

Resolution of the SEP (UK) Fourth National Congress

The resurgence of the class struggle and the tasks of the Socialist Equality Party (UK): Part Three

Socialist Equality Party (UK)
5 December 2018

This resolution was unanimously adopted by the Fourth National Congress of the Socialist Equality Party in Britain, which was held October 27-30, 2018. It is being published in three parts. This is the final part. To join the Socialist Equality Party, click here.

The struggle against the pseudo-left

45. The building of the SEP as a mass party in the working class requires a concerted political and theoretical offensive against the anti-Marxist theories of the pseudo-left groups, most of whom have their origins in the repudiation of the Fourth International as the world party of socialist revolution. Representatives of the many Pabloite, state-capitalist and other pseudo-left tendencies occupy leading positions in university departments, academic journals, online media and publishing houses, as well as the trade unions. They function as professional anti-Trotskyists, playing the essential role in promoting theories aimed at attacking the fundamental tenets of Marxism, including philosophical materialism, the revolutionary role of the working class and the necessity for a vanguard party. Their rejection of the “grand narrative” of the class struggle, in favour of identity politics based on race, nationality, ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation, facilitates the anti-democratic agenda of the ruling elite. Their embrace of irrationalism and philosophical subjectivism articulates the striving of an upper middle-class layer to buttress their social privileges against the challenge “from below.”

46. Whether they are organisationally part of the Labour Party or formally stand outside it, the pseudo-left are all loyal advocates of a Corbyn-led government, apologists for his every retreat before the right and determined opponents of the developing rebellion of the working class against the trade union bureaucracy, whose authority they uphold unconditionally. They collaborate intimately with Corbyn’s Stalinist advisers, such as Seumas Milne and Andrew Murray, and the leadership of Momentum, Jon Lansman, Paul Mason and Owen Jones, who have collectively drawn up the blueprint for an incoming Labour government. The pseudo-left’s acceptance of Momentum’s claim to represent “a people-powered, grassroots movement” facilitated the efforts of Lansman et al to stifle opposition to the right-wing, and police the influx of new members into the Labour Party. Notwithstanding belated and token criticisms, this collusion continues despite Momentum endorsing the expulsion of Ken Livingstone and others, removing critics of Israel from its National Executive Committee slate and Lansman joining anti-Corbyn

coup plotters on the platform of the Zionist Jewish Labour Movement.

47. The pseudo-left’s support for Corbyn is based on their desire for a position of influence within government and the state apparatus. Like Corbyn, their model is the Syriza government in Greece that, in 2015, betrayed its anti-austerity mandate. In the period since, it has dutifully implemented austerity measures far worse than those of its right-wing predecessors, and ruthlessly enforced the anti-immigrant policies of the EU. Earlier this year, Corbyn not only congratulated Syriza Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras on his record, but also invited Minister of State Dimitris Tzanakopoulos to address Labour’s annual conference, so delegates could “understand what they are going to do if they are going to enter government.” Tzanakopoulos was also afforded pride of place at Momentum’s World Transformed event, where Paul Mason echoed the statement of Syriza’s former finance minister, Yanis Varoufakis, that his aim was “to save European capitalism from itself,” by boasting that Labour could “make an offer to capitalism. We will save your bacon.”

48. Chantal Mouffe has emerged as a key advisor defining the political agenda of Momentum and similar pseudo-left groups throughout Europe, such as Die Linke in Germany and La France Insoumise. Mouffe describes Corbyn as potentially the most successful example of a new wave of “left populism,” because he “stands at the head of a great party and enjoys the support of the trade unions.” His success, she told *Red Pepper*, is above all based on Labour’s break with politics based on the working class and its defence of “political liberal institutions.” “The traditional left political frontier was established on the basis of class. There was the working class, or the proletariat, versus the bourgeoisie. Today, given the evolution of society, that is not the way in which one should establish the political frontier anymore,” she asserted. The reactionary character of this perspective is underscored by Momentum’s endorsement of Aufstehen (Stand Up), a right-wing initiative spawned from Die Linke that competes with the AfD in its denunciations of “unrestricted immigration, which also includes those who merely want to earn more money and enjoy a standard of living.”

The class struggle, rank and file committees and the general strike

49. In a period of enormous flux and sharp political changes, the SEP is charged with providing a programme, perspective and leadership, through which the working class can advance its independent interests and open the road to socialist revolution. The lag between the consciousness of the

working class and the advanced stage of the imperialist world crisis presents grave dangers. But the objective conditions that give rise to these dangers also provide the basis for their overcoming, through the intensification of class conflict. The struggle against the horrors of mass poverty, fascism and war generated by capitalism will dispel illusions, undermine traditional beliefs and radicalise social consciousness.

