The case for a general election: Expose the Tory-Labour conspiracy to drag Britain into World War III!

Socialist Equality Party (Britain)
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The Socialist Equality Party has issued a demand for a general election. We advance this call to bring into the open the issues that underlie the present crisis: 1) The relentless escalation of the war against Russia, even to the point of risking a nuclear war; 2) The criminal refusal to stop the endless transmission of the Sars-CoV-2 virus and allow mass infection and death; and 3) The ruthless assault on the living standards and democratic rights of the working class.

We demand an election to expose and build popular opposition to the policies of the Tories and their Labour allies.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson's resignation as Conservative Party leader is the outcome not only of deep divisions within the Tory party, but of a mounting crisis of class rule. Johnson, a hated and despised figure, is being removed from office because the ruling elite has lost confidence in his ability to lead Britain as it escalates the war against Russia and, at the same time, intensifies the war against the working class at home.

In the political history of Britain, war has frequently led to major political crises that required a change in the leadership of the ruling party.

In 1916, the Liberal Party removed Prime Minister Asquith over dissatisfaction with his leadership during World War I.

In 1940, having concluded that Neville Chamberlain was too compromised by his earlier concessions to Hitler at Munich, the Tory Party replaced him with Winston Churchill eight months after the outbreak of the Second World War.

In early 1957, in the immediate aftermath of the disastrous Suez War, the Tories kicked out Anthony Eden and replaced him with Harold Macmillan.

This political pattern is repeating itself, although with a significant difference. This time, under conditions of escalating war against Russia, the real issues underlying the leadership crisis are being excluded from public discussion.

The Tories want no disruption to their plans to escalate the war, continue their murderous pandemic policies, and drive down workers' living standards. Their determination to block working class interference with this political agenda is shared by the Labour Party.

Both parties fear above all that an election could awaken popular opposition to war and lead to a mass movement against it.

Behind the backs of millions of people, the Tories and Labour are dragging Britain ever deeper into a war against Russia, a nuclear armed state, that is rapidly spiralling toward World War III.

The SEP is initiating the call for a general election as a means for the working class to break through the conspiracy of both major parties, oppose their policies, and assert its independent social interests.

We would use the election period to rouse opposition to the war policies of the government and to agitate for mass action by the working class to defeat the savage assault on living standards and democratic rights.

Our call is directed to developing the industrial and political struggle of the working class against all the capitalist parties in Westminster. A war-crazed financial oligarchy—backed by Labour and the Scottish National Party no less than the Tories—is presenting war against Russia as a fait accompli. Supported by a corrupt media, the immensely dangerous implications for the working class are being concealed.

Neither the government nor Labour want a general election. Party leader Sir Keir Starmer's belated attempt to move a no-confidence motion was aimed at removing Johnson and not the Tories. Labour fears that any open discussion of the right-wing policies it shares with the government would clear the path for mass popular opposition. They sit on top of an angry working class constituency that despises the party's leadership and knows that Starmer could just as well be the leader of the Tory Party.

Many class conscious and socialist-minded workers may question the need for a general election because they know full well that replacing the Tories with Labour will change nothing. This is correct, but this does not mean that the working class must abstain from intervening in the political crisis.

The SEP's demand for a general election does not imply a shred of support for Labour, or for a non-existent parliamentary solution. In the event of an election, we will not call for a Labour vote. We will warn workers that Labour is their enemy and must be opposed just as decisively as the Tories.

We will use the general election to make the case for strikes, mass protests and the organisation of a general strike to stop the war, force the adoption of a zero-COVID policy, and build support for a socialist alternative to capitalism. This is essential under conditions in which the trade unions are suppressing a growing strike movement and preventing any political challenge to the Tory government and to Labour's right-wing policies.

We will give a voice to the millions of workers whose views are never asked for, let alone represented politically.

These are the policies that the SEP will advance in a general election.

For an international socialist anti-war movement!

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The SEP and its sister parties in the International Committee of the Fourth International fight for the development of a mass movement of the British and international working class against the preparations by NATO and the imperialist powers for World War III.

Humanity today stands closer to global war than at any time since 1945. The military is actively planning for this.

On June 28, the new head of the British Army, Chief of the General Staff General Sir Patrick Sanders, laid out his plan for a land war between NATO and Russia. The "British Army must be prepared to engage in warfare at its most violent," he said, "a European land war is not just some manifestation of distant storm clouds on the horizon; we can see it now."

