

SEP UK candidate David O’Sullivan addresses Primrose Hill hustings

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Socialist Equality Party candidate for the London constituency of Holborn and St. Pancras in the May 7 general election, David O’Sullivan, addressed a hustings called by the Primrose Hill Community Association (PCHA) on Wednesday.

The meeting was attended by about 120 people from the area, which largely consists of terraced Victorian houses worth several million pounds with a few pockets of social housing.

As with a previous hustings, the organisers attempted to prevent O’Sullivan from speaking on the platform, having decided that only the top five parties in the 2010 general election—Labour, Conservatives, Liberal Democrats, the Green Party and the UK Independence Party (UKIP)—would be allowed. The Green Party polled 2.7 percent and UKIP 1.1 percent in that election.

In reply to an earlier email request to allow O’Sullivan to take his place on the platform, PCHA manager Michael Hudspeth refused, saying the SEP candidate could make a speech from the floor.

Chairperson Valerie St. Johnston intended to enforce that anti-democratic edict, but O’Sullivan stood up to make a point of order.

He told the audience that he been “arbitrarily excluded” from the platform and insisted he had the democratic right as an official candidate to sit alongside the other speakers. With the breakdown of the two-party system in Britain, O’Sullivan said, it was vital a socialist alternative was available. He demanded the audience be allowed a vote, which after some hesitation, St. Johnston agreed to.

Loud cheers and applause greeted a 70-30 result in O’Sullivan’s favour, with one audience member shouting out, “It’s called democracy!” as O’Sullivan made his way to the platform. A video clip of

O’Sullivan being voted onto the platform was then uploaded to the Twitter feed of Richard Osley, the deputy editor of the *Camden New Journal*.

This was to the obvious displeasure of St Johnston, who spent the rest of the evening attempting to cut off O’Sullivan’s replies to questions after one minute. Other candidates, she arbitrarily decided, would be allowed two minutes. She continually harassed and even poked the SEP candidate.

Undeterred, O’Sullivan challenged the false promises made by the other candidates who often admitted that what they were saying was not the official policy of their party. Labour Party representative, Camden councillor Pat Callaghan, declared the next Labour government would be the first in history to “under-promise and over-deliver”, echoing the favoured sound bite of party leader Ed Miliband. Green Party leader Natalie Bennett called for a “fair economy” and “a peaceful political revolution” on May 7.

O’Sullivan insisted that seven years on from the financial crisis of 2008, which brought the entire global economic system to the brink of collapse, and despite massive bailouts to the banks and endless austerity, “Nothing has been resolved”.

He described how the financial collapse has been used by the ruling elite internationally to justify an unprecedented attack on the social conditions of the working class.

“Wages have stagnated or fallen for workers in virtually every country, especially so in Britain. At the same time benefits have been cut. Rents are increasing. It’s virtually impossible for young people to get on the housing ladder. Millions live below the poverty line,” O’Sullivan said, contrasting the situation of the majority of society with the super-rich who have seen a vast increase in their fortunes.

The SEP candidate declared, “All the parties are committed to further spending cuts that will dwarf anything seen so far. That is why parliament voted overwhelmingly to rush through the Budgetary Responsibility Bill, committing all future governments to permanent austerity.

“Whichever party or coalition of parties form the next government makes no fundamental difference. All of them are bought and paid for tools of the super-rich...

“Millions understand this. That is why the two-party system is breaking down and people are looking for an alternative.”

O’Sullivan explained that the SEP is also warning about the dangers of a new world war and that this was something that has been entirely excluded from discussion in the election.

“As in 1914 and 1939, humanity is threatened with a catastrophe. The NATO powers, led by the US and Britain, have utilised the Western-backed coup in Ukraine to despatch thousands of troops and advanced weaponry to the states bordering Russia. Their immediate aim is to engineer regime-change in Moscow as part of a broader geopolitical strategy for world domination.”

O’Sullivan said that workers and young people had to draw the bitter lessons of Greece. Widespread social discontent, he explained, had led to the victory in January’s election of Syriza, which had pledged to reverse these attacks, just like the other speakers on the platform. But Europe’s ruling elite were determined to demonstrate that there was no alternative to austerity, and threatened to bankrupt Athens. Within a month, Syriza capitulated.

O’Sullivan ended his speech by declaring that the only real alternative was a socialist alternative and calling on the audience to vote SEP.

A sign that the social crisis is even hitting the well-heeled layers that made up most of the audience were the concerns expressed over the inability of their children to afford to live in the area and the state of the health service and education system.

O’Sullivan’s insistence that the speakers on the platform had no answers to these problems, and that a socialist perspective was necessary, met a warm response from a considerable portion of the audience. About two-thirds took copies of the manifesto after the meeting finished. Some of them spoke to O’Sullivan

and SEP campaigners to congratulate him on his fight to speak, saying he was the only one telling the truth and apologising for the chair’s closing remarks. St. Johnston had thanked each of the establishment party candidates for coming along before thanking “David, the joker in the pack.”

A sound file of O’Sullivan’s call for a vote and opening remarks can be found here.

For further details visit www.socialequality.org.uk



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