

A paper of Marxist polemic and Marxist unity

weekly **worker**



Tory grandees sharpen their knives after May's fatal miscalculation

- Letters and debate
- Media's role
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- DUP bigots

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Towards a Communist Party of the European Union

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THINGS HAVE JUST GOT EVEN BETTER



LETTERS



Letters may have been shortened because of space. Some names may have been changed

Gagging order

The Labour Representation Committee's June 10 members meeting - announced only five days earlier as an "open discussion of the general election result (whatever it is) and the implications for the tasks facing the left" - attracted over 30 comrades, mainly from London, while "members in Scotland, Wales and the North of England will be looking to arrange similar opportunities in the days following the election". Having arrived a little late, I must apologise to comrade Mick Brooks for missing his 'Time to set the world alight' rip-roaring opening speech.

Personal reports from a range of constituency campaigns built up a picture of unprecedented numbers of pro-Corbyn members, along with dozens of unorganised youth, who turned up on polling day, winning the day for anti-Corbyn candidates imposed by Labour HQ - the "ungrateful bastards", as one comrade put it. During the campaign, Tulip Siddique reportedly told a Green Party meeting, "We will get rid of Jeremy".

Simon Hewitt emphasised the need to organise the surge of young people towards Labour and to implement a major programme of political education, particularly socialist economics. Camden Unison branch secretary George Binette drew attention to the continuing fall in trade union membership and the difficulty of organising under the Trade Union Act, and asked how we can mobilise extra-parliamentary action to hasten another general election to oust the Tory-Democratic Unionist Party reactionary coalition, which threatens a reduction of abortion rights. Gerry Downing of Socialist Fight hailed the "return of class politics", with any other than the two main parties marginalised, and pointed to the need for industrial action to resist welfare cuts being implemented by local councils, including those run by Labour.

My contribution to the discussion was to remind comrades that elections enable us to measure our strength - not just by the number of votes cast, but also by the content of the manifesto and the nature of campaign. In this campaign the strength of socialism amongst the working class was not measured, because the manifesto was not socialist and there was barely a socialist candidate to be found. Labour's election manifesto was only "radical" compared to the recent past. I warned against Labour under Corbyn taking government office prematurely (an unpopular view, albeit Marxist orthodoxy), when the left is weak and divided, the working class majority has yet to be won for socialist politics, and the trade unions and the party are ruled by an overpaid, self-serving bureaucracy. We are grateful for Len McCluskey's crucial support for Corbyn, but we should not be dependent on the whim of a privileged trade union bureaucrat. We must combine a struggle to win affiliation from the RMT, NUT and PCS unions, which must be democratised - Unison general secretary Dave Prentis, who "didn't know" about the misdemeanours of his minions and is trying to walk away from the Unisongate scandal squeaky clean, must be ousted.

The increased Labour vote measured support not for socialism, but for Labour's popular welfare manifesto promises - not for abolition of the monarchy and Lords, disestablishment of the church, replacement of the standing army with a people's militia (as expected, this brought telling laughs

from many of those present) - all of which will be necessary in order to take power away from the ruling class. We have a lot of political education to do.

A minimal motion from Pete Firmin was carried, after discussion, by majority vote, to circulate information about the June 17 discussion meeting for the left, convened by Grassroots Momentum. As Pete and several others were at pains to emphasise, the proposal was not to support GRM, merely to circulate information.

Graham Bash summed up the discussion with three action points:

1. Build and change the party, including organising left caucuses in each constituency.
2. Recruit new members to the party, especially the new young activists.
3. Put the party on an immediate general election footing: organise open selections now.

As one comrade noted, it has been promised that parliamentary candidates selected in a hurry for this election by an NEC panel will face an open selection process for the next. But, of course, as Keith Dunn suggested, let's not wait till another snap election allows the junking of that promise.

The friendly atmosphere of the meeting was marred at the end by comrade Mike Phipps, international editor of the LRC's *Labour Briefing*, complaining that I was taking notes and would probably report what was said by comrades in the meeting. As if political discussion should be kept secret - an unhealthy, patronising, bureaucratic culture. Some comrades seemed to think an account of political discussion can be rendered without mentioning who said what, but this only works if you are dispensing pre-digested pulp, and fails to develop the critical faculties of the readers, or draw them into the discussion. In short, hiding points of view does not constitute much needed political education.

After I declined to promise self-gagging, Jackie Walker proposed that I be excluded from future LRC and *Labour Briefing* meetings. However, as this was not a national committee meeting, it remains to be seen whether this proposed gagging of democratic reporting will be carried through.

Stan Keable
London

PCS affiliation

I respond to Peter Manson's challenge to me in his article, 'Left should not stand on sidelines' (June 8). I had reported in detail the manipulated debate held at the Public and Commercial Services union annual delegate conference in May, where the Socialist Party-dominated national executive committee and general secretary Mark Serwotka did not want to be put in a position where PCS policy would recommend that its 185,000 members vote for Corbyn's Labour Party - but without being clear to delegates that that was in fact their position.

Peter asks me: "Don't you think that militant, fighting unions could play an active role in determining Labour's state, Dave?" (I had said it was no use PCS considering affiliating until we saw the state of the Labour Party after June 8.) This argument has always been used to justify trade unions affiliating to the Labour Party. I'd bet the argument was even more used to justify the creation of the so-called super-unions (Unison, Unite, GMB), so they'd have even more influence on the Labour Party.

And what happened? It is stark how the Labour-affiliated 'super-unions' have been super-tame. They never mounted united action over pay, or job losses, or privatisations and outsourcing - no doubt because most councils were Labour-controlled. PCS led the call for united action over the attacks on public-sector pensions

and united action was delivered on November 30 2011. That saw the biggest strike, with 1.4 million workers out, since the General Strike of 1926. And, instead of building for an even bigger strike after PCS had proved that workers are inspired by united, common action, what happened? The major Labour-affiliated unions made their own shabby settlements, leaving PCS high and dry. Are you seriously suggesting that the fight would have carried on had PCS been affiliated to the Labour Party? Had that been the case, PCS would not have made that call - or if they had, they'd have been jumped on and silenced.

If all the unions currently affiliated to the Labour Party haven't pulled it left, if the creation of the super-unions has not pulled it left, what are the chances that PCS, plus the RMT and NUT can do so? What would actually happen is that PCS would be told to shut up, not to spoil Labour's election chances and, like all the rest, we would be expected to subordinate our members' interests to those of whatever is deemed electorally best for Labour.

I have written before about how the last Labour government treated the lower-paid civil servants - job cuts, pay restraint, regional pay in the ministry of justice, office closures, outsourcing ... Peter seems to have forgotten it wasn't the Labour left that powered Corbyn onto the ballot paper in the first Labour leadership contest. Corbyn put himself forward and needed the patronising nominations of MPs like Margaret Becket to be able to stand. No-one, including Corbyn himself, expected him to win.

As Peter well knows, as *Weekly Worker*, in detail, told us, Momentum was neutered to prevent it being any kind of vehicle for the left to transform the Labour Party. It simply exists to get members to get the vote out - Corbyn today, whichever Labour leader in future. Momentum has not made any demands on the Labour Party - the democratic deficit imposed by Blair still stands. Corbyn is absolutely against mandatory reselection of MPs. After the June 8 results and humble pie eating by most of the backstabbers, Labour is now united behind their leader.

Labour Party membership is now 800,000. One million may be achieved. However, even one million members is not a movement if they are passive rather than active. They have no influence if they are to simply deliver the vote for whoever is leader. If they do not attend constituency meetings (let alone have any understanding of the rules and constitution to try to effect change), how does the left influence them or the party?

Given the deliberate neutering of Momentum and the likely near total inactivity of the new younger members (in terms of their making any demands on the party), what kind of delegates are we likely to see at the next Labour Party conference? Starry-eyed youngsters, keen to become MPs, who do not make awkward demands on the party.

And the pay of MPs is what attracts all the careerists to become Labour MPs. The Chartists' demand for MPs to be subject to instant recall and to be paid an ordinary worker's wage have been continually resisted precisely in order to give leaders the well proven corrupting powers of patronage.

And now, when it is realistically possible Corbyn could win the next general election and be prime minister, even more will be the denunciations of any left demands. Others will loudly proclaim, 'Not now!' or 'Don't you know you're helping the media attack Corbyn', 'You'll will frighten off the wavering voters'. This is the same trick employed by the Labour-affiliated unions - no strike action when Labour is out of office for fear of making them

unelectable, no action when they are in power because that will help the Tories and media get Labour out! There will never be a right time to join the Labour Party to fight to make Labour more leftwing.

Since Corbyn became leader, has the Labour left increased in size and strength? Has Jeremy made overtures or assisted the Labour left? Labour Party Marxists are also moribund, as are the Labour Representation Committee.

Jeremy knows best and is now as unassailable as he is unaccountable. He much prefers mollifying the Parliamentary Labour Party than the Labour left/LPM/LRC/Momentum. Like Tony Benn before him, Jeremy never resigned from the Labour Party, no matter what it did. What about the expulsions and membership bars during the coup? Has Jeremy demanded these be overturned? What about allowing left organisations into the Labour Party? Not a word.

I had previously mentioned the further unique barrier to PCS affiliating to the Labour Party is the principle (and conduct policy) of civil service neutrality. The RMT and NUT do not have to consider that barrier; PCS does and it is formidable.

So, for all these reasons, PCS should not be affiliating to the Labour Party any time soon. Just like all the current affiliated unions, we wouldn't be able to pull Labour leftwards. In fact, the reverse will happen - PCS would be tamed by the super-unions, as they have in turn done to their own activists.

PCS has the best politically aware activists of any union because we are *not* affiliated to the Labour Party. No other union leadership is under the control of the left. A party that even under Jeremy does not encourage new members to be socialists or to make demands on the party, but just to deliver votes for Labour (no matter how bad in future), is not for PCS to affiliate to.

A test - let us see the proceedings at the next Labour Party conference, let us see what is allowed to be debated. Let us see the calibre of delegates from a party now 800,000-strong.

Peter also criticises me for opposing open borders. Where anyone concerned about the unprecedented levels of immigration is not dubbed a racist by the left, it seems we have a lesser form of name-calling: "national socialist", "social chauvinist" or the milder put-down, "sectionalist". It comes down to this - do indigenous peoples have *any* rights over those coming into their country or must all be welcomed and accommodated, no matter what the resources available?

Peter and the other open borderists are complete utopians (there - have an insulting label back). Under world socialism there wouldn't be wars. Everyone would have a house, a job, enough food to eat and decent public services. Under capitalism many countries cannot cope with huge, sudden influxes. It is banal to argue immigrants are not responsible for council house shortages, job cuts and public-service cuts, when the fact is, whilst that is true, they are responsible for greatly increasing demand. The over-supply of cheap labour welcomed by the remainers, the bosses, the bankers, the ruling class is one way. It undermines collectivised labour. Arthur Scargill and Bob Crow were right to question the 'free movement of labour'.

I have never followed the stupid argument that, because bosses can transfer millions of pounds anywhere, so workers should also be able to go anywhere. It is easy to put millions of pounds into a bank account or build a factory in another country, but way harder to accommodate hundreds of thousands of workers just turning up.

A question for you, Peter - applying that principle, answer me this: when an employer here closes a factory and

sets one up in Poland, do you defend the right of the displaced workers here to 'follow the investment' and stand outside that factory and undercut the local Polish workers queuing up to work for the new lower wages? Should they join the local union and demand a fair chance of getting those jobs? Should the local Polish trade union shop steward tell his fellow Poles to accept that 'fair competition', even if it means most locals do not then get a job because the Brits, let's say, are ready and willing to work longer hours, for more output, for less wages with the boss knowing that?

Some Poles over here boast they work seven days a week, 12 hours a day. I doubt they are in a union - that is their competitive advantage over workers born here and living here and they know it. They are proud to compete against each other for title of hardest worker and they regard unions as socialist. Deny many east Europeans are racist, homophobic and anti-socialist. All welcome here?

Where's their solidarity with workers here? You don't go to another country and scab - undermining their terms and conditions.

Dave Vincent
email

Republican unity

It was a great, indeed incredible, victory secured by Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party over the Tories. Theresa May would be sitting on the opposition benches, having been made to resign by her own party, if it wasn't for the bonkers Tory constitution.

Nobody understands how the Tory constitution works. It is a great national mystery. I think it is a complex Heath Robinson machine, in the basement of Tory HQ. The Tories feed in the results, then - hey presto - it translates into seats in the Commons and prints a letter from the queen, on goat skin, inviting one of the party leaders to visit Buckingham Palace.

May got the letter and drove immediately to the palace. Her Majesty was not amused. This great miscalculation had damaged the value of her shares. It might even mean missing royal Ascot. But the Tories clung on to May as the only person to save them from political meltdown.

Not a peep of criticism could be heard from Tory MPs, once the central decision had been taken. It is the type of discipline any Leninist could be proud of. Once again it was Heath Robinson to the rescue. By keeping Northern Ireland in the British union, the Democratic Unionist Party could keep the Tories in office.

Those who felt Corbyn could not win on a programme of restoring the social monarchy have been proven wrong. After 10 years of austerity, the social monarchy has proved widely popular with young people. But if the crown doesn't invest in the social monarchy then the whole show is in danger, as the vote to leave the European Union indicated. The message from this election is that the Tories cannot keep strangling the goose that lays their golden eggs.

Left Unity has been called the republican wing of the Corbyn movement. That seems like an exaggeration to me. But to their credit LU has taken an anti-unionist stance which is a necessary precondition for any serious republicanism. It is goes without saying that British republicanism is a complete fake. It is nothing less than a sordid attempt to mislead and deceive the working class.

The idea that Left Unity is the republican wing of the Corbyn movement is a contested idea, not an established fact. Left Unity began life in 2013 as a party of left social monarchism in the 'spirit of 45'. But it adopted a republican position in the

ACTION

2015 general election and had a change of mind on British unionism in 2016 after the Scottish referendum.

With the first victory of Corbyn in the Labour Party, most of the LU's left social monarchists went off to join Labour. For most of them it felt like going home, after their house had been stolen by Blair, who had thrown them out on the street.

Every forward march of Corbyn Labour poses the question of whether LU should liquidate into the Labour Party. If Left Unity is indeed the republican wing of the Corbyn movement in England and Wales, but a different dynamic is at work in Ireland and Scotland, then the answer is no. There has to be an independent working class republican party, 'strong and stable' enough to resist the siren call from Her Majesty's Labour Party.

With the ongoing crisis of British exit, people will eventually conclude that we need something better than the Tory's Heath Robinson constitution to decide who gets the keys to Downing Street and gets access to crown powers, which are constructed to govern the many on behalf of the few.

Despite crashing into the EU iceberg, the Titanic is still afloat, with Captain Corbyn ready to take command on the bridge. Even more people want to get on board. We are tilting but not yet sinking. Does anybody know on which decks the lifeboats are stored or do we have to build our own?

Steve Freeman
Left Unity and Rise

Pathetic

In my final reply to Lars T Lih I will concentrate on two incidents. First, the recovery of the session of the Petersburg committee of the Social Democratic Labour Party of Russia (Bolshevik), November 1 (14) 1917; and, second, the revelation of Zinoviev that the struggle against 'Trotskyism' was planned by him, Stalin and Kamenev in 1923-24.

