Workers speak on Johnson government crisis and the SEP's call for a general election

Our reporters
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Workers and young people in Britain have spoken with the *World Socialist Web Site* about the crisis of the Johnson government and the Socialist Equality Party's call for a general election.

The SEP's statement, "The case for a general election: expose the Tory-Labour conspiracy to drag Britain into World War III!" was published on Sunday. It explained:

"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 to 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."

Ash, a young hospitality worker spoke to campaigners in Sheffield, supporting the call for a general election, "We need a government which is not just a gang of filthy rich people. There was talk about lowering tax for people who do not have children, but how about taxing the likes of Jeff Bezos and the other billionaires?

"The accepted model of democracy of 'one person, one vote' does not work because there is too much social inequality. Everything is determined by a tiny handful in their financial interests. It is going to require a very big change and I am all for the widest discussion on how this can be done.

"For too long we have been treated to different flavours of Toryism including Labour. Corbyn was witch-hunted and slandered as anti-Semitic because they saw him as a threat.

"I'm all for a general strike against this government. They have treated those who have kept everything going during the pandemic like rubbish. The NHS is going down the path of further privatisation and that is a slap in the face especially to all those who worked hard to save lives. The health of the public was not put first and the only thing which mattered was making money.

"The first thing my former employer did at the start of the pandemic was to cut our sick pay. We should never forget Johnson's words, 'Let the bodies pile high'. All he got was a £50 fine for breaking lockdown rules while others made huge sacrifices to follow them and do the right thing.

"I don't understand much about geopolitics and the background to the conflict in Ukraine, but I do fear World War III and think this is a real danger which must be stopped. I will look into this more. You should not go off impressions and I don't trust the media. I'm glad you are here discussing these issues."

At a campaign stalls in Manchester, **Luke**, a student from Manchester, said he was concerned about the cost-of-living crisis. "I was raised by my father, a part time binman, on a council estate. Times were bad then, but it's far worse now. I'm in a privileged position at university, but my cousins work 50 hours a week, on zero-hour contracts.

"I worked briefly in a primary school in Wigan. I spoke with teachers, and they said their funding is miniscule compared to richer areas. Some kids were wearing uniforms too big for them, passed down. My friends are really struggling."

A student of international relations, specialising in the Middle East, Jon agreed that NATO's war against Russia could trigger global nuclear conflict, "The idea of a winnable nuclear war is terrifying."

Jon spoke about the refugee crisis caused by US and British imperialist war in the Middle East, "I'm doing a thematic analysis on how the *Sun* and *Daily Mail* represent refugees, based on 800 articles. The language they use is inhumane. The most common words are 'illegal', 'criminal', and 'swarm'.

"I noticed that with the Ukraine war, there was a change of emphasis. Refugees from Ukraine were described as hardworking, Christian."

Jon agreed with the call for a general election to alert the working class and mobilise opposition to the growing danger of World War III, "I agree absolutely with a general election. The people who should rule are the people who

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have done the work, and poets, writers who have empathy in their hearts."

Christopher, who lost his mother to COVID-19 in October 2021, spoke to the WSWS from Belfast, "We need the working class to rise up now more than ever." Of the Johnson government he said, "Everybody hates them, for their handling of the pandemic and the cost of living and their attacks on workers' rights. I think they're the most despised government ever. And Labour aren't really helping much. They should be calling for a general election but they're not."

Asked why he thought this was, Christopher replied, "They agree with herd immunity, they agree with everything, big business, the war in Ukraine and all. They're more right-wing than left-wing."

Describing the social situation in Northern Ireland, he explained, "There's nothing on the job sites and job boards over here— it's all part time. The work over here is terrible." Living on social support is "very hard. There are loads of foodbanks. One has just opened up down the street. More and more people are using them; even working people.

"COVID's on the rise again and they don't talk about it at all. Also the threat of nuclear war is quite high and they don't talk about it. It's the same with Saudi Arabia. They're bombing Yemen but nobody criticises them for it, while they criticise Russia every day."

Christopher said the Tory government "shouldn't be allowed to just pick another leader; they should be kicked out completely." They should be replaced by "a socialist party. But that's not Labour. Most people I know think Labour aren't much better so what's the point of voting for them." He added, "I would tell them to support the Socialist Equality Party, to support the party and the *World Socialist Web Site*."

Finn, a student, told the WSWS, "To me it seems that Johnson's resignation will not have any major impact on the mistreatment of the working class in the UK. Especially with the domain name Ready4Rishi [former chancellor and now leadership contender Rishi Sunak] being purchased well over 6 months ago, it seems that the ruling class has had plans to replace Johnson with an equally damaging new prime minister.

"Sunak's personal incompetence as chancellor has already cost the taxpayer billions while millions more fell into poverty because of the pandemic. And with all other Conservative candidates giving no reason to believe they will do a better job.

"Having a damaging and uncaring of the working class PM will allow the continued support of the war in Ukraine, austerity, privatisation of the NHS and all the other abuses this government has been responsible for.

"I do believe we need a fundamental change of government not just a new leader of the same party that will continue the same policy."

Helen Leon, a teacher forced to retire due to Long COVID and a member of the Educators Rank-and-File Committee, said she was pleased the "mass murderer Johnson is being removed from office" but added, "As far as the resignation goes, well, what does his resignation matter if the system stays the same? It is the system, capitalism, that has to go!

"I've struggled to recover from Long COVID since getting it in March 2020, at the beginning of the pandemic. It has left me acutely asthmatic, fatigued, often with backlashes. It has been appalling and unbelievable to see that so many of us are expendable if we're not 'profitable'. I've watched in horror as teachers walk back into unsafe workplaces, from which COVID has spread into communities, disabling roughly 10 percent of all infected with some form of Long COVID. Our lives just do not matter if we're not making profit for someone. And profit has been made, and lives have been lost."

Helen said, "I am encouraged by the mass strikes that have erupted, like the rail workers. Teachers must go on strike for better conditions. Workers are beginning to take a stand, but the unions are isolating these struggles. It's workers who must bring down this rotten government as no-one else is prepared to. Not the Labour Party and not the unions. They do not call for this.

"The value of rank-and-file committees is that they make these unequal power structures visible and help us to regain our power. That's why I joined this rank-and-file committee and that's why I see chinks of light as more and more of us connect and share information and experiences."

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