

Labour Affairs

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Labour's Next Leader?

Jeremy Corbyn's PLP critics claim that under his leadership Labour is unelectable. Some of these critics are the same people who were responsible for Labour losing the last two general elections. But rather than rally round Corbyn they have placed their faith in Owen Smith, a man with little more than six years experience as a member of parliament. Their aim, they say, is a Labour government. So what guarantees can they offer that, should Smith defeat Corbyn in the leadership election currently being held, Labour will win the next general election?

There is something odd about the choice of Smith. If Corbyn's critics seriously want Labour to win in 2020, why choose Smith? Whatever happened to the big guns among the PLP? Where are Hilary Benn and Yvette Cooper, for example? They have been strangely quiet in recent months as if on permanent vacation. Could it be that had either one stood against Corbyn in Labour's present political atmosphere they would have been soundly defeated? So why not use Smith as a stalking horse, hoping that in a year or so the euphoria around Corbyn will subside, enabling one or the other to mount a more serious challenge?

But if, as expected, Corbyn defeats Smith, what will his critics do then? For Labour to have any chance of forming a government the Party needs to unite. Divided parties do not normally win general elections. But one cannot have any confidence in a daggerless PLP getting behind Corbyn. In fact if his critics intend to force another leadership election, it is in their interests to be as disruptive as possible. The disruption which began with his election a year ago has continued throughout his leadership.

In recent weeks there appears to have been a carefully orchestrated succession of Corbyn's critics running to the media with concocted tales of his inability to lead and accusations of anti-semitism, misogyny and racism within the party for which Corbyn is deemed responsible. It seems however that almost all the abusive comments directed at Labour MPs, including

Corbyn himself, have come through social media. How many, one wonders, have been identified as party members?

London's Mayor Sadiq Khan has been Corbyn's most prominent critic. Just days before he launched a blistering attack on Corbyn he said he preferred to stay out of the debate over who should be leader. But he then became a useful tool for Corbyn's PLP critics and used the Observer (21.08.16) to attack Corbyn for making Labour unelectable; conveniently forgetting that he was elected as Mayor with a huge majority, with Corbyn as party leader. And he accused Corbyn of failing to articulate a case for Remain and being largely responsible for the Brexit vote. Khan needs to get out of London and talk to Labour Brexit voters in the north of England. He would find that not even his idol Tony Blair would have dissuaded them from voting to leave.

Labour's membership of more than half a million is at a record high with many joining since Corbyn was elected leader. They may be many, as Momentum reminds us, but they are nowhere near enough to guarantee an election victory. Corbyn's aim is to energise the membership within a social movement that engages directly with voters. If Corbyn wants to engage with the voters what message does he wish to convey? Where is the economic and industrial programme that will win back traditional Labour voters who defected to UKIP or simply stayed at home? Such a programme must address the concerns of Brexit voters, as well as those who voted to remain, over immigration, access to health and housing and insecure, low-paid employment. It seems that Corbyn understands this. He has identified what he believes is wrong with most of these concerns. But has yet to package his policies into a workable whole.

Labour's deputy leader Tom Watson claims that the membership has been infiltrated by Trotskyist activists, the evidence for which is in a report he appears to be keeping under wraps. But until it has been published

we will just have to assume that his is just another device to undermine Corbyn and his support group Momentum, while claiming to have the best interests of the party at heart. It seems that Watson fears a Militant-type takeover of Labour. But the Militant threat in the 1980s, when Watson was a junior employee at Labour's headquarters, was exaggerated. Their influence in most constituencies was minimal or non-existent. There have never been more than 10,000 British Trotskyists, at most. The bulk of them did not try to infiltrate Labour.

Smith's programme for a Labour victory under his leadership pitches him well to the left of the previous leader Ed Miliband. It is clearly aimed at Corbyn supporters, some of whom are reported to be disappointed with his leadership. This opportunistic ploy will not be lost on those who do not recall Smith expressing such radical left views during his time in parliament. His presence as Work and Pensions Secretary in Corbyn's shadow cabinet was barely noticed. He then resigned following the earlier planned mass exodus of shadow ministers. Smith's campaign so far is based on dire warnings about Labour's future if Corbyn wins a second time. His forecast that Labour could "bust apart and disappear" (Guardian. 04.08.16) is scaremongering on a gigantic scale. Appearing to row back a little on this he then claimed he is standing against Corbyn to prevent a split happening. He says that if Corbyn wins he would not serve in the shadow cabinet. But if he (Smith) wins he would invite Corbyn to be party president!

Although Smith's and Corbyn's programmes for economic recovery are broadly similar-- a case of the former stealing the latter's clothes-- they clash on defence and foreign policy. Smith's stance on Trident, that he is a "reluctant" supporter is bizarre. Corbyn's opposition to Trident and his perceived refusal to press the button for a nuclear strike may be out of sorts with voters, but Smith's "reluctant" support is that of an equivocator. And his calls for a second referendum on EU membership once the terms of a Brexit are known would offend the very people Labour must win back. His call for talks with ISIS also makes no sense and is unlikely to win many votes. So much for Corbyn being unelectable.

The closing date for postal and on-line voting is 12 September, with the result announced at Labour's conference on 24 September. Based purely on the number of nominations each candidate has received Corbyn looks the overwhelming favourite to win; he has the support of 283 constituencies compared to 53 for Smith. But controversy has surrounded the election. The Court of Appeal has ruled that 130,000 party members who joined after 12 January are ineligible to vote. John MacDonnell called this a "rigged purge". However, a bizarre decision may have allowed many of them to vote after all. Labour's ruling body, the National Executive Committee, have agreed that three groups are eligible: members who joined the party before 12 January; members of affiliated unions and those recent members and non-members who paid £25 to become "registered supporters" following the 18-20 July NEC offer; and 168,000 affiliated supporters who are members of affiliated organisations such as trade unions. Tom Watson's views on this are unknown. Perhaps he should check how many of these eligible voters are Trotskyist activists.

A MURDER OF CROWS

You sit in the park
 shredding bread
 feeding the crows
 feathered sharks
 they fight one another
 though there's plenty
 to see all fed
 and what about that runt
 thin in poor condition
 a bundle of woe
 its weakening legs shunted
 losing its place
 in the feast
 as the crow of the plump bird
 grows
 you want to feed it
 but the murder
 forms a border
 that's called the survival
 of the fittest
 which maintains a nation's
 order
 re: Darwin still in vogue
 as the passive
 witness
 are we too such unreasoning animals
 that we can't intervene in
 this society's pitilessness

Wilson John Haire.



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Parliament And World War One

by Dick Barry

WAR POLICY (POSITION OF LABOUR PARTY).

On 14 February 1917 Labour MP George Wardle spoke about what he believed to be the position of the Labour Party on the War. In his speech he referred to that made two days earlier by Ramsay MacDonald. MacDonald's speech appeared in the last issue (July/August) of Labour Affairs.

George James Wardle CH (15 May 1865-18 June 1947) was editor of the Railway Review. In 1906 he was elected a Labour MP for Stockport. At the 1916 Labour Party conference, he made a speech which resulted in the conference passing a resolution as to the party stand on World War I, something the party leader Ramsay MacDonald had failed to establish. He was a founding member of the Order of the Companions of Honour in 1917, and between 1917 and 1919 he served as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade. In the 1918 General Election he successfully stood for election as a Coalition Labour candidate. He resigned as a Member of Parliament on 9 March 1920 by becoming Steward of the Chiltern Hundreds.

