

SEP European election campaign: Manchester and Salford residents speak out

Robert Stevens
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The Socialist Equality Party's campaign in the North West of England has met a warm response from workers and young people. Campaign teams have worked in the cities of Manchester, Liverpool, and Salford, as well as other large urban areas such as Trafford and St. Helens.

Tom met the campaign team outside Manchester Central Library. He left school about 18 months ago and spent two months trying to get his latest job. "There are not enough jobs to go around, he said. "You see 100 people applying for one job. And then, at the top, they are telling us it's okay and we are moving in the right direction. It's a bad joke.

"I've got a job working in a kitchen. It's a minimum wage job. When I left school, I was looking to get a well-paid job that was going to set me up for the future. That is what anyone wants. There's not enough being done for young people."

Asked why he thought there was enough money to organise wars but not to give people good jobs, Tom said, "The wars are about making more money by opening up new markets. You only have to look in Iraq and Libya to notice that oil from these countries is now being directed to the Western powers, rather than among the Arab people.

"I worry about the future. My sister is in Year 11, wanting to go to college. I hope things improve by the time she gets to my age, but I can't see it, to be honest. I've got friends who are at university, getting into a bucket load of debt. I've got a mate at Salford University, who is paying £10,000 a year to do human biology. That's a four- or five-year course. It will be £50,000 plus interest. Education shouldn't just be for the elite. Only the elite can afford that. The average working class person can't."

Tom said he considered himself a socialist and was

enthused that the Socialist Equality Party stands for international workers' unity. He said, "That's what it needs to be. It needs to be worldwide, rather than just in one country. One people, one goal, that's what it has to be."

Lisa, from Manchester, is taking her final school exams. She said, "I have a humanist approach. I care about everyday people. I believe that the people in power who control all the wealth all come from the same system. They are only interested in serving the interests of the financial corporations. They are not for the people and for the majority.

"I think people should be equal. There should be absolute equality. Nobody should be higher than anyone else, for financial reasons or how they grew up.

"I care about homeless people and those without any future. I find it arrogant that certain people have more rights and freedom than other people on the planet.

"People in different countries don't want wars. It is the leaders who want them for financial reasons, like oil and wealth. People don't want wars against other people. They are forced into it, and they are then killed by them".

Her friend **Amy** added, "I don't think the people in power care about the youth and our future. They're just thinking about themselves."

In neighbouring Salford, the election team spoke with people at a local shopping precinct. **Francis** is a Nigerian student who is doing a degree at Salford University. He expressed his agreement with the SEP's manifesto, saying, "I totally agree workers need to work together to defend their rights. Workers need to take control of society. They work to provide for the country, they should also have a say."

Asked what he thought about the intervention of the US and European Union into Ukraine, he said, "The

Western world, the Americans and the EU are terrorising the world. What they have done in the Ukraine is what they have done in Iraq. It is what they are trying to do in Syria, and it is what they have done in Libya. If a democratically elected government can be removed and they [the EU and US] say that is right, I am not sure this world is secure anymore. I am totally against what is happening in the Ukraine. I think a third world war is fast approaching.”

Francis said he opposed the lies employed by the imperialist powers who claimed they were intervening in order to fight terrorism. “America gave the Afghanistan mujahedeen weapons in the 1980s to fight the Russians. After 20 years, they turned their weapons on the Americans to fight them”, he said. “Look at what is happening in Syria: a terrorist group want to topple a government. I don’t support what [Syrian president Bashar al] Assad is doing to his people, but you should be very careful about people coming in. They are getting their arms from the Americans. By arming terrorists, the US is encouraging terrorism.”

He added, “I am totally against what is happening worldwide. The wars in Iraq and Libya should not have been fought. America is the terrorist of the world. Look at what is happening in Ukraine, a democratically elected government was removed. If that had happened in another country, they would say it is a terrorist coup.

“They will try to suppress the international movement of the working class. They think they have the power, that they control everything. But we should stand together and stand by our rights. Without unity we cannot win. We have to stand together. Without us they cannot do anything.”

Alan, who recently became unemployed after a two-year period in an engineering factory, told the campaign team that he was impressed that an international working class party was standing in the European elections. He said he agreed with basic socialist ideas and was influenced by his father, who is French and “a lifelong socialist. He worked all his life and is now left on the shelf with nothing to show for his hard work.”

Alan said more people needed to be aware of a socialist alternative: “We need to all stand together, discuss the issues and get it out there.”

Alan has to report to the Job Centre every day in order to receive benefit, and after paying his bills he is

left with just £3.50 a week. He was told if he was late for an appointment, he could have his benefit payments stopped.

Alex is a catering worker on a zero hour’s contract and discussed the SEP’s manifesto with SEP candidate Danny Dickinson. He agreed strongly with the section demanding “End Militarism and War.”

He said, “The world can be blown to pieces through nuclear explosions, and the trouble in Ukraine is very frightening. Both Russia and America have nuclear weapons, and unless one of them backs down, I can’t see anything other than a war.”

Ben is an IT worker, who, after listening to the megaphone message being played at the Socialist Equality Party stall, asked some questions about the history of the party.

He was impressed by the fact that the SEP in Britain was standing in the elections alongside our sister party in Germany, on the same programme: “That is real internationalism. It must be hard trying to get this across to British workers. I know from my own job that foreign workers are used to downplay the real problems in society. The media are obsessed with immigration.”

Ben opposed the right-wing United Kingdom Independence Party, describing them as “nothing more than a polished-up BNP [British National Party].”



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