

The political issues in the Holborn and St Pancras by-election

Statement by the Socialist Equality Party (UK)
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The Holborn and St Pancras by-election brings into sharp focus the need for the working class to formulate a socialist response to the pro-war, pro-austerity, anti-immigrant and authoritarian programme of the Burnham Labour government.

The by-election in London is being held under the shadow of an escalating war against Russia by the NATO powers, with Britain supplying long-range missiles and support for massive drone attacks on Moscow, while its political and military representatives speak of putting the country on a war footing through massive rearmament and the reintroduction of conscription.

The war in Ukraine, now in its fifth year, has developed ever more openly into a direct NATO war against Russia, and is part of an expanding world war. The US government has instructed its citizens to leave the Middle East, amid renewed gangster threats against Iran by US President Donald Trump, who declared on September 20 that he could “blow the entire nation up”.

Alongside Israel’s genocide in Gaza, the criminal unprovoked war on Iran has demonstrated there is no line the imperialist powers will not cross in pursuit of their geostrategic and class interests.

The media and political establishment are doing everything to prevent the population from understanding the dangers they confront. And as the by-election demonstrates, they are being assisted by pseudo-left parties which are seeking to block the emergence of a socialist, anti-war movement in the working class.

“Battleground of the left”

The New Statesman described the by-election as a “battleground of the left”. In reality, since 2024, the Holborn and St Pancras constituency has served as a focal point for the wretched efforts of pseudo-left groups advancing themselves as an alternative to the rightward-careening Labour Party.

Labour took power two years ago with Keir Starmer as Prime Minister, after facing off a challenge centred on the party’s support for genocide in Gaza. Andrew Feinstein, a backer of Jeremy Corbyn, received nearly 20 percent of the vote in Holborn and St Pancras, cutting Starmer’s majority in half. His Labour government came to office on a historically low vote, in a “loveless landslide” against the Tories.

Feinstein used his candidacy to promote calls for a new “left” party under Corbyn, who had refused all such entreaties for years. That party was finally announced in July 2025, seeking to channel the

anger among millions of workers over Labour’s rampage against social and democratic rights, from the scrapping of winter fuel subsidies for the elderly to the proscription of Palestine Action.

But within months, Your Party had collapsed into factional infighting. Corbyn devoted himself to opposing calls for a more left-wing programme as he sought to confine workers to a policy of pressurising Labour from his enforced position outside its ranks.

He oversaw purges and expulsions against dual members of nominally socialist organisations in order to consciously sabotage the growth of a mass party in the working class dedicated to the struggle against austerity and war.

Your Party’s implosion was political confirmation that workers cannot answer Labour’s capitalist programme by supporting a new reformist parliamentary vehicle led by dissident factions of the Labour and trade union bureaucracy—a Labour Party Mark II. Your Party exists today as a rump directed by Corbyn’s inner circle. It is not fielding a candidate in Holborn and St Pancras, with Feinstein likewise not standing.

They have cleared the way for two parties—the Greens and George Galloway’s Workers Party of Great Britain—to promote themselves as left-wing opponents of the Burnham government. They are challenging Labour Party right-winger Sagal Abdi-Wali, leader of Camden Council and a key backer of Starmer.

Unity behind a party of NATO

As soon as Green Party leader Zack Polanski announced he would contest the by-election, he became the unity candidate for most of Britain’s pseudo-left. The same groups who promoted Corbyn’s Your Party as a vehicle for socialism responded to its collapse by seamlessly switching allegiance to the Green Party. This was part of broader efforts by the political establishment to promote the Greens as a safe channel for mass political disaffection, especially among young people.

Responding to the surge in Green Party membership, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), Socialist Party and Revolutionary Communist Party depicted Polanski’s rhetoric against austerity and genocide as evidence of his party’s turn to “green socialism”. During the May council elections, the SWP formed an electoral pact with the Greens. Their efforts to promote such a thoroughly right-wing, opportunist and unserious individual as Polanski is politically criminal.

The Greens offer no genuine alternative to the Labour Party. They

are a capitalist party that supports NATO, backs immigration controls, and whose leaders in local government are enforcing austerity. Polanski has framed NATO's intervention as a war for the protection of Ukraine, telling the BBC, "I think it's important our country stands in solidarity with Ukrainians."