Mr. WARDLE:

I do not desire to follow the course of the Debate which has already taken place. I should like to say I have listened to it with the closest attention, and that I take the stand in regard to this matter that the greatest question of importance to the working classes of this country at the present time is the question of food and the question of food prices, and that I hope that in dealing with this question the Government will not deal with it on the abstract lines such as we have been used to in Debates in this House before, but will deal with it on the severely practical line of its application to the food situation in regard to this War. I quite share the views of many of my hon. Friends opposite that a diminution in the drinking in the country would be for the good of all, but I feel quite sure that any attempt to impose forcibly prohibition at this stage would lead to determined opposition in certain quarters. I venture to think that the suggestion which was thrown out, that the method adopted should be rather to deal with the question of

manufacture than sale, is the right way to approach this question. I think none of us can deny that the question of the food supplies of the country is of immense importance, and particularly at the present stage, and I trust that both in regard to quantity and in regard to price, which is exceedingly important, the Government will take every step which the circumstances demand to see that there is a sufficiency so far as our Allies are concerned.

It is to-day to deal with the question of the speech delivered by the hon. Member for Leicester (Mr. Ramsay MacDonald) on Monday last, and in doing so I am sorry the hon. Member is not at the present moment in his place. That speech was to me an amazing speech. During the course of that speech he used time and again the word "we." I should like to know who he meant when he used that word "we," and for whom was he speaking, and for whom does he speak in this House. [An HON. MEMBER: "No one!"] Certainly he does not speak for the Labour party. At a conference which was held recently in Manchester the policy which he advocated the other day—and I must do him the justice of saying ably advocated—was argued out on a definite, distinct resolution, which was defeated by a large majority, and a Motion which was moved by my hon. Friend the Member for West Ham (Mr. W. Thorne) declared that the conference was inflexibly resolved to fight until victory is achieved. The two positions were clearly put before the Conference. The position of the Labour party is distinct and emphatic. When the hon. Member for Leicester uses the word "we," he certainly is not speaking for the Labour party. [An HON. MEMBER: "Nor for his Constituents!"] That is a matter he must settle with them himself.

I ask, also, was he speaking for the Independent Labour party, of which he is a member? I venture to say "no."

He certainly was not if we are to take notice of the decision taken at conferences of the Independent Labour party. What has happened? At the annual conference of the Independent Labour party, of which the hon. Member is a member, which was held at Norwich last Easter, what did the Independent Labour party do? They passed a resolution against war of all kinds, whether for national defence or not. Not only was that their policy then, but recently, both at Newcastle and at Govan, at two conferences held within the last two or three weeks, that policy was again adopted unanimously. For whom does the hon. Member speak? I doubt whether he speaks for any members of the Labour party who sit opposite. I should doubt whether he speaks for the hon. Member for Blackburn (Mr. Snowden), at any rate. I do not wish to raise old controversies at the present time, but it would not be difficult to show that the hon. Member for Leicester has not always spoken during this War in the sense in which he addressed the House on Monday. In speaking of the policy of the War, he used the words: What is the best way to procure the real victory which we all desire? If accepted standards are anything to go by, we must judge of this desire by the efforts made to secure its realisation. Those who will the end ought to be prepared also to will the means. I am prepared to grant that, although the hon. Member and his friends have never resisted any Vote of Credit, they have often, in this House and outside, professed their admiration for Dr. Liebknecht because he took his stand in the German Reichstag and voted with one or two others against Votes of Credit. The hon. Member and his friends have never done that, but, on the other hand, they have never said that they approved of those Votes of Credit, which is quite another matter. They would take no part in recruiting, and they have never by word or deed shown

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This also has old issues of Problems magazine.

their desire for a real victory in a very enthusiastic way. The hon. Member for Leicester wants definitions; he wants to know what is meant by “fighting to a finish” and by “victory.”

Mr. PONSONBY:

May I ask the hon. Member if he gave the hon. Member for Leicester notice of the attack he was going to make upon him?

Mr. WARDLE:

The hon. Member never gave me notice the other day that he intended to make the speech he did, and I do not see that I am called upon to give him notice. He was in the House a few minutes ago, and he has hon. Friends here who can communicate with him, I do not see that I am called upon to give him the notice suggested by the hon. Member. I would have done so on my own account if I had seen him. I saw him in the House, but I was not able to speak to him.

Mr. BOOTH:

It is quite Parliamentary.

Mr. WARDLE:

I am quite within my right, as a Member of this House, in replying to an hon. Member who makes a speech in this House. If he desires to hear my speech, he should be here.

Mr. BOOTH:

He never gave the Prime Minister notice when he made a personal attack himself.

Mr. WARDLE:

I should prescribe for the hon. Member for Leicester his own medicine. I have gone through his speech very carefully and have tried to find out what he means by the words—the real victory which we all desire, but I have looked in vain. He is a master of phrases. He can coin phrases which are as absolutely meaningless as the best. I have done my best to understand what he meant by the speech he delivered, and I confess it is very difficult. If I understand its meaning, it is this: that in spite of the submarine campaign, which he rightly condemns as a relapse into barbarism, he still says that the War should be ended in such a way that the two peoples will accept what has happened, and begin, for the first time in the history of Europe, a peace by consent of the two peoples who have hitherto been at war. Is that the real victory which we all desire, and who is “we” there?

Mr. W. THORNE:

The hon. Member for Hanley (Mr. Outhwaite) is one.

Mr. WARDLE:

Certainly, it is not the victory which the people desire or which the Labour party desires. Therefore, I venture to say that in using the words which we all desire the hon. Member was guilty of a misleading phrase. How are we to get at the end of this War a peace by the consent of the peoples who have hitherto been at war? We hear a great deal about wide and considered views, co-related views, moderate and calm views. We are told that that is all for which the hon. Gentleman and his friends ever asked. They have shown a curious way of asking for it. Putting all that on one side, what is the one proposal which the hon. Gentleman put forward in the phrase he used? If I have read his speech rightly, it comes to this: the hon. Gentleman does not see how the enemy is going to be dislodged, certainly in the East, except by negotiation. He does not believe that a military victory is possible. He does not believe that the military victory, even if possible, can produce anything but a patched-up peace, and his “real victory,” which we are supposed to desire, is to be obtained by some undefined action of the Foreign Office which, according to his statement, is to keep defining its position, expounding its position and removing misunderstandings. Negotiations, definitions, expounding positions, will not remove the misunderstandings which have arisen in this War. A nation guilty, as Germany was in this War, of an unprovoked attack upon Belgium, a nation guilty of Zeppelin outrages and of murder on the high seas, is not going to be deflected from its purpose by explanations and by expounding positions. Was such a futile policy as that ever proposed in this House? Peace by negotiations! How is it to be obtained? Example after example was given to us to show that military victories are useless. Nearly every one of those examples is a clumsy inversion of facts.

It was not the military victory of Germany over France which sowed the seed of future trouble; it was the terms Germany imposed after that military victory. Contrast that, with the results of the South African War, when military victory was followed by political sagacity and foresight, and

where we have, as a consequence, Boer and British now fighting side by side in a greater fight for liberty. Surely the real test was the Napoleonic War. There military victory did result in peace for a long number of years. There the military victory over Napoleon, because it was followed by giving France the old borders she had before the Revolution, resulted in France harbouring no revenge. France did not again seek to enter into war with her neighbours. If military victory achieved that result in the Napoleonic War, why should it not be the same now? [Interruption.] Will the hon. Member allow me to make my speech. I have as much right to speak in this House as the hon. Member for Leicester, and I did not interrupt him.

Mr. O’GRADY:

They do not believe in civil liberties!

Mr. WARDLE:

I so totally differ from the views held by the hon. Member for Leicester that I take this opportunity, which I think I have a right to take, as the Chairman of the Labour Party, being elected by members of that party, to state their views. If I cannot speak so cleverly or so ably as the hon. Member for Leicester I hope the House will make allowance for that. [An HON. MEMBER: “You are doing it very well!”] The hon. Member said he wanted to see Belgium restored and reparation made, and France restored and, I suppose, reparation made. With whom are we going to negotiate to get Belgium and France restored? How can we get at the people of Germany? It is impossible. The people of all Germany are fighting with their Government against this country and the Allies. Therefore to speak of peace by negotiation is to suggest the most futile policy which we could adopt at the present time.

