

UK Trotskyist Barbara Slaughter speaks at Leeds anti-Trump demonstration

Harvey Thompson
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On Saturday, around 400 demonstrators gathered at Leeds Art Gallery before marching through the centre of the city to protest the ban by President Trump on the citizens of seven majority Muslim countries from entering the US.

The demonstration and rally were organised by various pseudo-left organisations, with speakers framing their comments largely on the basis of identity politics, in opposition to a class-based perspective.

Barbara Slaughter, a long-time leader of the Socialist Equality Party, attempted to speak on several occasions before being finally added to the speakers list by the organisers. An attempt was made to cut short Slaughter's comments, but due to the interjection of some in the crowd she finished her remarks to cheering and applause.

Slaughter said:

"I am speaking on behalf of the Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site*. I have been fighting for the cause of socialism all my adult life.

"The protests in the US prove that millions of American workers and youth reject the anti-Muslim chauvinism and militarism of Donald Trump and his supporters.

"Trump's cabinet is a collection of multibillionaires and millionaires—a government of the rich, by the rich and for the rich.

"Trump's slogan 'Make America great again' means the abolition of all social and democratic rights won by the American working class over generations of struggle. His aim is to attack all working people—black, white, immigrant and native-born.

"And by 'America first' he aims to impose the global interests of the US as ruthlessly as possible.

"This is the man whom Theresa May praised as a defender of democratic values when she visited

Washington a few days ago—a man who promotes torture and who threatens the whole world with trade war and the danger of a third world war.

"The response of the European ruling class is to strengthen its military and police in preparation for the coming conflict with Washington and with its own working class.

"But why has America come to this? Trump cynically exploited the desperation of millions of Americans in the devastated industrial towns and rural areas after eight years of President Obama, a man who claimed to be the candidate of hope and change, who won the Nobel peace prize and carried on all of George Bush's wars and started a few of his own. During those eight years, there was the greatest ever transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich.

"Obama deported more immigrants and prosecuted more whistle-blowers than all other presidents. His policies paved the way for Trump, the most right-wing administration in US history.

"Trump's right-wing and militarist policies do not merely express the individual brutality of the president, but is the programme of that oligarchy.

"The fight of the American working class and youth is our fight. The rich have always sought to divide the working class on ethnic, linguistic and religious grounds. And it is only through the unity of every race and nationality that the working class has ever made any gains. In every country, working people are being made to pay for the crisis. In every country, cuts in education, health care, and social services are being forced through.

"In Britain, this was begun by the Blair Labour government, which introduced student fees, cut social services and took Britain to war in Iraq on the basis of a lie. The Labour party has not changed. Jeremy Corbyn

was voted into leadership because he pledged to oppose austerity and war. But he has since betrayed the people who voted for him.

“He has instructed Labour councils to impose austerity cuts demanded by the government, he has come out in favour of a two-tier system of immigration control, he allowed a free vote on the bombing of Syria and did nothing when 66 Labour MPs voted in favour. Since then, the RAF [Royal Air Force] has carried out over a thousand air strikes over Iraq and Syria.

“Anybody that says just by putting pressure on the trades unions and the Labour Party can make a change, is wrong. Look at what happened in Egypt, where in fact a military government has been installed. And look at demonstrations that took place against the Iraq war in 2003. Millions were on the street all over the world but the war still went on.

“To build genuine opposition to war, racism and xenophobia and attacks on immigrants, the working class must break from the Labour Party and all the groups that sow illusions in it. We have to build a powerful international socialist movement that will put an end to war, inequality and attacks on democratic rights.

“2017 is the centenary year of the Russian Revolution. We have to learn the lessons of history; why that revolution took place and how it was betrayed. Come to the meeting of the Socialist Equality Party on March 4 at Woodhouse Community Centre at 1 p.m. Thank you very much.”



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