

“Brexit is a shambles—it will affect so many people in many ways”

Our reporters
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Reporters for the *World Socialist Web Site* spoke to demonstrators at Saturday’s anti-Brexit protest in London. They explained the social and political concerns that brought them to support the demand for a second referendum.

Haleh, a school teacher from Kent, said, “Brexit is a shambles. It will affect so many people in many ways. The economy is going down. House prices have already dropped and that is a big indicator of something very serious.

“Of course, Europe is not perfect, but before we had a say. Now we are in a weaker position. Now we have parties of the far right trying to steal our futures. I am British but what is happening is that this is being hijacked by such as the British National Party and [former UK Independence Party leader] Nigel Farage. They are xenophobes. Immigrants are not leeches on society. They all work hard and are the reason why society ticks. It is a Nazi type of ideology.

“People are looking at this with Brexit and are now changing their minds. They saw the truth and how the economy has dropped. They saw the xenophobia after the vote. I think people are going to lose their jobs. We need to be together with Europe, not isolated.

“It will affect education a lot. There are lots of schools who have European students who are now in limbo. I’ve got colleagues from Europe who are waiting to see what to do with their passports. It is heart-breaking.

“[Tory MP and leading Brexiteer] Boris Johnson doesn’t give a damn about the rest of us. He comes from a very elite background. He doesn’t have any understanding of reality of what people’s lives are like. He has never done a day’s hard work in his life. How can he relate to a factory worker who tomorrow won’t have bread and butter on the table?

“If we don’t stop it, I’m worried about my children. I came from Iran after the revolution [in 1979]. I have taught thousands of children here. What right has the BNP and the far right to scapegoat me?

“Look at who wants Brexit. The first one to support Brexit was [US President Donald] Trump. Trump’s interest is zero sum, that means my gain, your loss. He wants everyone else destroyed. It’s not just America First and Britain second. It’s America first at the cost of others. It doesn’t work for him that we live in an inter-dependent world. We need to work together. We need to look long-term and not just think about our own little world and separate off. No one will win out of this [Brexit].

“I feel completely lost [politically]. I normally support Labour but I have voted Green. I think Labour have not been clear enough.”

Susana came to the demonstration with friends Bethany, Rachel and Pixie. “My parents are Portuguese. They have created a life here, they could be deported,” she said.

Pixie said, “I’m half French and still want to be part of Europe.”

Her girlfriend Bethany said, “A lot of people didn’t vote in the 2016 referendum. No one knew what was going on. Brexit was a protest vote. We weren’t educated on what the EU is. We need change. The governments bomb other countries and wonder why people are fleeing to Europe. I don’t support the wars.”

Speaking about the rise of the far right, Rachel said, “We’re going back in time. Look what happened in New Zealand [with 51 dead after the rampage by a fascist in Christchurch]. Look at America.”

Connor said, “The government is a shambles, we’re a worldwide laughing stock now. The rest of the world can’t possibly contemplate how badly we’re dealing

with the Brexit fallout.

“I think with protests like today, they will sit up and take notice. All you can really do is try and make your voice heard as loud as possible by all coming together, and hopefully common sense will prevail. It’s everything, whether it’s your jobs, your rights, everything right across the board. I’ve got a small son, and I’m worried where this is going for his sake. He’s only three. What kind of a country are we becoming?”

Sally said, “I am here because I’ve got a Greek husband. I’ve spent 10 years working abroad and some of my pension is in France and Greece. I don’t think we should leave. I think we should get another chance to have our say, now that everybody knows how disastrous it is. Now we know the full details. We were lied to [by Brexit politicians] in the vote. I think now we need another chance to say what we feel.

“I am surprised that Greece is still in the European Union after what has happened with Brexit. My mother-in-law moved her money from Greece into England, thinking it was a safer place. But that was a bad move. Greece is very committed to staying in. I don’t think they will leave unless they are ejected. There was a vast majority to join the EU in Greece and they joined before us.

“For me, when I was brought up, the idea of joining the EU and being able to work all over Europe freely was a good one. But I was mis-sold on it, in that I was given to imagine that if I paid my social security anywhere in Europe, I would then be able to draw it when I left for the full amount of years that I had worked.

“But that isn’t how it’s worked out. You can draw your pension, but only what you’ve built up in Britain. I worked for five years in the French Alps and five years on the Greek islands. I’ve got pension credits built up in different countries. If we leave the EU all that money that I have paid in will be lost.”

Ali, a young man in his 30s of British-Pakistan origin, is unemployed. He said that being Asian, he was worried about Operation Yellowhammer being implemented and further surveillance of the population by the government.

The rise of far-right ideology is making Islamophobia and racism more acceptable, he feared. “The populist movement is growing—with Trump, Farage, Hungary. It’s become global, it’s frightening. Unfortunately,

they are using Islam and anti-immigration as a bogeyman. They are using fake stories to besmirch the good name of refugees.

“I’m a big fan of the Greens. The wealthy elite are contributing to the damage being done, because of capitalism and climate change. I’ve noticed a lot of younger people coming out to vote, against climate change. Look at Brexit [voters], they were older and not as educated as younger people.”

On Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, Ali said, “He hasn’t pushed enough. He should have been more supportive of the EU. Something needs to be done, I don’t believe Corbyn is going to be the one to do it. A lot of Labour are Blairites, proud to be corporate. They’re going to shift people to the right.”

Joe, a visual artist in his mid-30s, came to the demonstration because “I believe in staying in the European Union. It’s more communal in looking after people.”



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