His occasional criticism of NATO is based on advocating "an alternative alliance, based on working with our European neighbours" and aligns with the advanced plans by the European imperialists to create a new military architecture against Russia and China and as a counterweight to Trump's America First agenda for global hegemony.

The pseudo-left must not be allowed to replicate the disorienting experience of the past two years with Corbyn under a new figurehead and a different pro-capitalist party.

George Galloway's toxic nationalism

Galloway is claiming that his Workers Party of Great Britain is the only party standing "against war, against NATO and the preparations for World War III". He is seeking to extract political capital from the pro-war, pro-Zionist politics of the Greens, and its broader promotion of middle-class identity politics.

But Galloway's politics is toxic and opposed to the fundamental interests of the British and international working class. As the SEP has explained, "What he retains from Stalinism, decades after the bureaucracy destroyed the Soviet Union, restored capitalism and mutated into a mafia-style oligarchy, is a fierce British nationalism."

His opposition to the NATO war in Ukraine is based on his politically reactionary support for the Putin regime of capitalist oligarchs, whose invasion of Ukraine he glorifies. His denunciations of NATO and the European Union are grounded in the defence of British imperialism and the pursuit of lucrative multilateral alliances with China, Russia and other BRICS countries.

During the 2016 Brexit referendum, Galloway formed an alliance with then UK Independence Party leader Nigel Farage, declaring that "left" and "right" must unite to defend British sovereignty, including "the right to decide who can come and live and work in Britain, who we can deport from Britain, what level of deficit we can run in Britain, or what our Foreign Policy in Britain should be."

World War II, he declared, was "our finest hour. When we all went forward together—Mr. Churchill and Mr. Atlee and Mr. Bevan ... That's what we are doing here tonight... Left, right, left, right, forward march." On Twitter, he added of Farage, "We are allies in one cause. Like Churchill and Stalin..."

In 2019, Galloway supported Farage's Brexit Party in the European elections. In May of that year, he shared a platform with Trump's fascist advisor Steve Bannon at the Eurasia Media Forum in Kazakhstan, declaring, "Steve Bannon is right. The only way that you have any chance of controlling the elites and monopolies and the exploiters is on a nation state level."

Socialist Equality Party's record

In the 2024 general elections, the Socialist Equality Party fielded

Tom Scripps, the party's assistant national secretary, in Holborn and St Pancras to advance a genuine socialist alternative for the working class. We explained, "The SEP is using this election to break the conspiracy of silence maintained by the capitalist media, the major parties, the trade unions and what passes for the 'left' over the acute dangers facing the working class. We intend to build a socialist alternative..."

"The SEP rejects calls to sink political differences to bring about one big Gaza protest vote. The promise by the Stop the War Coalition and various pseudo-left groups of 'No Ceasefire, No Vote' means supporting some protest candidates while calling for a vote for Labour everywhere else. It ends with the formation of a government that will continue backing Israel and waging NATO's wars."

Every word of our election statement has been confirmed, above all on the bankrupt and treacherous politics of Corbyn. Against the entire pseudo-left, who were begging him to found a new left party, the SEP warned: "The only reason Starmer is poised to enter 10 Downing Street is that Corbyn and his backers, elected by a landslide to lead the Labour Party in 2015, faced down demands from workers and youth to drive out the Blairites. Corbyn capitulated on all fundamental issues, including NATO membership and nuclear weapons, and then politely handed the party over to Starmer."

Neither a victory for Burnham's Labour Party nor the Greens will advance the interests of the working class a single inch. What is necessary now is to carefully examine the bitter lessons of the political failure of Corbynism and the criminal role of those tendencies that boosted him and now promote the Greens.

Two years ago, we wrote in our election statement, "The Socialist Equality Party states plainly to workers, especially the young generation: The building of a new and genuinely socialist leadership must begin now. We advance the socialist and internationalist programme on which this new leadership must be built."

The Socialist Equality Party is holding an online public meeting on October 7 at 7 p.m., "The Holborn and St Pancras by-election: why socialists oppose Labour, the Greens and Galloway", and will be campaigning among workers, youth and students throughout the electorate to discuss and clarify these fundamental questions.

To register to attend the meeting [click here](#)



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