

Britain: SEP to stand in Haltemprice and Howden by-election

Our correspondent
23 June 2008

The Socialist Equality Party is standing Chris Talbot as its candidate in the Haltemprice and Howden by-election to advance a socialist programme in defence of civil liberties.

The by-election was forced by the resignation of Conservative MP David Davis in protest at the Labour government's legislation enabling people to be detained for 42 days without charge.

This latest measure stands at the apex of a mountain of anti-democratic legislation that, in the name of the "war on terror," has effectively established the apparatus of a police state in Britain. Yet, despite the fundamental issues raised by measures that do away with the right of habeas corpus, Labour has refused to stand a candidate in the election.

The government's hostility to any form of democratic accountability is of piece with its decision to support the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq in defiance of popular opinion.

Labour is incapable of publicly defending its actions because it is the political representative of big business and the super-rich. It cannot secure a popular mandate for policies based on militarism, colonial conquest and the systematic destruction of the living standards and civil liberties of the broad mass of working people.

It is vital that workers and youth reject Labour's draconian measures and mobilise against this government. But this cannot be done by lending any support to David Davis in his claim to be the champion of civil liberties.

Labour and the Tories are both right-wing parties of big business. And though he now balks at 42 days' detention without charge, Davis and his party agreed to 28 days' detention. Moreover, the Tories share in Labour's crime of supporting the US-led invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, which are directly responsible for

any terrorist threat against Britain.

The fact that Davis can set himself up as an opponent of the government on this issue is testimony to how far to the right Labour now stands. Not a single Labourite has been prepared to break with the government on this or any other issue.

Instead, a handful of supposed Labour "lefts," together with the Liberal Democrats, are supporting Davis's campaign on the spurious grounds that this is an issue that stands above politics. By throwing their lot in with Davis, they have relinquished any right to speak on behalf of working people.

The erosion of civil liberties, the stepping up of surveillance and attacks on free-speech are ultimately made necessary by the extreme social polarisation in Britain between a fabulously wealthy elite and the broad mass of working people. Living conditions are being constantly eroded, wages cut, schools and hospitals run into the ground.

With Britain and the world standing on the edge of an economic precipice, the raft of legislation passed in the name of opposing terrorism will be available for use against workers seeking to defend their livelihoods against the major corporations and the government.

The Socialist Equality Party insists that the struggle to defend democratic rights can only be waged by the working class in an independent political struggle against all the parties of big business. It must be the spearhead of a broader political defence of the class interests of working people in Britain and internationally against militarism, social inequality and the profit system that give rise to them.

We call on all readers to support Chris Talbot's candidacy, participate in our campaign and donate to our election fund. For further information visit our website at: www.socialequality.org.uk



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact