

Election result

Bad for workers

Time to draw lessons



Mark Davidson/Alamy



Aaron Chown/Alamy

Starmer takes over in reactionary climate that benefits Farage (right) and his Reform UK.

The election of Starmer's Labour government is bad news for us all. The hated Tories were annihilated, and good riddance to them, but the Starmer government that replaced them is no less the enemy of the working class and oppressed. The country is now run by the most right-wing Labour government ever, led by a technocrat who spent the last four years purging the left. His government supports the genocide in Gaza and its economic programme will mean attacking the trade unions and public services.

What was needed was to build a united, pro-working-class opposition to Starmer. But although millions of people oppose his support for the genocide of the Palestinians and his Thatcherite austerity policies, the left made no effort to unite the working class. They were weak and divided and played *no role* in the election. Now, the overriding priority remains to unite the workers movement to resist the Starmer government. But to do that, we must draw the right political lessons.

For us, the starting point in the election was: Starmer has drawn a line against the working class, therefore the workers movement must say *no vote to Starmer's Labour*. We made no exceptions for left Labour candidates like Zarah Sultana, John McDonnell and Diane Abbott, who have been vocal in support of Palestine but helped put Starmer into office. As for the left, some shamelessly called to vote Labour (the CP, AWL) while others couldn't bring themselves to oppose a vote for Starmer (the SWP, Socialist Alternative). Moreover, the union bureaucrats that the left idolises—Mick Lynch, Daniel Kebede and Sharon Graham—all supported Starmer. These sell-outs who sabotaged strikes under the Tories will be even more treacherous when faced with the Labour government that they helped install. In the next round of pay talks, when the unions are pitted against Starmer, workers will have to fight tooth and nail *against* these class traitors.

Under the slogan "vote working class", we called for support



Pro-Zionist Telegraph rejoices over defeat of Galloway.

to the Workers Party, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC) and any independent candidates who stood against Starmer on a pro-working-class platform (which excluded the Greens). The main left challenge to Labour came from George Galloway's Workers Party, which ran numerous candidates on an openly anti-Starmer and pro-Palestine, pro-socialist basis. But the Workers Party failed to make the breakthrough it expected. Galloway himself narrowly missed getting re-elected in Rochdale, to the delight of the Starmer camp and of the rabidly right-wing *Telegraph*, which crowed that Galloway's defeat was "a triumph for Israel".

The inability of the left to build any viable alternative to Starmer left the field clear for Nigel Farage's Reform UK to posture as the only challenger to the establishment parties. His outfit made significant gains by tapping into anger in run-down working-class areas and channelling it into anti-immigrant bigotry. The rise of this far-right movement poses more sharply than ever the need to overcome the divisions within the working class.

In today's climate of right-wing reaction, it is important to reassert that struggle by the working class is the only way to change society in a progressive direction, and the only political

perspective that can unite the working class for this purpose is opposition to the capitalist rulers. The way forward for socialists is to fight for a political *rupture* from Labour, which ties the working class to the British rulers. This is the lesson for the anti-Starmer left, which remains tied in various ways to the politics of Labour, whether it be through the Labour and trade union lefts, Corbyn, the local independent campaigns or Galloway's old Labour model. Their political ties to Labour are the chief obstacle to uniting the working class.

Corbyn revivalists

Instead of drawing the lessons of past failures, much of the left is placing its hopes on Corbyn, yet again. Of course, it's a good thing that Corbyn got re-elected as an independent, thrashing Starmer's stooge candidate. But for Owen Jones and Novara Media as well as Socialist Alternative, the Socialist Party and the SWP, Corbyn's victory has rekindled hope in the impotent Pope of the left, whose acceptance speech promising "peace not war" and "kinder, gentler" politics could easily have come from the Archbishop of Canterbury. Corbyn's revivalists hold up his 2019 election manifesto as their blueprint for changing society. That document supports the imperialist EU, while promising a list of good things—funding for the NHS, council housing, etc—which Corbyn could never deliver.

