

Socialist Equality Party stands in UK general election: No to austerity, militarism and war! Free Julian Assange! For class struggle and socialist internationalism!

Socialist Equality Party (UK)

6 November 2019

The Socialist Equality Party is standing candidates in the UK general election to wage a political struggle against austerity, authoritarian rule, militarism and war.

The December 12 election is the most socially and politically polarised in the post-war history of the UK.

At stake for the competing factions of the ruling class are efforts to resolve the deep crisis of capitalist rule compounded by Brexit. For workers and young people, despite the insidious divisions fostered over Brexit, the decisive issues are social: falling wages, brutal exploitation, rising unemployment and the destruction of vital social services.

The only comparable crisis election was held in 1974, when Edward Heath's Conservative government lost after demanding an answer to the question, "Who governs Britain?" He issued this challenge in the face of a strike wave including building workers and dockers and national action by miners in 1972 and 1974.

Internationally, protectionism and trade war measures threaten to plunge the world economy into a crash worse than 2008. The danger of militarism and war—including against the nuclear-armed powers China and Russia—has never been so acute.

Under conditions of this accelerating breakdown of world capitalism, the Labour Party offers no alternative to Boris Johnson's Conservative government. Jeremy Corbyn has pledged to "transform our country" and go after "the tax dodgers," "dodgy landlords" and "bad bosses." But his rhetoric is belied by his four years as Labour Party leader.

Corbyn has worked with the trade union bureaucracy to suppress or betray every struggle waged by workers, keeping the Tories in power under three prime ministers. He has insisted that the Blairite plotters in the Labour Party must be protected in the name of "party unity," adopting much of their programme as his own. He held weeks of talks with Theresa May and then abortive discussions with Johnson in an attempt to seek "national unity" over Brexit.

After Corbyn's efforts failed and he finally accepted Johnson's election challenge, almost half of Labour's MPs voted against, some quit, and others, led by the war criminal Tony Blair, are urging a vote for the Liberal Democrats.

Even this will not move Corbyn to act. He has pledged, if elected, to "sort out Brexit" by next summer by renegotiating a deal with the EU before holding a second referendum, declaring that "my whole strategy has been to try and keep the party, the movement and the country together."

This strategic goal will ensure that even if Corbyn wins on December 12, he will work with the Scottish National Party and other pro-Remain forces in a de facto government of national unity, while his meagre

spending pledges rot on the vine.

A Corbyn Labour government would do nothing to end the suffering inflicted on millions of working people, because this demands a frontal political assault on the major banks and corporations. Meanwhile, Labour's shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, is busy wooing the City of London with his backstage "tea and biscuits" charm offensive.

This government would be a cue for a renewed offensive by Labour's right wing. Blair is already telling the *Financial Times* that tactical voting is necessary "to get into parliament many reasonable and capable politicians of all parties who will not spout populism."

"There is a core of good Labour MPs who will not be whipped into supporting policy they do not believe in," Blair added. "After this election, the real battle over the future of British politics will begin."

The Socialist Equality Party bases its perspective on the independent political mobilisation of the working class in Britain, in alliance with their brothers and sisters in Europe and internationally. There are powerful indications that workers are now seeking to break out of the straitjacket of the trade union bureaucracy through a return to class struggle—including massive national strike votes by postal workers, by the staff at 60 universities taking a nine-day strike beginning November 25, a strike by workers at 25 Sixth Form Colleges, and a vote for 27 days of strikes in December by South West Rail drivers and guards.

To mobilise the working class in an independent political movement, the SEP advances the following essential demands:

No to Brexit! No to the European Union! For the United Socialist States of Europe!

The conflict over Leave and Remain is between rival right-wing factions of the ruling class over how best to protect the interests of British imperialism. Johnson and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage want to "complete the Thatcher revolution" by tearing up all restrictions on the exploitation of the working class and allying with the Trump administration against Europe. The Remain faction wants to maintain vital access to Europe's Single Market and base their alliance with US imperialism on the Democrats, who are now seeking Trump's impeachment.

Whichever faction dominates, the assault on the working class will deepen. To remain globally competitive means an endless assault on the jobs, wages and conditions of the working class. Already, 876,000 jobs

have been lost in the public sector since 2010. This year, 85,000 retail jobs have gone, with another 10,000 at HSBC, 3,000 at Vauxhall, 3,500 at Honda and 4,500 at Jaguar Land Rover to come.