Mr. DAVID MASON:

No!

Mr. WARDLE:

Well, that is my opinion. In the speech referred to we had an excursion into the Balkans, where my hon. Friend desired to set up an International Commission. I have no objection myself to a proposal for an International Commission to consider the question of the Balkans after the War. But surely no International Commission is sitting, and no International Commission could deal with this problem as

the matter stands at present! He also had something to say about the danger in the East to the future peace of the Continent of Europe if Constantinople goes to Russia. But what about the danger if Constantinople is allowed to remain in the hands of Germany, for it is practically in the hands of Germany now? What, if we leave this War unfinished, without a military victory, and we leave Germany in possession of Middle Europe, with a straight run from Berlin to Bagdad, and with the East in her possession? I think we shall have sown the seeds of future wars there with a vengeance, indeed—a vengeance which not only our children but our children's children will have to pay for. What is the position at present? The real danger is not of Constantinople getting into the hands of Russia. The position at present, according to a writer in the "Deutsche Politik"—and I believe there is a good deal of truth in these words—is that the war was kindled in the East, and it seems now as if the first flicker of peace were also to come from the East. But his view was quite different from that. The War comes from the East, the War is waged for the East, and he says the War will be decided in the East. The whole tenor of this article is this: Germany is now in possession of Serbia and Roumania, and in consequence has a straight run through to Constantinople, and being Allies with Turkey and Bulgaria, she will soon, if she does not now, dominate Egypt and the route to India. To talk of peace by negotiation under these circumstances seems to me to be folly, and I think, too, an impossibility.

The hon. Member spoke of a policy which is yet to happen. We have to win before Constantinople goes to Russia, and I would much prefer to see it Russian than to see it in German hands. I am not myself very keen about the policy of Constantinople being given to Russia, but surely it is possible, if it be in the hands of Russia, and Russia an Ally, that we can make arrangements for the internationalisation of the Dardanelles, and can make such arrangements with regard to the East as will preserve not only the British Empire, but the peace of the East for some time to come. Therefore, I am not very much disturbed at the idea of Constantinople going to Russia, but I am disturbed at the prospect of seeing

the German Empire and its Allies, who are merely potential parts, dominated by the German Empire, reaching from Berlin to Bagdad. I admit that we have a long way to go, but the Labour party says that it is with the Government and with the country for a fight until victory is achieved. We want something to say about the peace terms when they come. We want, if possible, that when this War is over there shall be a chance of peace for many, many years. To me the attitude of the hon. Member is amazing. He does not yet seem to realise what Germany is, what she is doing, and what she is prepared to do. How can it be that we should look on Germany for some time to come in the same light as we regarded her before this War? So unprovoked, so savage, so barbarous has been her conduct that it seems to me an impossibility that anyone, looking at the facts of the War as it has been actually waged by Germany, apart altogether from the way she started it, that it ought to make our blood boil, and instead of being willing to talk about the peoples coming together now we should certainly demand some chastisement and some reparation for the injury she has inflicted upon the world.

It is for that reason largely that my Friends and myself have supported each Government as it has come along. We did not go into this War willingly. We did not seek it. It was forced upon us, and to talk about making peace until Germany has given up the war aims with which she set out seems to me an impossible position for anyone who loves his country to take up. To me fighting to a finish and victory do not mean the same thing as they seem to mean to the hon. Member. They mean to me much more. They mean the defeat of the war aims of Germany. They mean the destruction of the vilest plot that ever disgraced humanity. They mean chastisement for crimes which will remain for ever an indelible stain on the page of history. They mean, first, a military victory, and then a reasonable and a settled peace. The hon. Member says this War will, indeed, be fought in vain unless it is the last of all wars. That is an impossible position for any man to take up. We cannot rule the future. We can fight as far as we can to make this the last war, but it does not rest with us to say that it shall be the last

war. We can only take care that in the settlement, as far as possible, we shall do our part to remove the causes of future war; but if it is necessary in order to do this to talk Germany into peace, I for one refuse to accept such a statement. Germany cannot be talked into peace. The Americans have tried it long enough, and the very fact that peace-loving America, her patience strained to the uttermost, has had to come to breaking off diplomatic relations, simply proves that the hon. Member's speech had no relation at all to the facts as they now stand

THE HAVEN

Bluethroats
Chakor partridge
Demosielle crane
Sandgrouse
Houbara bustard
The General Atomics Mq-9
Reaper Drone
all visitors
to this safe haven for birds
and Taliban
the boy holds a catapult
with a plan
fills the sling with a
stone
who or what dies
the nerd on the keyboard
eats French fries
the dad finishes painting
the roof
five faces of his
kids
rough sketches but
proof
of his peace bid
the reaper
stillier than a hawk
looks
for something to cook
the boy aims
but hits the Bluethroat
and lames
the bird tries to climb
steeper
shrilling its last nightingale
notes
then on one wing
spirals down
dad
descends in a panic
above
the slow crawl of a crab
with an electric generator
sound
fingers rattle the keyboard
a coca-cola poured
the reaper waits
inanimately bored.

Wilson John Haire.

Froggy

News From Across The Channel



Holidays in the country

A certain village half way down France to the East, in the *département* of the Haute Marne, has terraced houses built in the old style with space for farm animals under the same roof as space for people. The beds used to be placed inside very large wooden cupboards and a huge stone fireplace warmed the whole. Now brick or breeze blocks separate the barn from the living quarters. The door of the barn has lozenge or heart shaped holes to let in the swallows who come every year to build their nests and raise one or two broods. Until the 1980s cows came through the village streets into the barn part of the house twice a day for milking.

Today some houses are tastefully done up, the paint work an elegant pale grey, the stone work restored, the grass in front neat. Others are abominations of random concrete repairs. The neat ones belong to foreigners who come in the summer, the ugly ones to the young of the village who have decided to stay. Some houses neither tasteful nor ugly belong to the older generation of locals. Big family parties, grand-parents, cousins etc gather on Friday and Saturday evenings in the ugly houses, with much noise and laughter.

Life there revolves round family rather than round work. Whether this is by choice or necessity, the result seems to be a lot of happiness. But we couldn't all do that, or what would happen to the economy? Who would buy the tasteful grey paint?

The landscape provides other examples of uneconomic behaviour. Fields feed mixed groups of animals: a bull, cows and calves; the calves suckle their mothers. But perhaps the owner of the beasts gets a premium for this quality of rearing of meat.

At the market in the nearby small town stall holders upturn a metal dish for their customers to write their cheques on. At the railway station, the person behind the counter explains to passengers all the different times and tariffs of the different trains that run on different days, and it's very complicated and takes a very long time. Then he

prepares their railcard for them, cutting the edge of the photo they supply with little scissors to make it fit, slides it carefully under the sticky plastic etc etc. When the whole operation is over, the passenger leaves, saluting politely everyone in the queue.

No wonder France needs 'reforming'! It's all much too slow and behind the times. And the idea of preferring to be near your family rather than exile yourself to a distant place for the sake of a job! Who can afford this luxury?

Labour news

The new Labour Law, the so-called El Khomri law, was finally passed in July thanks to a government decree. The work of liberalisation is ongoing, with continuing obstructions from the population and the unions.

Another SCOP, *Societe Coopérative Ouvrière de Production*, [Production Cooperative Society run by its workers] was formed when a printing firm was to close down. It was taken over by the employees, who went on to employ the manager as their commercial manager. The 19 employees invested their redundancy money and government grants to take over the business. This was validated by the local tribunal of commerce of Puy-en-Velay.

Meanwhile the trial of Orange/France Telecom managers is beginning. They are accused of causing the suicides of dozens of employees during the years when they were 'slimming down' the human resources with modern managerial methods, including transferring people to posts away from home, making them choose between family and job.

