

Haltemprice and Howden by-election

Britain: SEP speaks to voters in Cottingham and Willerby

Our reporters
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Chris Talbot is the candidate of the Socialist Equality Party in the July 10 by-election in the constituency of Haltemprice and Howden in the East Riding of Yorkshire. It was called following 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 the villages Cottingham and Willerby on July 2 and a reporting team from the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to workers, students and youth about the issues raised in the election.

Angela Morkos is a mature student at Hull University and lives in Cottingham.

“I am familiar with all the issues that people are standing for. The SEP stands for more or less what I agree with,” she said.

“I am against the war in Iraq, I don’t like big business and I think David Davis is mobilising right-wing policies in Britain. I watch the news on TV and I suspected this. And I would never trust a Conservative anyway, to be quite honest.”

Angela said she fully agreed with the SEP’s aim of preventing Davis mobilising the popular hostility to the Labour government for his own right-wing agenda. She explained that she opposed all the attacks on democratic rights carried out by successive Conservative and Labour governments.

“I think Gordon Brown has been disappointing. I supported Blair when he first came into power but I was disappointed over the Iraq war. I didn’t believe all this about weapons of mass destruction when I heard about it

on the TV. I think it was a bit like Maggie Thatcher and the Falklands War, that Blair wanted to be the next Churchill. I think he had delusions of grandeur.

“Before this election I have tended to support Liberal Democrat policies in Parliament.”

Angela said that she wasn’t aware that the Liberal Party were not standing their own candidate and that they were calling for a vote supporting Davis. The SEP explained that this showed how far the Liberals have moved in a right-wing direction, that they can now support an avowed anti-working class politician such as David Davis.

Angela said she supported the fact that only the SEP was putting forward a coherent programme representing working class people.

In response to questions about the impact of the worsening economic crisis on working class people, Angela said, “I think it very worrying. I am on a low income. I feel that around here businesses exploit me. I am on Disability Living Allowance. I think there is a prejudice against people who are unable to work. I am doing my best and am actually studying to improve my situation and I find I am just exploited.

“All the basics are going up—milk, cheese, butter. I have to live on lentils basically and people lending me a couple of quid because they feel sorry for me. That is not very healthy and I’m anaemic as it is.

“Then there are dental charges and I don’t know how I am going to afford those. I also have to take regular medication and I am just glad that at least prescription charges are free at the moment for people on Disability Living Allowance.

“I think all this stems from Margaret Thatcher anyway. Tony Blair said that he agreed with her and I think it all worsened right from the beginning with her. And the governments after Thatcher have just continued in the

same vein since then”.

Kate Webster is a retired doctor's receptionist and lives in Cottingham.

The WSWS reporting team asked her what she thought of David Davis, the Labour Party and their attitude to the question of democratic rights.

“I don't think David Davis stands for democratic rights. I thought the Conservatives are always for the richer people aren't they? What I can't understand is him resigning and then trying to get re-elected. What is all that about?”

Katie agreed that both the Labour Party and the Conservatives are right-wing formations, hostile to the working class.

“I wouldn't have voted for Davis and I think the Labour Party are too right-wing. I saw that the NSPCC [a national child protection organisation] was trying to get smacking stopped, but Davis wasn't interested in that.

“I didn't agree with the Iraq war. The Labour Party are more like capitalists now. They are giving themselves a great big raise and the credit crisis is not affecting their pay is it?

“There is no party now for the working class. I will read the SEP election statement and I will vote for Chris Talbot,” Katie said.

During the campaign in Cottingham several other local residents told the SEP that they had heard about the party's campaign and would be supporting Chris Talbot. Among these was a currently unemployed bricklayer, who said that he had read the SEP election statement a few days ago and that he agreed with a revolutionary socialist programme. He said he would like further discussion on the role of new left formations in Europe and the Socialist Workers Party. He added that he was going to attend the Eve of Poll meeting being held by the SEP at Cottingham Civic Hall on July 9.

During the day Chris Talbot was filmed and interviewed by a student from the University of Sheffield who was covering the by-election as her final project.



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