Corbyn's pacifist and Labourite politics are a repudiation of the class struggle. That's why, when he found himself in a position of power, he capitulated on every question that the ruling class regards as a red line issue. When Corbyn was leader, right-wing Labour MPs demanded an assurance that he would support any military action Israel undertakes. Corbyn refused, but he also betrayed the Palestinian cause by his refusal to fight the "anti-Semitism" witch hunt. He is hated by workers in de-industrialised areas for his support to the EU, which they rightly see as a sell-out to middle-class London liberals who despise the working class. Corbyn's liberal-Labour politics are a proven dead end.

Greens—Starmerites on bikes

The Corbyn cheerleaders are also excited about the rise in support for the Greens, but this is not a cause for the left to celebrate. The pro-NATO, pro-EU Greens are popular among the liberal middle classes, but are despised within the working class, not least for anti-working-class measures like the ULEZ tax. The Greens will prove spineless as an opposition to Starmer. No one should be taken in by their election material promising all kinds of good things—from a clean environment to defending the NHS. There's no way they can achieve such demands. As a capitalist party, the Greens are on the other side in the class struggle. When they controlled Brighton council and bin workers were forced to go on strike

WORKERS HAMMER
 SUPPLEMENT JULY 2024

Vote Communist Party?
Not so fast... we have a condition

The Communist Party of Britain is contesting 14 seats under the slogan "Vote communist on 4 July". Surely, Communists should deserve a vote against Starmer's Labour? Not so fast... The CP's line is "Vote Communist wherever you can" and vote Labour virtually everywhere else, with their overall line favouring a Labour government.
 Voting for Starmer's Labour is completely against the interests of the working class. As we have explained in our article "To hell with Sunak and Starmer! Vote working class", *Workers Hammer* on 25th, Starmer has made clear that his government will serve the rich and powerful, support Israel's genocide against the Palestinians and attack public services and trade unions. The CP's call to vote for Labour amounts to supporting that and is a total betrayal of the interests of the working class. To justify this with the argument that Labour is the lesser evil of the two evils is a complete...
 candidates represent real opposition to Starmer's Labour. OK. We are ready to give them the benefit of the doubt. We are putting the following challenge to the CP and *Morning Star*:
 If the *Morning Star* unambiguously calls on working people to vote for their candidates against the Labour Party, the Spartacist League will be happy to call for a vote for them. If, on the other hand, the *Morning Star* maintains that the "top priority" is to vote Labour or strikes back on the eve of polling day with a similar editorial in during the local elections, then no one should bother supporting a completely symbolic campaign designed to deceive people.
 The Spartacist League rejects any vote for Labour and calls to vote for the Workers Party, the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, pro-socialist independents and... maybe the CP. We will correct mistakes in *Morning Star*.

Spartacist League challenged Communist Party of Britain: oppose voting Labour (they didn't).

Read online:



Spartacist League/Britain

PO Box 42886, London N19 5WY • 07301003174 • workershammer.com

Open letter

For unity against Starmer's Labour!

Read online:



Dear comrades,

The Stratford and Bow constituency has three pro-socialist, pro-Palestinian candidates on its ballot: Halima Khan for the Workers Party, Fiona Lali, an independent supported by the Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP) and Steve Hedley, an independent. This situation divides the vote and only helps Starmer's Labour, leaving pro-socialist and anti-Starmer voters in Stratford and Bow with three divided options instead of a unified candidacy.

Despite any disagreements we might have with each candidate, they all deserve a vote against Starmer's Labour—which is the whole problem. Therefore, we are writing to urge the three candidates to resolve this problem by choosing one candidate.

The issue is that each candidate believes they are the real deal. Workers Party candidate Halima Khan has a right to be frustrated as she was the first to announce her candidacy. But since then, on X, Halima Khan has implied that the RCP and Hedley are competing with the dubious group "Hope not Hate" to undermine her, an accusation that is both baseless and destructive. As for the RCP, their claim to be the only "communist" does not give them the right to ignore everyone else and divide the vote. Steve Hedley might be a former RMT leader, but this does not give him any legitimacy to run against the other two.

Ridiculous spectacle in Stratford of three left candidates—Halima Khan (Workers Party), Fiona Lali (RCP) and Steve Hedley—running against each other. Our letter tried to knock heads together to agree on ONE candidate to do most damage to Starmer. To no avail.