There was an attempt to wipe from the historical record the struggle within the Bolshevik central committee by deleting that whole day's minutes and then having to renumber the pages to cover this up. Unfortunately for the falsifiers, they forgot to alter the previous day's minutes which scheduled the next day's meeting and they did not manage to destroy the rushes of the minutes of that day, which fell into Trotsky's hands. And it is obvious why they had to alter this record: it gave the lie to all their attempts to slander Trotsky.

Trotsky tells us: "We publish herewith the minutes of the historic session of the Petrograd committee of the Bolsheviks held November 1 (14) 1917. The conquest of power had already been achieved - at any rate, in the most important centres in the country. Within the party, however, the struggle over the question of power had far from terminated. It had merely passed into a new phase. Prior to October 25, the representatives of the right wing (Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Kalinin, Lunacharsky and others) argued that the uprising was premature and could lead only to defeat. After the victorious insurrection, they proceeded to argue that the Bolshevik Party would be unable to maintain itself in power unless the Bolsheviks entered into a coalition with the other socialist parties - ie, the Social Revolutionists and the Mensheviks. During this new phase, the struggle of the right became exceptionally acute, and terminated with the resignation of the representatives of the right wing from the Council of People's Commissars and from the central committee of the party. It should be borne in mind that this crisis occurred only a few days after the conquest of power."

This is Lenin's furious response: "The question of the armed insurrection was raised at the October 1 session of the central committee ... However, certain [old] members of the central

committee came out in opposition. This grieved me deeply. Thus, the question of power has been posed for a long time. Couldn't we now renounce it because of the disagreement on the part of Zinoviev and Kamenev? The insurrection was [objectively] necessary. Comrades Zinoviev and Kamenev began to agitate against the insurrection, and we began to look upon them as strikebreakers. I even sent a letter to the central committee with a proposal to expel them from the party.

"I expressed myself sharply in the press when Kamenev made his speech in the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets. [On August 6 (19), he also spoke on the subject of the Stockholm International Socialist Conference, which the conciliationists proposed to convene in the summer of 1917 for the purpose of expediting the conclusion of peace by the socialist parties exerting pressure upon their respective governments] ... Kamenev spoke in his own name in favour of participating in the conference [despite the decision of the central committee of the party not to participate in the Stockholm conference] to assume a severe attitude toward them ...

"And now, at such a moment, when we are in power, we are faced with a split. Zinoviev and Kamenev say that we will not seize power [in the entire country]. I am in no mood to listen to this calmly. I view this as treason. What do they want? Do they want to plunge us into [spontaneous] knife-play? Only the proletariat is able to lead the country.

"As for conciliation, I cannot even speak about that seriously. Trotsky long ago said that unification is impossible. Trotsky understood this, and from that time on there has been no better Bolshevik."

During the period of the United Opposition - 1925-27 - Zinoviev revealed how they had planned the rewriting of the history of the revolution and the vilification of Trotsky. This is Trotsky's account of what was revealed in *The Stalin school of falsification*:

"After the formation of our bloc with the Leningrad group, during one of the conferences, in the presence of several other comrades, I put substantially the following question to Zinoviev: 'Could you please tell me whether the so-called literary discussion against 'Trotskyism' would have taken place, if I had not published *The lessons of October*?' Without the slightest hesitation, Zinoviev replied: 'Yes, indeed. *The lessons of October* served only as a pretext. Failing that, a different motive would have been found, and the discussion would have assumed somewhat different forms - nothing more.'

"... At the joint plenum of the central committee and the central control commission of July 14-23 1926, Zinoviev said: 'I have made many mistakes. But I consider two mistakes as my most important ones. My first mistake of 1917 is known to all of you ... The second mistake I consider more dangerous because the first one was made under Lenin. The mistake of 1917 was corrected by Lenin and made good by us within a few days with the help of Lenin, but my mistake of 1923 consisted in ...'

"... In this manner, Zinoviev admitted his mistake of 1923 (in waging a struggle against 'Trotskyism' and even characterised it as much more dangerous than that of 1917 - when he opposed the October insurrection!)"

Of course, Zinoviev and Kamenev reverted to their old tricks, once the United Opposition fell apart, when they capitulated to Stalin in 1928 and denied their own too-honest confessions.

I think everyone must acknowledge this is Lenin in his best fighting revolutionary form handing out a merciless ear-bashing to the rights, whom Lars T Lih would like to try to persuade us were the real heroes of the Russian revolutions. It is

clear that Lenin and Trotsky led that revolutionary struggle and not Lars T's pathetic conciliators.

Gerry Downing
Socialist Fight

We dig coal

Responding to Eddie Ford's 'Growth for the sake of growth' (*Weekly Worker* June 8), I would say that tens of thousands of former miners and their families - and tens of thousands more in those communities thrown on the scrapheap - would actually quite like to dig coal.

The achievement of massive and speedy carbon emission reductions are not incompatible with the re-expansion of the deep mine coal industry or a greater percentage share for coal power. As a matter of fact the only dramatic way to reduce carbon emissions and still keep the lights on is through the global adoption of carbon capture and storage (CCS) systems. The best of these, such as the one which was scheduled for Hatfield Main colliery, would have seen the building of a coal power station with zero emissions and almost 90% of all other emissions caught and recycled.

The scheme being developed at Drax, which was aimed at taking almost 50% of carbon emissions out of the process (the White Rose scheme), wasn't anywhere as good, but if adopted on a worldwide scale would have dramatically and rapidly reduced the amount of CO₂ going into the atmosphere. The Tories vindictively pulled the plug on both as 'the final solution' to those pesky miners and their union. But China, India and other developing countries are *not* going to stop mining and using coal - hell, Poland and Turkey have both said the same and I'm not sure Trump will actually do anything to make deep mining attractive again in the USA after the slaughter of their deep mined coal industry, but the fact is coal will be mined, and burned. That being the case, we need the most effective and rapidly deployed means of reducing emissions - and that means CCS and the development of other schemes (which we had in the pipeline and were well down the road of development in the 70s and early 80s - like the fluid bed combustion system, producing massive intense heat from tiny amounts of coal with minimal emissions. Thatcher pulled the plug on that one).

It must be said that climate change is hard-wired into the planet - it always has been and always will be. Our human contribution to it, through all forms - including meat consumption, transport, forest devastation and carbon fuels - may be as much as 50%, although less hysterical evidence suggests it is somewhat lower than that, but the point is, it doesn't help. Unlike the perfectly natural cycle of climate change endemic to the planet, we can do something about it, but crying 'Stop the world - I want to get off' or 'The sky is falling' doesn't help.

The reason why third-world countries are disproportionately effected is purely and simply poverty. If Holland was a third-world country it would be underwater. What's the difference between Nicaragua and Holland? The answer is wealth and technology, which is the way humanity will survive change, not going back to the caves. So-called 'renewable energy' and nuclear power are at this stage of development not going to substitute for coal and gas and are either unviable in most parts of the world (China's massive expansion of renewables in this field, probably the greatest in the world, amounts to 4% of its energy total) or else unsafe and undependable (uranium will run out long before coal or gas).

So, aye - dig coal, generate CCS-produced wealth and power, and make sure its fairly distributed worldwide.

David Douglass
South Shields

London Communist Forum

Sunday June 18, 5pm: Weekly political report from CPGB Provisional Central Committee, Calthorpe Arms, 252 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. Followed by open discussion and reading group: study of August Nimtz's *Lenin's electoral strategy from Marx and Engels through the revolution of 1905*. This meeting: chapter 1, 'What Marx and Engels bequeathed' (continued).

Organised by CPGB: www.cpgb.org.uk; and Labour Party Marxists: www.labourpartymarxists.org.uk.

Radical Anthropology Group

Tuesday June 20, 6.45pm: 'Size matters!: the scalability of modern hunter-gatherer animism'. Speaker: Nurit Bird.

Next steps for Labour

Friday June 16, 8pm: Meeting, Shern Hall Methodist Church, Shernhall Street, London E17. Speakers include Jenny Lennox, Matt Wrack and Seema Chandwani.

Organised by Waltham Forest LRC: www.facebook.com/Waltham-Forest-Labour-Representation-Committee-1637916753090748.

Renewables are here

Saturday June 17, 10.15am to 5pm: Conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London, WC1R 4RL. Anti-nuclear, pro-renewable event with high-profile speakers.

Organised by CND: www.cnduk.org.

Transform Labour!

Saturday June 17, 2pm to 5pm: Meeting of Labour left, Student Central, Malet Street, London WC1.

Organised by Red Labour and Grassroots Momentum: info@grassrootsmomentum.com.

People's Assembly

Saturday June 17, 12 noon to 4pm: National Assembly, Hamilton House, Mabledon Place, London WC1.

Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

Myths of war

Sunday June 18, 7pm: Live anti-war performance with Mark Rylance, Park Theatre, Clifton Terrace, Finsbury Park, London N4.

Organised by Stop the War Coalition: www.stopwar.org.uk.

No to war

Sunday June 18, 6.30pm: Peace festival, All Saints Parish Church, Victoria Terrace, Leamington Spa, Warwickshire.

Organised by Leamington Peace Festival: <http://peacefestival.org.uk>.

Peace pagoda

Sunday June 18, 10.30am: Cross-cultural peace ceremony, Brickhill Street, Willen, Milton Keynes MK15.

Organised by Peace Pagoda: <http://stopwar.org.uk/index.php/events/other-anti-war-events/2549-18-june-milton-keynes-peace-pagoda>.

Tension, Trump and the two Koreas

Wednesday June 21, 7pm: Public meeting, committee rooms 3 and 4, Council House, Birmingham B1. Speaker: Billy Hayes.

Organised by Birmingham Stop the War Coalition: www.facebook.com/BSTWC.

Red banner, green rosette

Thursday June 22, 7pm: Launch of David Douglass's new book, Holly Hill social club, Benson Terrace, Felling NE10. Followed by concert - music from Ireland and the Tyneside coalfield, with the Geordie Shamrocks and Tony Corcoran Band. Entrance £3.

Organised by Follonsby (Wardley) Miners Lodge Association: <https://en-gb.facebook.com/follonsby>.

Living on the edge

Monday June 26, 9am to 4.30pm: Conference, Congress House, London WC1. 'The rise of job insecurity in Britain.'

Organised by TUC: www.tuc.org.uk.

Social histories of the Russian Revolution

Thursday June 29, 6.30pm: Discussion meeting, Birkbeck, University of London, 26 Russell Square, London WC1. 'The working class and the first five-year plan, 1928-32'. Speaker: Don Filtzer.

Organised by Social Histories of the Russian Revolution: <https://socialhistories1917.wordpress.com>.

Happy Birthday NHS

Saturday July 1 and Wednesday 5, all day: Street parties followed by national day of action in support of the NHS. Nationwide. 'No Cuts | No Closures | No Privatisation'.

See for details: http://www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/saturday_1_july.

National Shop Stewards Network

Saturday July 1, 11am to 5pm: Annual conference, Conway Hall, 25 Red Lion Square, London WC1. Open to all trade union and anti-cuts campaigners. Speakers include: Len McCluskey, Ronnie Draper, Steve Gillan, Chris Baugh, Sean Hoyle and Linda Taaffe. Entrance: £6.

Organised by National Shop Stewards Network: www.shopstewards.net.

Not one more day

Saturday July 1, 12 noon: Protest against continued Tory government. Assemble BBC Broadcasting House, Portland Place, London W1, for march to parliament.

Organised by People's Assembly: www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk.

CPGB wills

Remember the CPGB and keep the struggle going. Put our party's name and address, together with the amount you wish to leave, in your will. If you need further help, do not hesitate to contact us.

MEDIA BATTLE**Bloodied, but not broken**

Paul Demarty examines the media's role in May's humiliation

As the dust settles after the June 8 election, wrong-footed pundits (including your humble, and humbled, correspondent) scramble for explanations, and anonymous 'senior Tories' sharpen their best stabbing knives, a story is doing the rounds, most especially in the liberal media.

The story is one of hubris, but not of Theresa May's - rather of her snarling cheerleaders in the tabloid press. The calumnies against Labour, increasing in venom with every passing day, seemed to make no difference at all. The intervention of Islamist terrorists in the final weeks provided an excellent opportunity to rehash Jeremy Corbyn's old Provo sympathies, but it came to naught. The *Daily Mail's* final contribution was to hand off no less than 13 pages to foaming vituperation against the Labour leadership, rehashing its classic accusation against Stephen Lawrence's killers beside a picture of Corbyn, John McDonnell and Diane Abbott: "Apologists for terror - the *Mail* accuses this troika of befriending Britain's enemies and scorning the institutions that keep us safe." The *Sun* settled for the "shock revelation" that Corbyn had spoken at a rally also attended by Anjem Choudhary and his merry band of Salafist trolls, recently linked to the London Bridge attack. No matter - Labour, though not victorious, so radically outperformed expectations that you could almost be forgiven for expecting to see Corbyn in Downing Street after all.

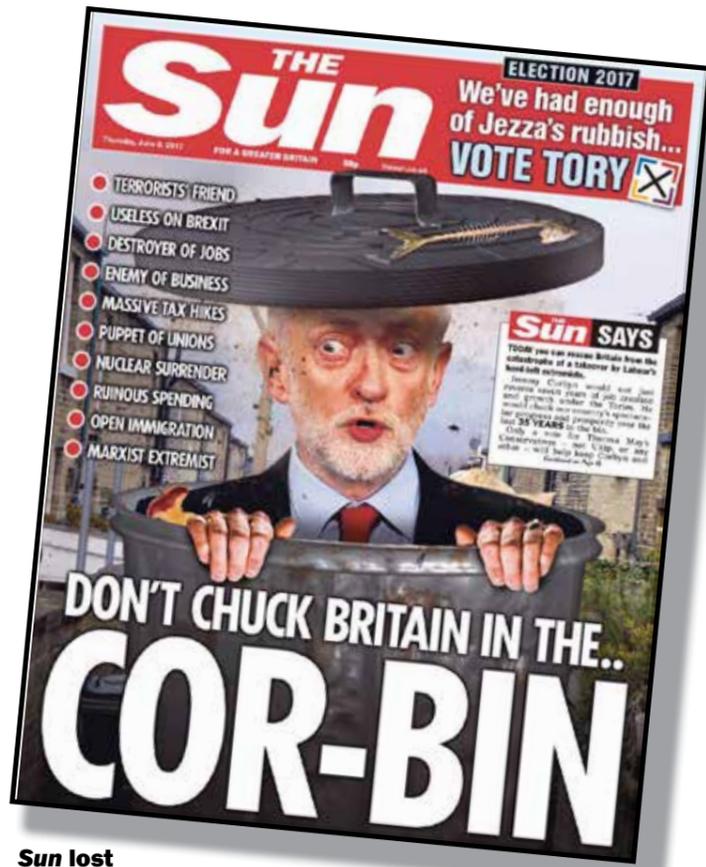
All this has been interpreted, around and about the left and liberal media, as a nail in the coffin of the press barons. Once they had the sort of power that left politicians covering, but that power has been eroded by new technology, and new generations of people (those 'tech-savvy millennials' so beloved of marketing gurus and the sub-caste of journalists wholly subsumed into the marketing *Weltanschauung*) have grown up with a streak of impudence towards the gutter rags of their elders and betters. Suzanne Moore writes, in *The Guardian*, that the attack-dog tabloids' "power over politics is broken":

The sudden thrust in the direction of the future, youth and possibility means that the dictum that politicians have to crawl to the *Sun* or the *Mail* is overturned ... Increasingly it appears people may look at the pregnancy- and cellulite-policing of the sidebar of shame for a laugh, but have no truck with the actual politics of [the *Mail*].¹

John Cassidy strikes a similar note on the website of *The New Yorker*:

To circumvent a largely hostile print media, he relied on social media and television appearances. That didn't prevent the Tory newspapers from trying to smear him ... [but] in defying such gutter tactics, Corbyn demonstrated the limits of Fleet Street's influence in a fractured media age.²

By moving the centre of gravity of their campaign away from the mainstream media, Corbyn's allies were able to better master their message. Momentum full-timer Emma Rees boasted to the *Financial Times* that the group's YouTube videos "had been viewed by nearly a quarter of UK Facebook users in the last week, [showing that] slick, timely content that speaks to the issues people care about can match the millions the Tories are spending."³



Sun lost

This interpretation of the election result has two parts - a positive claim that social media platforms offer a vastly more fertile terrain for progressive politics, allowing left politicians to address their audiences relatively directly; and a negative claim that the press barons are in perhaps terminal crisis. Both these ideas have elements of reality to them, but are rather too rosy.

