

SEP (UK) candidate Dennis Leech speaks at hustings in Manchester

Our reporter
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On Monday, Dennis Leech, the Socialist Equality Party's candidate in the general election for the Manchester Central constituency, attended a hustings organised by the Salvation Army.

The only other candidates present at the event in the Beswick district of the city were from the Liberal Democrats and the Brexit Party. Incumbent Labour MP Lucy Powell didn't attend, and neither did the Conservative or Green candidates.

In his three-minute allotted introductory remarks, Leech said, referring to the SEP's manifesto, "We stand in opposition to austerity, authoritarian rule and attacks on our democratic rights, militarism and war."

"Brexit compounds the deepening crisis between Europe and the United States and is an expression of the failed capitalist system," he explained. "We are against Brexit and we are against the European Union. We are for the unity of Europe, but based on the fight for the United Socialist States of Europe."

Pointing to the enormous inequality in society, Leech continued, "Under central government and a local Labour council, Manchester has become a haven for those who want to make vast amounts of money in property development and speculation. He contrasted this to the growing poverty in the region, noting that in 2018, "Fifty homeless people died on the streets of Greater Manchester."

Leech posed the question, "What has Jeremy Corbyn done in the four years since being elected leader of the Labour Party?"

"Corbyn allowed a free vote in Parliament on the bombing of Syria, with 66 Labour MPs, including Lucy Powell, voting to bomb Syria. Corbyn has refused to fight a right-wing campaign by the Blairites and Tories, who claim that Corbyn and his supporters are anti-Semites.

"A Corbyn-led Labour government will do nothing to end the suffering of millions of people who are facing austerity."

Leech placed emphasis on the SEP's global campaign to free Julian Assange and prevent his extradition to the US.

In April, Powell, a prominent Blairite, actively collaborated in the politically motivated smear campaign against Assange. She was one of more than 100 cross-party signatories to a letter addressed to Home Secretary Sajid Javid requesting he "champion action that will ensure that Julian Assange can be extradited to Sweden in the event Sweden makes the extradition request ... so the formal investigation into the allegation of rape can be concluded."

Moves by these right-wing political forces in Britain to extradite Assange to Sweden were always nothing more than a pretext to have him railroaded from there to the US. In November, a Swedish prosecutor announced her office was dropping "preliminary investigations"—for the third time—into bogus allegations of sexual assault by Assange, citing a lack of evidence against him.

Leech answered the following questions put to the candidates: what an adequate minimum/living wage would be; how to resolve the lack of mental health provision; what was the source of the general disengagement with parliamentary politics; and his opinion on the incarceration of Assange.



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