A programme on France Inter state radio on rhetoric and eloquence took the former General Secretary of the Communist Party, Georges Marchais, as the model to study. We heard him speaking, and the wise heads pointed out the use of *ad hominem* arguments, humour, sudden changes of tone and the other rhetorical devices employed by the orator. Marchais was very impressive. What is French radio thinking of? Still, it was August, the silly season.

Shop keepers claim the right not to

work! Shopkeepers in a shopping mall near Toulon closed their establishment during the public holiday of 14th July; they were prosecuted by the owner of the mall. The main culprit was fined 180,000 Euros; his reaction was, if that's how it is, I won't open on the 15th August either. This is part of the general effort to hold on to Sundays and bank holidays as days off for shop employees.

France not a Catholic country.

During the Revolution, 'trees of liberty' were planted. One school in a little town of the Haute Marne planted a 'tree of secularism' [*arbre de la laïcité*] in its front yard; *laïcité* is the fundamentalist secularism sponsored by the state, the banning of public expressions of religion. But the landscape in the countryside round that little town offers a silent protest against this. At the entrance of every village stands an old stone cross; if several roads lead into the village, each road has a cross. The grass is neatly cut round it, sometimes flowers are planted there. The church in the centre of the village is locked and empty, with a notice saying where mass might be heard on a Sunday, somewhere else. But the churchyard is full, the new graves in particular covered in flowers and ornaments. The bells ring floridly at noon and 7 in the evening. Catholicism must have a meaning of sorts for the people there.

The French have a bank holiday unknown in England: the 15th of August, traditionally a big holiday. (It celebrates the Assumption of the Virgin, when Mary is transported to heaven to sit with Jesus.) Radio stations on the day announce this as something celebrated by 'the Catholic community'. It is observed throughout France, shops are closed etc. It is true that its true meaning is only celebrated by 'the Catholic community', but referring to a 'community', rather than just 'Catholics' puts that religious group on the same level as Muslims and Jews, which is the aim of the exercise, but does not reflect the reality in the country.

Continued On Page 7

Notes on the News

By Gwydion M. Williams

Corbyn and Labour's 'Timid Tendency'

"Labour was left trailing 16 points behind the Tories today in a grim new poll.

"The regular ICM survey for the Guardian put Jeremy Corbyn's party on 27% - its lowest ebb for seven years while MPs are consumed by a leadership fight.

"Theresa May's Conservatives were on a staggering 43% - also a record since October 2009...

"The result lays bare the struggle Labour could face if Mrs May, boosted by her new Brexit Cabinet, called a snap general election before the end of the year."¹

Thus speaks the *Daily Mirror*. Who ought to know that since 2011, Prime Ministers can't call elections just as they please. It needs a vote of no confidence, or the agreement of two-thirds of MPs.² Labour has enough MPs to block it, unless the Tories went mad and passed a vote of no confidence in themselves.

Tory MPs voting out a Tory government is not quite unthinkable, given the bitterness and delays over Brexit. But it would split and discredit them. Destroy their appearance of competence.

The *Mirror* doesn't mention that the Labour Party was matching the Tories in the run-up to Brexit.³ Had Labour MPs

remained loyal while the Tories squabbled, Labour might have pulled ahead.

But a rebellion had been plotted to happen after a forecast disaster in local government elections. Then Labour did quite well, including electing a new mayor of London. So they waited for the Referendum. Blamed Corbyn, even though he delivered his own constituency for Remain.

Why?

We've heard noise about Labour's the long-extinct Militant Tendency. Who were more a nuisance than a real menace, like all Trotskyists everywhere since their emergence in the 1920s. They were deservedly expelled, having formed a chain of command independent of Labour Party structures. But at least they were willing to fight.

The anti-Corbynists should be labelled the **Timid Tendency**. Past experience of losing with radical-left ideas makes them believe they dare not seriously oppose the system. Neo-Liberal ideas are visibly failing and losing popularity, but they remain overawed by the power of the Establishment.

The battlefield will be firstly Labour Party members and then the electorate, so I don't find Establishment power that impressive. They have messed up massively

ever since the Soviet collapse in 1991. Back then, they were given the world on a plate. They knocked the plate over.

Blair was a prime bungler when it mattered, and was rewarded with an enormous fortune. These characters are not smart on larger matters where history is really made.

Remember 1935. And 1945.

Being haunted by the spectre of Labour's 1935 defeat is timid. It shows an ignorance of history. 1935 was a partial recovery from the disaster of 1931, when Labour leader Ramsay MacDonald formed a 'National Government' that was actually the Tory Party writ large. He was persuaded that the 'national interest' meant looking after the rich. That his own people should suffer for a crisis caused by speculation and lack of regulation.

1935 also paved the way for the gigantic victory of 1945. This was the next election after 1935, the World War having interrupted the normal five-year cycle of elections. 1945 was the most decisive victory ever, with the most achieved. Not the greatest number of MPs, but many long-standing Labour policies were implemented. Labour set the agenda for the next 20 years.

Back in 1931, MacDonald trusted the Tories to know what was best. They cut government spending, which made things worse.

A household in financial trouble should cut spending, certainly. The wider economy will barely notice them. But a *society* that cuts spending will cause further closures and job losses. It will only multiply its problems.

MacDonald in the economic crisis of 1931 should have chosen the policies later known as Keynesianism. Had the Liberals refused to back his Minority Government in anything so radical, he could have then called a new General Election. He might have won such an election. Or might have lost and insisted that the Tories must now govern and try to fix things. He might even have got enough Liberal support to implement the policies that worked brilliantly after 1945 - Lloyd George in 1931 was Liberal leader and had considered similar notions. Franklin Roosevelt, elected in 1932 on a bland program, brilliantly did something similar with his New Deal.

Sadly, MacDonald was part of an

Continued From Page 6

It is also in line with state thinking, that religion is something peculiar, only indulged in by peculiar 'communities'.

At the end of July a priest was murdered while celebrating mass by a man claiming to act for Islamic State. Hollande had to distance himself from the event: 'the Catholic community feels the attack deeply', but also claim that the whole of France felt the pain: 'when a Catholic priest is murdered, the whole of France is attacked', he said. He then requested an audience with the Pope. The State's denial of religion leads to some incoherence.

More secularism

More secularism and more incoherence, after the fight in Corsica between locals and people of immigrant origin on a beach by a coastal village. The first reaction of the mayor, who is responsible for public order, was to ban the bathing costume designed for fundamentalist Muslim women. The argument was that Islamists were behind this costume wearing and it was part of their plan to disrupt French society, and as such it had to be stopped. The mayor, a socialist, said, in defence of his decision to ban that costume, that his Maghrebine fellow citizens were being plagued by Islamists and had to be protected from them.

It turns out that no one was wearing that costume that day. Three families of immigrant origin, from Bastia, the capital of Corsica, had adopted a small beach as their own, or monopolised parts of it. Some thoughtless tourist turned up and started taking pictures; he was told to desist in no uncertain terms, or with some violence, depending on reports. The locals came to his defence, and a general fight ensued. Now the fight is presented as a dispute over the ownership of public space, but the absurd dispute over the bathing costume fills the media, making France ridiculous once again. The French Human Rights League weighed in, invoking the right of everyone to wear what they like, and the debate fruitlessly goes on, ignoring the real issues.

older Timid Tendency within Labour. He trusted a Tory Party that was dominated by out-of-date ideas. Which failed to confront Fascism when Fascism was weak – Hitler would have backed down if his re-militarization of the Rhineland had been treated as an act of war. Separately, some Tories had a sensible notion of Dominion Status for India. But opponents led by Winston Churchill took a hard line, paving the way for a total loss of Empire in the post-war world.