The only road forward is the unification of the working class in Britain and across Europe in a struggle against all factions of the British ruling class, the EU and all its constituent governments. The Socialist Equality Party and our sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International's European sections, the Parti de l'égalité socialiste (PES) in France and the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (SGP) in Germany, will fight to mobilise the working class to take power in a United Socialist States of Europe that can utilise the vast resources of the continent to meet the needs of all its peoples.

To this end all, workers' struggles must be united, led by rank-and-file committees independent of the trade union apparatus. They must be based consciously on a turn to the movement against austerity and social inequality now developing internationally, which has seen mass protests, in Tunisia, Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, Lebanon, Ecuador and Chile and strikes erupt throughout Europe and the US. The central goal must be "Workers of the world unite!"

No to war! Defend democratic rights! Free Julian Assange!

The demand to free WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange must be the spearhead of the defence of democratic rights and the struggle against war.

The UK government and its corrupt legal system intend to stage a show trial next February before extraditing Assange to the US, where he faces a sentence of 175 years in prison on espionage charges and a possible death sentence. So brutal is his treatment that United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Nils Melzer has warned that if Assange is not urgently released from prison and provided with medical care, he may die.

Assange is being punished for exposing war crimes, as a warning to others to keep quiet. Yet neither Corbyn's Labour Party nor a single trade union has lifted a finger in his defence. Nor have any of Britain's pseudo-left groups.

The SEP will continue to do all in our power to mobilise opposition in the working class to defeat this vile conspiracy.

An international movement of the working class against war must be based on a struggle against the capitalist profit system that is the source of war. The Brexit crisis is only one manifestation of a global eruption of inter-imperialist antagonisms, as rival powers vie for control of the world's markets.

The turn to trade war inevitably means a turn to militarism and a lurch to the right by all the world's imperialist governments. Plans to bring the army and riot police onto the streets after Brexit in Operation Yellowhammer confirm that the savage social attacks required can be imposed only by brute force, including the cultivation of far-right movements, such as the Alternative for Germany, as a bludgeon against the working class. The intimate collaboration between the official parties, the state and the fascists is demonstrated by our German sister party being placed on an official list of "extremists" by the secret service for calling for "the establishment of socialism," "agitation against alleged 'imperialism' and 'militarism'" and "rejection of nation states and the European Union" in a report drawn up in direct discussions with the AFD!

The growing threat to democratic rights is underscored by a leading British general warning that Corbyn's professed opposition to NATO and the launching of nuclear weapons would provoke a "mutiny," using "whatever means possible, fair or foul" against such a threat to "the security of this country."

Corbyn will not mobilise the working class against this threat or the war danger, but instead seeks to convince the ruling class he can be trusted. Asked by the *Guardian* if he was prepared for the "3 am call" warning that Britain is under imminent threat, he replied, "Of course: absolutely. You have to take decisions at times like that."

Build the Socialist Equality Party!

Britain's pseudo-left groups have once again loyally rallied to the Labour Party, insisting like the Socialist Workers Party that a vote for Corbyn "could change everything." But four years of Corbyn's leadership have proved that the Labour Party cannot be reformed, let alone British capitalism, by the installation of a nominal "left" leader whose real loyalty is to the Labour and trade union bureaucracy and British imperialism.

The future of working people depends on the building of a new and genuinely socialist leadership. It requires the formation of new organisations of struggle, dedicated to the taking of political power by the working class: A workers' government—elected from the factories, offices, workplaces and working class neighbourhoods—charged with implementing socialist policies based on planned production for social need, not profit, and the seizure of the wealth of the billionaires, banks and major corporations to provide decent jobs, education, health care, housing and pensions for all. Never again must there be atrocities such as the Grenfell Fire so the super-rich can gorge themselves at workers' expense.

History proves that without revolutionary leadership, socialism is impossible. Youth and workers who want to fight for a socialist future must assimilate all the strategic political experiences of the 20th century, above all the Russian Revolution of October 1917. The Socialist Equality Party is the British section of the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI). Our party continues the struggle of the Left Opposition, formed by Leon Trotsky in the struggle against Stalinism and in defence of the perspective of world socialist revolution on which the October Revolution was made.

In 1938, Trotsky founded the Fourth International to resolve the crisis of revolutionary leadership in the international working class. The ICFI has continued that struggle against Stalinism, Labourism, Pabloism and all forms of national opportunism. The political capital accrued during this history of principled struggle must now be made familiar to all class-conscious workers and youth as the basis for building a new international movement for socialism.

All workers and young people wishing to support our campaign should contact the SEP.



To contact the WSW and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)