50. This is foreshadowed by recent strikes, where opposition to the attacks of the employers has immediately involved a confrontation between workers and the trade unions. The past two years has witnessed a series of walk-outs on the railways against Driver Only Operated trains, and the generalised attack on pay, pensions and safety. Entire areas of the country, including London, have been paralysed, demonstrating the immense potential power of the working class. After decades in which anti-union legislation and the threat of punitive fines and dismissal has been used to prevent solidarity action, railway drivers have refused to cross guards' picket lines. During the recent strike by female council workers in Glasgow, refuse collectors took illegal secondary action in their support. In each instance, this was in defiance of the trade union bureaucracy, which functions as the chief ally of corporate management and enforcer of anti-union laws. The strike by lecturers saw mass protests outside the University and College Union HQ, in opposition to its planned sell-out deal and the early closure of its annual conference to prevent motions of censure against its leadership. In the Royal College of Nursing, anger at a similar rotten pay deal forced the resignation of the entire executive. In November, an entire shift of auto workers at Vauxhall's Ellesmere Port plant mounted a wildcat strike against job losses that Unite was negotiating, while, on the same day, Cammell Laird shipyard workers, just 20 minutes away, began a series of strikes against mass redundancies.

51. Historical experience demonstrates that the escalation of social struggles leads towards a general strike, which poses the question of political power. This was the case in the 1926 General Strike that was betrayed by the TUC and Labour Party. The same possibility was pregnant within the strikes by miners and others that erupted between 1972 and 1974, which brought down the Conservative government of Edward Heath. Today, the generalised offensive of the capitalist class, and the common experience of millions, who face worsening social hardship and brutal exploitation, must once again provoke such a unified counter-offensive by the working class. Preparation for such a coalescence of struggles requires the formation of rank-and-file committees of action in factories, workplaces and communities, from which the capitalist politicians and the corporate-controlled trade unions are excluded. The *World Socialist Web Site* has established the *International Amazon Workers Voice* and the *Autoworkers Newsletter* as a forum through which workers can begin to coordinate their struggles independently and on a global basis. In Britain, the SEP set up *NHS Fightback* and the Grenfell Fire Forum, which has worked to systematically expose the fraud of the official government inquiry through hundreds of postings and in the monthly public meetings held in the local area.

52. The rightward evolution of what was once defined as the "labour movement" has seen the emergence of mass protests and movements outside the confines of official politics. In the absence of a socialist program, such socially heterogeneous protests, often in defence of essential democratic and social rights, take on a confused character. Hundreds of thousands protested in favour of Remain, animated by genuine revulsion at the nationalist xenophobia of the leading Brexiteers and its devastating economic impact. Close to 300,000 protested in France against Macron's crippling fuel tax rises. In Britain, this sentiment was exploited by a coalition of Blairites, Liberal Democrats and Tories, while in France it was Marine Le Pen's National Rally that tried to make political capital from the fuel protests. But the ability of right-wing or far-right forces to secure influence and exploit popular discontent is the

product of the suppression of the class struggle by the trade unions and social democratic parties. Against this danger, the working class must come forward as the leadership of the emerging social and political movements.

The tasks of the Socialist Equality Party

53. The SEP's work in the coming period will be to extend its influence in every section of the working class. It will connect struggles against austerity, falling wages, attacks on the NHS and the dismantling of education with the defence of immigrant workers and free movement, and opposition to the destruction of democratic rights and the danger of world war. It will seek to impart to these struggles a revolutionary socialist, anti-imperialist and internationalist orientation for the working class to take state power and reorganise economic life to meet social need, not private profit. At the centre of this is the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe.

54. Together with its sister parties, the SEP has a central responsibility in building sections of the ICFI throughout Europe. It will wage a unified campaign in next year's European elections, in support of the candidates of the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei, and will publish and popularise the book, *Why Are They Back ? Historical Falsification, Political Conspiracy And The Return Of Fascism In Germany*, documenting the fight waged by the SGP since 2014 to develop a socialist opposition to the rehabilitation of fascism and the renewal of German militarism. The SGP and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality have been alone in alerting workers and young people to the implications of efforts to rehabilitate Hitler by far-right ideologues such as Jorg Baberowski of Humboldt University. For this, the SGP has been cited by the German secret service as a "left-wing extremist party," and identified as an "object of observation." This is justified on the basis of the SGP's opposition to "nationalism, imperialism and militarism." In contrast, the AfD is mentioned only as a victim of alleged "left-wing extremists." The issues fought out by the SGP have become the immediate concern of masses of workers and youth, as expressed in the recent 250,000-strong protest in Berlin against the rise of the far-right.

