

London protesters speak out about Brexit

Our reporters
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World Socialist Web Site reporters interviewed some of those attending the London demonstration, called by the Unite for Europe organisation. Socialist Equality Party members and supporters distributed copies of the statement, “No to British nationalism and the European Union! A socialist response to Brexit at the protest.”

Claudia, who came to England more than 20 years ago and is now a university lecturer in Luton, said, “Until June 23rd [the date of last year’s Brexit referendum] I never felt foreign. But now the atmosphere has changed. I have noticed that if I speak Italian with my daughter some people will start looking at us.

“I was angry I couldn’t vote in the Brexit referendum. That is because I do not have British nationality or residency. But I have paid taxes for over 20 years and done everything I was supposed to do. I will absolutely not apply for nationality or residency now. I was a European going to live in another European country. Now the government has changed the rules. They will have to use a tank if they want to get me out.

“I don’t agree with the European Union stopping immigrants coming into Europe. The answer is not to create more borders, but to break down borders. I am worried about the growth of right-wing parties in Italy and everywhere. I just hope normal society prevails.”

Claudia’s teenage daughter, Miriam, said, “I believe we should stay in the EU. People are becoming more divided and there is danger of more conflicts happening. The EU was created to stop something like the Second World War happening again. If it breaks up, countries will become more isolated and are bound to take action to protect themselves.”

Richard, a cancer research scientist, explained that the UK received billions in research funding from the EU and a lot of scientists rely on it for their jobs and livelihoods. He said, “It’s not just about looking after

ourselves, though. So much research is done at a European and international level. It is a collaborative effort across the globe. We should be breaking down barriers, not creating new ones.

“If there is a criticism to be made of the EU and science, it is the way the EU is liberalising and privatising everything. That is leading to unnecessary competition, secrecy and fraud. Private companies tend to cut staff, wages and corners in terms of safety.

“That sort of thing generally happens across workplaces and is why I think so many people voted to leave the EU. I have done quite well out of the EU and have an interesting life, thanks to it. But the poorer off in society have been the victims of all this liberalisation and privatisation while they see the top dogs getting all the benefits.”

After the rally, trainee accountant Ellie said she had come along because she was hoping to find some opposition to the “rising tide” of right-wing, anti-immigrant sentiment. “The trouble is we see the stage draped in Union Jacks [British flag] here and to hear the speakers talking about defending ‘British’ and ‘European’ values makes me sick.

“You’ve got Alastair Campbell [Tony Blair’s spin doctor] speaking ... he was in a Labour government that lied to start the Iraq War and then Nick Clegg [former Liberal Democrats leader] who promised to abolish tuition fees and then increased them when he came to power [in the 2010 Conservative/Liberal Democrats coalition] and I started university. I do not have any confidence in those people.

“I think the organisers today called the march to stop people getting demoralised. But the stuff the speakers said was very confusing. Some said we have to accept the referendum, which I agree with. Others said there is a chance of reversing Brexit or even having a second referendum. And then a couple of them going all slushy about how much they love the EU and its civilising

values.

“I only voted Remain because the Leave people were so disgusting. But I think your idea of a boycott was a good one in retrospect. I wish I had known about it earlier. I agree with you that Remain and Leave was a fight between different wings of big business and ordinary people did not have a real choice. The finance houses and stock exchanges decide what’s going on whether we’d stayed in the EU or now we are coming out.”



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