Rizwana Karim



Rizwana Karim

Spartacist lit table in Hayes urging “Vote working class!”. SL proudly campaigned for Rizwana Karim (second from left) against left Labourite John McDonnell.

against their proposed cuts, the strikers found themselves pitted against the council’s “Tories on bikes”.

What now for independents?

A record number of independent candidates stood for election, which shows the breadth and depth of anger against Labour over Gaza. We supported Andrew Feinstein, who ran an effective pro-Palestine, independent campaign in Starmer’s constituency that slashed his majority. In addition to Corbyn, four independent candidates of Muslim background were elected. A fifth independent, Leanne Mohammad, came close to unseating the arch-Starmerite Wes Streeting in Ilford.

Since the election, activists who worked on independent campaigns have been discussing how to continue with grassroots activism. Both Corbyn and Feinstein have promised to build local movements in their respective boroughs of Islington and Camden. But efforts that are narrowly focused on local issues are not the way forward. Local problems such as the housing crisis, crumbling schools, etc are symptoms of the larger decline of the country that cannot be fixed by cash-starved local councils or by tinkering at the local level. Instead, it’s necessary to build a strong national movement that is prepared to wage the class struggle in opposition to the whole system that has driven the country to ruin.

Where was TUSC?

We supported TUSC, whose stated aim was to unite other organisations on a pro-working-class basis. While they rejected our application to run our own campaign under their banner (so much for their “united” front), we offered to canvass for some of their candidates, including Nancy Taaffe and Roger Banister. But their campaigning efforts were minimal and reeked of demoralisation. TUSC’s refusal to break from the Labour lefts and union bureaucrats (notably the probation officers’ “union”) undercut its aim of building a working-class opposition to Starmer. In fact Nancy Taaffe’s election leaflet assured voters that they could support TUSC without doing any damage to Starmer’s Labour. So, few people saw any point in voting for TUSC and they received a very poor result.

The Workers Party—under what flag?

In contrast to TUSC, the Workers Party did stand candidates against left MPs, rightly insisting that any vote for a Labour candidate is a vote for genocide. We welcomed the opportunity to canvass for Workers Party candidate Rizwana Karim, who stood against left Labour MP John McDonnell. She defiantly fought the obstacles placed in her way by McDonnell, who has deep ties to the mosques and played up the fact that he attends

the Palestine demonstrations, in an effort to retain the Muslim vote. For that matter, many trade union leaders marched for Palestine and, like McDonnell, supported the election of Starmer. These ties to Labour explain why the Palestine movement has so far been incapable of achieving any real gains.

While we actively supported the Workers Party against Labour, we warned that Galloway’s eclectic mix of old Labour-style social conservatism and British flag-waving makes it incapable of uniting the working class. Galloway’s views on trans people put him on the side of Wes Streeting, who is spearheading a major assault on trans youth by banning puberty blockers. Anti-trans bigotry is repellent to many young activists, whether it comes from the Workers Party or from Labour.

Galloway appeals to the Muslim community based on a mix of pro-Palestine sentiment and his own retrograde views on the LGBTQ and abortion questions. But he did not invent the idea of playing to conservative views in minority communities. For decades the Labour Party has secured the Muslim vote by a system of patronage organised through community religious leaders.

We oppose Galloway’s social conservatism because it accepts bourgeois moral codes which are manipulated by the capitalists to reinforce divisions within the working class. As opposed to keeping oppressed groups alienated and divided against each other, the way forward is to show that workers have a common interest in taking up the cause of women, gays, trans people, as well as Muslims and other oppressed communities, in a fight

WORKERS HAMMER

No 222 • SUMMERTON ROAD

Member of the Socialist League

Read online:

To hell with Sunak and Starmer!

Vote working class!

The last year of global capitalism has been a disaster for the working class. It has led to a global economic crisis, a war in Gaza, and a war in Ukraine. The only way to survive is to vote for the Workers Party.