55. The SEP has a special responsibility to champion the rights of immigrant workers, above all the refugees made homeless by the social and economic devastation created by imperialist intervention in their countries. The SEP defends the right to free movement, not just for European citizens but for workers throughout the world. It opposes the whipping up of anti-immigrant chauvinism, from the open xenophobes on the far right and the EU's inhumane "Fortress Europe" policies, to Corbyn's specious advocacy of "managed migration." The fight against the persecution of immigrants must be based on the recognition that their scapegoating is an attack on all workers, and that the brutal measures taken against them strengthens the state in its suppression of social and political dissent. Their defence is the cutting edge of the struggle to unite the working class across national boundaries in the struggle for socialism.

56. The SEP will redouble its efforts to develop an international coalition of socialist and anti-war web sites against Internet censorship by the tech corporations and governments. The WSWS has been the primary target of internet censorship, because of its role as the authentic voice of Marxist revolutionary socialism. The aim of the international coalition is to encourage the broadest possible mobilisation of the working class in defence of democratic rights. It opposes all attempts to justify censorship with claims of "Russian interference," combating terrorism, or on the grounds of "anti-bullying" and political correctness. Measures taken on such pretexts are directed at closing off all avenues of democratic debate

and independent political action by the working class. It will counter the efforts to conceal the WSWS, by Google and other search engines, by developing its content and expanding its readership, including through the development of our social media presence.

57. Central to this work is the intensification of the campaign to end Britain's persecution of WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. For exposing the war crimes of the major powers, Assange has been forced to shelter in the Ecuadorian Embassy for six years, against Britain's plans to extradite him to the US, where he faces criminal proceedings that could even include the death penalty. Since the start of the year, he has been rendered incommunicado, cut off from contact with the outside world. The key role in isolating Assange, despite massive popular support, has been played by the Labour and trade union bureaucracy and the pseudo-left groups. Based upon their espousal of identity politics, they endorsed the demands for Assange to be extradited to Sweden to face trumped-up allegations. All of them, including Corbyn, have erected a wall of silence, behind which the government conspires to lay the basis for Assange to be arrested and deported to the US to face espionage charges.

58. The branches of the SEP must conduct an energetic offensive to build the International Youth and Students for Social Equality among young workers and on the campuses. The desire for social change is felt most keenly in the young generation, which is the hope for a new social order. The focus of the IYSSE will be to educate the younger generation in Marxism and the history of Trotskyism, and to turn student youth towards the working class and a conscious struggle against capitalism. It will make a focused intervention among the younger generation of workers, especially the super-exploited in the major distribution centres, call centres and others employed for a pittance in the gig economy.

59. The SEP reaffirms its commitment to establishing a new socialist anti-war movement of the working class. The principles of such a movement are outlined in the ICFI statement, *Socialism and the Fight Against War*:

i) *The struggle against war must be based on the working class, the great revolutionary force in society, uniting behind it all progressive elements in the population.*

ii) *The new anti-war movement must be anti-capitalist and socialist, since there can be no serious struggle against war except in the fight to end the dictatorship of finance capital and the economic system that is the fundamental cause of militarism and war.*

iii) *The new anti-war movement must therefore, of necessity, be completely and unequivocally independent of, and hostile to, all political parties and organizations of the capitalist class.*

iv) *The new anti-war movement must, above all, be international, mobilizing the vast power of the working class in a unified global struggle against imperialism. The permanent war of the bourgeoisie must be answered with the perspective of permanent revolution by the working class, the strategic goal of which is the abolition of the nation-state system and the establishment of a world socialist federation. This will make possible the rational, planned development of global resources and, on this basis, the eradication of poverty and the raising of human culture to new heights.*

60. The building of a new revolutionary leadership demands that the cadre of the SEP is firmly rooted in the historical experiences of the Marxist movement, above all the eighty-year history of the Fourth International. This immense history must be brought into the developing movement of the working class. As Trotsky insisted, "Without a party, apart from a party, over the head of a party, or with a substitute for a party, the proletarian revolution cannot conquer" (*The Lessons of October*). Only the conscious alignment of the programme and practice of the revolutionary party with the objective radicalisation of the working class will create the conditions for a world free of class exploitation, fascist reaction and war.

Concluded



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