Fight for a workers’ government**

The profit system is incompatible with the essential requirements of the broad mass of the population. We advocate the establishment of a workers’ government, which will represent the social and economic interests of working people and give them democratic control over the decisions that affect their lives.

The SEP indefatigably defends every past democratic gain, including voting, electoral rights and civil liberties. Every law against strikes and picketing must be repealed and all discrimination based on nationality, ethnic background, religion, gender or sexual preference outlawed. Refugees held in detention centres must be released immediately. We call for an end to all forms of immigration control and travel restriction. Workers must have the right to live and work wherever they wish, with full citizenship rights and full access to social benefits. Women must have the unrestricted right to abortion on demand.

But the very concept of democratic rights must be extended beyond formal equality before the law, which masks ever greater social and economic inequality. Genuine democracy requires real control by ordinary people over economic decision-making, working conditions and the circumstances of their daily lives. True democracy can be achieved only through the political mobilisation of an informed and class-conscious working population in the struggle for socialism.

#### **\* For social equality**

In opposition to a world characterised by economic insecurity for the masses and the impoverishment of millions, we advance the struggle for social equality as the essential basis for a truly free and democratic society.

All large industrial and agricultural corporations, together with the banking and financial institutions, must be taken into public ownership, with full compensation for small shareholders and, for large shareholders, public negotiation of terms of compensation.

To ensure full employment and well-paid jobs for all, we propose a massive programme of public works. To create jobs and allow workers to more fully participate in political and cultural life, the working week must be reduced to 30 hours, with no loss of pay.

Those who are unable to work—the disabled, single parents, the ill—must be provided with the equivalent of a living wage, so that they are able to live a dignified and decent life. All citizens must be guaranteed a comfortable pension on retirement and the looting of existing pensions by employers must be criminalised.

Health provision and a decent education must be available as a universal right, free of charge. Billions of pounds must be poured into public hospitals, schools, universities and child care facilities so that these services are equipped with the latest technologies and properly trained staff. There must be an end to the selling-off of public housing and a massive programme of affordable home construction undertaken. Rents

and mortgages must be reduced so that no worker pays more than 20 percent of his or her income for shelter.

Such measures must be combined with policies to advance scientific development and fund cultural life so that it is available to the broad mass of the population and contributes to the fully rounded development of every human being, and to society as a whole.

The Socialist Equality Party is the British section of the Fourth International, established by Leon Trotsky in 1938 to defend the programme of world socialist revolution in a struggle against Stalinism and social democracy.

We reject the notion that socialism is merely the end product of extended trade union militancy. It requires a high level of culture and planning, which can be established only through the politically conscious activity of the working class, guided by its own party.

The primary task of a socialist party is to educate and inform working people, and thus provide the basis for decisive collective action. To this end the ICFI has established its internet centre, the *World Socialist Web Site*, to provide a Marxist analysis of contemporary events and to advance a socialist programme to workers in every country.

We urge all those workers and youth in Britain seeking a genuine alternative to war, social inequality and reaction to read the *World Socialist Web Site* and participate through the WSWS in discussions on our programme. Above all, we call on everyone who agrees with our programme and perspective to join and build the Socialist Equality Party as the new political party of the working class.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**