

Britain: SEP campaign in Cottingham and Beverley

Our reporters
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Chris Talbot is the candidate of the Socialist Equality Party in the by-election in the constituency of Haltemprice and Howden in the East Riding of Yorkshire, England.

The by-election will take place on Thursday, July 10. It was triggered by the resignation of sitting Conservative MP David Davis in protest at government “anti-terrorist” legislation enabling police to detain individuals for up to 42 days without charge.

Socialist Equality Party members and supporters campaigned in Cottingham and Beverley over the weekend. The campaign team distributed hundreds of leaflets containing a statement explaining why the Socialist Equality Party is standing in the elections.

Cottingham, with a population of just over 17,000, is the largest village in the constituency of Haltemprice and Howden. The main employers in the area are the local hospital, the local Royal Mail depot, a timber yard, and a caravan manufacturer.

Beverley, with a population of 29,110, is a major market town and is part of the neighbouring constituency. It is the administrative centre of the county. The town is the shopping and cultural destination for many people who live in the constituency.

A reporting team from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to workers, students and youth about the issues raised in the election and the socialist perspective of the SEP.

Obie, a cosmetics salesman, spoke about his views on the policies and program of David Davis and the recent case of Rizwaan Sabir, a student, and Hitcham Yezza, an administrator, who were detained without charge for six days after a police raid on the University of Nottingham.

Obie said, “I first thought David Davis was saying

good stuff recently against Labour. Saying what Labour has done is really bad.

“About the case in Nottingham, that is really tough. I have never been involved with politics and stuff but I think it is out of order for people to get held like that. There are a lot of people that are just arrested and held and not even given a reason. Then they get released without being charged. I mean, do they even have a right to a solicitor or anything?

“Obviously I think it is against human rights to do this.”

The campaign team in Beverley also spoke to Steven, who is employed by Hull city council.

He approached the Socialist Equality Party campaign stall and said that he had heard about the decision to stand when reading the *World Socialist Web Site* recently. Steven said that he had been reading the site every day for about five years.

“I think for most people and for me particularly, this is about very simple bread and butter issues. It is issues about the affordability of food, obviously against the sky rocketing prices of food internationally.

“Regards the David Davis election, I think for me personally it is about the hypocrisy of him opposing the 42-day extension, as though he was opposing the 28 detention without trial.

“This is obviously not the case because there is no principle there. I think it is a stunt, and I think it takes away the attention from the broader issues of what Labour is doing. To me, it diverts the anger of people and prevents it from coming to the fore against the government.

“I think those are the reasons why he pulled out and chose to stand in the election.

“There is a definitely a link between the aggressive foreign policies of governments, including this country

and also the United States.

“The local aim of that type of aggression is to ensure that democratic rights are curtailed. And they try to erode the gains and democratic rights that workers and ordinary people have been making over the years. There is a definite link there.”

Speaking about the recent arrests of Rizwaan Sabir and Hicham Yezza, Steven said, “Yes, there is a definite connection between those who stand up for their rights and the move by the state against them.”

Peter lives in Cottingham and is a lorry driver for Seven Side, the UK’s largest re-cycling company. He expressed agreement with the SEP’s assessment of the Labour Party not representing the interests of workers.

He added, “Prices are going up faster than wages. How can people tolerate it? At some point people have got to say ‘enough is enough’.

“With the French...they’d be out on the streets. But people can’t carry on absorbing these attacks. It’s becoming too prohibitive. Gas prices, electricity, fuel are all going up.”

Peter told how the huge increase in fuel prices had affected his work, leading to a downturn in demand.

“Politicians don’t take any notice of what people are saying. That’s why Labour has become the second or third party in recent elections.”

He then spoke against the official scapegoating of immigrant workers.

“Immigrants should be given the same chances as everyone else. On the whole they are as hard working.

“People are having to go into their savings to live. They shouldn’t have to do that.”

During a door knock in Cottingham, the team spoke to Anthony, a single parent who works part-time in a local supermarket. He said, “On the wage I earn it all goes back to the company on provisions to feed my family and that’s with staff discount! Wages just don’t go up enough to keep up with price rises.

“I used to work as a fish filleter but left to look after my daughter. Shortly after all the workers who did that job in the fish industry were made redundant and the work is now done by machines.”

Eighty-four year old Mary Wilds said she was glad to come across a party with the name Socialist Equality Party. “I’m all for the Socialist Equality Party. Your party’s name says what you stand for. I worked in the dry cleaning industry for thirty five years at a time

when there was no equal pay between men and women. I will definitely read your manifesto and come and listen to what your candidate has to say. I’ve just been reading the local paper about that beauty queen who is standing. It’s just not serious.”



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