

End the Tory government's rule by conspiracy: Demand a general election!

Socialist Equality Party (Britain)
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The Socialist Equality Party calls on workers and youth to demand the immediate removal of the Conservative government and the calling of a general election.

The Tories are using the political crisis leading to the downfall of Boris Johnson to engineer a further lurch to the right. They are doing this through a leadership contest in which candidates compete over who can best deliver massive tax cuts for big business, continue a herd immunity agenda as the pandemic surges, and step up the war against Russia and China—all paid for through the destruction of jobs, wages and essential services.

This is only made possible by the political and industrial suppression of the working class by the Labour Party and the trade unions.

On Wednesday, a no confidence motion moved by Labour should have been debated in parliament, but the government refused to allow it. Longstanding convention dictates that a no confidence motion tabled by the leader of the opposition must be debated and voted on. But this is a government that will do whatever it takes to keep in office so it can continue with its relentless assault on the working class.

The Tories are so hated that a general election would sweep them from power. That is why when Johnson threatened to call a snap election at the height of his efforts to fend off a leadership challenge, there were demands for the queen to block him.

But Labour has no intention of seriously opposing this. Even when demanding a vote of no confidence, Sir Keir Starmer made clear he was not seeking a general election but to persuade the Tories to remove Johnson immediately, declaring “we’re challenging them to put their constituents first and put the country first.”

Now this manoeuvre has been blocked, Labour will let the Tories get on with whittling down the list of leadership challengers to two, so that the next prime minister can be in place for the reopening of parliament in September.

This must not be allowed to happen! The Tories cannot be left free to resolve their political crisis and establish a new government that would be a right-wing, authoritarian regime

of warmongers, ruling on behalf of the financial oligarchy.

Every day they remain in power deepens the threat posed to the working class. On Monday, even with leadership candidates briefing against one another, the government was united in passing legislation allowing the use of agency workers as scabs to break strikes in essential services and quadrupling to £1 million the maximum fine on trade unions for industrial action deemed illegal.

Last month’s rail strikes by the Rail, Maritime and Transport union were cited as the pretext for this legal offensive, but Tories lined up to threaten the same treatment for teachers, doctors and nurses.

As for the war in Ukraine, UK ambassador to NATO David Quarrey told the *Financial Times* that Johnson’s departure would have no impact on Britain’s leading role in providing weapons for use against Russia. “It hasn’t just started. And I don’t think it is just about to end,” he said. There is no doubt also that the decision by Defence Secretary Ben Wallace not to stand as party leader was taken in discussion with Washington to ensure continuity in a conflict that threatens a new world war.

The demand for a general election provides a means for the working class to intervene into political life and bring its independent interests to bear. It must be fought for in opposition to all the parties of big business now conspiring to keep workers politically disenfranchised.

The Tory and Labour Parties are de facto a single party of herd-immunity, social reaction, militarism and war. For the five years up until 2019, workers were told that Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership of Labour would see a “left” rebirth. Instead, constant retreats and betrayals ended with Corbyn handing the party back unscathed to Starmer.

Under Starmer, Labour members, including Corbyn himself, have been ruthlessly witch-hunted and driven out through lying allegations of anti-Semitism. The party fully supported Johnson’s herd immunity agenda throughout the pandemic and acted as a loyal partner in the war in Ukraine. For months, its response to the crisis over lockdown drinks parties was to appeal to the Tories to do the right thing. Even

as he urged “decent, honourable members” on the Tory benches to “put their country first” and remove Johnson, Starmer was threatening his own MPs with expulsion should they either criticise NATO or attend a picket line.

Should Labour come to power, it would seek to form a government of national unity, encompassing not only the Liberal Democrats but possibly some of the Tory MPs it has tried to convince to abandon Johnson. And Starmer has already made clear that such a government would continue to impose Tory policies to the letter.

The pseudo-left groups such as the Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party have come out in opposition to the demand for a general election, claiming this would divert from the struggle outside parliament and play into the hands of Starmer. But it is they who once again do the dirty work of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy by insisting that workers abstain from political struggle and leave the Tories and Labour unchallenged.

The SWP tells workers. “Don’t play their parliamentary games... We have to look elsewhere—away from parliament and the Labour Party—to bring them down...” But what they describe as forcing “our way in through the cracks” leaves the trade union leaders who stand fully behind Labour free to continue their efforts to suppress the class struggle.

Confirming the SWP’s rejection of any possibility of workers challenging either the Tories or the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, SWP leader Alex Callinicos writes, “Who knows what’s coming next? ... The Tories’ tradition of renewing themselves by decapitating unpopular leaders may work for them.”

The Socialist Party admits that the central problem facing workers seeking an end to Tory rule is that “waiting for a Labour government to act in workers’ interests” is a “pipe dream”. But its answer is also to leave Labour in charge and the Tories in office until the next general election in 2024, when they hope to persuade “the trade union leaders or potentially Jeremy Corbyn” to solve “the problem of working-class political representation.”

The Socialist Equality Party (SEP) raises the demand for a general election because posing the question of who rules the country addresses workers to the fundamental political tasks they face. And if replacing the Tories with Labour is no answer then now is the time for the working class to begin the building of its own socialist party.

The SEP is that party.

The conditions are rotten ripe for the working class to bring down the Tory government. Johnson’s own downfall came just two weeks after national rail strikes threatened to act as a catalyst for an eruption of strike struggles by millions of workers facing a cost-of-living catastrophe. Only on Monday, train drivers employed by eight separate

operating companies voted overwhelmingly for strike action.

The ruling class and its media speak constantly of a Summer of Discontent, while workers on picket lines talk of the need to unify all these struggles in a general strike. But the fight for such a mass mobilisation of the working class cannot bypass the central questions of political perspective and leadership.

Bringing down the Tories is not a perspective for parliamentary struggle. It demands a rank-and-file rebellion against the trade unions, which are working with Labour to suppress and betray every effort by the working class to take on the government and the employers to ensure the crisis is resolved safely within Westminster and in the interests of the capitalist class.

The fight of the working class against the Johnson government poses the necessity of a political mass movement, independent of and opposed to both the Tories and Labour, and against the capitalist system and its state. We will utilize any election campaign to fight for a programme expressing the interests of the British and international working class, uniting the struggle against austerity and herd immunity with the demand for an end to war through a struggle against capitalism and for socialism.

This fight for an anti-capitalist, internationalist, anti-imperialist and socialist perspective must be centred on building an interconnected network of rank-and-file workplace and neighbourhood committees to wrest control of the class struggle out of the hands of the pro-capitalist labour bureaucracy.

Above all, we will make clear that defending workers’ livelihoods, bringing an end to the pandemic and opposing militarism and war requires the unification of the working class in every country against the common enemy.



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