

# Britain: SEP candidate responds to written questions from Manchester Stop The War Coalition

Our correspondent  
20 April 2010

Robert Skelton, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate for Manchester Central in the May 6 general election, was asked to submit brief written replies to five questions posed by the Stop The War Coalition. These are his responses, as subsequently posted on the Manchester STWC website.

1. Do you agree that we should bring British soldiers back from Afghanistan now?

All troops must be withdrawn immediately and unconditionally from Afghanistan, Iraq and other military bases as an essential component of a socialist foreign policy based upon the unification of the world working class in a struggle against imperialist militarism, neo-colonialism and war.

2. Are you opposed to the Trident replacement?

The Socialist Equality Party is opposed to the replacement of Trident. NATO must be dismantled, the nuclear weapons programme cancelled and Britain's armaments industry converted to socially useful production. The money saved should be used to fund essential social programmes and to pay compensation to those countries devastated by the British military. The architects of these wars must be placed on trial for war crimes.

3. Will you call for an immediate end to the siege of Gaza?

Unequivocally, yes. The oppression of the Palestinians by Israel, its resort to systematic terror and targeted assassination, has set a precedent for the war crimes of all the major powers in their own colonial ventures.

A genuine struggle against Zionist atrocities is conceivable only on the basis of a class struggle that transcends national boundaries, uniting Arab and

Jewish workers based upon their common class interests. Outside of such a class perspective, which seeks the independent and united mobilisation of both Arab and Israeli workers, there is no real means of defeating Zionism and imperialism in the Middle East. The political bankruptcy of the Fatah regime in the West Bank and of Hamas in Gaza is only an expression of the rotten character of all the regimes headed by the Arab bourgeoisie, which have stood by or participated in the repression of the Palestinians. The greatest threat to the Israeli regime is the intensification of class struggle and the prospect of socialist revolution in Egypt, the other Arab states and in Israel.

4. How will you help stop the tide of anti-Muslim hatred?

We are the implacable opponents of all manifestations of racism, chauvinism and discrimination. Responsibility for the generation of anti-Muslim sentiment rests with the warmongering and supposed anti-terror measures of the Labour government and all those parties that lent it support in Iraq and Afghanistan. Opposition to anti-Muslim hatred cannot, therefore, be confined to electoral opposition to the fascists of the British National Party and run-ins with the police-protected English Defence League. Least of all can it be accomplished through a political alliance with Labour, the Conservatives, et al., based upon a supposed common commitment to democracy. It must be waged by means of the class struggle and the socialist unification of the working class.

5. How will you strengthen our right to protest?

The right to protest has been placed under constant attack by Labour, the most authoritarian government in recent history. And this attack will continue under

whatever government takes power after May 6, whether a majority government led by David Cameron or Gordon Brown or some kind of coalition or national government. All these parties are committed to imposing billions of cuts to jobs and vital social services to pay for the bank bailout and further enrich their big business backers. They cannot tolerate any expression of mass opposition to this agenda, and working people cannot allow them to get away with this. Workers need to mobilise independently of these rotten parties and their backers in the trade union apparatus in defence of their democratic rights and basic social needs.



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