

# Residents in North West England speak to SEP election campaign teams

SEP candidate Ajitha Gunaratne  
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In the last week of the Socialist Equality Party campaign in the North West region of England, campaign teams were out in the cities of Manchester and Liverpool and surrounding areas.

In Manchester teams covered the city centre at the Central Library, the city's two universities, hospitals, Royal Mail delivery depots and suburban areas including Cheetham Hill. The team also campaigned in Atherton in the Metropolitan Borough of Wigan.

In Liverpool, teams had stalls in the city centre and at the City of Liverpool College. Campaigners, including SEP candidates, spoke to a cross section of workers, youth and students explaining the importance of the SEP's programme. They raised the questions of the danger of fascism and war in Ukraine, Edward Snowden and the attacks on democratic rights, the massive social inequality in society and the need for the building of new party based on socialist internationalism.

The SEP received a warm reception for its opposition to the European Union and call for the United Socialist States of Europe, under conditions where many people are alienated from all the major political parties—Conservative, Liberal Democrats and Labour. Thousands of the SEP's election manifestos have been distributed throughout the election campaign, with hundreds being distributed over the last week.

Many workers, unemployed, youth and students spoke about their concerns over a wide range of questions including the threat of war, imperialist interventions across the world, the impact of worsening austerity measures and attacks on the National Health Service.

**Sara** is a student of Manchester University and has come to the UK from Egypt. She said, "I was not into politics before the events in Egypt in 2011. Now I am

looking for political alternatives to the existing system. I know how American imperialism operated in Egypt to bring about the government they needed. I am not a Muslim Brotherhood supporter, but I am totally against the atrocities carried out against them by the military.

"I have listened to the leaked phone conversation of [US Assistant Secretary of State] Victoria Nuland and [US ambassador to Ukraine] Geoffrey Pyatt on Ukraine and it shows how nakedly America works everywhere in the world to defend its interests. I agree that America and its allies are supporting the fascists and right-wing forces in Ukraine and there is real threat of war."

Sara bought a copy of the SEP's resolutions from its 2012 Congress, including one on the danger of imperialist war. She took a copy of the election manifesto and said that she would follow the WWS coverage on Egypt.

**Anthony**, an unemployed worker, said, "I worked in Lewisham College in London for 13 years. I got ill in the last year with bipolar [disorder]. I handed in sick notes as and when were needed. For three months they maintained that they didn't receive sick notes until November, which was four months after June when I first got ill in 2010. They said they hadn't found sick notes. However, they found them in November after four months and they paid me up. It's an admission that they had the sick notes.

"I ended up in Manchester because I lost my flat. The council booted me out. I was very ill by that time. Thankfully I had my family in Manchester. I stayed with them and got the relevant treatment. I am back on my feet but without a job.

"The GMB, my union didn't do anything despite the fact I had been a member for 15 years in London. They said I had to do things within the three months after I was sacked and after that I couldn't. But I had bipolar

by that time. After six months I went to a lawyer. He said he couldn't do anything as it was late. The GMB said it was constructive dismissal. My 84-year old mother helped me more than my union. That was a disgrace."

On the situation in Europe he said, "I am scared that the situation in Ukraine is going to escalate and America is looking for confrontation with Russia and trying to drag us with it. Supporting fascists and right-wing forces in Ukraine is wrong. America has been doing it for years. They have been pumping money into that country. The European Union is going with them. So what do we do?"

He continued, "The political situation in this country is disgraceful. The political elite are a breed of gangsters who are so indifferent to the fate of working class. They are going to take everything from us. Zero-hour contracts, no safety networks, no minimum wage and they are taking us to disaster. And the whole political establishment is supporting the greedy wealthy elite to enrich themselves more and more. The ruling elite and City of London have thrived on the backs of us.

"And I don't believe that the Labour Party is any different to the Tories now. We had powerful unions before. They are not anymore. We need a genuine socialist party."

Anthony said he would read the SEP's manifesto and hoped to attend upcoming meetings.

**Tawfeek**, an unemployed worker, said, "I came to Manchester with my family seven months ago from London and I have been without a job since then. Hundreds of people are after one job sometimes. It is very difficult to live with two small children without a proper job. We all depend on my wife's job."

A doctor spoke to the team about the ongoing attacks on the National Health Service and their impact on working conditions. "Government cuts to the NHS budget are severely jeopardising patient care and safety," he said. "Working conditions of NHS staff have eroded gravely over the years. It is very difficult to cope with the workloads. Sometimes we don't get a break. We need more doctors, nurses and other staff to look after patients properly."

**Daniel** is a college student in Stockport, in Greater Manchester and said he agreed with what SEP stands

for. He took an election manifesto and bought a copy of the SEP's 2012 Congress Resolutions pamphlet. Criticising the imperialist hypocrisy over the war against terrorism he said, "America and the other imperialist powers are arming and supporting the Al Qaeda-linked forces against the Assad government in Syria. It is also well known that Al Qaeda was funded and trained by the CIA against the Russian army who were then in Afghanistan."

**Peter** graduated recently from the Manchester University. He praised the SEP's stand in support of the US National Security Agency whistleblower Edward Snowden and democratic rights. He stated, "Snowden is a hero. He sacrificed his life to expose the mass surveillance programmes which spy on people. I like that guy but it is very unfortunate that he had to have asylum in Russia."



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