

Socialist Equality Party (UK) meeting discussion addresses critical issues on the failure of Corbynism

Our reporters

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Last Sunday's online meeting, "The Blairites' anti-Semitism witch-hunt and the failure of Corbynism," hosted by the Socialist Equality Party (UK), included a discussion period in which important issues were raised.

SEP National Secretary Chris Marsden, who gave the main report to the meeting, read out the following statement from a Jeremy Corbyn supporter who had written to the *World Socialist Web Site*.

"I have put forward the argument that Jeremy Corbyn is not surrendering or capitulating to his enemies as he is constantly accused of doing by voices on the left and that the reality is the very main stream media (MSM) who have conspired in the smear campaign against Jeremy Corbyn, were never ever going to give him the opportunity to counter and/or refute their lies and falsehoods, and that whatever he says, it is condemned by the MSM and the usual suspects.

"My point of course being that it is impossible for him to get fair coverage by the MSM et al, who will just smear him whatever he says, then given that this has been the reality ever since he was elected leader, and since he stood down, then it is unjustified to accuse him of surrendering or capitulating to those who smear him, and yet the WSWs has done so repeatedly. Given that you do accusing him of capitulating etc.. I'd be really grateful if you could explain how he could refute the claims etc... if the MSM et al just vilifies and condemns him when he does. I'm of course mainly referring to the anti-Semitism smear campaign. P.S. This is a genuine request."

Marsden said in response to the reader:

"I'm sure it's a genuine request... let's address this on its own terms for a moment here. What is being said? Jeremy Corbyn and his various retreats can't be described as capitulation because no matter what he did, he would still be attacked by the MSM and his opponents. So, therefore, nothing different could be done.

"Now, what are the implications of that as a position, that you can't fight for principles because you will meet opposition from your opponents?"

"There's something really deeply reactionary about Jeremy Corbyn, and what he represents in the British working class, because he's not a new phenomenon. He's the tattered modern-day representative of a school of thought, of a political tendency, Fabianism, based on the fine art of the possible, class

collaboration, a worshipping of parliamentary procedure, a liberal variant of a religious 'turn the other cheek' approach to politics. Corbyn was associated with this right from the beginning when he said he was going to develop a new kind of politics that wasn't personal, that fought for ideas, that wouldn't descend from the Olympian Heights to the nitty gritty of actually opposing the Tories, opposing the employers, fighting to mobilise the working class. His was going to be an appeal to some great altruistic sentiment that existed in the population, and he generated and made his appeal based on a constant attempt to suppress the realities of contemporary society based on ruthless class struggle.

"Jeremy Corbyn describes politics as some sort of cricket match. He encourages us to say, 'Well this isn't fair'. Well politics isn't a cricket match, politics is war. It's the conflict of irreconcilably opposed class forces. The ruling class in Britain as it is internationally, is utterly and completely ruthless in the preservation of its interests. The greatest danger for the working class is if it doesn't recognise that it too must be equally ruthless in pursuit of its own interests, and that must find conscious political expression in the development of a combat party of the working class armed with a socialist and internationalist programme.

"Jeremy Corbyn represents everything that is backward looking in the working class. It is middle class do-gooding soporifics to blunt the class struggle, to suppress any initiative by the working class, to encourage its subordination to the labour and trade union bureaucracy, to wed it to a parliamentary perspective at all costs. That's what he represents.

"When someone, who is clearly genuine, says you cannot fight because someone will oppose you, well what is the logic of that? If you are doing something right, when will the mainstream media not attack you? If you are fighting for socialism, you should expect to be vilified, hounded, at every corner by the representatives of the ruling class, and you make your appeal to the working class to fight that, to fight back. Not simply as an emotional appeal, but by recognising the realities of contemporary class society and adopting a revolutionary alternative internationalist perspective.

"There is a section of the Corbynites which we appeal to, which are those that wanted to fight. And we will do so by rejecting another section of the Corbyn supporters that were attracted on the basis of his milk of human kindness nonsense, that are always

looking for a compromise, when no compromise is possible.

“This should be ingrained in the working class. Workers have gone through enough bitter experiences to know that the ruling class will give you nothing, will not cede an inch outside of a political struggle. And that if you are fighting for socialism, which is the overthrow of the capitalist order, then this sort of stuff, this passivity, this complacency, defeatism and cowardice should be purged from the workers movement. It should be anathema to anyone who considers themselves a genuine socialist.”

