Lively discussion at Socialist Equality Party (UK) public meetings on the collapse of Your Party

“We need a complete upheaval of the existing system”

Our reporters
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The Socialist Equality Party (UK) has concluded a series of public meetings, “Your Party’s collapse—Time to build the Socialist Equality Party”. A lively discussion followed the opening report at each meeting.

The report was delivered by SEP National Secretary Chris Marsden, Assistant National Secretary Tom Scripps and National Committee member Steve James at meetings in July and August in London, Sheffield, Manchester and Glasgow.

Questions from the floor in **Manchester** included, “How does the SEP propose to defend migrants?” and “How do you create a globally unified working class?” One person, noting that New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani calls himself a social democrat, asked how social democracy compares with socialism. Another asked the SEP’s attitude to the environmental parties.

Marsden stressed the struggle of the Trotskyist movement to build the Fourth International as the centre of a world socialist movement: “For the vast bulk of our history, workers all over the world have still looked to the reformist and Stalinist parties for leadership—Trotskyists were killed, framed up, persecuted, every imaginable crime committed against our movement—but it didn’t succeed in destroying it.

“Now those parties have largely collapsed, or for the most part collapsed, and there’s an opportunity to construct a socialist movement as it was always meant to be—an international movement of the working class.”

He continued, “There’s already been a massive global movement in defence of Gaza. Millions of people all over the world have rallied to the defence of the Palestinians. They didn’t wait for us to tell them to: they were motivated by anti-imperialist sentiment, by the terrible plight of the Gazan population, by the horrific character of the Zionist state.

“So, there are traditions and sentiments within the working class which create the ideological foundations for the development of an international socialist movement. We don’t have to tell people to oppose war, we have to tell them how to oppose it.”

Retail worker Mae attended after visiting an SEP stall in Salford. She said, “I had been thinking about where I politically stood for some time before that, but then I realised I didn’t actually know.”

She said, “a lot of the points fully resonated with me. They were all ideas that I already had, but I didn’t really have a name for them… I thought, ‘Yeah, this actually very much aligns with what I would like to see for the world’. So, I took their information and then started doing some private research.

“Myself and the other people in the room asked some quite complex questions about environmental positions, NATO, how socialism compares to social democracy, and how the movement can develop internationally rather than just nationally. It’s difficult to build a national movement, never mind an international one.

“The answers were very in-depth and included a lot of historical context, which I liked because communism and socialism are very old concepts now. It was good that there was a lot of historical knowledge and evidence to support the ideas being put forward. It felt like there was a solid foundation.”

Alenke, a medical student from Sri Lanka, said, “I think it’s really great that we’re having these sorts of events. I think we need to spread the word… we need more people supporting it. We’ve seen the historical consequences of

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capitalism, and I think at this point, we need change."

He added, "We need a complete upheaval of the existing system. Because we're not just fighting people here. We are fighting a whole system. And you can't just replace people from the existing system."

In **Sheffield**, hospitality worker Hagen told us: "Uniting the working class internationally in a struggle for world socialism is an amazing idea. It's what we need, and it's really the only thing we can do now."

Joshua, a Sheffield Hallam student who signed up as a Supporter, said, "The days just prior to the meeting I had already been thinking about certain world issues; it's kind of impossible not to. Every other day you see someone like Trump, Elon Musk becoming the first trillionaire while many people can't even afford meals, and the nightmares people in Gaza must live through.

"Combine that with living through the effects of climate change, where greed keeps getting in the way of solutions to its issues, and companies replacing more and more jobs with AI, I was already in a position where I was willing to hear out answers and alternate perspectives. Having met a representative of the SEP a day before the meeting, it convinced me to come over and hear them out."

He explained, "The meeting, which emphasised the flaws in the current system of capitalism, spoke to me. Addressing the common counterarguments for socialism was very important."

Mark, who attended the meeting in **London**, said, "Tom's report made it crystal clear to me that any party—no matter how left-sounding its rhetoric—which bases itself on a programme of national reformism offers the working class only demoralisation and defeat. The ultimate beneficiary of which will be Reform UK and the far-right."

In **Glasgow**, asked the party's attitude to Hamas, Steve James explained that the party defended the Palestinian and Iranian people's right to self-defence against imperialism and its Zionist agent, but neither Hamas nor Iran's bourgeois clerical regime could drive imperialism from the region. Only the working class could, through the fight for the United Socialist States of the Middle East.

SEP Supporter Colin asked why Reform UK was winning support. James placed the far-right's growth in the context of the 10 wasted years of Corbynism and Your Party. With the social crisis intensifying, every mainstream party is shifting right and with a movement of the working class betrayed by Corbyn and the unions, far-right attempts to blame the most vulnerable for the real crisis in housing, health and welfare could get a hearing.

John asked about the Your Party debacle's impact in Scotland. James replied that its influence there had been more limited, owing to confusion over Scottish nationalism, but Corbyn's collapse had handed voters back to the SNP and Greens.

Your Party's Scottish collapse was partly a split over separatism: its Dundee founding conference became a focal point for pseudo-left efforts to revive the independence referendum campaign, but when those candidates were barred from the elections they walked out and it disintegrated. The SEP opposes illusions in the bourgeois project of Scottish separatism.

Recent SEP recruit Adele commented afterwards, "My biggest takeaway from the meeting's report is that further clarifications on Marxism and its history are of utmost importance. Still to this day many individuals believe that socialism or Marxism equals Stalinism. Many workers still believe that communism means no personal possessions. Many workers still look for alternatives to the establishment, such as Corbyn and Sultana.

"The only correct and effective alternative is through the Socialist Equality Party and the parties of the Fourth International. The only party that is taking the necessary steps to educate workers on the history of Marxism, clarifying misunderstandings and historical falsifications, is the Socialist Equality Party."

There was considerable interest in the Mehring Books stalls at the meetings, with a wide selection of literature sold. Among the titles bought was the pamphlet *Corbyn's new left party—What it is and what it isn't*, containing the SEP's early analysis of Your Party.

• **To sign up as an SEP Supporter and join the fight for socialism visit our Supporters page.**

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