Press barons

To take the power of the press barons first of all: it was certainly a poor day at the races, on the face of it. If we make the assumption - empirically unimpeachable, surely - that the best outcome for the bourgeoisie on June 8 was a majority Tory government (that is, a government of *the party of the state* also directly in the pockets of the capitalists), then we have to say that the press has, indeed, failed in its job. Thus we must take the oddly *personal* execration of Theresa May in the pages of the press currently as at least in part an exercise in blame-shifting (after all, who among them was calling May a tedious robot in the actual course of the campaign?).

It seems to many that this represents a major change. After all, 25 years ago, *The Sun* ran its infamous one-two punch of front-page headlines - "If Kinnock wins today, will the last person to leave

Britain please turn out the lights?" on the morning of the April 9 1992 election day; and then a triumphant "It's *The Sun* wot won it" the following Saturday, when John Major's continued premiership was assured. If not in so many words, that assessment of events was shared by many in the Labour right's upper echelons, and when Tony Blair scrambled to the leader's job, he immediately courted Rupert Murdoch to avoid a repeat showing. It *seemed* to work, and Blair won three elections with the backing of the Murdoch papers; Labour left office only after it lost the good graces of the Australian mogul. The phone hacking affair provoked a severe curtailment of the Murdoch empire's power over the political class, but one that ended up being pretty brief.

The Sun is the very avatar of the idea of the salt-of-the-earth reactionary, opposed to the liberal elite - anti-Marxist as in anti-matter, an equal and opposite view of the working class *in toto*. According to Nick Davies, Kelvin MacKenzie - who edited the paper in its terroristic pomp - had a very clear idea of who its idea reader was: "the bloke you see in the pub, right old fascist, wants to send the wogs back ... afraid of the unions, afraid of the Russians, hates the queers and the weirdos and drug dealers."⁴ This status is appropriate, since *The Sun* - in its ancient prehistory - started life as a strike bulletin, of all things, which became a paper of the labour movement.

The *Mail* is a somewhat different case, having never gone over to support for

Labour even under Blair (despite the latter's most strenuous efforts). Its role is far from the vanguard of the electoral battle, deep in the psychology of the core Tory voter: that bigoted petty bourgeois obsessed with civilisation's decline. Its power is to denounce certain Tory leaders for their modernism, their friendliness to liberal causes like gay marriage; the picture it paints is of a world dominated by a metropolitan liberal elite, living in a smug little echo-chamber, whose ranks - the horror! - extend deep into the Tory leadership. (Just as *The Sun* has a bizarrely perfect working class lineage, so the *Mail* is evergreen in its petty bourgeois *enragé* extraction, having begun in quite that fashion a century or so ago and notoriously been a supporter of Hitler, Mussolini and Mosley.) It is less the *Mail's* influence over potential Labour voters, then, but rather its ability to make mischief within the Tories, that is the source of its true power.

Like the members of the Holy Trinity - and alongside other papers with whom we shall not deal in detail, such as *The Times*, which supposes itself to speak directly for 'British interests', but is, of course, a weapon in the hands of its proprietor - these gutter rags are distinct in their narrow purpose and mode of intervention, but united in their essence as an ideological pillar of bourgeois rule. Thus we must proceed, as the Athanasian Creed puts it, "neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance".

This is important in the current connection because the turning point of May's campaign must undoubtedly be the infamous manifesto launch, which saw widespread outrage at the so-called 'dementia tax', which was to expand the number of people liable to pay for social care (surely dead in the water now, with not a Tory in parliament sad to see it go after last week's result). One aspect of this interests us here: *The Sun* supported the government, but the *Mail* did not. It was pressure from the *Mail*, above all else, which spooked sufficient Tory MPs to force a U-turn; after that the polls started to tighten.

That tells a story of the power, not the weakness, of the traditional media: the *Mail*, after all, convinced much of the Tory core vote that their homes were at risk. Just as the Tory front bench might have toughed it out regardless, the *Mail* might not have raised a fuss. Media organisations are not some demiurgic anonymous power, but *agents*, capable of making mistakes, of using their power erroneously. Thus the *Mail's* reflex-twitch into petty bourgeois rabble-rousing presented an unexpected gift to Corbyn and his supporters. The nature of that gift was merely a *crack in the consensus*, that May was a (yawn) "strong and stable" leader - an impression basically laughable after the dementia tax U-turn. Everything subsequently cited as a weakness of hers goes back to this; her avoidance of leaders' debates, for example, did her no harm until she seemed to have something to hide.

The point is simple. It is true that the traditional media is under serious strain; but its key weakness in the recent campaign was actually a long-standing one, which is that its power and foresight has never been absolute or beyond challenge. Part of Murdoch's genius, as he drives the political lines of his papers, is being on the winning side without revealing how much that is a matter of creating the outcome and how much a matter of anticipating it. He is not careless, and knows that *he needs the politicians* as much as they need him; his demands of them are forthright, but never unmanageable.

(That *The Times* and *Sunday Times* took different lines on the Brexit vote is perhaps a bellwether of how unpredictable British politics had already become.) The idea that the power of the press empires is somehow absolute *was always reactionary*: it signifies either a Blair, deciding that Murdoch's consent was indispensable, or the sort of comfortable failure of those whose projects would have been perfectly successful 'if it wasn't for the biased media'. The advent of new technology does not change this either way.

Transformation?

So far as the latter goes: the kernel of truth in our optimists' assessments is that we genuinely are at a moment of transformation in the history of the media. We do not need to belabour the point with the sort of starry-eyed descriptions of the internet that serve charlatan futurologists so well today. Existing business models for the capitalist media are in crisis. The trivial ease with which all other media productions can be shared, legally or otherwise, and returned to repeatedly, has had a real effect on the ability of the press to live down its errors and blatant untruths.

The problem is that this phenomenon is identified as a matter of technology in the narrow sense. It is 'the internet' (or, more narrowly, 'social media') that has broken the power of the press barons. In reality, of course, social media companies are - by definition - *media companies*, just like News Corporation. They are, in many cases, *poorly-run* media companies - Twitter is an egregious example - and they have not yet been put very much at their proprietors' direct political service, although the increasing readiness of Twitter, Reddit, Facebook and the like to declare it their solemn intention to banish the absurd racist verbiage of the alt-right and 'fake news' from their platforms suggests that this may be starting to change.

The incentives, underneath it all, are actually the same: in the narrow, pounds-and-pence sense, both old and new media are advertising-subsidised and thus in hock to the capitalist class as a collective purchaser of marketing space; and in the more expansive sense, the likes of Twitter are a very tempting potential platform for influence-mongering, for anyone with the readies to buy it (a private-equity raid would surely make short work of that malfunctioning noise generator). Murdoch was ahead of the curve on this one, splashing out for Myspace 10 years ago; that was a disaster, to be sure, but future moguls will learn from his mistakes.

The conclusion, despite all this, ought to be encouraging. It is not the case that the mainstream media was once powerful, but is currently weak; it was always powerful, and still is, but *it can be defeated anyway*. The *idea* of declaring independence from it, meanwhile, is a good one, but it must go further than merely enthusing about (say) YouTube videos, which are not in the end a replacement for the mainstream media, but a *new mainstream medium*, as yet imperfectly 'socialised' into the decorum of its older siblings ●

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Notes

1. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/09/tabloids-crush-corbyn-power-politics-sun-mail-labour.
2. www.newyorker.com/news/john-cassidy/jeremy-corbyns-achievement.
3. *Financial Times* June 10.
4. N Davies *Hack attack: how the truth caught up with Rupert Murdoch* London 2014, p84.



PERSPECTIVES



Huge Corbyn rally in Gateshead

Things have just got even better

The unexpected general election result has considerably weakened the Tories and strengthened Jeremy Corbyn's position. The left has a real chance of transforming the Labour Party into a united front of a special kind, says **James Marshall** of Labour Party Marxists

I was firmly convinced that the Tories were heading for a clear majority and the Labour Party would almost certainly lose seats. You can therefore appreciate my emotional state on election night. Delight mixed with surprise, as soon as the joint BBC-ITV-Sky exit poll was announced. The Tories were on track to be the biggest party ... but with no overall majority.

From our viewpoint the results were almost without exception excellent. While the Tory share of the vote was 42.4%, humiliatingly they lost 13 seats. Labour's share rose to 40% and we gained 30 seats. No less pleasing, the Scottish National Party suffered a significant setback - down by 21. True, as we have long warned, there was an always present danger of a Tory rebirth north of the border. Ruth Davidson now has 13-strong group of Scottish MPs. But Labour is back too. Having been reduced to a single MP in 2015, we now hold seven seats in Scotland's central belt. Those on the left who pathetically trail the SNP - eg, Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Resistance, Scottish Socialist Party, etc - and wanted to "make" June 8 an "independence election" have had their answer! And in Wales, instead of the Tories gaining, it was Labour.

With good reason we can say that there is a return to two-party politics. Not that it ever really went away. Capitalism, the existence of two main classes, the first-past-the-post system - all tend to produce two great camps: one of capital, the other of labour.

So what about the other parties? Frankly, I expected a minor Liberal Democratic revival. They are, after all, ideally placed to Hoover up discontented remainers because of their manifesto promise to oppose Brexit and the offer of a second referendum. True, they gained four seats. However, their share of the vote fell to just 7.4% - an all-time low (see note 20). An additional bonus: Nick Clegg lost in Sheffield Hallam - the final coda to the Cleggmania that swept the country just before the 2010 general election.

The UK Independence Party now looks to be heading in the same direction as the British National Party. And it wasn't Stand Up To Racism what done it. Theresa May stole Ukip's programme. This helps to explain why the Tories could increase their overall total vote to 13.6 million. Nevertheless, especially in the north of England

Labour too benefited from Ukip's collapse.

Northern Ireland's politics are ever more polarised. The Democratic Unionist Party gained two seats, as did Sinn Féin. In parliamentary terms the official Ulster Unionist Party and the Social Democratic Labour Party suffered complete wipe-out.

Nature of election

Was June 8 a second EU referendum? Was it chiefly about Europe and Brexit? That is what pundits suggested when the general election was first called. And, obviously, that is what Theresa May and her Tory strategists intended. The same can be said of Paul Nuttall and Ukip, and Tim Farron and the Liberal Democrats. However, unless they could not help it, that was never going to be the case with Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. Their position on the EU was, and is, deliberately equivocal. They campaigned 'remain' in 2016, but now they say they respect the 52:48% 'leave' vote. Moreover, they want a Brexit that protects British jobs and British industries, while simultaneously making noises about reducing the flow of labour from abroad. A classic left-nationalist fudge.

Here the Lord Ashcroft analysis of the general election makes fascinating reading. Six out of 10 of those who were for 'leave' in 2016 voted Tory this time. Only 25% of them voted Labour. Meanwhile, amongst 'remainers' 25% voted Tory, 51% Labour and 24% Liberal Democrat. In other words, in terms of electoral base the Conservative Party is solidly pro-Brexit, while that of the Labour Party and Lib Dems is opposed to Brexit. Certainly, taken as a whole, this bloc has no wish to see a hard Brexit. That said, when it comes to reasons for voting, while Tory and Lib Dem voters rated Europe as their key issue, Labour voters were much more likely to be motivated by education spending, NHS cuts, student grants, poor housing, low wages and opposing wars of foreign intervention. Given how well Labour actually did, certainly when it came to poll predictions, it is clear that June 8 was not a Brexit election.

Arguably it was a generational election. The figures are startling. Of those aged 18-24 a massive 66% went with Labour; a mere 18% for the Tories. And this cohort came out in record numbers. Many for the first

time. However, when it comes to the over-65s, the picture almost reverses: 58% Tory, only 23% Labour.²

What this reflects, however, is not a generational war: rather class retrogression, the proletarianisation, the de-petty-bourgeoisification of the younger generation. They might be attending university, or already have graduated. But they come out of full-time education burdened with huge debts, and then they can only secure precarious or comparatively low-paid jobs. As for the dream of home ownership, it is likely to remain just that: a dream. They have to stay with aged parents, pay exorbitant rents for tiny, often shared, flats. Sociologists insist on classifying them as middle class, but of course they are no such thing. They are working class. They have to get up in the morning and sell their labour-power. Even those who still aspire to make it into the middle class bitterly oppose the Tories - their austerity, their anti-migrant national chauvinism, their warmongering, their amorality and their worship of the market. Newly qualified teachers, junior doctors and young techies alike voted Labour in huge numbers. Corbyn chimed with them, exited them.

Predictions

Ever since Jeremy Corbyn looked like he was going to win the Labour leadership contest in 2015 - certainly since the Brexit vote and Theresa May became prime minister - Marxists arrived at five main conclusions:

1. The Labour right would fight an unremitting civil war against Corbyn and the left.
2. We had a once-in-a-lifetime's chance to transform the Labour Party.
3. There would be no Brexit - definitely no hard Brexit.
4. Whatever May was saying about waiting till 2020 and the fixed-term parliament act, she would eat her words and call a snap election over Brexit.
5. The Labour Party would come out of the general election in no position to form a government.

I make no apology about warning about a bad Labour result. The danger was that a Tory landslide and Labour being reduced to a parliamentary rump would demoralise the hundreds of thousands who had joined or rejoined the Labour Party because of Jeremy Corbyn. The strategic goal of transforming the Labour Party could,

as a consequence, hit the rocks. It was necessary therefore to try and lower expectations in the short term with a view to securing the long-term goal.

And, of course, that is what the polls were telling us. In the couple of weeks before June 8 polling companies were reporting that, while the gap between the two main parties had narrowed, it was still considerable. ComRes gave the Tories a 12% lead (down from 21% when the election call was first made). ORB put the Tories at 44% and Labour 38%. On the day of the election, Lord Ashcroft produced estimates giving a Tory majority ranging from 52 to 96. Given past performances in by-elections and the recent round of council elections, such figures struck me as quite likely. Labour was also plagued by a rightwing anti-Corbyn campaign that amounted to out-and-out sabotage. Labour MPs habitually briefed against Corbyn, staged coordinated resignations and regularly demanded his resignation. Rank-and-file leftwingers were subject to vile charges of anti-Semitism, intimidation and even assault. Thousands were expelled or suspended. While, of course, no rightwing Labour MP actually wanted to lose their seat, without exception they expected Labour to do badly. Therefore the "working the tearooms" in preparation for a new leadership challenge.³ Yvette Cooper and Chuka Umunna were widely touted. So was Clive Lewis (thanks to Owen Jones).