The scale of the UK's war aims, Sanders made clear, demands the militarisation of the economy and society. "We can't be lighting the factory furnaces across the nation on the eve of war; this effort must start now," he insisted. Britain must "inspire the imagination of our people to fight and win if called upon… To succeed in mobilising, we must ensure that we engender the culture and behaviour required."

War against China is also being actively prepared. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss told the NATO summit in Madrid last month that their war in Ukraine was sending a message to Chinese President Xi. Increased collaboration between Russia and China and the extension of "their military capability" and "global influence" necessitated a new strategic concept for the Indo-Pacific and for Euro-Atlantic security.

These global war aims are incompatible with democratic forms of rule. Placing Britain on a war footing means a war against the working class at home. It means mass austerity and the suppression of fundamental democratic rights, including the right to strike and to free speech and assembly. The UK has already spent £4 billion arming Ukraine, leading to demands to increase defence spending by a third to 3 percent of GDP. But this is only the beginning.

The only way out of this disaster is through the conscious intervention of the working class.

For a zero-COVID strategy to end the pandemic!

The SEP and the ICFI are leading the fight to build an international movement of the working class to stop the pandemic.

Millions of workers celebrated the downfall of Johnson, whose criminal response to the pandemic has claimed more than 200,000 lives. Yet despite the removal of the man who declared, "No more lockdowns, Let the bodies pile high in their thousands!" his policies continue.

The ruling class demand that we must "learn to live with the virus" is a policy for mass illness and death. One year since Johnson proclaimed "Freedom Day", the pandemic is surging. An estimated 3.5 million people had COVID last week, up nearly 30 percent in a week with young adults and working-age people hardest hit.

The long-term implications are disastrous, with 1.8 million people suffering symptoms of Long COVID. According to a tracker of excess deaths from *The Economist*, 3.8 million people globally have died since January 3 from the pandemic.

The prioritisation of the profits of the banks and corporations over the lives of the working class has created a catastrophe. This was made possible by the Labour Party and the trade unions, who, while supporting trillions in COVID bailouts to the corporations, never launched a single strike to demand safe schools, hospitals and workplaces. Today, even the former "left" advocates of limited forms of mitigation say nothing.

We call on workers to demand the reinstatement of all necessary public health measures to suppress the virus, including the closure of non-essential workplaces with full compensation to workers and small businesses, and the restoration of test, trace and quarantine protocols, including masking and lockdowns when required. This must be paid for through the expropriation of the major corporations, banks and pandemic profiteers.

Mobilise the working class in a general strike to end the cost-of-living crisis!

The SEP will link the demand for an election to the fight for a general strike.

The war against Russia and the pandemic are fuelling an inflationary spiral that is devastating workers' lives. The price of oil, gas, grains and other basic commodities has reached record highs, with fuel bills likely to rise from today's record £1,971 to £3,245 in October.

The working class cannot afford to live because society is run in the interests of the super-rich! Surging corporate profits are responsible for 60 percent of the increase in inflation, according to Oxfam. Meanwhile, British workers face the "worst real wage squeeze" in decades. Britain is the second most socially unequal country in Europe after Bulgaria.

Last month's strike by the Rail, Maritime and Transport union led to warnings of a Summer of Discontent and the government legislating for the use of agency workers as scabs and threatening to outlaw strikes in essential services. Strikers were denounced as "Putin's stooges" undermining the war effort.

Millions of workers want to join this struggle for an inflation-busting pay rise, with train drivers, post, BT telecoms and airport workers voting to strike by massive majorities and angry demands for action by teachers, doctors, nurses, council workers and others. But they confront a trade union bureaucracy determined to suppress the class struggle at all costs.

We urge workers to build rank-and-file committees in every workplace, democratically accountable and led by the most respected worker militants, to take the fight into their own hands and unify their struggles against the common enemy.

For the international unity of the working class!

The central perspective fought for by the SEP is that of socialist internationalism.

The allies of British workers are the workers in Europe and worldwide already coming into struggle. In the past weeks, general strikes have been carried out in Greece, Italy and Belgium. Waves of industrial action have rolled through Turkey, France and other countries. A mass movement of the working class and rural poor has brought down the Rajapakse government in Sri Lanka.

A determined industrial and political offensive by the British working class centred on challenging the right of the parties of big business to rule would become a powerful inspiration for the developing class struggles in Europe and internationally.

This is what the SEP stands for and it is the basis of our call for a general election and the building of our party as the new socialist leadership of the working class.

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