The trade union movement and the Labour Party have failed to protect the interests of the working class. They have supported the war in Gaza and the war in Ukraine. The only way to survive is to vote for the Workers Party.

WORKERS PARTY

Read online:

Letter to Weekly Worker

“Debating with Labourites”

Read online:

against Starmer's government—the common enemy of all.

Labour alienates Muslims

Labour's support for the aims of British imperialism in Gaza has driven Muslims out of the Labour Party in huge numbers. This raises an important question. If the Muslim community were to join in a new pro-working-class, anti-imperialist initiative, it would be a progressive step. However, there is a danger that, out of legitimate opposition to Zionism and despair at Labour turning its back on them, many Muslims will abandon the labour movement in the direction of ethnic and religious politics. This would be a reactionary development, separating Muslims from the broader working class and reinforcing the existing divisions. The fact that the Workers Party, which seeks to put forward somewhat of a pro-working-class platform, lost out to an independent Muslim ex-councillor in Blackburn is not a good sign. The way forward for Muslim working people must be with the broader workers movement.

The Workers Party tried to compete with Farage for the white working-class vote by draping itself in the Union Jack. Previous generations of immigrants dreaded this flag under which British fascists carried out violent attacks on dark-skinned people. Today, many of their descendants embrace the Union Jack to show that they are as British as everyone else, to counter the racist trope that this country is not their home. But this is misguided. The labour movement's traditional emblem is the red flag, although it faded under Labour's pro-imperialist politics. As the satirical song says, "the workers flag is deepest pink, it's not as red as you might think". Nevertheless, replacing it with the Union Jack as the party's emblem was intended to underline Labour's loyalty to the establishment.

The Workers Party's embrace of the Union Jack drives away many layers of the population who rightfully belong in a workers party. In Northern Ireland, the Union Jack is routinely flown by Loyalists alongside the Israeli flag to show support for the oppression of the Irish Catholics. It signifies the oppression of the Scots nation (underlined by Starmer's refusal to grant a second independence referendum). The Union Jack also repels many English workers who grew up knowing that this is *not* the flag of their class. The Workers Party reinforces patriotic views among workers, rather than challenging them, which can only benefit Farage. After all, why vote for the Workers Party when



Workers Hammer

Andrew Feinstein's campaign enraged Starmer by slashing his vote total. Support to genocide in Gaza lost Labour millions of votes.

they can choose the real thing—Reform UK. Often while we were canvassing for the Workers Party, their red-white-and-blue colours meant we had to explain that we were not Reform UK.

The Workers Party also echoes Reform UK's racist hysteria against migrants, offering its own "migration policy that reflects the anxiety felt among the working class about an influx of migrants". This is deadly for the working class. The exploiting class will always take advantage of immigrant labour to undercut the wages of all workers. And many white workers are conned into blaming migrants because no party organises the struggle of working people against those who are actually responsible for Broken Britain: the British rulers. The real criminals arrive in yachts, not small boats. Rather than proposing reactionary migration policies, the task of socialists is to fight for citizenship for migrants. The workers movement must oppose such divide-and-rule ploys by organising migrant workers into the unions and fighting for decent pay and conditions for everyone.

Farage's rise cannot be stopped by liberals (echoed by the SWP) scolding Reform voters for being racist. A chunk of Reform's working-class base must be broken from this reactionary movement, not by liberal ideology but by showing that the class struggle that's necessary to turn this country around requires taking up the cause of migrants. A first step towards that is to replace the pro-Labour union bureaucrats with a new leadership.

The need to sever the ties that bind the left to Labour is the beginning of wisdom for overcoming the sorry state the left is in today. During the election, instead of a united, pro-working-class challenge to Starmer, the left was disunited and practically non-existent. Often we saw the absurd spectacle of the anti-Starmer left running against each other, as happened in Stratford. Faced with the tough battles against the Starmer government that lie ahead, this situation simply will not do. The bottom line is that the working class can be united. But only in opposition to the British imperialist ruling class. And that means in opposition to all variants of Labour politics. ■

Let trans kids decide!

To hell with the CASS review!

The state, NHS and parents have no business in who kids want to be!



ANDY BUCHANAN/GRITY

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