Hence, it was more than reasonable to take a sober approach. Opinion polls, recent election results, ongoing Labour Party divisions and historical parallels, such as 1931 and 1983, are certainly a lot more reliable than subjective impressions derived from the last person one happened to talk to on the bus or at the train station.

Terrified by the prospect of an increased Tory majority Jon Cruddas, Clive Lewis, Helena Kennedy, Hilary Wainwright, Tulip Siddiq, etc, pleaded for Labour to stand aside for the Greens in Brighton Pavilion and the Isle of Wight.⁴ In line with this, Compass - a "leftwing" pressure group, once aligned with the Labour Party, but now uniting "people across different political parties (and those with no party affiliation)"⁵ - promoted its 'Progressive Alliance'. This popular front involved tactical voting and Labour, the Lib Dems, Plaid, the SNP, the Women's Equality

Party and the Greens getting together to "co-create a new politics".⁶

Of course, there was no increased Tory majority. Nor was there a 'Progressive Alliance'. Thanks to Tory blundering, May's cowardice, Corbyn's wonderfully successful town and city rallies, his more than competent media performances, the alternative Labour machine in the form of Momentum and a huge army of individual members canvassing and campaigning - not least by Facebooking, Tweeting and Snapchatting - Labour did remarkably well.

Seemingly, the Labour surge took place with the finishing line already in sight. According to Lord Ashcroft's post-election analysis, unlike the Tory vote, Labour's took some time to firm up: 57% decided to vote Labour in the last month, 26% in the "last few days" of the campaign.⁷

And there has been another mass influx into the party. Hundreds of thousands have joined. It should be said, moreover, that the majority of them stand instinctively, albeit vaguely, to the left. They soaked up Labour's policies from the social ether ... and interpret them as far more radical than they actually are. Tory propaganda also had its own, altogether unintended, effect. Corbyn was denounced as a communist, a Marxist, a friend of extremism, an advocate of class war. The Tories repeatedly showed old pictures of him standing alongside Gerry Adams. They repeatedly showed old pictures of him speaking in Trafalgar Square in opposition to the Iraq war.

This hugely expensive media and advertising campaign totally backfired. Nowadays many people, especially the young, are looking for an alternative to capitalism. They no longer fear socialism. They positively yearn for fundamental change ... and they are looking to Jeremy Corbyn to deliver.

What about the Iraq war? The Tories attacked Corbyn for suggesting some causal link between what has happened to Muslims in the Middle East over the last couple of decades and Manchester, London and other recent examples of home-grown Islamic terrorism. Well, there is a link. That is not to excuse the bombings, the car attacks, the stabbings. It is merely to state the obvious ... and it served to bring attention to Tory cuts in police numbers in pursuit of their austerity agenda.

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Moreover, the electorate was usefully reminded by the *Tories* that Corbyn was one of the tiny minority of MPs who consistently stood against the imperial interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria ... and the hell on earth they created. Not only has the 'war on terror' cost the lives of "as many as two million people" (Physicians for Social Responsibility).⁸ The conditions were created for al Qa'eda, Ansar al-Sharia, al-Nusra, Islamic State, etc. As for Gerry Adams, British ministers now regularly meet and greet him. Sinn Féin is integral to the constitutional arrangement put in place by the 1998 Good Friday agreement. As for being pictured alongside Gerry Adams - Charles Windsor, Bill Clinton, Nelson Mandela and Tony Blair have all posed for the world's cameras, smiled and duly shook hands with the great peacemaker.

Brexit crisis

The general election greatly diminished Theresa May. She is a shadow of her former self. Her remaining time as prime minister is surely very limited. Already her trusted aides, Nick Timothy and Fiona Hill, have been forced to fall on their swords. Leading rivals retain their ministerial posts and have demanded one token concession after another. The proposed "confidence and supply" deal with Arlene Foster and her Democratic Unionist Party is a recipe for weak and unstable government. May's allies are sectarian, bigoted, eccentric, crazed ... and unreliable. Expect to see MPs transported to the Commons by ambulance. Expect desperate government bribes. Expect by-election defeats. Indeed, so slim is the government's legislative majority, so fractured are the *Tories*, that the prospect of a hard Brexit has been reduced to zero. At least that is my considered opinion.

The Brussels bureaucracy, the EU 27, crucially Germany and France, will play hard ball. British negotiators will be treated with contempt. After all, Theresa May did not get the mandate she asked for. She was rebuffed, thwarted and punished by the British electorate.

True, the Great Repeal Bill that parallels Brexit could be presented to parliament as a one-line motion. Politically, however, that is impossible. There are too many factions, too many conflicting interests, too many hobbyhorses. Meanwhile the two-year clock is already ticking away. The March 2017 vote on article 50 saw to that. Therefore, with an unprecedented mass of legislation to steer through parliament, in all probability the whole Brexit process will simply grind to a halt. Tellingly, both president Emmanuel Macron and the German finance minister, Wolfgang Schäuble, have recently stressed that the EU is "open" to a British change of heart.⁹

Big business frets mightily over the uncertainty. The June 23 2016 EU referendum came as a terrible shock for the core representatives of capital. Now they have the June 8 2017 general election. A double whammy. Note, Moody's is already casting doubt over Britain's stability and its Aa1 credit rating. Understandably, desperate voices are being raised calling for a "national unity government" made up of ministers from both main parties. Of course, as the *Financial Times* readily admits, in the "real world" it will not happen.¹⁰ Corbyn has no apparent appetite for a coalition and is obviously relishing the prospect of a decaying Conservative Party and outright victory in the next general election.

Labour's manifesto

Yet the fact of the matter is that Labour's *For the many, not the few* manifesto is only a tad to the left of Ed Miliband's 2015 offering. *Britain can be better* promised a ban on "exploitative" zero-hours contracts, to "freeze energy

bills", "abolish non-dom status", to "value" trade unions as an "essential force" in society, to "reduce tuition fees to £6,000" annually, invest in health and education, put in place a national rail body and encourage "public-sector operators", build "at least" 200,000 homes, "cut the deficit every year", "replace" the House of Lords with an elected "Senate of the Nations and Regions", and "build an economy that works for working people".¹¹

For the many promised to eliminate the "government's deficit on day-to-day spending within five years", "invest in cutting-edge" industries and to "upgrade our economy", bring back into "public ownership" the rails, establish "publicly-owned water companies", no new "private prisons", "regain" control over "energy supply networks", "review laws on trade union recognition", "repeal the Trade Union Act", "ban zero-hour contracts", a programme to build a "million new homes", a Britain "for the many, not the few", etc.

In other words, a pro-worker Keynesianism that was tried, tested and failed in France with the socialist-communist government under president François Mitterrand. Having begun in 1981 with the mildly leftwing policies of the common programme, he presided over the so-called *tournant de la rigueur* (austerity turn) two years later. Capital went on strike, inflation shot up and French competitiveness slumped. That *For the many* is in fact thoroughly Mitterrandist did not stop the economic left going into rhapsodic overdrive.

A *Labour Briefing* editorial called for "Labour to power" and somehow managed to claim that this amounts to "a clear socialist message".¹² The Labour Representation Committee, the mother ship of *Labour Briefing*, welcomed the manifesto as a "a programme which would help begin the socialist transformation of Britain". The LRC even gave *For the many* its own subtitle: *A socialist manifesto for Britain*. That though the word 'socialism' never appears anywhere in the actual text.

Socialist Worker fulsomely welcomed Labour's manifesto as a "shift to the left" and, crazily, urged Corbyn to embrace the cause of Scottish independence.¹³

Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, announced that it would fight "for a Jeremy Corbyn-led government with socialist policies".¹⁴

Paul Mason, formerly a leading Workers Power member, now a right-moving "Momentum activist", said that we can "elect the Labour Party on a socialist platform".

Socialist Resistance - otherwise known as Resisting Socialism - praised Corbyn for presenting a "radical alternative" ... and in that spirit called for an "anti-austerity alliance" uniting Labour, the Greens and the SNP.¹⁵ Class politics is a long forgotten concept for these comrades.

Ironically, the economic left found confirmation in the hard right print media. Except, of course, that their hopes are turned into nightmares. *The Daily Telegraph* described the Labour manifesto as "a tax raid on the middle class" and a recipe to "take Britain back to the 1970s".¹⁶ A "socialist programme", fumed the *Daily Mail*, that is "red in tooth and claw and dripping with class envy".¹⁷ *The Sun*, *Express*, *The Times*, etc, could be quoted along similar lines.

However, as we have seen, there is precious little that is genuinely leftwing about *For the many*. Certainly it has nothing whatsoever to do with genuine socialism. For orthodox Marxism, as everyone knows, socialism begins with a fundamental break with capitalism - socialism being the rule of the working class and the transition to a classless, stateless, moneyless society. But *For the many* does not even adhere to a

reformist socialism ... which holds out the seemingly plausible prospect of ending capitalism though introducing socialism in one country at a time through piecemeal legislative change.

For the many accepts capitalism, does not mention socialism, wants to reconcile antagonistic classes. In fact, for those willing to see, there are many tell-tale formulations within it, designed to appease the openly pro-capitalist right. No wonder in the aftermath of June 8 one rightwing Labour MP after another has gone to TV and radio studios to sing its praises.

The opening section of *For the many* includes the revealing statement that Labour "will support businesses". Big capital is given the assurance that a Corbyn Labour government will keep corporation tax "among the lowest of the major economies". And then there is the pledge to "put small business at the centre of our industrial strategy".

As for 'back to the 1970s', in truth it is more like 'back to the 1980s'. Margaret Thatcher thought that rail privatisation was a step too far. What of prisons? Did she ever seriously envisage wholesale privatisation? No, the most that was considered to be politically viable was allowing private companies to tender for contracts and building prisons through the so-called private finance initiative (continued by the Blair-Brown Labour governments).

Indeed, sadly, it is worth noting that *For the many* internalises many aspects of Thatcherism. Take the programme of building a million homes. Nine-tenths of them are projected to be private. Only a tenth council and housing association. A Corbynite take on the Tory ideal of the property-owning democracy: a cynical attempt to undermine working class consciousness by getting mortgage slaves to imagine themselves little capitalists.

Nato membership goes unquestioned and there is the *boast* that the last Labour government "consistently" spent above the 2% benchmark. Indeed it is claimed that the *Tories* are putting "Britain's security at risk" by "shrinking the army to its smallest size since the Napoleonic wars". We are also told that "the scrapping of Nimrod, HMS Ark Royal and the Harrier jump-jets have weakened our defences and cost British taxpayers millions". Unlike the Labour 1983 manifesto, *For the many* commits Labour, not to a "non-nuclear defence policy", but renewing the Trident missile system. Bizarrely, this is proposed in the name of fulfilling Britain's "obligations" under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. So building the next generation of SSBN submarines, together capable of obliterating 172 cities, is meant to be a step towards "a nuclear-free world".

No genuine leftwinger, no genuine socialist, no genuine Marxist could possibly support *For the many*. Our motto remains "For this system, not one man, not one penny" (Wilhelm Liebknecht speaking in the German Reichstag in 1871). The working class should, as a matter of elementary principle, oppose the standing army, not regret its reduced size. We are for a popular militia, not weapons of mass destruction.

Nor are socialists purveyors of the myth of Britain's "long established democracy". Britain's *quasi*-democracy is in historic terms recently established. And every democratic advance has been won from below in the face of fierce opposition from above. Male workers only got the vote in the late 19th century. Women in the 1920s. And, of course, the capitalist press, the media, the education system ensure that the electorate normally votes for safe, careerist, bribable candidates (eg. a clear majority of Labour's 262 MPs elected on June 8). Moreover, the country is a monarchy, where the privy council, the secret service, the bureaucracy, the army high command and the judges can legally dispose of

any unacceptable government. Yet *For the many* innocently proclaims that "Democracy is founded upon the rule of law and judicial independence." A classic liberal formulation. And, apart from calling for an elected second chamber, a "more federalised country" and a vague phrase about "inviting recommendations about extending democracy", the existing constitutional order is accepted.

The same goes for capitalism. *For the many* believes that capitalism, the economic system, can be managed for the benefit of the many. But it simply cannot be done. Capitalism is a system of exploitation based on the endless self-expansion of capital and generalised wage-slavery. Individual capitalists and top managers can have their dividends heavily taxed and their salaries capped. But capital has to expand through extracting surplus value from workers ... without that capital will cease to be capital, stay as money, find its way abroad, etc. In fact, the "creation of wealth" is not, as *For the many* maintains, "a collective endeavour between workers, entrepreneurs, investors and government". Wealth is created not by so-called entrepreneurs, not by investors, not by government. No, wealth is created by workers ... and nature.

Past Labour leaders have promised much in opposition ... but once in office they always side with the interests of capital ... typically disguised with the coded phrase, used by *For the many*, of putting the "national interest first". And in the "national interest" they keep down wage rises, attack irresponsible strikes and back British capitalists against foreign rivals.

Therefore the real significance of *For the many* lies not in how leftwing it is. No, it encapsulates the political drift, the taming of Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell. Once they were left reformists; now they seem to have reconciled themselves to the existing constitutional order and the system of capitalist exploitation. Obviously the same applies to the main authors of *For the many* - reportedly Andrew Fisher, a former darling of the LRC, and Seumas Milne, a former Straight Leftist.

However - and it cannot be stressed too strongly - for the ruling class, for the political, business and state elite, Jeremy Corbyn remains totally unacceptable as a potential prime minister. His *past* statements on Marxism, the monarchy, Nato, nuclear weapons, the Soviet Union, Iraq, Zionism, Palestine, etc, rule him out as a safe option. No wonder, as soon as he was elected Labour leader, there were rumours of unnamed members of the army high command "not standing for" a Corbyn government and being prepared to take "direct action".¹⁸ Prior to that, the normally sober *Financial Times* ominously warned that Corbyn's leadership damages Britain's "public life".¹⁹

Despite that, the majority who voted Labour on June 8 did so not because of what *For the many* actually says, but because what they believe *For the many* says. Hence, while there is the distinct danger that Corbyn and McDonnell will steer further to the right, in the attempt to secure PLP unity and victory at the next general election, there is also a real chance of transforming the Labour Party into a united front of a special kind ... and equipping it with the minimum-maximum programme of classical Marxism.

Programme

The minimum programme, it should be stressed, is not concerned with tinkering with capitalism: rather readying the working class to become the ruling class. So the minimum programme is both the maximum the working class can achieve under capitalism and the minimum terms the workers' party sets for forming a government.

Hence demands such as genuine

equality for women, extending popular control over all aspects of society, devolving power downwards, a federal republic, Irish unity, abolishing the monarchy, the second chamber, MI5 and disestablishing the Church of England. The shortage of housing should be ended through a massive programme of council house building. Flats and houses must, of course, be of a high quality and rents set at a token level. Allocation should be on the basis of need. State secrets should be ended, along with all forms of censorship. The pharmaceutical industry, the power, water and transport infrastructure, land, the banks and financial services must be nationalised. Judges should be not be appointed from above, but subject to popular election.