MacDonald was a fool who snatched defeat out of the jaws of victory. A successful Labour government in the 1930s might have weakened Fascism and avoided World War Two. Hitler succeeded with his own 'New Deal', though with much injustice to Jews and others. But his plans included preparations for a war that caused the deaths of at least seven million non-Jewish Germans, as well as all the millions he was targeting for death or enslavement. Yet his early economic measures were sound enough.

The Nazis rose because Classical Liberalism let ordinary people suffer in the defence of abstract economic doctrines. Rejected the Keynesianism that could have fixed the Great Slump. And it took till the 1980s for the Centre-Right to forget this lesson. They remain in denial, failing to see themselves as the main cause of a lot of the malignant politics that has flourished in response to their rule.

(They denounce anyone who gives reason for malignant politics as being sympathetic to that malignant politics. A few left-liberals do suffer from excessive sympathy for evil characters: most of us don't. But it is common-sense to recognise that people who turn bad might have been better given better influences.)

In our own era, Tony Blair as Prime Minister wasted many opportunities. He encouraged the fatal policy of destroying Saddam Hussein, whose brutal regime was creating a secular and Westernised Iraq. Saddam's brutality, including gassing Kurds, had never previously bothered Blair or any other British MP outside of the Labour Left. Saddam was a useful Cold War ally. The USA rescued him from likely overthrow after his unprovoked attack on Islamist Iran. But with the Cold War over, Thatcher and Bush Senior had the bright idea of replacing Saddam with someone more docile.

The mysterious failure of the USA's ambassador to warn Saddam about the consequence of invading Kuwait make perfect sense if Iraq was being lured into a trap. (As does the mysterious failure of the British Foreign Secretary to warn Germany of the consequences of marching through Belgium in the long crisis that led to World War One.)

It wasn't just Iraq. The Tories under

Major had shown signs of returning to One-Nation Toryism. When Major quit, they had a series of weak, bald and unpopular leaders. But Blair chose to believe that Thatcherism was some sort of unavoidable truth, even though most of Western Europe was doing fine without reverting to 19th century values. He introduced market forces to the National Health Service, which Thatcher had never dared do. He won elections but wasted opportunities.

The whole 'New Labour' project was a failed experiment. A pointless reversion to the obsolete non-socialist radicalism of the early 20th century Liberal party.

More on the 'Timid Tendency'.

"Owen Smith, who now faces Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour leadership battle, worked as a lobbyist in the pharmaceutical industry for five years before becoming the MP for Pontypridd in 2010."

"Amgen was ultimately fined \$762m for illegally promoting the drug to cancer patients in a way that increased the likelihood of their deaths. Amgen was hit with the fines after it emerged that the California company was 'pursuing profits at the risk of patient safety' as it promoted a non-approved use of Aranesp."⁴

Do the remnants of New Labour now 'wish they could all be Californian'? And not even the decent side of California? That seems to be the real agenda.

It's notable that the media promote anti-Corbyn smears and ignore the rest. And not just anti-Corbyn. You may have noticed Owen Smith doing a big number about him being a family man with visible children. So too is Corbyn: but at that time Smith was competing with Angela Eagle to be the main challenger for Labour leadership. It was a clear signal that Angela Eagle's lesbianism would have been used against her, had she not backed down. But he got none of the condemnation that Andrea Leadsom got when she tried something similar regarding Theresa May's childlessness. News nowadays is not about facts, but just objectives.

Voters.

The big problem in British politics is demoralised voters who don't bother to register, never mind cast a vote. Most of them would vote Labour, if they did vote. So I started wondering how they might be persuaded. I thought of a leaflet going something like:

You don't vote.

You get treated like dirt.

You don't like being treated like dirt.

So spend a couple of hours a year getting on the register. And then VOTE!

It really is as simple as that.

People who say 'they're all the same' get treated like dirt.

People who vote for whoever looks after them, get treated more nicely.

More old people vote than young people vote.

Old people get looked after better, with state pensions remaining untouchable.

The rich spend enormous amounts of time and money influencing politicians. Often dishonestly, but mostly legally.

Politicians look after the rich.

This could be a neutral **Campaign for Voter Registration**, aiming just to get people to register, and so not subject to rules about electoral expenses. Obviously it would favour Labour. But many more would be principled enough to support it anyway, fine.

Drugs and Gold at the Olympics.

Drug abuse in sport is a problem. But sometimes treated forgivable, sometimes not.

Russian drug cheating was treated as unforgivable. Similar abuse by Western athletes had very often been forgiven.

Consider also the remarkable way in which the leadership of football governing body FIFA was destroyed and disgraced. Teaching a lesson that it is wise to look after Anglo interests?

It wasn't just Britain that had an unexpected Olympic success. The USA got 121 medals, more than any games since the 1984 Los Angeles games, which was boycotted by the Soviet Union and its allies.

(I've also done a detailed analysis by country and event, see <https://gwydion-williams.com/46-globalisation/olympic-sports-for-the-top-four/>.)

Turks and Moderate Islamists.

"NBC News triggered a firestorm after initiating a domino effect among media outlets after incorrectly reporting that Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had fled Turkey and was seeking asylum in Germany in a number of later deleted tweets posted in the thick of the July 15 coup attempt.

"NBC [a large and widely respected US broadcaster] cited an unnamed 'senior military official' as the source of the information which immediately went viral on social media."⁵

Myself, I was *scared* on the evening of the 15th, when it seemed the coup had succeeded. I was sure that military men would not do such a thing without a green light from the USA, given all that Turkey might lose if the West turned against them. And I noticed the lukewarm first response from US Secretary of State Kerry. Kerry and Obama neglected to uphold the sanctity of elected governments until it was clear that the coup had failed.

I was scared because I was thinking of several hundred thousand Turks being added to the existing community of violent terrorist Islamists. Erdogan's party got 23 million votes at the last election – 23,681,926, to be exact. If the coup had succeeded and then just one percent of his supporters turned to terrorism – think about it. 230,000 terrorist Turks would be a lot more formidable than the current movements.

I was relieved the next morning to learn the coup had failed. And I quickly figured that the Turkish plotters must have planned to arrest or kill Erdogan.

Later I got apparent confirmation:

“Erdogan said as the coup unfolded that the plotters had tried to attack him in the resort town of Marmaris and had bombed places he had been at shortly after he left. He ‘evaded death by minutes,’ the second official said. Around 25 soldiers in helicopters descended on a hotel in Marmaris on ropes, shooting, just after Erdogan had left in an apparent attempt to seize him, broadcaster CNN Turk said...

“The coup plotters appeared to have launched their attempt prematurely because they realized they were under surveillance.”⁶

At the time of writing (29th August), the USA is being very tolerant of a Turkish invasion of Syria. The main targets are left-wing Kurds who'd been doing a good job fighting Daesh (ISIS). Despite which, the West could still lose Turkey.

Any notion of Turkey being compatible with the European Union is now ridiculous. When Turkish politics were dominated by secular conservatives and secular socialists, it might have come off. But the West encouraged Islamist politics and then lost control of it. Turkey is no longer compatible.

Snippets

Why Blair Destroyed Iraq

The New Labour assault on Corbyn knocked out of the news the implications of the long-delayed Chilcot Report – which may not be an accident. But consider what the man himself has said:

“The decision to go to war in Iraq, and remove Saddam Hussein from power, in a coalition of over 40 nations led by the USA, was the hardest, most momentous and agonising decision I took in my 10 years as British Prime Minister...

“The aftermath turned out more hostile, protracted and bloody than we ever imagined.

“The Coalition planned for one set of ground facts and encountered another.

“A nation whose people we wanted to see free and secure from the evil of Saddam became instead a victim of sectarian terrorism...

