

# Britain: Vote Socialist Equality Party

## Cast ballot for Chris Talbot in Haltemprice and Howden

By Socialist Equality Party (Britain)  
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The Socialist Equality Party calls on all constituents in Haltemprice and Howden to vote today for Chris Talbot.

Casting a ballot for the Socialist Equality Party is a vote in defence of civil liberties. It is a declaration of opposition not only to the extension of detention without trial to 42 days, but all the anti-democratic measures passed by the Labour government in the name of the so called war on terror.

More than this, it is a vote against the avowedly pro-big business party that Labour has become and a declaration of intent to build a new and genuinely socialist party to represent working people.

There is no Labour candidate in this by-election because Gordon Brown and the party leadership dare not put their authoritarian measures and right-wing social and economic policies to a popular vote. The governments of Brown and Tony Blair are the most undemocratic in modern times because they represent only the interests of a global financial oligarchy.

Internationally, Labour is dedicated to seizing oil reserves and other vital resources on behalf of the super-rich. It is in alliance with George Bush and the Neo-conservatives in the United States.

At home, they have gone further than even Margaret Thatcher in destroying universal social and welfare provisions, slashing wages and shifting the tax burden away from the big corporations and onto the backs of the working class.

The reasons for the assault on democratic rights are not to be found in the terrorist threat. The danger of murderous attacks by Islamic fundamentalists is the responsibility of Labour and all those within ruling circles that have supported the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and who are now contemplating war with Iran. And it can only be combated by working people coming forward in opposition to militarism and colonial wars of conquest. This is the only way to cut the ground from under the feet of the religious extremists.

The elimination of vital civil liberties that we are experiencing is on a scale not witnessed even in times of war. This testifies to the acute tensions within society which result from the massive and growing gap between the very, very rich minority and the majority of workers and young people.

Time and again, measures introduced and justified by citing a particular group have then been used against ever broader layers. Under conditions of an economic downturn, families already struggling to survive under a mountain of debt are being told that their wages will either fall against inflation or even be cut. Growing numbers face the loss of their jobs. The result will be home repossessions, bankruptcies and innumerable hardships.

The ruling class knows that this will provoke a backlash, with tens of thousands of workers taking strike action, mounting protests and seeking some way of defending their livelihoods. What Labour has amassed in the form of literally hundreds of pieces of legislation are the powers to spy on anyone it identifies as a dissenting voice or a social threat.

Civil rights are universal, applicable to all, or they are no longer in operation and we are left with pervasive and encroaching authoritarianism.

The defence of democratic rights is fundamentally a class question. Labour carries out its policies in the interests of a parasitic layer of multi-billionaires. Opposition to the Labour government must, therefore, be based on the independent political mobilisation of working people against not just Labour, but all the representatives of big business.

David Davis forced today's by-election by resigning in protest at the passing of 42-days detention. He opposes this as a step-too-far that undermines public confidence in parliamentary rule. But despite his rhetoric opposing the prevalence of CCTV cameras, DNA databases and other infringements of personal liberties, Davis remains an arch-

Conservative who has collaborated in the implementation of undemocratic and anti-working class measures by both the Tories and Labour. He supported going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq and has backed other Labour anti-terror legislation.

Davis voted in favour of the 2001 Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Bill. He voted against the 2005 Prevention of Terrorism Bill as originally moved, before accepting its amended provisions including detention without charge for 28 days—four weeks, rather than six!

He has been active in the Tory party since his days as a student and became chairman of the Federation of Conservative Students in 1973, at a time when the Heath government was locked in a bitter struggle against the working class.

He is a supporter of the death penalty, has opposed measures concerning equal rights for homosexuals and remains an ardent Thatcherite. He said of Margaret Thatcher in 2006, “Let us never forget what we owe to that lady! We owe her our freedom from the threat of the Soviet Union. We owe her our freedom from socialism at home. We owe her our prosperity, and our pride in our country. She made Britain great again, and the whole nation knows it.”

Addressing the Tory conference last year in his capacity as shadow home secretary, Davis criticised Gordon Brown for only “talking like a Tory”, before demanding that he “free the police from all that red-tape”, build more prisons, and implement real “zero tolerance policing”. “When I’m Home Secretary, the police will reclaim the streets,” he boasted.

Those Labourites such as Tony Benn and nominally liberal journalists and civil rights campaigners who have endorsed Davis based on his opposition to 42-days and ambiguous call for “a much more effective use of both CCTV and DNA” only expose their own lack of political principles. To claim that 42-days is an issue that stands “above politics” only means that the politics of both Davis and of Labour go unchallenged by the working class. As far as Benn and Labour MP Bob Marshall-Andrews are concerned, supporting Davis in Haltemprice and Howden allows them to remain loyal to Labour in all other things.

Shami Chakrabati of Liberty has endorsed Davis’s campaign, telling the *Telegraph*, “There is no question that David Davis is doing this out of principle ... Liberty has been working with him and Dominic Grieve (Davis’s successor as shadow Home Secretary) for quite a few years now.”

“We don’t agree with everything they say,” she added, before insisting that “it is possible for people to really care about rights and freedoms and disagree about how they are to be achieved.”

Yesterday, at the Tory candidate’s eve-of-poll meeting at which Chakrabati and Bob Marshall-Andrews spoke, Davis demonstrated his commitment to democracy by excluding members of the Socialist Equality Party and the Greens, including Green candidate Shan Oakes, the only other parties standing that oppose 42-days detention. (See accompanying article)

The behaviour of others claiming to be either left-wing or liberal is, if anything, worse. The rest of the Labour “left” have been completely silent since just 36 MPs voted in opposition to 42-days detention. Meanwhile Labour, scared of fielding its own candidate, is lending tacit support to Jill Saward, who is utilising the issue of rape to advance a right-wing law and order agenda that includes backing 42-days detention. She is also supported by *The Sun* newspaper.

Joining Labour and Rupert Murdoch in endorsing Saward is what now passes for Britain’s liberal media. Both the *Guardian* and the *Independent* have featured prominent articles endorsing Saward. *Independent* columnist Johann Hari described her as the champion of “a state that intervenes to make you free,” while Deborah Orr praised her for “having done the nation a service”.

The end product of allowing Davis to be identified as the leader of a supposedly non-partisan movement in defence of civil liberties is to maintain the exclusion of the working class from political life. At the very point where the necessity of breaking with Labour is becoming clear to millions of people, and when the most thoughtful layers are looking for a political alternative, workers are urged to either remain loyal to Labour despite everything or to back the Tories.

The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers, students and retirees to consider very carefully our policies and programme and take the most important decision of your lives by joining us.



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