SEP (UK) campaign among Peterborough youth

Our reporters
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Socialist Equality Party members spoke to a number of students and young workers in Peterborough, while campaigning for Stephen Woodbridge, candidate for Bretton North.

When asked about the situation facing youth, Stacey, a student at Peterborough Regional College, replied, “It’s hopeless. Everyone is getting sick of it, so hopefully this is the year that things are going to get sorted out. A lot of people I knew used to be Labour, but after the disaster that has happened with them in power, everyone now says, ‘Well what do I do now, who do I go for now?’”

“The employment situation is really bad at the minute,” said Duane, a student at Stamford College. “The government is just taking money off everyone to give to themselves. They are not giving the lower class citizens a chance. The price of everything is going up while the wages are going down, so soon we will not be able to fend for ourselves.

“It is very hard to get a job. I have been applying for part-time jobs while I am at College to help fund myself. After this year I’ll have to pay as I will no longer get Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA). People that were getting EMA up to two years back are entitled to £30 per week and people who got it last year are entitled to £20. I think people who apply for it now won’t get it.

“The way the economy is going, it looks as if I will have to drop out because I won’t be able to afford it. If people don’t go to college they will not be able to get the skills to get out of this economic crisis.

“When the politicians ask for our opinions and they don’t get them, they don’t like it. But when we voice our opinions, they don’t like it either. So really as youth we cannot get our voice heard.”

Lucas, a university student attached to Peterborough Regional College, said, “The austerity measures are ideologically driven. They are trying to make a link between natural forces and the market—we have to serve the markets and become austere. The benefits of socialism, i.e., nationalisation of the banks when needed, are being granted to big business. Then the crisis is imposed onto the people who are least deserving of such a punishment and had no control over it in the first place.

“In Greece the failure of a few is being imposed on the many. There are massive social tensions as a result. The distribution of wealth, which is in the hands of a few as with many European countries, excludes access to health, education and breeds welfare inequalities. Life chances become confined to a few at the very top, the social elite. Sanctions are imposed on the many by the failure of the elite.

“The Labour Party’s response to the economic crisis has shown they are a nonentity. On the left now there is now a huge void. Labour has never been a socialist party, but at times in the past they incorporated left tendencies.

“None of the main parties, except for yourselves, are addressing the apartheid in education between public schooling and state schooling. Paying for education should be seen as perverse. Under this system you don’t have the right to a free education.”

Ben, a young worker, said, “Your campaign is perfect for me. It’s right up my street. I don’t believe in the

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message of any of the parties. From what you've told me, it's what I believe in. That's why I'm interested and talking to you today."

Asked about the Labour Party and trade unions insisting on austerity, he replied, "They tell us you have to accept it, but why should we accept the cuts? Because of the recession they are finding ways to take more money off the working class whether we like it or not. It's hitting the working class more than those that are well off. I've always believed the wealth of the world should be distributed equally."

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