“Saddam was himself a wellspring of

terror, a continuing threat to peace and to his own people. Had he been left in power in 2003, then I believe, for the detailed reasons I shall give, he would once again have threatened world peace, and when the Arab revolutions of 2011 began, he would have clung to power with the same deadly consequences as we see in the carnage of Syria; whereas at least in Iraq, for all its challenges, we have today a Government, recognised as legitimate, fighting terrorism with the international community in support of it.”⁷

Blair is thinking in sound-bites and using sloppy categories. Saddam's Iraq used terror, but only to rule Iraq. It turned out that it's not possible to rule Iraq any other way, as they should have known all along. But in any case, Iraq was seldom involved in International Terrorism.

Blair fancies himself as a great statesman. He did bestride the measured world, like a ridiculous mouse. And we still live with the consequences.

Boris the Menace

Boris Johnson suddenly dropped his long-cherished plans to become Prime Minister. It seemed he was destined for a spell in the political wilderness. But also well placed to come back strongly if Theresa May messed up.

Then, of all things, May chose him as Foreign Secretary. There were other big jobs he could have been given, if she wanted him. But Boris had already shown a habit of insulting foreigners. Why choose someone so unsuitable?

Maybe in the hope he would in due course mess up and she could sack him, leaving him much weaker than if he'd stayed in the wilderness.

Brexit and Farmers

“Originally established with the intention of supporting small farmers and reducing Europe's reliance on food imports, the CAP, which accounts for over 40 per cent (€55bn) of the EU budget, has become a slush fund for assorted dukes, earls and princes. Payment is based on acreage alone and takes no account of wealth, making the scheme one of the most regressive – the more you own, the more you get. In addition, since the EU's definition of ‘farmer’ does not require individuals to produce food or other agricultural products, many recipients are, in effect, paid not to farm.”⁸

An absurd system, where money goes to those who need it least. Brexit means we might possibly reform it. But since small farmers mostly let large farmers dominate, it probably won't happen

South China Sea Dispute

“China is absolutely right to insist that the essence of the South China Sea dispute

concerns conflicting sovereign claims over the islands and related maritime delimitations, over which the tribunal clearly has no jurisdiction. This is because territorial sovereignty over maritime features in the South China Sea is beyond the scope of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. In addition, on August 25, 2006, pursuant to Article 298 of the convention, Beijing deposited with the UN secretary general a written declaration that made it clear China does not accept any of the compulsory dispute settlement procedures (including compulsory arbitration) provided for under the convention, with respect to disputes concerning maritime delimitation.”⁹

The world does not have a regular and binding system of International Law. It could have been created after the Soviet collapse: but the USA preferred to aim for a New World Order in which the USA could impose its will on anyone and ignore any legal rulings that did not suit the current US President.

Websites

Previous *Newsnotes* can be found at the Labour Affairs website, <http://labouraffairsmagazine.com/past-issues/>. And at my own website, <https://longrevolution.wordpress.com/newsnotes-historic/>.

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The Labour MPs who voted for the Iraq War.

On 18 March 2003, 414 MPs voted for the invasion of Iraq including most of the Labour and Tory front benches. Despite three general elections and several deaths and resignations, 139 of them are still serving in parliament—66 Labour and 69 Tory.

Current Labour MPs and their constituencies who voted for the Iraq war

Adrian Bailey – West Bromwich West, Kevin Barron – Rother Valley, Margaret Beckett – Derby South, Hilary Benn – Leeds Central, Clive Betts – Sheffield, Attercliffe, Ben Bradshaw – Exeter, Nick Brown – Newcastle upon Tyne East and Wallsend, Chris Bryant – Rhondda, Andy Burnham – Leigh, Alan Campbell – Tynemouth, Ann Clwyd – Cynon Valley, Vernon Coaker – Gedling, Ann Coffey – Stockport, Yvette Cooper – Pontefract and Castleford, Jon Cruddas – Dagenham, Jim Cunningham – Coventry South, Wayne David – Caerphilly, Geraint Davies – Croydon Central, Jim Dowd – Lewisham West, Angela Eagle – Wallasey, Maria Eagle – Liverpool, Garston, Louise Ellman – Liverpool, Riverside, Paul Farrelly – Newcastle-under-Lyme, Frank Field – Birkenhead, Jim Fitzpatrick – Poplar and Canning Town, Caroline Flint – Don Valley, Mike Gapes – Ilford South, Barry Gardiner – Brent North, Roger Godsiff – Birmingham, Sparkbrook and Small Heath, David Hanson – Delyn, Harriet Harman – Camberwell and Peckham, John Healey – Wentworth, Mark Hendrick – Preston, Margaret Hodge – Barking, George Howarth – Knowsley North and Sefton East, Lindsay Hoyle – Chorley, Alan Johnson – Kingston upon Hull West and Hessle, Helen Jones – Warrington North, Kevan Jones – North Durham, Gerald Kaufman – Manchester, Gorton, Chris Leslie – Shipley, Ivan Lewis – Bury South, Fiona Mactaggart – Slough, John Mann – Bassetlaw, Rob Marris – Wolverhampton South West, Gordon Marsden – Blackpool South, Steve McCabe – Birmingham, Hall Green, Siobhain McDonagh – Mitcham and Morden, Steve Pound – Ealing North, Geoffrey Robinson – Coventry North West, Joan Ryan – Enfield North, Barry Sheerman – Huddersfield, Andrew Smith – Oxford East, Angela Smith – Basildon, John Spellar – Warley, Gisela Stuart – Birmingham, Edgbaston, Mark Tami – Alyn and Deeside, Gareth Thomas – Harrow West, Stephen Timms – East Ham, Derek Twigg – Halton, Stephen Twigg – Enfield, Southgate, Keith Vaz – Leicester East, Tom Watson – West Bromwich East, David Winnick – Walsall North, Rosie Winterton – Doncaster Central.

Current Labour MPs and their constituencies who voted against the Iraq war

Of 85 Labour MPs who defied Tony Blair to vote against the war, just 13 are still in parliament.

Diane Abbott – Hackney North and Stoke Newington, Graham Allen – Nottingham North, Ronnie Campbell – Blyth Valley, Jeremy Corbyn – Islington North, David Crausby – Bolton North East, John Cryer – Hornchurch, Clive Efford – Eltham, Paul Flynn – Newport West, Kate Hoey – Vauxhall, Kelvin Hopkins – Luton North, John McDonnell – Hayes and Harlington, Graham Stringer – Manchester, Blackley, Jon Trickett – Hemsworth.

Note: Labour MPs who voted for the Iraq war but now represent the following different constituencies: Geraint Davies- Swansea West, Chris Leslie- Nottingham East, Angela Smith- Penistone and Stocksbridge, Stephen Twigg- Liverpool, West Derby.

Labour MPs who voted for the Iraq war and whose constituency name has changed slightly: Clive Betts- Sheffield South East, Nick Brown- Newcastle upon Tyne East, Yvette Cooper- Normanton, Pontefract and Castleford, John Cruddas- Dagenham and Rainham, Jim Dowd- Lewisham West and Penge, Maria Eagle- Garston and Halewood, Jim Fitzpatrick- Poplar and Limehouse, Roger Godsiff- Birmingham, Hall Green, John Healey- Wentworth and Deane, George Howarth- Knowsley, Steve McCabe- Birmingham, Selly Oak.

Labour MPs who voted against the Iraq war and whose constituency name has changed slightly: John Cryer- Leyton and Wanstead, Graham Stringer- Blackley and Broughton.

Welfare Reform Vote.

A number of Labour MPs didn't vote against the second reading of the Welfare Reform and Work Bill 20 July 2015

The main changes in the Bill were reducing the household welfare cap from £26,000 to £23,000, abolishing legally binding child poverty targets, cuts to child tax credits, cuts to Employment and Support Allowance, and cuts to housing benefit for young people.

Some of the MPs listed below may have been absent from the vote for their own reasons – for instance, Labour MP Alexander Cunningham says he was recovering from knee surgery at the time. Others may have been on maternity leave or ill.

