

Stop the racist and divisive EDL

Steve Simpson

On Saturday 9 July, several cities are threatened with visits from the 'English Defence League' (EDL). They claim they will have 'protests' around the slogan of "Defending our culture: No surrender!" in Halifax, Middlesbrough, Cambridge and Plymouth. They say that a further march in Derby has been cancelled.

Over the last two years their demonstrations in a series of towns have been accompanied by violent racist attacks. For example, on 18 June in Dagenham, east London, they attacked three Asian youth who happened to be standing on the side of the road as they passed by, reportedly hospitalising one of them.

In their 'mission statement' they laughably claim to be a "human rights organisation". What kind of human rights group sends out thugs to attack anyone they see as Muslim?

The EDL's public material has claimed that they are not racist and that they only blame "Muslim extremists" for a series of ills such as terrorism and the "molestation of children". Yet in their actions and the slogans chanted on their demonstrations they clearly 'blame' all Muslims.

The EDL scapegoat Muslims, and not only seek to divide people on racist lines, but distract attention away from the real causes of the problems that working class people face. They aim to pick up on the disillusionment felt by many working



A united movement of working class people must actively oppose the divisive EDL photo Paul Mattsson

class people at being abandoned by Labour and mainstream politicians.

Yet, they have nothing to say about the severe public service cuts being meted out by the Con-Dem government. Where were the EDL when 750,000 trade unionists took strike action and tens of thousands took to

the streets to defend pensions and public services on 30 June? They were nowhere to be seen and would of course not have been welcome!

In truth, they have no answers to the onslaught on benefits, pay and jobs caused by the crisis in the big business system. Instead they seek

to divide the working class movement that is developing to fight back on these issues.

This divisive organisation must be opposed by a united movement of working class people from all backgrounds. We must support communities who organise their own

defence against these thugs. But we also have to build a movement, including a new party of working class people, that can pose socialist answers to the problems people face and that can put the blame where it lies - with capitalism and its political representatives.

What we stand for

The Socialist Party fights for socialist change - a democratic society run for the needs of all and not the profits of a few. We also fight, in our day-to-day campaigning, for every possible improvement for working-class people. As capitalism dominates the globe, the struggle for genuine socialism must be international. The Socialist Party is part of the Committee for a Workers' International (CWI), a democratic, socialist international that organises in over 40 countries.

Our demands include:

Work and income

- Trade union struggle to increase the minimum wage to £8 an hour without exemptions as an immediate step towards £10 an hour. For an annual increase in the minimum wage linked to average earnings.
- All workers, including part-timers, temps, casual and migrant workers to have trade union rates of pay, employment protection, and sickness and holiday rights from day one of employment.
- An immediate 50% increase in the state

retirement pension, as a step towards a living pension. Reinstating the link with average earnings now.

- Reject 'Welfare to Work'. For the right to decent benefits, education, training, or a job, without compulsion.
- Scrap the anti-trade union laws! For fighting trade unions, democratically controlled by their members. Full-time union officials to be regularly elected and receive no more than a worker's wage.
- A maximum 35-hour week with no loss of pay.

Public services

- No to privatisation and the Private Finance Initiative (PFI). Renationalise all privatised utilities and services, with compensation paid only on the basis of proven need.
- Fully fund all services and run them under accountable, democratic committees that include representatives of service workers and users.
- Free, publicly run, good quality education, available to all at any age. Abolish university tuition fees now and introduce a living grant. No to academies!
- A socialist NHS to provide for everyone's health needs - free at the point of use and under

democratic control. Kick out private contractors!

- Keep council housing publicly owned. For a massive building programme of publicly owned housing, on an environmentally sustainable basis, to provide good quality homes with low rents.

Environment

- Major research and investment into replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy and into ending the problems of early obsolescence and unrecycled waste.
- Public ownership of the energy generating industries. No to nuclear power. No to Trident.
- A democratically planned, low fare, publicly-owned transport system, as part of an overall plan against environmental pollution.

Rights

- Oppose discrimination on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexuality, age, and all other forms of prejudice.
- Repeal all laws that trample over civil liberties. For the right to protest! End police harassment.
- Defend abortion rights. For a woman's right to choose when and whether to have children.
- For the right to asylum. No to racist immigration laws.

New workers' party

- For a new mass workers' party drawing together workers, young people and activists from workplace, community, environmental and anti-war campaigns, to provide a fighting, political alternative to the pro-big business parties.
- Trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party now and aid the building of a new workers' party!

Socialism and internationalism

- No to imperialist wars and occupations. Withdraw the troops immediately from Iraq and Afghanistan!
- Tax the super-rich! For a socialist government to take into public ownership the top 150 companies and banks that dominate the British economy, and run them under democratic working-class control and management. Compensation to be paid only on the basis of proven need.
- A democratic socialist plan of production based on the interests of the overwhelming majority of people, and in a way that safeguards the environment.
- No to the bosses' neo-liberal European Union! For a socialist Europe and a socialist world!