Marxists certainly oppose Brexit and instead demand the democratisation of the European Union - moving towards an indivisible Europe under a council of ministers elected by the European parliament. And, while Marxists would advocate specific measures to protect small businesses and farms from exploitation by banks and monopolies, we have no wish to preserve this sector in aspic. Indeed its destruction is historically progressive.

For the sake of human survival we must put a stop to the degradation of nature in double quick time and seek to preserve what remains. Native animal and plant species should be reintroduced. In short, the connection between town and country must be placed on new foundations. Huge farms and urban sprawl have to be replaced by an urbanised countryside and cities full of gardens, small farms and open spaces. Trade unions must be freed from state control. They are voluntary associations. We fight for complete democratisation and measures to combat bureaucracy in the trade union movement.

When it comes to the armed forces, we demand that officers be elected. There should also be full trade union rights and the rank-and-file soldiers must be encouraged to mutiny if they are given orders that run counter to the interests of democracy, the working class and the struggle for socialism. Of course, we want to see the end of the standing army and its replacement by a popular militia.

Unless we can carry out such a programme *in full*, which would, obviously, require international coordination, we cannot countenance forming a government. Meantime our task is to act as a party of extreme opposition.

Ten-point platform

There has been much silly media talk of a PLP split and MPs resigning the Labour whip and sitting as independents until Corbyn quits as leader. Frankly, it is not going to happen. To this day, the right is haunted by the ghosts of Ramsay MacDonald and the Gang of Four. MacDonald, twice a Labour prime minister, led what he called the National Labour Organisation into a thoroughly unequal coalition with the *Tories* in 1931. The Gang of Four of Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams broke away exactly 50 years later to form the Social Democratic Party. The NLO instantly became a tame *Tory* slave - it finally dissolved in 1945. As for the SDP, it merged with the Liberal Party in 1988 and shared the same richly deserved fate. From the early 1970s, even till the late 80s, of course, the political centre enjoyed something of a revival. No longer.²⁰ Despite May's hard Brexit stance providing an open goal, the Lib Dems remain to this day marginalised and widely despised.

Given the results of June 8 and the punishing logic of the first-past-the-post system, only a complete fool would now expect Tom Watson to play Ramsay MacDonald, Sadiq Khan to step in for Philip Snowden or Iain McNicol to make an appearance

as Benjamin Musgrave. Even with a bad general election result there is every reason to believe that Corbyn would have seen off another leadership challenge. Obviously, with June 8, Corbyn's position has become considerably stronger. However, while there is every reason to defend Corbyn against the right, we must go far beyond that. Our goal is socialism and towards that end we must put in place and fashion the organisational means. That is why the LPM advocates this 10-point platform.

1. Fight for Labour Party rule changes. Crucially, all elected Labour representatives must be subject to mandatory reselection based on 'one member, one vote'. MPs must be brought under democratic control - from above, by the NEC; from below, by the CLPs.

Mandatory reselection, of course, terrifies the right. It was this, "even more than nuclear disarmament and membership of the European Community, that became the main catalyst for the launch of the breakaway Social Democratic Party".²¹ Progress, Lord David Sainsbury's party within the party, furiously denounces mandatory reselection as "a weapon of fear and intimidation".²² Yes, mandatory reselection is viewed as an affront by every wrecker, every hireling, every parliamentary careerist.

It is worth revisiting the background. Interestingly, and with good reason, we read, on the Progress website, that mandatory reselection carries "echoes of the Paris Commune, and of the Russian soviets, where delegates were subject to recall if they displeased their local citizenry. It rests on the idea that leaders will always be tempted to sell you out, once they get power."²³ Well, surely, that is what history actually shows.

For decades, sitting Labour MPs - certainly those in safe seats - enjoyed a job for life (as long as no better offer came along). They might visit their constituency once or twice a year, deliver a speech to the AGM and write an occasional letter to the local newspaper. Meanwhile they lived a pampered, middle class life, frequented various London's gentlemen's clubs and spent their weekends in the home counties countryside with Lord this and Lady that. Despite such evident moral corruption, they were automatically the candidate for the next election. Unless found guilty of an act of gross indecency or had the party whip withdrawn, they could do as they pleased.

With the insurgent rise of Bennism that situation was increasingly called into question. The Campaign for Labour Party Democracy, founded in 1973, committed itself to a range of internal reforms - crucially mandatory reselection of MPs, which was finally agreed by the 1980 conference. What this saw, however, was not a Labour Party equivalent of the Paris Commune or the Russian soviets - there was no right of instant recall. Nevertheless, once in each parliament, our MPs had to get the endorsement of their local general management committee. Note, GMCs were made up of delegates elected by local party and trade union branches. They were sizable bodies, typically consisting of 100 or even more delegates.

At the prompting of the bourgeois media and desperately seeking acceptability, Neil Kinnock sought to extract trade unions from the voting process altogether. He failed, but accepted a compromise. A local electoral college for the selection and reselection of candidates was introduced. Ordinary members were given a direct vote for the first time, leaving GMCs with the right to nominate and shortlist only. This electoral college system gave unions and affiliated organisations up to 40% of the vote, with ordinary members having some 60% (the actual balance was different in each seat, depending on party and union membership).

Trigger ballots were a product of the 1990s. Formally honouring conference's "desire to maintain reselection", they made it significantly "easier for MPs to defend their positions".²⁴ Trigger ballots allowed for a sitting MP to be subject to a full-scale ballot of the membership. But only if they lost the trigger ballot. 2. We need a sovereign conference once again. The cumbersome, undemocratic and oppressive structures, especially those put in place under the Blair supremacy, must be rolled back. The joint policy committee, the national policy forums, etc, must go.

3. Scrap the hated compliance unit "and get back to the situation where people are automatically accepted for membership, unless there is a significant issue that comes up" (John McDonnell).²⁵ The compliance unit operates in the murky shadows, it violates natural justice, it routinely leaks to the capitalist media. We say, allow in those good socialists who have been barred, reinstate those good socialists who have expelled or suspended.

4. Momentum proved to be an effective campaigning organisation. An alternative election machine for Corbyn and McDonnell to wield, given the sabotage, bias and limited imagination of Iain McNicol and the Victoria Street HQ. But politically the stultifying inertia imposed on Momentum has proved to be an own goal. Eg, Jon Lansman blocked all Momentum attempts to oppose the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' smears; nor did he allow Momentum to fight the 2016 purge of leftwing supporters of Corbyn. It is now impossible to transform Momentum into a democratic organisation - an organisation that can educate, activate and empower the rank-and-file membership. So there is an urgent need for the left to organise within Momentum branches where they still exist ... but, also, go far beyond that by expanding the influence and organised strength of Labour Party Marxists.

5. Winning new trade union affiliates ought to be a top priority. The FBU reaffiliated. Excellent. Matt Wrack at last came to his senses. He took the lead in reversing the disaffiliation policy. But what about RMT? Especially after June 8 we can surely get RMT militants to finally drop their support for the thoroughly misconceived Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition project. Not only vote Labour, but reaffiliate to Labour ... and exert real influence. And what about the NUT? This year's Cardiff conference saw the executive win an amendment by the narrowest (50.63% to 49.37%) majority, which effectively ruled out affiliation. This can surely be changed ... if we campaign to win hearts and minds. Then there is PCS. Thankfully, Mark Serwotka, its leftwing general secretary, has at last come round to the idea. True, PCS affiliation to the Labour Party will run up against the Trades Disputes and Trade Union Act (1927). Introduced by a vengeful Tory government in the aftermath of the general strike, civil service unions were barred from affiliating to the Labour Party and the TUC in the name of ensuring the "political neutrality" of civil servants. The Civil and Public Services Association - predecessor of PCS - reaffiliated to the TUC in 1946. Now, however, surely it is time for the PCS to reaffiliate to the Labour Party. Force another change in the law.

6. Every constituency, ward and other such basic unit must be won and rebuilt by the left. Our individual membership grew from 200,000 in May 2015 to over 500,000 because of the historic opening provided by Corbyn. And with the general election campaign membership has again rise, this time to 800,000. A million members is within our grasp. However, the left must convince the sea of new members to attend meetings ... only then can we sweep out the right from the NEC, the HQ, the councils and the PLP. Elect officers who support genuine socialism. Elect officers who

are committed to transforming our wards and constituencies into vibrant centres of socialist organisation, education and action.

7. Our goal should be to transforming the Labour Party, so that, in the words of Keir Hardie, it can "organise the working class into a great, independent political power to fight for the coming of socialism".²⁶ Towards that end we need rule changes to once again permit left, communist and revolutionary parties to affiliate. That is what we mean by a united front of a special kind. As long as they do not stand against us in elections, this can only but strengthen us as a federal party. Today affiliated organisations include the Fabians, Christians on the Left, the Cooperative party ... the Jewish Labour Movement and Labour Business. Allow the Socialist Workers Party, Socialist Party in England and Wales, CPGB, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain, etc, to join our ranks.

8. Being an MP ought to be an honour, not a career ladder, not a way for university graduates to secure a lucrative living. A particularly potent weapon here is the demand that all our elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker - a principle upheld by the Paris Commune and the Bolshevik revolution. Our MPs are on a basic £67,060 annual salary. On top of that they get around £12,000 in expenses and allowances, putting them on £79,060 (yet at present Labour MPs are only obliged to pay the £82 parliamentarians' subscription rate). Moreover, as leader of the official opposition, Jeremy Corbyn not only gets his MP's salary. He is entitled to an additional £73,617.²⁷

Let them keep the average skilled worker's wage - say £40,000 (plus legitimate expenses). Then, however, they should hand the balance over to the party. Jeremy Corbyn, John McDonnell and Diane Abbott ought to take the lead in this.

9. We must establish our own press, radio and TV. To state the obvious, Twitter and Facebook, etc, have severe limits. They are brilliant mediums for transmitting simple, short and sharp messages. But, when it comes to complex ideas, debating history and charting political strategies, they are worse than useless. 10. Programmatically, we should adopt a new clause four. Not a return to the old, 1918, version, but a commitment to working class rule and a society which aims for a stateless, classless, moneyless society, which embodies the principle, "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". That is what socialism is all about. Not a measly £10 per hour "living wage", shifting the tax balance and a state investment bank. No, re-establishing socialism in the mainstream of politics means committing the Labour Party to achieving a "democratic republic".²⁸

Sidelines

Organisations such as SPEW, the SWP, the CPB and Left Unity are having a hard time of things at the moment. Not only are they haemorrhaging members: there is profound political disorientation.

Having dismissed the Labour Party as nothing more than a British version of the US Democrat Party, having fought for trade unions to disaffiliate, SPEW's general secretary, Peter Taaffe, is busily rowing backwards. But if he wants his perfectly correct call for the Labour Party to be opened up once again to affiliation by socialist organisations to be treated seriously, it is obvious what he must do. Put an end to the farcical Labour Party mark two Tusc project. Close it down ... permanently.

However, comrade Taaffe is a towering genius, compared with Robert Griffiths, the CPB's general secretary. When not promising to shop "entryists" to our witch-finder general, Iain McNicol, what he displays is a completely detached attitude towards Labour's ongoing right-left civil war.

He seriously says there are more important issues ... like strikes and protest demonstrations. *Morning Star* editor Ben Chacko is equally small-minded. He sees "a task far bigger than the Labour Party". Fighting for a mass revolutionary party? No. Forging the links necessary for establishing a new workers' international? No. What comrade Chacko, laughably, wants is "organising at a local level in groups such as the People's Assembly, Keep Our NHS Public, Black Activists Rising Against Cuts and many more".²⁹

Where we in LPM strive to elevate local struggles to the national and the international level, comrade Chacko's sights are set on "saving an A&E or a youth club". That he does so in the name of Marxist politics and creating a mass movement on the scale of the Chartists shows an inability to grasp even the A in the ABC of communism.

Having rejected any active involvement in the Labour Party at its 2016 conference, what remains of Left Unity is also reduced to issuing its own thoroughly unremarkable list: Another Europe, Stand Up to Racism, People's Assembly demo, etc. No wonder its entire London membership now meets in the snug little space provided by Housmans Bookshop.

Then there is Charlie Kimber. Showing the SWP's crisis of leadership, he is now *joint* national secretary of the SWP and editor of *Socialist Worker*. Anyway, as might be expected, comrade Kimber called for a Labour vote, but, the more members who leave the SWP, the more he stresses localism, ephemeral demonstrations, economic strikes and fake fronts. In his 'Letter to a Jeremy Corbyn supporter', comrade Kimber warned that "there's a great danger that you could be drawn into endless internal battles". The "crucial arena" of struggle is not "the long slog" of "endless meetings" (perhaps) get rid of a rightwinger". No, according to comrade Kimber, it is the "fightback in the workplaces and the streets".³⁰

Comrade Kimber's claim that what *really matters* is not changing the Labour Party through the long, hard slog, but the "fightback in the workplaces and the streets", is a Bakuninist, not a Marxist, formulation. For the 19th century anarchist leader, Mikhail Bakunin, strikes and protests were the key to revolution. By contrast Marxists have always placed their emphasis on programme, consciousness and building solid organisation.

In Marxist terms therefore, because the Labour Party is historically established, because it is a class party, because it involves all big unions, because it has a mass electoral base, because it has drawn in hundreds of thousands of new members, what is now happening within it is a far higher form of the class struggle than mere economic strikes, 'here today, gone tomorrow' protests, let alone fake front conferences. In point of fact, the struggle to transform the Labour Party, is a *highly concentrated* form of the class struggle.

It is worth noting that Lenin and the Bolsheviks, following in the tradition of Marx and Engels, considered the "fightback in the workplaces" - ie, trade union politics - the lowest, the most elementary form of the class struggle. Bargaining over wages and conditions might be the dawning of class-consciousness, but, "taken by itself, is in essence still not social democratic [Marxist] work, but merely trade union work". Lenin elaborates: "... social democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich."³¹

Apply comrade Kimber's derogatory, typically economic, remarks about the "long slog" and "endless meetings" to the Russian

Social Democratic Labour Party. There was a drawn-out struggle between the Bolshevik, Menshevik and many other smaller factions. Of course, I am not equating the Labour Party, which can, with its federal structure, only become, at best, a permanent united front of the working class in Britain - our version of soviets - with the highly dedicated, explicitly Marxist, individual-membership Russian Social Democratic Labour Party.

That said, it is clear, that comrade Kimber exhibits a fundamental disdain for the Marxist perspective of *elevating* the trade unionist politics of the working class (which, through error, miseducation or sorry conviction, far too many on the left nowadays take as common sense). Comrade Kimber and the SWP serve to *degrade* Marxist politics to the level of routine trade union politics.

Another analogy. OK, we envisage the possibility of the Labour Party becoming a British version of Russia's soviets (not that the LPM is calling for 'All power for the Labour Party'). Would the Bolsheviks have been right in 1917 to direct their main energies towards economic strikes, street protests and building fake fronts? Hardly. In fact, Lenin, having returned from his Swiss exile in April 1917, famously presented a perspective of winning the argument for the Bolshevik programme - sloganistically crystallised as 'Land, bread and peace'. Progress was, however, judged by the election results provided by the "long slog" and "endless meetings" of the soviets of workers, soldiers and peasants.