Out of the four leadership candidates, Yvette Cooper, Andy Burnham, and Liz Kendall all abstained on the proposals. Jeremy Corbyn voted against.

At the time Labour said it supported the benefit cap and cuts to mortgage support but not disability benefit cuts or the repeal of child poverty targets. Its amendment did not mention tax credit cuts.

Labour's leadership recommended an abstention against the bill as a whole, though a group of 48 rebel MPs backed an alternative motion that wholly opposed the package. The 184 Labour MPs who abstained were:

Heidi Alexander, Rushanara Ali, Graham Allen, Jon Ashworth, Ian Austin, Adrian Bailey, Kevin Barron, Margaret Beckett, Hilary Benn, Luciana Berger, Clive Betts, Roberta Blackman-Woods, Tom Blenkinsop, Paul Blomfield, Ben Bradshaw, Kevin Brennan, Lyn Brown, Nick Brown, Chris Bryant, Karen Buck, Richard Burden, Andy Burnham, Liam Byrne, Ruth Cadbury, Alan Campbell, Ronnie Campbell, Sarah Champion, Jenny Chapman, Vernon Coaker, Ann Coffey, Julie Cooper, Rosie Cooper, Yvette Cooper, Jo Cox, Neil Coyle, David Crausby, Mary Creagh, Stella Creasy, Jon Cruddas, John Cryer, Judith Cummins, Alex Cunningham, Jim Cunningham, Nicholas Dakin, Simon Danczuk, Wayne David, Gloria De Piero, Thangam Debbonaire, Stephen Doughty, Jim Dowd, Jack Dromey, Michael Dugher, Angela Eagle, Maria Eagle, Clive Efford, Julie Elliott, Louise Ellman, Natascha Engel, Bill Esterson, Chris Evans, Paul Farrelly, Frank Field, Jim Fitzpatrick, Rob Ffello, Colleen Fletcher, Caroline Flint, Yvonne Fovargue, Vicky Foxcroft, Mike Gapes, Barry Gardiner, Pat Glass, Kate Green, Lilian Greenwood, Nia Griffith, Andrew Gwynne, Fabian Hamilton, David Hanson, Harriet Harman, Harry Harpham, Helen Hayes, John Healey, Mark Hendrick, Stephen Hepburn, Meg Hillier, Margaret Hodge, Sharon Hodgson, Kate Hoey, Kate Hollern, George Howarth, Lindsay Hoyle, Tristram Hunt, Rupa Huq, Huw Irranca-Davies, Dan Jarvi, Alan Johnson, Diana R. Johnson, Graham Jones, Kevan Jones, Susan Elan Jones, Mike Kane, Barbara Keeley, Liz Kendall, Stephen Kinnock, Peter Kyle, Chris Leslie, Emma Lewell-Buck, Ivan Lewis, Ian Lucas, Fiona Mactaggart, Justin Madders, Khalid Mahmood, Shabana Mahmood, Seema Malhotra, John Mann, Gordon Marsden, Chris Matheson, Steve McCabe, Kerry McCarthy, Siobhain McDonagh, Pat McFadden, Conor McGinn, Alison McGovern, Catherine McKinnell, Alan Meale, Ed Miliband, Jessica Morden, Ian Murray, Lisa Nandy, Melanie On, Chi Onwurah, Albert Owen, Matthew Pennycook, Toby Perkins, Jess Phillips, Bridget Phillipson, Steve Pound, Lucy Powell, Yasmin Qureshi, Angela Rayner, Jamie Reed, Steve Reed, Christina Rees, Rachel Reeves, Emma Reynolds, Jonathan Reynolds, Geoffrey Robinson, Stephen Philip Rotheram, Joan Ryan, Naseem Shah, Virendra Sharma, Barry Sheerman, Gavin Shuker, Andrew Slaughter, Ruth Smeeth, Andrew Smith, Angela Smith, Jeff Smith, Nick Smith, Owen Smith, Karin Smyth, John Spellar, Keir Starmer, Wes Streeting, Gisela Stuart, Mark Tami, Gareth Thomas, Nick Thomas-Symonds, Emily Thornberry, Stephen Timms, Jon Trickett, Anna Turley, Karl Turner, Derek Twigg, Stephen Twigg, Chuka Umunna, Keith Vaz, Valerie Vaz, Holly Walker-Lynch, Tom Watson, Catherine West, Alan Whitehead, Phil Wilson, Rosie Winterton, John Woodcock.

Diary of a Corbyn foot soldier (No 4)

by Michael Murray

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A dictionary definition of “foot soldier...a dedicated low level follower...”

In this month’s Diary :

"Are you, or, have you ever been..."

The Labour Party Rule Book and its part in the present internal party conflict.

It’s been a funny old summer for the Labour Party foot soldier. After what feels like an endless period of campaigning around by-elections, London Mayoral elections and the EU Referendum all local Labour Party activity was suspended almost immediately after the EU Referendum and the subsequent launch of the coup to oust Jeremy Corbyn. Even our own planned Branch end of Summer BBQ was cancelled, on orders from Head Office, via our Ward Secretary. This was ordained on the grounds that Branch life as usual might lead to all sorts of inter-personal hassle between party members. That’s hard to imagine in our neck of the woods, but we’ve been stuck with that ruling, as has the rest of the country, though I hear many local parties ignored it and carried on as per usual. Here in Hackney North, of course, we have a mayoral election in the offing and, as incoming new Ward Organiser (yes, but I’m still a foot soldier, albeit with a stripe) without the structure of regular Branch meetings the job is that bit harder. And, of course, the seasonal holiday comings and goings compound the reduced Branch member contact.

The leadership election campaign has filled the vacuum, to some extent – especially for supporters of Jeremy Corbyn. And Momentum, here in Hackney, has organized events for members, pro-Corbyn ones anyway, to come together to discuss politics and local, single issue, campaigns via an exciting new educational initiative which is experimenting with participative, shared learning methods and learning objectives. As a foot soldier (and former Trade Union Education Officer) I applaud and support Momentum’s work, but I’d like to see that energy and people power

channelled through the Labour Party’s own Branch/Constituency structure. Yes, I forgot Branches/constituencies won’t be meeting until October next at the earliest, if then.... Silly me.

On the Corbyn front, there was encouraging news a couple of days ago. YouGov published the results of a poll of a cross-section of party members which showed Jeremy comfortably ahead of his opponent, Owen Smith, in every demographic. (see yougov.co.uk). I wish I could let myself believe that he can win with a workable margin, never mind the margin indicated in the poll. And if these poll results turn out to be even half accurate - and all that after 130,000 of mostly Corbyn supporters have been disenfranchised - what kind of a party are we going to be in at the end of the election process? What kind of political battles are we going to be in – more to the point?

That Corbyn is comfortably ahead is not being disputed, surprisingly, in the main stream media, even though YouGov in its discussion of the poll method warns that the population polled is small and future voting intentions forecasts not wholly reliable for a number of stated reasons. Among other things, YouGov comment on the implications of the leadership election outcome.

It says: “Should Corbyn’s opponents split off from the party 18% would follow them to their new party. Should Corbyn and his supporters split off 32% would follow them to their new party.” To corroborate this result, which goes against Smith’s presumption that he is the natural choice for the leadership of the party, because of Corbyn’s “unelectability,” almost two thirds of Jeremy’s supporters believed in him as a potential Prime Minister, while only around a third of Smith’s supporters envisaged him as PM.

I’d got to this point in my diary entry, when, one third through my article, the phone rang – and I learned that two fellow members of my own local little ward Branch had been contacted, one was being expelled and the other suspended “for two years.”

The Purge, as it’s being called in the main stream media, has hit our local party. Now I’m beginning to suspect an ulterior purpose in the decision arbitrarily taken by the NEC to close down branch activity around the country until after the Leadership elections. Though done in the name of calming all the alleged antagonisms that could break out if people were permitted to congregate together, it seems to have another motive.

