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Britain

George Galloway wins parliamentary seat

- News from around the world -

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George Galloway, the former Labour MP, who broke with the party on opposition to the war in Iraq in 2003, was re-elected to parliament in the northern England town of Bradford.

Socialist Resistance strongly welcomes the stunning victory of George Galloway and the Respect Party in the Bradford West by election. His majority of 10,000 is a remarkable achievement. It was, as George Galloway said in his acceptance speech, the most sensational result in by-election history. Only 4 out of 10 voters voted for the establishment parties. It is a rejection not only of the Con Dems and their policies of cuts and war but of Labour's timidity in fighting them. It was a rejection, in a highly multi-cultural society, of nearly 10 years of war drive, the occupation of other people's countries, scapegoating of the poor and Islamophobia.

The result recalls the huge potential and electoral resonance which Respect enjoyed after it was launched in January 2004 following George Galloway's expulsion from the Labour Party for calling of British troops not to fight in Iraq.

It is also another major opportunity for Respect to build something serious to the left of Labour, something it failed to do after George Galloway defeated Oona King in Bethnal Green and Bow in the general election of June 2005 and despite the mass support Salma Yaqoob won in south Birmingham. The need for such a party to tackle the problem of working class representation is as strong today as it was in 2004 yet every opportunity has come to very little.

Socialist Resistance members were members of Respect for several years. We sought to develop the support it had won in some of the most deprived communities in Britain into a broad-based and democratic party of the left. We argued that it had to function as a party all year round and not just during the run up to elections. We encouraged it to develop a programme that addressed the needs of working people. Our experience convinced us that this cannot be achieved on the basis of loose networks and preemptive top down decision making processes but only on the basis of a fully democratic and broad-based political party. We urge Respect to set a new course in that direction.