

George Galloway tried to become Brexit Party candidate—and failed

Robert Stevens
17 May 2019

George Galloway was forced to admit publicly that he will not be standing as a candidate for the Brexit Party in the June 6 Peterborough by-election.

Coming after weeks in which he refused to say whether he was intending to stand as an independent, his failed attempt to represent Nigel Farage's party is not only confirmation of his own nationalist politics. It is indicative of how an entire layer of the ex-Stalinists and pseudo-left have become part of a "new right."

On May 8, Galloway tweeted, "I tried to persuade @Nigel_Farage to support my candidacy in #Peterborough to emphasise the broad democratic alliance the campaign must be and balance the candidatures of Ms Widdecombe and Ms Rees-Mogg. Now that the #Brexit Party have named their candidate I have withdrawn my own."

The Brexit Party is the recently founded vehicle of Farage, the former leader of the far-right UK Independence Party (UKIP). Galloway made known his intention to stand in the election in a May 1 tweet, in which he wrote only, "I intend to stand in the forthcoming parliamentary by-election in Peterborough. More follows. ..."

On April 17, he had already tweeted that he planned to back Farage's party in the upcoming European elections, tweeting, "Given the nature of Labour's Euro-fanatic candidates list and the crucial juncture we have reached in the fight for the full implementation of the #Brexit referendum result and for one-time only I will be supporting @NigelFarage in next month's elections. @TheBrexitParty"

The first indication that he actually planned to stand as a Brexit Party candidate was in a May 1 tweet from Pippa Crerar, the *Daily Mirror* political editor, who wrote that "Galloway tells me that he has approached...Nigel Farage directly to say he wants to stand in Peterborough by-election for his Brexit Party. But if not selected, he could

stand as an independent."

Galloway tweeted the following day, "If elected as the MP for #Peterborough my first priority will be to help secure the full implementation of the #Brexit decision made overwhelmingly by the people there in 2016. I believe I'm the best placed candidate to do so and the one who'd make the biggest impact in the House."

For the next week there was radio silence, during which time he must have been in intense discussions with Farage trying to convince him of the need for a left fig leaf. His pitch is indicated by his tweet citing the high profile enjoyed by Thatcherite former MP Ann Widdecombe and Annunziata Rees-Mogg, sister of Jacob, the backbench leader of the Conservative Brexiteers. Annunziata proudly boasts that she joined the Tory Party at the age of five.

On May 9, the Brexit Party announced that it would stand a local millionaire and lifelong Tory supporter, Mike Greene, as its Peterborough candidate. Greene made his fortune in the retail industry and in providing consultancy services to corporations including Conoco, Shell, Phillips and Spar.

Greene's candidature appeared to be a partial compromise on Farage's part, as it had been rumoured that he favoured either Rees-Mogg or Widdecombe.

Galloway's polite reference to "Ms Widdecombe and Ms Rees-Mogg" barely scratches the surface regarding the right-wing pedigree of Farage's party. While the ex-Labour MP was pleading to be a candidate, it was reported that Noel Matthews, the Brexit Party national election agent and a former UKIP candidate, had defended the fascist Tommy Robinson as being "persecuted" and had written, "Islamophobia is a silly, made up word."

A candidate for the Brexit Party in the North East of England, John Tennant, had defended the use of a Nazi slogan in the European parliament—directed at German Social Democratic Party leader Martin Schulz by a UKIP

MEP, Geoffrey Bloom. The treasurer of the Brexit Party, Michael McGough, was forced to stand down from any senior role after it emerged he said of three senior Labourites who have Jewish backgrounds—Ed and David Miliband and Peter Mandelson—that they had “shallow UK roots” or were “devoid of UK roots.” Tennant said many survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire were “illegal aliens enjoying an amnesty.”

No one should accept Galloway’s line that supporting the Brexit Party in the European elections is for “one-time only.” He is set firmly on a right-wing trajectory.

He played a pivotal role in alliance with Farage and UKIP in the 2016 EU referendum campaign. Launching the *Grassroots Out* campaign, Galloway—whose nationalist agenda and support for Brexit are derived from his political origins as a Stalinist—embraced Farage and lined up with representatives of the arch-Thatcherite wing of the Tory Party as he issued the call, “Left, right, left, right, forward march together.”

In the face of substantial opposition even among his own supporters on social media, Galloway has defended spending weeks in discussions with Farage, literally begging the Brexit Party leader to be on his platform.

After being rejected, he tweeted to the Brexit Party leader, “No hard feelings.”

The following day—during Farage’s 34th appearance on the BBC’s *Question Time* current affairs panel show—Galloway commented that “Farage is 3-0 up so far” against the other politicians.

He retweeted a gushing comment from another individual—in honour of Farage’s party—after one poll showed that it could win a higher percentage in the European Election than the Conservatives and Labour combined: “The Brexit Party has mobilized and is like Shermans march to Atlanta. Unstoppable as predicted by @georgegalloway weeks before many other commentators.”

Galloway is only the most prominent representative of the right-wing political orientation of sections of the pseudo-left, made under the guise of putting forward a “patriotic” but still supposedly “left” Brexit.

Another advocate is Paul Embery, a Fire Brigades Union Executive Council member. On March 29, the day the UK was set to leave the EU—before further extensions were granted—Embery was a featured speaker at the pro-Farage Leave Means Leave demonstration in London.

Galloway is joined in his support for the Brexit Party by no fewer than four former members of the now-defunct Revolutionary Communist Party/ *Living Marxism*

tendency— *Claire Fox, Alka Sehgal Cuthbert, James Heartfield and Stuart Waiton*—who have all been selected as candidates for the Brexit Party.

The RCP emerged in the 1970s as a faction of Tony Cliff’s state-capitalist International Socialist group, now the Socialist Workers Party. It spawned the right-wing libertarian Institute of Ideas, which is the moving force behind the *Spiked* website that is infamous for advocating the line of the political right on every major issue.

Galloway’s pseudo-left backers in the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) were panicked by his moves to back the Brexit Party, as it represents a further devastating exposure of their own rotten politics. The SWP previously allied themselves with Galloway in the Respect Party, after Galloway was expelled from Labour by Tony Blair for his opposition to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. In the EU referendum, the SWP, while not joining Farage’s own campaign, endorsed Brexit under the guise of supporting a “Lexit” (Left Brexit).

After describing the right-wing bona fides of the Brexit Party, it declared when Galloway announced his backing for it that “people with more genuine left-wing credentials have been taken in by Farage’s ploy, most notably—and tragically—George Galloway.”

This is a rotten over-up. There is no “tragedy” in Galloway’s political trajectory, only confirmation of the reactionary character of “left nationalism.” As the Socialist Equality Party insisted in its statement calling for an active boycott of the 2016 referendum, “The first responsibility of a socialist is to oppose the mixing of class banners. In the referendum, this means rejecting all appeals for working people to fall in behind one or another faction of the bourgeoisie who are fighting between themselves solely over which strategy best upholds the interests of British imperialism.

“To do otherwise and to in any way endorse the nationalist and pro-capitalist agendas espoused by both the ‘remain’ and ‘leave’ campaigns sows dangerous political confusion, weakening the political defences of the working class at a time when the noxious fumes of nationalism, anti-migrant xenophobia and militarism are polluting the UK, Europe and the entire world.”



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact