

Socialist Equality Party election campaign wins support in Holborn and St Pancras, London

Our reporters
16 June 2024

On Saturday the Socialist Equality Party campaigned in Holborn and St Pancras with a stall on Camden Road. Tom Scripps, 28, is challenging Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and is the only candidate advancing a socialist programme for workers and young people against capitalism and war.

Hundreds of copies of the SEP election manifesto were distributed outside Sainsbury's and near Aldi on Camden High Street. The SEP is fielding Scripps in London and 25-year-old Darren Paxton in Inverness to build a socialist anti-war movement based on the international working class.

The SEP's election statement alerts the working class to NATO plans to escalate their proxy-war in Ukraine into a direct military confrontation with Russia: "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."

Dozens of workers, youth and retirees stopped and spoke with SEP campaigners. The stall, with its large placards denouncing Labour's support for the Gaza genocide and NATO's proxy-war in Ukraine, attracted interest throughout the day, despite heavy rain at times.

Mali, a self-employed worker, pointed to the SEP's election manifesto and said, "The first thing I agreed with when I saw you was 'no to the Gaza war' and 'build an anti-war movement'. That is why I am supporting Tom. I don't know his background, but I believe in those words. I believe in justice in the world, and peace in the world.

"The people who are dying in Gaza and Ukraine are the same people. The Americans are pushing the western countries into war. I agree there is a connection to the war in Gaza and Ukraine."

Mali has attended all the mass protests in London against Israel's slaughter in Gaza. He linked Britain's support for genocide to the criminalisation of protest and free speech: "Democratic rights includes the right to say what you want. These protests are not antisemitic as they are saying. If you look at many of the normal Israeli people—I'm not talking about the Netanyahu government, but the people—they are against the war. They don't want anything to do with genocide.

"I agree that Starmer is just as much a war criminal. I don't know any more of any difference between the Labour and Conservative parties."

Mali took some of the manifestos to share with his family and friends.

A young worker told SEP campaigners, "I have been to all the marches on Gaza, and I was shocked, shocked when Keir Starmer, my MP, agreed that Israel had the right to stop Palestinians receiving water and food. Starmer is a lawyer and knows human rights, and he has broken humanitarian rights so much.

"He led what was in effect a coup against Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour Party yet Corbyn being nice is also his biggest downfall. He would not fight them.

"I work seven days a week with only a morning off. I am for the whole political set-up to be swept away and replaced with a socialist society where what is needed is given. I am interested in this campaign."

Hawie, a musician from Camden, took a copy of the SEP's election manifesto and told an SEP volunteer: "I haven't heard that take before, about the mobilisation toward war with Russia. I'm following lefty discussion all over the place, on Twitter, YouTube discussion, I haven't heard anything like that before.

"There seems to be a lot of talk around allowing Ukraine to strike territory inside Russia, and possibly

other countries such as Poland, so everything's moving toward escalation. I'll have a look at your website certainly. I wasn't planning to vote Labour, and I was thinking that Feinstein was a good alternative, but maybe I'll think again."

Hawie had supported Corbyn as leader of the Labour Party in 2015: "I was pleased that someone seemed to be steering the Labour Party back in the direction worthy of its name, closer to its origins coming out of the labour movement." He described Starmer's "Stalinist tactics" in purging thousands of left-wing members from the party. But he was also critical of Corbyn for "leaning into that" and refusing to challenge his attackers. "He should never have given in to the Labour Party".

The campaign team encountered widespread opposition to the Gaza genocide, but there was little awareness of NATO's push for direct military confrontation against Russia. Several young people expressed surprise at the Zelensky regime's imprisonment of our comrade, the Ukrainian socialist Bogdan Syrotiuk for opposing the war.

"I thought Zelensky was in favour of democracy", a youth said in surprise, after an SEP member explained his role in cancelling elections, arresting youth for resisting the draft, imprisoning left-wing opponents, banning strikes and promoting fascist wartime leaders such as Stepan Bandera, who played a leading role in the Holocaust.

He took a leaflet and expressed support for Bogdan's struggle for the unity of Russian and Ukrainian workers against the war.

Outside Aldi, an SEP member was confronted by an angry member of the public who mistook us for the Labour Party. He demanded to know why Labour had supported members of Ukraine's fascist Azov battalion being invited into the UK parliament.

An SEP campaigner quickly explained our opposition to the Labour Party, but said he was right to be alarmed over Labour's promotion of fascists. He took a manifesto and said he would read it with interest.

Outside Sainsbury's the SEP encountered volunteers campaigning for Independent Andrew Feinstein and handing out flyers. One of their campaign managers approached us and accused the SEP of "splitting the left vote" before walking off.

Feinstein's election flyer and website does not mention the word socialist, while the Gaza genocide is referenced just once, as a call for divestment by Camden Council.

While Feinstein is running as an Independent, he

represents the "Collective" group formed last month by supporters of Jeremy Corbyn and self-billed as "the first organised mass movement of the left outside of the Labour Party".

Until recently a member of the Labour Party, Feinstein holds up as his model Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party and bases his programme on the five demands of Corbyn's Peace and Justice Project: a pay rise for all, green new deal with public ownership, housing for all, tax the rich to save the NHS and welcome refugees in a world free from war.

Election leaflets produced by Feinstein in the constituency promote a crass anti-political party localism and municipal politics, with statements such as, "An Independent candidate serves only local people, not political party agendas" and "I want Camden to thrive again".

Such a perspective conceals the implications of imperialist genocide and war, austerity and the rise of the far-right—processes rooted in the breakdown of world capitalism, radicalising millions of workers and young people around the world and demanding a political solution fought for by a socialist party.

Like Corbyn's election platform in neighbouring Islington North, Feinstein's campaign is calibrated to appeal to popular hostility toward Labour's right-wing programme, while blocking a socialist and revolutionary challenge to capitalism by the working class.

His sole reference to Starmer is not that he supports genocide and should be tried as a war criminal, but that he "views residents as a stepping stone to power". Feinstein concludes, "We deserve an MP who is active locally and shares our moral values".

The SEP is intervening in the British general elections to politically educate the working class and youth in the struggle against war and for socialism, in direct opposition to the pro-capitalist politics of Andrew Feinstein and the Corbynite "left". We urge workers and youth everywhere to read our election manifesto and join the SEP's campaign.



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