Assistant National Secretary Thomas Scripps responded to a question on Corbyn’s virtual silence on Julian Assange, and the role of Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer who was Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) from 2008 to 2013—during the initial years of Assange’s hounding by the British state.

Scripps said, “I would imagine that most people watching this are familiar with the case of Assange, but as a way of summing the situation up, Assange is the founder of WikiLeaks which has been the subject of a decade-long persecution by all of the imperialist governments in the world for its exposure of war crimes, brutal diplomatic intrigues, human rights abuses and the use of torture against the oppressed peoples of the world.

“Assange was arbitrarily detained ultimately in the Ecuadorian Embassy in London for years under the threat of being extradited to Sweden for what, it was clear at the time, were bogus sexual abuse allegations, manufactured by the Swedish state, which would’ve acted as a platform for his extradition to the United States.

“All of that has come to a head in the last year. Assange was seized from the Ecuadorian Embassy, thrown into Belmarsh maximum security prison and is going through a pseudo-legal travesty of an extradition hearing to determine whether or not to send him to the US, where, it is clear from the charges the US has brought, he will be disappeared into the deepest, darkest hole the US prison system has—if he avoids the death penalty.

“We have played the leading role in exposing this. It is not simply the fate of an individual, of course. It is a fundamental question of democratic rights, and beyond that it’s a class question of the right of the working class internationally, particularly its most oppressed sections, to fight back against imperialist aggression against them.

“WikiLeaks gave a spur to anti-imperialist sentiment all over the world. For the US and the ruling class, that is Assange’s greatest crime, and why he is being persecuted.

“We said that his defence couldn’t be entrusted to the courts, the judiciary, or the media, who function as spokespeople for the government, carrying out embedded journalism repeating the talking points of the military, and covering up the worst crimes. We said the defence of Assange has to be based on a massive, global struggle of the working class who owe Assange, and the revelations he was responsible for bring to light, a great deal.

“Corbyn came to the leadership of the Labour Party [in September 2015] on a mass wave of support. At any stage in his leadership of the Labour Party he could, with a word or a single speech, have summoned hundreds of thousands if not more people to the streets in defence of Assange.

“Assange was being left to rot in London, arbitrarily detained,

and psychologically tortured in the Ecuadorian embassy for most of Corbyn’s tenure. He was then thrown in Belmarsh [in April 2019] for the rest of it.

“Corbyn was silent all the way through, up until the moment that Assange was illegally dragged from the embassy by British police. The outrage against that finally forced him to make some comment, giving some sort of nominal opposition to the treatment of Assange.

“Within one day, the Labour Party right-wing launched into an attack on Assange... a repeat of the thoroughly discredited Swedish sexual assault smears and demanded that Corbyn retract his position. Corbyn did so immediately. He went on TV to say there is ‘no hiding’ from the Swedish accusations and that [Assange] should face them. He even went further and said Assange’s fate vis a vis Sweden or the US was a ‘matter for the British courts’, and that was that. Then it was left for a number of months, including the entirety of the December 2019 general election campaign. The word ‘Assange’ did not pass Corbyn’s lips.

“We stood candidates in that campaign and made it one of our central demands to call for Assange’s freedom. Corbyn remained utterly silent... [Now] Corbyn is wheeled out to frame all opposition to Assange’s fate in terms of an appeal to Boris Johnson’s government.

“The thrust of Corbyn’s politics is to ask Boris Johnson politely to intervene, or to ask the courts to show some decency.

“The point of all of Corbyn’s politics is to prevent a mobilisation of the working class over any issue. In this issue, it is over defending the most significant journalist of the 21st century.

“Corbyn handed over the Labour Party to Sir Keir Starmer, who we know as Director of Public Prosecutions [DPP] oversaw a department which sent a message to the Swedish state demanding that it continue to maintain its bogus allegations against Assange, to serve as a pretext for his continued detention in the Ecuadorian embassy.

“Emails were sent out from the DPP telling their Swedish counterparts, ‘Don’t you dare get cold feet.’ Don’t think that this is just another case. This means a great deal to the British state. Starmer is now the leader of the Labour Party and ensuring the extradition of Assange to the US is carried out. This is one of the most significant betrayals by Corbyn during his tenure as Labour Party leader.”



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