In the spring of 1917 the Bolsheviks were a not insignificant minority fraction in the workers' soviets. By the summer of 1917 they had gained majorities in Petrograd and Moscow, Kiev and Odessa. And, of course, in November 1917 the peasant congress of soviets voted for the entire Socialist Revolutionary programme of land reform ... plus, the vital Bolshevik addition of soviet power. In other words a Bolshevik government ●

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SCOTLAND

Blow to separatism

The Tory revival north of the border exposes the failure of left nationalism, writes Eddie Ford

For years we have been told by most sections of the left that Scotland was so much more advanced than the rest of Britain - a progressive, Tory-free zone to be envied and emulated. This sentiment was reinforced by the freak result in the 2015 general election, thanks to the 'first past the post' (FPTP) electoral system, which saw the Scottish National Party scoop up 56 of the 59 seats (95%) with only 50% of the vote - leaving the other parties with only one seat each. There was only one direction of movement, it seemed, and that was towards Scottish independence.

But, of course, that was always baloney that ignored history and common sense. In the 1950s, apart from the 'red belt' and a few scattered Liberals, Scotland was a Tory country - the Conservatives won an absolute majority of the vote in the 1955 general election (50.1%) and not far off that four years earlier (48.6%).¹ Now, in certain respects, politics in Scotland shows every sign of returning to type, at least if the results of the general election are anything to go by. Indeed, as many commentators have pointed out, we are seeing the return of two-party politics in all parts of the UK - or in the case of Northern Ireland, its first emergence with the Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin carving up everything between them except for one seat. This should not surprise us in the slightest, as two-party politics is predicated on FPTP, electorally punishing splits and breakaways.

Anyhow, this time round the SNP was reduced to 35 seats on 36.9% of the vote - representing a 13% drop in its share of the popular vote, and costing it nearly 480,000 votes compared with 2015. This result, we must remember, comes on the back of last year's Holyrood elections, in which the SNP failed to secure an overall majority, but the Scottish Tories increased their MSPs by 16 and overtook Labour as the largest opposition party. And last week the Tories secured 13 seats on 28.6% of the vote and were runners-up in nine other constituencies - very nearly doubling their share of the vote from two years ago and getting over 300,000 more votes.

Meanwhile, Labour ended up with seven seats, gaining six, and 27.1% of the vote - a share broadly similar to the Tories, but the swing towards Labour was only 2.8%, as opposed to 13.7% for the Tories. Moreover, two of them are Corbyn supporters: Danielle Rowley and Phil Boswell. And Matt Kerr, another Corbyn supporter, came a narrow second to the SNP in Glasgow South West, winning 14,326 votes, just 61 votes short of winning (those on the left who called for an SNP vote in Scotland should be considered class traitors). As for the Liberal Democrats, they got four seats on 7.5%, but actually got 40,000 fewer votes than in 2015. Overall, 39 MPs were elected with fewer votes than their party polled in the previous election.

One consequence of the election, surprising many, was that two of the SNP's biggest stars lost their seats. Angus Robertson, its Westminster parliamentary leader and MP for Moray, was defeated by the Tories - though he remains deputy leader for now - as did Alex Salmond in Gordon, losing out to Conservative Colin Clark. This leaves former SNP leader Salmond without a parliamentary seat



Ruth Davidson: new face of Scottish unionism

for the first time in 30 years.

The general conclusion from these results is that momentum is ebbing away from the SNP and towards their opponents - especially the Tories, who are now enjoying a serious revival (something that we in the CPGB have long warned was possible). But it was obvious that, once Nicola Sturgeon announced plans for a second referendum on independence, the Tories would be going hell for leather to capture the anti-independence/unionist vote - with those for Brexit thrown in for good measure.

Indy Ref 2?

In fact, the Scottish first minister - not being a fool - has had to admit a good part of the reason for the result was a backlash against her calls for independence. Sturgeon said she needed more time to "reflect carefully" on the consequences of the election before deciding whether to press on with her quest for another referendum either towards the end of next year or the spring of the following year, "when the terms of Brexit are known" - as she originally phrased it. "Undoubtedly" the issue of an independence referendum was a "factor" in this election result, she also remarked, but there were "other factors as well", such as Brexit.

However, despite Sturgeon facing calls at Holyrood and elsewhere to abandon any plans for a second independence referendum, Scottish government ministers on June 13 apparently did not discuss Indy Ref 2 in their first meeting since the election, and the next day there were a flurry of stories about how she was planning to "rebrand" the independence referendum as a vote on the finalised UK Brexit deal - with one SNP MEP, Alyn Smith, telling the BBC's *Good morning Scotland* programme that any future referendum "would be on the terms of Brexit set against independence".² On the same day Sturgeon issued a series of almost Trumpian tweets stating that media speculation about her plans for a referendum, or not, was "nonsense" - she would set out the way forward "in due course after talking to people across the SNP".³ She went on to tell BBC Scotland that she would not be "rushed into knee-jerk decisions" on a referendum and that her "immediate

focus" will be on the forthcoming Brexit negotiations - a "Tory-led hard Brexit is simply not acceptable" in the wake of the election result, she said.

Sturgeon wants a "short pause" in the Brexit negotiations and has written a letter to Theresa May, in which she argues that new proposals are "urgently needed" to end the "confusion surrounding the UK's position" - she repeated her call for Scotland and the UK to remain in both the single market and the customs union and for the rights of EU citizens living in the UK to be "guaranteed". Furthermore, she claimed that the Scottish government's *Scotland's place in Europe* document, published in December, provides a "blueprint" for the "way forward" for the whole of the UK. In her opinion, the UK government should "reconvene" a joint ministerial committee involving all three devolved governments in Edinburgh, Belfast and Cardiff, and set up an "advisory group" involving Sinn Féin to agree a consensual, "cross-party, all-government", approach to the Brexit negotiations.

Perhaps ironically, Nicola Sturgeon's appeal for a "pause" in Brexit talks comes just as the European commission's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, warns in the pages of the *Financial Times* that Britain risks crashing out of the EU with no deal if it wastes any more time - he urged Theresa May to "very quickly" begin the discussions and appoint a negotiating team that is "stable, accountable and with a mandate" (June 12). After all, he notes, as from next week it will be three months since the sending of the letter triggering article 50 - but no progress yet.

Obviously, Tory, Labour and Lib Dem leaders in Scotland are stepping up the pressure on Sturgeon to finally dump Indy Ref 2 - now declared "dead" by Ruth Davidson, the Scottish Tory leader and saviour of the party (if it was not for her performance on June 8, the Tories would be even deeper in the shit). She has accused the first minister of having "given up representing Scotland" and of "turning a tin ear to everyone outside the SNP, who just want a break from her political games" - instead, Sturgeon is now "focused solely on her discredited and unwanted plan to drag us back to a second referendum". Similarly, Willie

Rennie, the Scottish Lib Dem leader, urged Sturgeon to withdraw a Holyrood motion calling for the referendum. Just as damning, Kezia Dugdale, the Scottish Labour leader, said the country "won't be fooled by Nicola Sturgeon's desperate plan to rebrand her divisive referendum".

Scotland's deputy first minister and a former SNP leader, John Swinney, also seems dubious about the prospects for Indy Ref 2. He told the BBC that Sturgeon's dogged quest for a second referendum was a "significant motivator" for SNP losses and the party would "have to be attentive to that". Other senior SNP figures disagreed, however, arguing that Sturgeon won a "clear mandate" for a referendum in last year's Holyrood election and in a Scottish parliament vote in March - and claiming that support for independence is still as high as 47%.

Capitulated

The Tory revival in Scotland has exposed the total bankruptcy of those left groups who capitulated before Scottish nationalism and the SNP. For instance, the Socialist Workers Party crazily argued that Jeremy Corbyn should "champion" Scottish independence in order to boost his then dismal poll ratings - thankfully he ignored their advice, otherwise the Labour Party might still have only one seat north of the border. The SWP also wanted us to vote Labour in... "England and Wales". But not in Scotland, as apparently the struggle for independence was the top priority. Or, as Charlie Kimber wrote back in March, "we need to fight for [a] new referendum on Scottish independence", so that "May can be wrecked on the shores of Scotland".⁴

In other words, the SWP's rationale for effectively backing the SNP was the same as for voting Brexit - it will damage David Cameron. Yes, comrades, it certainly did that - but so what? As Kenneth Clarke said, it was obvious to anyone but a fool that Cameron would not "last 30 seconds" if he lost the EU referendum: we hardly need the SWP's help or advice on this matter, thank you very much. But the idea, repeated *ad nauseam* by the comrades, that the Tory Party would "shatter" under the weight of Brexit (or Indy Ref 2) was always absurd - it is the party of government, existing

for that purpose. It was always going to unite around one candidate - hence the crowning of Theresa May. If she goes soon, which looks likely, then they will eventually unite around somebody else - not split apart in order to make life easier for *Socialist Worker* journalists.

Clearly, we are not going to see another referendum on independence any time soon - however much Sturgeon might try to 'rebrand' it. This completely shoots down in flames the SWP's 'strategy', insofar as it had one - in its excitable, day-to-day existence devoid of programme. Now, instead of attempting to critique its own obviously failed perspective, the SWP pathetically informs us that "socialists should take from these results that independence, which *Socialist Worker* supports, is not and should not be the only key fault line for the left" (June 9). Rather, we read that "support for independence hasn't changed" and that "the surge in support for Corbyn's Labour mirrors the surge in working class support for independence in 2014" - once again deluding themselves. Nothing ever goes wrong in the SWP's world: everything is a confirmation of the central committee's infallible line.

If anything, the position of the Scottish Socialist Party is even worse - more cravenly nationalist. The SSP told us on its semi-moribund website that the "forthcoming" election (ie, June 8) has to be made into a "referendum" on independence, and called upon the SNP to "put independence at the heart of its general election manifesto". It boasted about the "100,000 leaflets" distributed throughout the country making the case for an "independent socialist" Scotland, as it is "essential" that "Scottish MPs are armed with an unchallengeable mandate for self-determination".⁵ Effectively the SSP was for an SNP vote in Glasgow and elsewhere.

But, just like the SWP, the SSP's "referendum" has completely failed - the majority of Scottish people voted for parties that do not support independence and Indy Ref 2 is almost certainly off the agenda. Commenting upon the election result, Colin Fox, the SSP's national spokesperson, argues that the SNP's diminution is a "direct consequence of their failure to make the case for independence". Yes, he says, June 8 was a "setback for the independence movement", but it also "clearly demonstrates that support for independence is greater than that for the SNP" - again "underlining the case for a reinvigorated broad-based 'yes' movement".⁶

What was totally wrong to start with has now become utterly stupid and reactionary - the SSP's commitment to Tartan nationalism coming at the expense of working class unity throughout Britain. If they had any sort of working class outlook, they would be fighting to transform and democratise the Labour Party both sides of the border - not acting as a nationalist pressure group on the SNP ●

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Notes

1. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Scotland.
2. www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/scottish-news/1144651/nicola-sturgeon-top-lieutenants-plotting-indyref2-dream-alive.
3. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-40263711.
4. <https://socialistworker.co.uk/art/44196/e+need+to+fight+for+new+referendum+on+Scottish+independence>.
5. www.scottishsocialistparty.org/snp-must-put-independence-heart-manifesto.
6. www.scottishsocialistparty.org/rebuff-may-makes-second-election-likely.

NORTHERN IRELAND



Arlene Foster and the DUP ten

Pact with the devil?

Will a deal with the DUP mean an end to the so-called peace process? **Anne McShane** investigates

Theresa May's reliance on the Democratic Unionist Party's 10 MPs has led claims that she has entered a pact with the equivalent of the Taliban or Islamic State. Some have even predicted that same-sex marriage and abortion rights in Britain will be under serious threat and thousands have signed an online petition demanding that the Tories step away from a coalition with bigots and homophobes. Former Labour Party spin doctor Alastair Campbell has denounced Theresa May for putting the Good Friday agreement (GFA) at risk through "a sordid, dangerous, distasteful deal". Tory grandees like Kenneth Clarke and John Major have joined the fray, with warnings of severe ramifications from the 'confidence and supply' deal, and urging May to open talks with other parties.

Missing from this debate is a sense of reality. The DUP has appeared like a bolt from the blue in UK politics, when in fact it shared power with Sinn Féin in Stormont for 10 years until March of this year. Before that, of course, its deceased founder, Ian Paisley, was an extremely prominent personality, propagating a blend of Presbyterian fundamentalism and an overwhelming antagonism towards Northern Irish Catholics that bordered on the obsessive. His was the only party in Northern Ireland to oppose the GFA - current leader Arlene Foster was herself a former member of the Ulster Unionist Party, but defected to the DUP in 2003 in protest at the GFA. Warmly welcomed into the fold by Paisley, she shares many of his fundamentalist views. In 2015 she demanded (unsuccessfully) that same-sex couples from Northern Ireland be prevented from marrying in Scotland. In the same year she became party leader.

Foster's hostility towards

republicanism is far sharper than that of her predecessor, Peter Robinson, and even that of Paisley in later life - remember the 'chuckle brothers' and the friendship with Martin McGuinness when they were first minister and deputy? It was expected that, as a member of the Church of Ireland and ex-member of the UUP, she would continue the process of compromise apparently central to the GFA. However, she took the opposite stance and refused to extend the hand of friendship to McGuinness. She is described as a difficult woman, whose belligerence has inflamed the inbuilt antagonisms between the two communities.

Loyalism

But, while Foster's personality no doubt plays a role, it is her dedication to traditional loyalism which is the key to her intransigence. Here is an ideology which predates the Six Counties. It has its antecedents in the colonial plantations of the 17th century, when the rebellious Gaels were driven off the land and replaced by Scottish Protestant farmers. The settlers unsurprisingly feared and despised the natives. They saw their own survival as wholly contingent on the continuation of rule from Westminster and their continued protection by the crown - loyalism is born from dispossession and colonial rule.

Ian Paisley was simply one of a long line of evangelical sectarians who fed this siege mentality with histrionic depictions of the peril posed by republicanism. With the beginning of the IRA's failed 1956-62 border campaign, the IRA became largely dormant, he was amongst those who helped form Ulster Protestant Action - a vigilante organisation armed to defend British-Irish privileges and ensure the continuation of gerrymandering and dominance of loyalists in local government.

As the founder of the Free Presbyterian Church, he stoked up intolerance in thundering sermons and speeches. And, when Catholics rose up against their institutionalised repression in the late 1960s, Paisley and others worked with loyalist paramilitary groups, including the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Defence Association, to hold the line against the demands for civil rights. Such was the paranoia about being swamped by the 'taigs' that the UDA released a document calling for the repartition of Ireland to create a wholly Protestant Ulster. Sammy Wilson, a future DUP Stormont minister, called it a "valuable return to reality" and lauded the UDA for "contemplating what needs to be done to maintain our separate Ulster identity".

As the main opposition to the GFA, the DUP built on the sense of siege and fear among Protestant voters. On July 12 2006 at an Orange Order march in Portrush, Paisley declared that Sinn Féin was "not fit to be in partnership with decent people. They are not fit to be in the government of Northern Ireland and it will be over our dead bodies if they ever get there".¹ Ten months later he was sitting alongside Martin McGuinness in the Stormont administration. The fact that Paisley's intransigence had given way to compromise in such a relatively short time reflects the recognition that the GFA could not be beaten.

