London County Council Elections: Party Manifesto

This is the first time that members of the Socialist Party of Great Britain have stood for election in East London. The candidates' names are unimportant; you will not see them on placards or in front windows, because it is not the Socialist Party's practice to cry up individuals or promote slogans. What we have to put before you is a simple but reasoned case about the world in which we all live - the case for Socialism.

Perhaps first, however, you will want to know something about the Socialist Party. It was founded in 1904; its Object and the Declaration of Principles on which it took its stand then, and still takes it now, are printed at the end of this Manifesto. The Socialist Party looks at the world from one viewpoint only—the viewpoint of working-class men and women, and what may best serve their interests.

Do not confuse the Socialist Party with the Labour Party. The Socialist aim is a revolutionary change in society. The world we know is the capitalist world, in which the means of life are owned by a minority and the motive of sale and profit dominates all other things. From this basis—the capitalist organization of society—arise all the problems of to-day: wars, crises, insecurity, want and unhappiness in a hundred forms.

Other parties believe, and promise, that those problems can be solved by changes of government and legislation. The Socialist Party's case is that while capitalism remains, the problems which are its consequences will remain, too. Indeed, it should hardly need the Socialist Party to point this out. Any man's lifetime to-day has seen several changes of government, allied with spectacular scientific progress; how much nearer, however, is the solution of any of those problems?

You may object, at this stage, that these are not issues in this election. The voter in the L.C.C. Election has in mind not world problems but the everyday questions of housing, schools, rent and roadways and public health services. That is true, but the more important truth is that they are not local questions at all. They are, in fact, aspects of the position of the working class the world over: a position in which the only differences are the depth of want and the degree of insecurity.

The housing problem, which will be spoken of a good deal in this election, has been with us for more than a hundred years. All efforts to solve it have been unsuccessful simply because it is a part of the working-class poverty problem. London's forests of flats and prefabs are the attempts of administrators to do the impossible—to house generation after generation of working people who cannot afford to house themselves.

A great deal of the illness and much of the crime and "vice" that are problems in every city in the world are direct consequences of people's poverty. And what are the problems of education but the problems of how children shall be taught to be clerks, factory workers, mechanics and labourers—that is, education for future poverty? The Socialist case is that within capitalism there can be no cure, and the whole history of modern times bears us out.

Ours is not a gloomy message, however. On the contrary, through our fifty-four years' existence we have steadily pointed to the obvious real remedy. If it is true that all these problems are the inevitable consequences of the capitalist organization of society, then we must end it and replace it with something better. That is what the Socialist Party of Great Britain stands for: the abolition of capitalism and the establishment in its place of Socialism.

Socialism does not mean a different kind of government, or State administration of industry (nor has it anything to do with what goes on in Russia). It means a completely different social system, based on the ownership of all the means of life by everybody. On that basis, there could be no wars or
crises, because those are results of trade and competition between capitalists. Nor could there be poverty and all its consequent problems, because all the resources of society would be directed not towards profit but to satisfying the needs of all.

You may ask, as most people do, how the Socialist Party is going to effect all this. The answer is that it is not. YOU are going to. In our Declaration of Principles you will find one which says: "That this emancipation must be the work of the working class itself." The Socialist Party does not present itself as a would-be ruler or a new leader. Another of our claims is that leaders will take working people nowhere good: in fact, that the world will not change for the working class until they themselves change it.

Thus, in this election we are promising nothing. What we are laying before you is the proposition briefly outlined here, and what we ask is that you consider it and see if it does not fit the world as you know it. If you agree with it, you will not need to be asked to vote for the Socialist candidates who alone in this election stand for the interests of the working class. If you disagree, we ask you to go on thinking about it—but not to vote for our candidates.

Your final question may be that even though you listen favourably to what we have to say, you see no purpose in voting for a little group of candidates who, if elected, could change nothing. That is true, of course; three Socialists in the London County Council would be in a position only to state the Socialist case on every opportunity, and little more. Have you thought, however, that those who support the candidates of the majority parties are also electing administrators who can do nothing to improve the position of the working class?

And, of course, there is a far more important aspect. The change to Socialism can only be brought about by a Socialist working class sending its representatives to take the powers of government, national and local, to make the all-important change in ownership. Somewhere a start has to be made. The presence of three Socialist Candidates in this election is a lengthening, slight though it may be, of the shadow over the reign of capitalism. Every fresh person who hears us and decides that he or she is with us adds substance to that shadow.

During the weeks leading up to this election, Socialists will be everywhere where they can find the opportunity to talk to you. Our speakers will be on the streets and in the halls as often as possible, and our canvassers will come to as many doors as they can—not to tout for your vote, but to talk to you about Socialism. The Socialist future is not so far away. Your understanding and wanting it will SPEED THE DAY!

Tuesday, 1 April 1958