

BBC Radio Manchester interviews SEP candidate Robert Skelton

Our correspondent
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BBC Radio Manchester's Michelle Daniel interviewed Robert Skelton, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Manchester Central.

Radio Manchester was interviewing some of the candidates in the city and asking each of them the same questions about why people should vote for their party and their policies on health, immigration, education, defence, the economy and crime. The BBC is using 20-second sound bites from the interviews in their local news bulletins on the different policy topics.

We reproduce the interview.

Michelle Daniel: Why should people vote for your party?

Robert Skelton: People should vote for the Socialist Equality Party because we are the only party in this election standing on a socialist programme. Labour, the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, these are the parties of big business. We are for a workers government and socialist policies. Capitalism—a society based on the principle of private profit and the obscene enrichment of a tiny minority—must be replaced with socialism—the democratic and rational control of production in the interest of social need.

MD: What is your policy on health?

RS: The Socialist Equality Party is for a free, comprehensive and fully-funded National Health Service that is accessible to everyone. After the election, all parties are going to make massive cuts in the NHS. This will mean job losses, pay cuts and more back door privatisation.

The super rich elite that run Britain see free health care as a drain on their unrestrained accumulation of

wealth. The amount of public money given over to the banks in the government bailout is about £1 trillion pounds. That is enough money to fund the entire NHS for the next 10 years.

In Manchester Central, the University of Manchester has just announced cuts of £3 million and at the Manchester Metropolitan University 127 job losses are planned.

MD: What is your policy on immigration?

RS: The Socialist Equality Party supports the rights of working people to live and work where they please. We are completely opposed to the scapegoating of immigrants and asylum seekers. Politicians of all parties and the media blame them for all our social problems.

The purpose of the constant attacks on immigrants and asylum seekers is to divide working people. It is to divert attention from the real cause of the deepest recession since the '30s and the most extensive public spending cuts ever made. As a socialist candidate, I stand for the international unity of working class people on the basis of their common interests.

MD: What is your policy on defence?

RS: We are for an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all British troops from Afghanistan, Iraq and wherever else they are stationed. Compensation must be paid to these countries, which have been devastated by British guns and bombs. Those in the Labour government who planned and executed this war on the basis of a pack of lies must be brought to trial before a war crimes tribunal.

This is integral to our uncompromising stance against militarism and war. We call for Britain's nuclear weapons to be scrapped and the workers employed in

the armaments industry re-employed in socially useful production. The hundreds of billions spent on defence must be used to meet the needs of working people—for decent services and well-paid jobs.

MD: What is your policy on the economy?

RS: All three main parties agree that after the election working people must pay for the economic crisis. The Socialist Equality Party rejects this. It was the criminal and speculative practises of the major banks and financial institutions that created the recession, not working people.

The monopoly over society by the super rich and corporate elite must be ended. The only democratic resolution of this crisis is to take political power away from these parasites. We are demanding the cancellation of all debt owed to the international financial institutions. The banks and big corporations must be transformed into publicly owned and democratically controlled utilities so that we can plan production for need, not profit.

MD: What is your policy on crime?

RS: We think that the greatest crime that needs discussing is the one committed by the super rich, the billionaires and their government backers—the one that led to the financial crisis and the looting of unprecedented amounts of public money.

What has happened after the 2008 crash, which was caused by criminality and fraud on a gigantic scale? No one has been prosecuted. Instead there was a raid on public wealth by the super rich and their accomplices in the Labour government. Some £1 trillion pounds was stolen— it is the biggest robbery in history.

The bankers should be locked up and made to pay back their ill gotten gains.

MD: What is your policy on education?

RS: Education is a right. It is not a privilege just for the minority. We are for free and high quality education—from nursery school all the way up to higher education. The cuts already announced mean that more than 200,000 students won't get a place at university next September. As unemployment grows, they face a future on the dole or in minimum wage jobs.

Ms Daniel then asked, “I have had a look at your website and see that the Socialist Equality party is only standing in Manchester Central and Oxford East. Even if you win, this is hardly going to make a difference, is it?”

RS: The Socialist Equality Party is standing candidates in the election, not on the basis of seeking election to the House of Commons. That is not the objective of our campaign. We are standing in order to prepare an independent political movement of working class people against the inevitable attacks on living standards, jobs, wages and conditions that are to come, no matter which party wins the election.



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