But it did not mean an end to sectarianism. In fact Stormont is an example of how the GFA hardened the institutional divisions between the two communities. MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) have to designate themselves 'nationalist', 'unionist' or 'other'. Important resolutions cannot be passed unless they have 'cross-community' support. Despite the election of a People before Profit MLA, there has been no shift

in the political culture within the assembly. Outside Stormont, bodies like the Parades Commission, set up under the GFA to settle disputes during the Orange Order marching season, have also found themselves mired in disagreements. Conflicts almost inevitably flare up every July and the marching season is a time of intense fear for Catholic communities.

The divisions along nationalist and loyalist lines were reflected even more vividly in the general election, with the DUP emerging as the clear winner among Protestant voters, with 10 seats. However Sinn Féin also increased its seats by three, taking its total to seven. The UUP and the Social Democratic and Labour Party both lost out completely. When Stormont is reconvened, the DUP will be in a strong position ... because the Westminster government relies on its votes. This despite March's Northern Ireland election triggered by the 'cash for ash' scandal. The DUP lead over Sinn Féin fell from 10 to just one. DUP now hold 28 seats and Sinn Féin 27. The significance of this lies in the fact that it is the biggest party which gets the position of first minister. The second party, if its is designated 'nationalist', gets the deputy.

Preventing a hard Brexit is key when thinking about the likely outcome of the pact. Although the DUP campaigned for a 'leave' vote, Northern Ireland voted by 55.7% to remain. However, the DUP never support a hard Brexit. Foster has argued that she does not want any restrictions on exports to the Irish republic or any weakening of tourism initiatives - the cross-border bodies set up to promote joint economic activity should not be undermined.

The Irish government is likewise pushing hard to make sure that Brexit does not affect its relationship with Northern Ireland and Britain. Various TDs have condemned Sinn Féin for

refusing to break with its abstentionism. They have insisted that it has a duty to take up its seats in Westminster and prevent a Brexit coalition of the Tories and DUP. But Sinn Féin has refused to countenance such an action. Gerry Adams has made it clear that his party is not interested in operating in the UK parliament. Its focus is on continuing to win ground both north and south to secure a united Ireland through constitutional means.

There is no doubt that there will be fresh conflicts in the north because of the Tory-DUP pact. However, it is very unlikely that Sinn Féin will abandon the assembly. In fact it has already called for the recommencement of talks for its re-establishment. With representation almost on a par with the DUP and strong support behind it, Sinn Féin will campaign against British government interference in Northern Ireland. Outside of Stormont it can be expected that the tensions will spill over into the marching season.

But I very much doubt that it signals an end to the GFA despite the concerns of many on the left. The Socialist Workers Party and Socialist Party in Ireland, along with many other groups, portrayed the British government initiative in 1998 as a step forward. They refused to acknowledge that it was a rearticulation of imperialist rule in Ireland. Yes, the majority voted for it to make the ceasefire permanent, some perhaps hoping that it would bring about integration. But, while the GFA has seen an end to 'the troubles', it has cemented sectarianism. Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland are still as divided as ever ●

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Notes

1. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/5174000.stm.

ASSESSMENT



May's fatal miscalculation

Corbyn must press home his advantage after June 8, urges **Tony Greenstein**

As with all good fairy tales, the wicked witch of Westminster was rumbled before she was able to cast her evil spells. The good news is that she is not yet dead. The longer she lives, the more damage she is likely to do to the Tory Party. Theresa May's promise to the 1922 Committee that, having got them into "this mess", she is the best person to get them out again would, in normal circumstances, indicate that she had a sense of humour.

The question for us to understand is how and why May and her supporters made such a catastrophic political misjudgement and what the consequences may be. It was not simply political hubris that led May to call a general election when she had a workable parliamentary majority for the next three years. There was a collective act of self-deception by the political class - the talking heads and self-styled experts who feed off each other's delusions. It was taken for granted that in a general election Corbyn was a lamb going to the slaughter.

Almost alone amongst the political commentators I predicted the outcome.¹ The day after parliament voted by 522-13 for dissolution and with the polls showing a lead of over 20% I wrote:

... it was Harold Wilson who said that a week is a long time in politics. Seven weeks is a political eternity. Theresa May has taken a gamble that her 21% lead will hold. It is a gamble that she may yet come to regret.

There is only one direction that her lead can go, and that is down. Once her lead falls, then a snowball effect can take over. What is essential is that Labour marks out the key areas on which it is going to base its appeal. The danger is that Corbyn is going to continue with his 'strategy' of appeasing the right and appealing to all good men and women. If so that will be a recipe for disaster ...

Theresa May is a cautious conservative. She is literally the product of her background - a conservative vicar's daughter. Reactionary, parochial and small-minded, she is a bigot for all seasons. What doesn't help is that she is both wooden and unoriginal. The danger is that Corbyn tries to emulate her.

The key question is whether or not Corbyn can rise to the occasion. Even Jesus ... didn't allow the gospel of love to prevent him from driving the money lenders from the temple ... There is everything to win if Labour has the courage of its convictions.

On June 3, five days before the election, when all the polls were predicting that May's lead was widening, I wrote:

My initial predictions, that there would or could be a hung parliament was based on my assessment of the situation. This is still quite possible, as the Tories are widely detested for their attacks on the working poor, people on benefits and the continuous privatisation of the NHS. They are seen as the party of a vicious class rule, which is what austerity is about.

That does not, however, mean that the Tories will necessarily be defeated. People do not vote in line with their class interests. The whole purpose of the patriotic card, used by a succession of ruling class scoundrels from Pitt to May, is to blind people to their real interests ... The Tory press, of course, is doing its best to foster illusions in Strong and Stable.

... The Lib Dems are not going to gain enough seats to prop up another Tory coalition ... By ruling out any form of pact with Labour under Corbyn, the Lib Dems have guaranteed their own irrelevance.

We could be in

Knives being sharpened: David Davis, Philip Hammond, Boris Johnson, Amber Rudd and Michael Fallon

for a period of political instability such as we have not known for 40 years ... A Tory government is still possible if it cobbles together a coalition of the Lib Dems and the Ulster Unionists-DUP. Even a majority Tory government cannot be ruled out.²

Contrast this with the drunken pundits who inhabit the Westminster bubble, who competed with each other in their efforts to describe how badly Corbyn would be defeated. Prime among them was Nick Cohen, who writes with all the passion of a neocon convert for the once liberal *Observer*. In March Cohen predicted that in the event of a general election:

Labour will get around a quarter of the vote ... The Tories have gone easy on Corbyn and his comrades to date for the transparently obvious reason that they want to keep them in charge of Labour ... In an election, they would tear them to pieces. They will expose the far left's record of excusing the imperialism of Vladimir Putin's gangster state, the oppressors of women and murderers of gays in Iran, the IRA, and every variety of inquisitorial and homicidal Islamist movement. Will there be 150, 125, 100 Labour MPs by the end of the flaying? My advice is to think of a number then halve it.³

Suffice to say, Cohen was faced with having to eat rather large helpings of humble pie. How did he explain himself? Primarily by blaming others! It was all because "the paralysed Tories don't know how to govern or what to do next". Having informed us through gritted teeth that May's electoral defeat "is not only due to the PM's monumental incompetence - Corbyn deserves credit", he then tells us, by way of an alibi, that "most Labour MPs stayed in their

constituencies, convinced defeat was at hand. They kept Corbyn's name off their leaflets and told anyone who asked that Corbyn did not represent the real Labour Party."⁴ Not once did it occur to Cohen to question these MPs' cowardly behaviour, still less talk to some real people instead of embittered Labour MPs. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

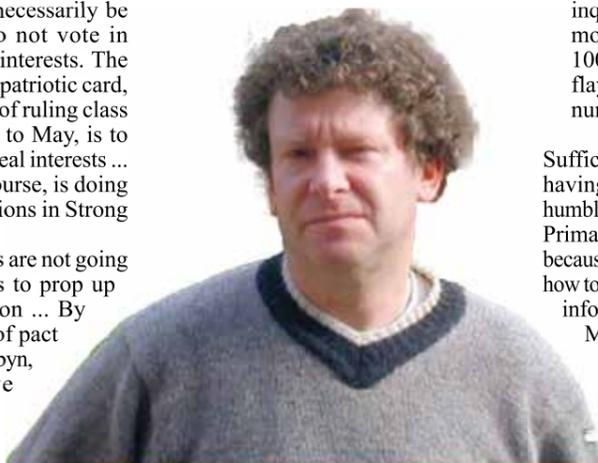
If he had felt particularly brave, Cohen might have ventured into the crowds at one of the 90 mass rallies that Corbyn addressed up and down the country and asked himself whether something was happening beneath the surface of British politics. Instead Cohen, who even today defends the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan, tells us that he "doesn't swing with the polls". Instead he reverts back to the horrors of the "links between the Corbyn camp and a Putin regime that persecutes genuine radicals", to say nothing of his support for "an Iranian state that hounds gays, subjugates women and tortures prisoners" - and, of course, Corbyn's "indulgence of real anti-Semites (not just critics of Israel)".

New mood

The question is why 99% of the pundits and 'experts' got it so badly wrong. The answer is really not so difficult. Their understanding of what is happening in the country is limited to the latest opinion poll and soundings at Westminster. In essence what they are doing is testing whether the ideological broadside of the popular press against Corbyn has been successful or not.

Corbyn's election was accompanied by hundreds of thousands of people joining the Labour Party. Contrary to the self-deluding nostrums of Labour Party MPs and the Tory media, this was not a far-left takeover. Would that the far left in this country accounted for even 10% of these numbers. Corbyn's election was symptomatic of a wider revulsion at Cameron's narrow victory and the years of austerity, cuts to

Tony Greenstein: general election predictions spot on



What we fight for

benefits, a housing crisis, the plight of the NHS and the enrichment of the already rich.

It is this mood that not only Cohen and the media, but also the far left, has failed to pick up on. The growing disillusion in modern capitalism and its inability to provide even a basic and acceptable standard of living to people. The fact that young people are forced to live with their parents because they cannot afford to rent anywhere, the food banks and homelessness. The only response to growing impoverishment has been to redefine what poverty means.

I campaigned in Brighton Kemptown, a Tory marginal of 690 votes. Every school had displayed outside it large banners explaining how the cuts were affecting them. Robotically quoting figures saying that education funding is being increased means little when the actuality of what is happening in education is very different.

There was clearly a massive swing amongst young people to Labour. The effect of benefit cuts to the under-25s, combined with tuition fees and the removal of student grants and student nurses' bursaries, have taken their toll.

Labour's manifesto was genuinely radical in a number of ways. The decision of the right in Labour Party headquarters to leak it in advance ironically worked in favour of Labour by giving it nearly a week of extra publicity. Corbyn broke with Miliband's legacy by openly opposing the politics of austerity. This was in contrast to the Tories' promises of more austerity, with the abolition of the triple lock on pensions, means testing of pensioners' winter fuel payments and the removal of free school meals. The promise to abolish tuition fees, and to restore housing benefit to the under-21s, struck a chord with younger people. Today no Labour rightwinger dares defend Miliband's austerity-lite politics. The promise to renationalise the railways, post office and utilities was also genuinely popular. Of course, we should call for workers' control in industries that are renationalised, in order that what happened previously - whereby private-sector managers just moved over from the private to the public sector and carried on in the same way - does not happen again.

We are not in a revolutionary situation or anything even approaching it, which is why it is not possible to put forward a demand for nationalisation without compensation and gain any measure of support. It is, however, possible to demand that any compensation paid is linked to the price that the industries were originally sold for, minus the profits taken out and, not least, in the case of water, the land that was sold off by the water companies.

We should also call, in the case of the NHS, for the statutory reversal of private finance initiative contracts which have enabled private companies to literally make a killing. We should demand that, adjusted for inflation and say a 2% return, companies which have already received their initial investment back should not receive further compensation. We need to be able to formulate concrete demands which, though they go against capitalist economic 'logic', also resonate with sections of the class. I have no doubt that this will be controversial with some on the far left, but it is also necessary to link one's demands to existing consciousness.

I also have little doubt that Brexit played a major part. The reason that the Liberal Democrats did not benefit from the support of remainers was that they were not a credible electoral vehicle, especially after they explicitly ruled out supporting a Corbyn-led government. We saw two conflicting tendencies.

First, Labour clearly benefited from pro-European Tories who were alienated by a hard Brexit. There is no other explanation for the victory

of Labour in Kensington, possibly the richest constituency in Britain. The votes in Brighton, Hove and Canterbury, among other places, indicate that this was not just confined to London constituencies.

There was also the collapse of the UK Independence Party vote. Unlike most received wisdom, I have argued that the suggestion that Ukip votes would go automatically back to the Tories was mistaken. Although we may not like it, Ukip posed as a party of protest against the establishment - Farage's peoples' army. With its virtual collapse at this election, the majority of working class Ukip voters in the north went back to Labour, not the Tories. Even in the south a large proportion appear to have supported Labour too. People voted for Ukip not because they were racist, but because they believed that immigration was responsible for their decline in living standards.

What next?

What then has been the reaction of the Labour right? During the campaign the theme of many - like Peter Kyle, the MP for Hove - was that a vote for them was not a vote for Corbyn.⁵ The Zionist lobby that Corbyn was so assiduous in appeasing paid him back with studious contempt. Joan Ryan, chair of Labour Friends of Israel, whose sole achievements have been to claim the second highest expenses of any MP in 2005-06 and the highest amounts in 2006-07,⁶ asked her constituents to elect her "despite Corbyn" because May would win.⁷ Jeremy Newmark, the chair of the Jewish Labour Movement, the British branch of the Israeli Labour Party, likewise assured voters that if they voted for him Corbyn still would not win.⁸

For all his attempts to please the Zionist lobby, including suspending supporters of the Palestinians and supporting the redefinition of anti-Zionism as anti-Semitism, the Zionists treat Corbyn with utter disdain. He is not reliable compared to Tom Watson.

Some on the right like Owen Smith⁹, Chuka Ummuna and even Peter Mandelson¹⁰ have recognised that they were wrong in writing off Corbyn as an electoral liability, although Mandelson returned to type pretty quickly with his bizarre suggestion that Labour MPs should prop up May in order to achieve a soft Brexit.¹¹ Others, such as Chris Leslie, the former shadow chancellor, complained that, despite the fact that Corbyn had been fighting the Tories as well as Labour traitors like himself, he had not achieved an outright victory.

It must be very painful for the Labour right to admit that the Labour Party under Corbyn won the highest vote since 1997 and the largest increase in any party's percentage of the vote since 1945. The right's whole narrative revolves around the idea that warmed-up Blairism would still prove attractive - despite having lost nearly five million votes between 1997 and 2010. Corbyn's 12.9 million votes were, with the exception of Blair in 1997 (13.5 million), the highest for Labour since 1966 (13.1 million). The right has been forced to acknowledge that it was Corbyn's strategy of ignoring the print media and using social media that contributed to Theresa May's defeat.

The question for the left though is 'Where next?' Of one thing we can be in little doubt. Theresa May is, in the words of George Osborne, a dead woman walking. There can be no future in her putative alliance with the Democratic Unionist Party. The DUP is not simply anti-gay and anti-abortion: it is above all a racist, sectarian party of Protestant supremacy. It was created in reaction to the formation of the civil rights movement by Catholics in 1969. It has strong links with loyalist terror groups, including the Ulster Defence Association and its death squads. Only a few days ago its leader, Arlene Foster, met with Jackie MacDonald, a senior leader of the UDA, in the wake of the

UDA murder of another loyalist in Carrickfergus.¹² But then some forms of terrorism have always been acceptable to the Conservative and Unionist Party.

It is important that the previous strategy of appeasing the right is not pursued. It would be a strategic mistake to take Chuka Ummuna and Angela Eagle back into the shadow cabinet. In a reversal of Lyndon Johnson's maxim, it would be better to have them pissing outside the tent rather than fouling the shadow cabinet!

It is essential that Corbyn purges Labour's civil service. It is absurd that the left leadership of the Labour Party has next to no control over its unelected staff. This meant that virtually no resources were directed to any seat that Labour was trying to gain. Under Iain McNicol, Labour's witch-hunting general secretary, a strategy of defending Labour marginals - especially those like Hove, where Progress MPs were in danger - was pursued. That was why no help whatsoever was given to crucial marginals like Brighton Kemptown, where a Tory majority of 690 was turned into a Labour majority of nearly 10,000. Labour HQ swallowed the tabloid and media nonsense about Labour being in for a catastrophic result. What this meant in practice is that at least 15 seats that Labour could easily have won were lost - and with them any chance of a majority. McNicol, if he is not prepared to fall on his sword, should be sacked for gross incompetence.¹³

As the right in the Labour Party recover from the shock of Corbyn's performance and take stock, I predict a renewal of the false 'anti-Semitism' campaign. It is essential that the compliance unit is wound up, that all those suspended - including Jackie Walker, Ken Livingstone and myself - are reinstated. At the beginning of the election campaign Mel Melvin, women's officer for Brighton Kemptown, was suspended for posting a satirical tweet, in response to reports of the bullying of Dianne Abbot: she said that Abbot should claim Jewish ancestry, then action would be taken. It would seem that any form of humour, if it involves poking fun at the false anti-Semitism campaign, is also *verboten*. Mel's comment was nothing more than a satirical joke.

The key Zionist activists in the Labour Party have demonstrated that their first loyalty is to Israel and British foreign policy. Newmark, Ryan, Gapes and Kyle did their best to undermine Corbyn during the election campaign and no-one could be more disappointed with the election result than these Labour Zionist candidates.

The one issue that never really came to the fore, but underlies much of the voting, was the question of Brexit. May's hard Brexit has clearly hit the buffers. Labour's position at the moment is incoherent. Corbyn's reference to "managed migration" during the election campaign and the myth that immigration, rather than the erosion of trade union rights, leads to lower wages, has to be fought. Labour's stance should be clear - Britain should stay in the single market and the custom's union and it should accept the free movement of labour. Corbyn should not pander to the myth that immigration lowers the price of labour. There is already a crisis of a lack of nurses in the NHS and now there are reports that the number coming in from the EU has declined by a massive 96%.

The message for the left inside the Labour Party is that it has to go on the political offensive. We need to deselect large numbers of what were imposed candidates. Never again should the Labour machine be allowed to choose the candidates, as happened this time. Another general election is probable within a year. The Tory Party is divided over Brexit and it is highly unlikely that the present government can continue with the support of the DUP. John Major has already spoken out against it, following on from the comments of the Scottish Conservative leader, Ruth Davidson ●

Notes

1. <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2017/04/labour-can-win-if-corbyn-is-bold-key.html> (April 20 2017).
2. <http://azvsas.blogspot.co.uk/2017/06/general-election-is-labour-on-threshold.html>.
3. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/19/jeremy-corbyn-labour-threat-party-election-support (March 19 2017).
4. www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/jun/10/i-was-wrong-about-jeremy-corbyn-still-doubt-him.
5. www.theargus.co.uk/news/15296372.
6. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joan_Ryan.
7. www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/02/back-me-despite-corbyn-as-may-will-win-labour-mp-urges-voters.
8. www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/byers-jeremy-newmark-piece-1.438620.
9. www.walesonline.co.uk/news/local-news/defeated-labour-leadership-contender-owen-13160869.
10. www.politicshome.com/news/uk/political-parties/labour-party/jeremy-corbyn/news/86571/i-was-clearly-wrong-jeremy-corbyn.
11. www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4592272/Lord-Peter-Mandelson-urges-Labour-MPs-soft-Brexit.html#ixzz4jr9e9vXQ.
12. www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/jun/11/arlene-fosters-stance-on-paramilitary-groups-brought-into-question.
13. <https://skwawkbbox.org/2017/06/10/excl-labour-hq-defunded-marginals-corbyn-achieved-this-despite-them-ge17>.

Fighting fund

Help needed

I remarked last week about the surge in online readers, and I'm pleased to say that this week's figure remains quite a bit above average, at 3,566. But I'm afraid that hasn't led to an increase in donations - in fact this week's contributions to our fighting fund are the lowest I can remember for a long time, with only £102 coming in.

That takes our running total for June up to £594, but the bad news is we need £1,750 and almost half the month has gone. So now some sharp acceleration is called for in the second half of the month.

The main problem is that the last seven days have coincided exactly with the least productive part of the month in terms of the standing orders we receive - just two came in, from DV (£20) and RP (£5). No doubt next week will see something above average, but I'm not sure it'll be enough to put us back on target.

So we could really do with a lot more comrades playing their part - comrades like SS, a reader in Canada who donated £25 this week. Other comrades who used our PayPal facility were JM, who added £10 to the new subscription she took out, DB (£7) and JP (£5). Finally we received two cheques - from KN (£20) and BS, who also added a tenner to his subscription.

But we definitely need a lot more like them stepping in to help. That's where you come in. Please write us a cheque, click on our PayPal button or - best of all - make a transfer from your online bank account (sort code: 30-99-64; account number: 00744310) ●

Robbie Rix

Fill in a standing order form (back page), donate via our website, or send cheque, payable to Weekly Worker

Without organisation the working class is nothing; with the highest form of organisation it is everything.

There exists no real Communist Party today. There are many so-called 'parties' on the left. In reality they are confessional sects. Members who disagree with the prescribed 'line' are expected to gag themselves in public. Either that or face expulsion.

Communists operate according to the principles of democratic centralism. Through ongoing debate we seek to achieve unity in action and a common world outlook. As long as they support agreed actions, members should have the right to speak openly and form temporary or permanent factions.

Communists oppose all imperialist wars and occupations but constantly strive to bring to the fore the fundamental question - ending war is bound up with ending capitalism.

Communists are internationalists. Everywhere we strive for the closest unity and agreement of working class and progressive parties of all countries. We oppose every manifestation of national sectionalism. It is an internationalist duty to uphold the principle, 'One state, one party'.

The working class must be organised globally. Without a global Communist Party, a Communist International, the struggle against capital is weakened and lacks coordination.

Communists have no interest apart from the working class as a whole. They differ only in recognising the importance of Marxism as a guide to practice. That theory is no dogma, but must be constantly added to and enriched.

Capitalism in its ceaseless search for profit puts the future of humanity at risk. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, exploitation and crisis. As a global system capitalism can only be superseded globally.

The capitalist class will never willingly allow their wealth and power to be taken away by a parliamentary vote.

We will use the most militant methods objective circumstances allow to achieve a federal republic of England, Scotland and Wales, a united, federal Ireland and a United States of Europe.

Communists favour industrial unions. Bureaucracy and class compromise must be fought and the trade unions transformed into schools for communism.

Communists are champions of the oppressed. Women's oppression, combating racism and chauvinism, and the struggle for peace and ecological sustainability are just as much working class questions as pay, trade union rights and demands for high-quality health, housing and education.

Socialism represents victory in the battle for democracy. It is the rule of the working class. Socialism is either democratic or, as with Stalin's Soviet Union, it turns into its opposite.

Socialism is the first stage of the worldwide transition to communism - a system which knows neither wars, exploitation, money, classes, states nor nations. Communism is general freedom and the real beginning of human history.

weekly WORKER

**Momentum
played vital
role in Hallam
victory**

Parallel campaign delivers win

One the greatest upsets of the election took place in Sheffield Hallam, where a pro-Corbyn candidate defeated Nick Clegg. **Carla Roberts** of Labour Party Marxists reports

Sheffield Hallam is one of the richest constituencies in the country and had never previously been in Labour hands.¹ Yet on June 8 Labour's Jared O'Mara, a member of Momentum, defeated former Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg.

Oddly enough, it was also an upset for the regional Labour Party too. The campaign was underfunded, understaffed and would have not have got off the ground without the help of local Momentum supporters. No cash was allocated from the regional party office for Hallam's campaign, and so the entire £4,000 spent (compared to the maximum of £12,000 per constituency) was raised locally. This leaves Hallam rather short financially, especially when it comes to sending delegates to annual conference in September.

Was this just the result of the defensive campaign run by the Labour HQ - an effort to protect Labour seats rather than take the fight to the Tories? That is what is being argued now. But *The Skwawkbox* reports similar underfunding problems in other parts of the country² - including in areas with marginal Labour seats held by leftwingers, such as Wirral West.

But how come any leftwingers were chosen to contest in this election in the first place? We know that candidates were selected in backroom deals between Corbyn's people and the national executive. But the allocation of funds, resources and manpower is organised via regional Labour Parties - ie, full-timers appointed by general secretary Iain McNicol and co.

It seems to us that what happened in Hallam has indeed been part of an organised, Britain-wide attempt by Labour HQ to undermine Jeremy Corbyn, prop up the vote of rightwing MPs - and accept that marginal seats with leftwing candidates would be lost. If that is indeed the case - and the evidence is mounting up - then heads must now roll: McNicol must go.

Sheffield Hallam was not identified as a marginal that would be worth fighting for. The regional Labour Party - no doubt under instruction from Labour HQ - had decided that all fire should be concentrated on supporting the rightwing Progress supporter, Angela Smith (who has called for Corbyn's resignation many times and will undoubtedly do so again³), in Penistone and Stocksbridge constituency to the north of the city and directed volunteers from across the other five Sheffield constituencies to that area. Hallam was effectively written off, despite the fact that in 2015 Nick Clegg only won the seat with a margin of just over 2,500 votes.

Jared O'Mara has a very low profile, to put it mildly.⁴ He is a disability campaigner with cerebral palsy, has run twice - unsuccessfully - for the local council and is treasurer of the small Sheffield City Labour Party branch. In effect he was regarded as a mere paper candidate.

But, once local Momentum members and others on the Labour left heard that a fellow Corbyn supporter had been selected as the candidate, they pulled



Nick Clegg (third left) beaten by Jared O'Mara (second right)

out all the stops to make it a successful campaign. It was an uphill struggle against the Labour bureaucracy: for days after the election was called there were no leaflets, no web presence and hardly any official support for the campaign. Residents in Hallam were bombarded with one glossy, pre-produced Lib Dem leaflet after the next, while the scruffy black and white numbers produced for Jared looked like something the cat had dragged in. Large areas of Hallam were entirely left out of the 'campaign plan' and no effort was made to leaflet or canvass there.

It was Momentum members who first got together with Jared to take some photographs of him, plan the campaign and discuss how to make it as vibrant as possible. It was Momentum members who drove Jared to leafletting sessions and events, because his official agent was hardly ever around.

At times, almost a parallel campaign had to be organised, bypassing official Labour structures. Sometimes it felt as though the bureaucracy was hell-bent on sabotaging things. Right until the end, even volunteers from Hallam itself were encouraged to campaign for Angela Smith. Campaigners were told not to drive around with a megaphone, not to produce specific leaflets to hand out outside schools and not to organise any public meetings or even a fundraising event. But leftwingers in Hallam did most of those things anyway and some were eventually adopted by the campaign.

The left really started to get its act

together at a crucial CLP campaign meeting a week after the election was called. Over a hundred people turned up and it became clear that a majority was not happy with the official mantra being put out by most of the local leadership that 'Hallam could not be won'. Momentum supporters and other leftwingers in the meeting disagreed and encouraged others to at least try and run a campaign to win the seat.

The ball really got rolling when Momentum organised a canvassing training session in Hallam at the beginning of May with a campaigner from Bernie Sanders' team. For three hours the importance of actually talking to people was discussed, to try and convince them to vote for Labour. That sounds like an obvious thing to do, but the official election agent - who came along for a Q&A and to hand out material for the first canvassing session of the campaign - insisted that "everybody has to stick to the script". Of course, the so-called national "script" consists of nothing more than asking people on the doorstep which party they will vote for and which one they voted for last time. This is called 'voter ID' - a hangover from the Blair years which needs to be got rid off.

Clearly, if you want to build a real party of the working class, then speaking to people is a pretty basic necessity. Momentum's fact sheet provided people with arguments to take on the Liberal Democrats over their U-turn on tuition fees, their

responsibility for austerity - as well as their role in privatising a lot of services across Sheffield, when they were the largest party in the local council. Luckily, most people ignored the 'advice' of the agent to stick to the script and left the training session enthused and equipped with some useful 'persuasion techniques'. The video is now online.⁵

After that, the left continued to organise, mainly via email and Facebook (all Labour Party meetings were, of course, suspended). It took some effort to convince other lefties from across Sheffield to come to Hallam. Incredibly, many of them had followed the Labour HQ instructions and went to campaign for Angela Smith. But many of them eventually joined us in Hallam and on polling day more than 200 people crammed into the campaign headquarters.

There was an incredible buzz on June 8. Campaigners drove around Hallam in a decorated car with a megaphone, playing 'Liar, liar' and 'The magic money tree', and calling on people to vote Labour. Groups of teenagers waved back and shouted 'Vote Labour!', while passing drivers raised their fists in support. Campaigners started to believe they could actually win the seat - although it still came as a shock to many when the result came through. The story goes that Jared was so convinced he would come second that he had to shoot off in the middle of a night to a nearby 24-hour Tesco to buy himself a new suit for his

acceptance speech! Alas, we can reveal that this is not true: he was wearing his dad's jacket and a black pair of jeans.

Despite our well-known criticism of the Lansman coup in Momentum,⁶ I have to admit that Momentum nationally was most helpful. Once they were informed by local members that Hallam was indeed a marginal seat - and one contested by a pro-Corbyn candidate - they really pushed for Momentum supporters across the area to come out and help (and surprisingly went against the instructions of the local Labour Party). Local Momentum supporters from across Sheffield report receiving several phone calls and text messages urging them to get involved.

In that sense, Jared O'Mara really is Momentum's first MP. Can you imagine what kind of impact an organisation like Momentum could make it if it were a democratic, members-led campaign? But I am not sure Momentum is up for doing what is now necessary: helping to get rid of the saboteurs in the Labour Party - and not just in Sheffield Hallam

Notes

- [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheffield_Hallam_\(UK_Parliament_constituency\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sheffield_Hallam_(UK_Parliament_constituency)).
- <https://skwawkbox.org/2017/06/12/proof-labour-hq-funnelled-resources-away-from-pro-corbyn-marginals>.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=EtVoeTOAp2U.
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jared_O%27Mara.
- www.youtube.com/watch?v=TpOfgUljzg&t=180s.
- <http://labourpartymarxists.org.uk/yes-to-a-momentum-opposition-no-to-a-split>.

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