It has the appearance of being a classic “psyops” exercise generating and maintaining a sense of organizational “crisis” aimed at keeping people in line and permitting individual members targeted for expulsion, suspension – or disenfranchisement in the leadership election - to be picked off, one by one, without recourse to their local Branch. And that makes me angry. How dare they, I say to myself? More to the point though, is the question: how *can* they? And the answer is in the instrument that is the “Labour Rule Book.” In the remainder of this entry I will suggest to you, fellow Labour comrades, how the current rule book is not fit for purpose in our party, going forward. With its cumbersome structure of NEC/NCC/Compliance Unit and other elements it gives Franz Kafka a run for his money. Kafka, you ask?

Franz Kafka’s novel, “*The Trial*,” one of his many novels about procedural unfairness used in power relations, was dramatized at the Young Vic theatre, London, last year. It’s about a management-level employee subjected to a surreal, arbitrary trial, based on an unfathomable process, or procedure, on a non-specific charge with non-specified punishment. A predicament now widely known as “*Kafkaesque*.” Yes, I am angry. And, yes, I know, in this current “psyoptic” atmosphere deliberately created in the party it could get me into trouble.

But do I, as Jeremy is wont to say, walk by on the other side of the street and ignore my Branch comrades’ predicament? Or do I offer them whatever support and advice (if they ask me for it) I can? Let’s put this “existential” question in context. Clause IV of the

Labour Rule Book 2016 reads:

Aims and values

The Labour Party is a democratic socialist Party. It believes that by the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone, so as to create for each of us the means to realise our true potential and for all of us a community in which power, wealth and opportunity are in the hands of the many not the few; where the rights we enjoy reflect the duties we owe and where we live together freely, in a spirit of solidarity, tolerance and respect. (my emphasis, MJM)

I don't believe the Labour Rule Book's disciplinary procedure facilitates and promotes solidarity, tolerance and respect, or **democratic** socialism. Chapter 6 of the Rule Book contains the following:

Paragraph 2:

When a person applies for re-admission to the Party following an expulsion by the NCC on whatever basis or by automatic exclusion under Chapter 2 4.A above of the membership rules, the application shall be submitted to the NEC for consideration and decision. **Such applications shall not normally be considered by the NEC until a minimum of five years has elapsed.**

Paragraph 2 continues:

The decision of the NEC shall be binding on the individual concerned and on the CLP relevant to the application.

Clause X is the final catch-all which explains the recent arbitrary rule-making and tactical interpretation which has upset people so much – mainly due to their ignorance of such a body of rules as the Labour Rule Book 2016. Note the date and think for yourselves of its significance for a moment.

Clause X

“For the avoidance of any doubt any dispute as to the meaning, interpretation and general application of the constitution, standing orders and rules of the party ... shall be referred to the NEC for determination and the decision of the NEC (National Executive Committee) shall be final and conclusive for all purposes.”

(In parenthesis: can you see now why the NEC won its famous appeal, thereby disenfranchising 130,000 people? And why the Rules must be changed ?)

In the course of my trade union work, I developed a great attachment to what are called “*The Principles of Natural*

justice.”

So let me explain in general terms, what is meant by “Natural Justice,” and how it is a relevant set of values to be internalized by all aspiring democratic socialists. I will explain it, as I, a lay man – a mere foot soldier - understands it without making specific reference to recent Labour Party cases, or naming names though I am bearing them in mind as I select the most relevant Principles. But let me point out: ***there is not one of the dozen or so Natural Justice Principles on the list below that does not have a bearing on some aspect of all the cases we have heard and read about – and the cases that have just occurred in my own Branch.***

I'll leave it to the reader to make the connection, as I'm not legally qualified to be more prescriptive. And I'll leave it to the reader to apply these principles to cases they are aware of - as well as making your own judgement on the Labour Rule Book, as presently drawn up - and my personal opinion that it is not fit for purpose in a party claiming to be democratic socialist.

Principles of Natural Justice applied to Disciplinary issues:

(Note, though starting from my knowledge of Natural Justice applied to employing organizations, I've selected those principles of natural justice relevant to the Party-Member relationship where loss of earnings/conditions are not necessarily involved and where, instead, the potential damage to a member is reputational - and, supremely important to most active members – **denial of democratic rights to participate in the Party during a period of suspension**, such as that highlighted by the current leadership election.)

The Principles summarised:

(i) To have clearly understood and regularly updated rules/standards/procedures in place (in compliance with the law, and best practice).

(II) Rules/standards/procedures must be **consistent**, which means:

***Made known to all**

***Applied equally to all**

***Applied consistently over time**

(III) Accord people the right to **hear in full** complaints made against them **(and by whom)**

***Having the procedure, time frame and possible disciplinary outcomes clarified**

***Given reasonable time to prepare a response**

***Access to all relevant information. The Data Protection Act further enforces this right in both employing organisations and voluntary ones, like the Labour Party.**

***Accord people the right to answer charges (with appropriate representation, including legal)**

(IV) Management/the organisation must carry out a full investigation **before taking any action** (as far as is “reasonably practicable,” the interpretation of which must not be abused.)

(V) **Fair and proportionate penalty.** i.e. What penalty would the “reasonable employer” (or, in the present context “reasonable organisation”) sanction? That is the penalty should fit the crime, in other words.

(VI) A “reasonable” employer or organisation would explore all avenues other than dismissal/expulsion, which ought to be a last resort – and, again, be subject to appeal.

(VII) The emphasis ought to be on **improvement** in performance, behaviour or attitudes, not **sanctions** and **punishment**. In “best practice” employments and organisations it is.

(VI) **Appeal mechanism:** both **internal** to the organisation and **external** “third parties” and legal redress through Tribunals or Courts, and the **accused informed about them and how to access them.**

***Designated senior manager(s)/ senior officials as final internal appeal stage**

***These must not be involved in earlier stages of investigation/hearing**

(V) **A reasonable set time frame for processing cases and appeals:** “Justice delayed is justice denied.”

This list of The Principles of Natural Justice was prepared in my time as a trade union official and trainer for use in management-employee relationships. A Labour Party activist argued in the Guardian that the Labour Rule Book is not a binding contract but a pragmatic 87 page guide for arranging and facilitating party business. (*Guardian*, 27 July, 2016)

It is, and will be, what the members decide it ought to be; that's a big part of the “democratic” in democratic socialism. The members choice: begin the process for formulating a fair and just set of disciplinary rules for a democratic socialist organization, or see the Labour Rule Book as a continuing part of the problem.

Parliament Notes



Dick Barry

On 18 July the House of Commons debated a Government motion on the UK's nuclear deterrent. It was clearly designed to further expose and undermine the Corbyn led Labour Party. The motion (see below) was carried by 472 votes to 117.

Jeremy Corbyn's speech is reproduced as well as a bizarre contribution from Labour's Mike Gapes, a critic of Jeremy Corbyn and a former active member of CND.

Resolved, That this House supports the Government's assessment in the 2015 National Security Strategy and Strategic Defence and Security Review that the UK's independent minimum credible nuclear deterrent, based on a Continuous at Sea Deterrence posture, will remain essential to the UK's security today as it has for over 60 years, and for as long as the global security situation demands, to deter the most extreme threats to the UK's national security and way of life and that of the UK's allies; supports the decision to take the necessary steps required to maintain the current posture by replacing the current Vanguard Class submarines with four Successor submarines; recognises the importance of this programme to the UK's defence industrial base and in supporting thousands of highly skilled engineering jobs; notes that the Government will continue to provide annual reports to Parliament on the programme; recognises that the UK remains committed to reducing its overall nuclear weapon stockpile by the mid-2020s; and supports the Government's commitment to continue work towards a safer and more stable world, pressing for key steps towards multilateral disarmament.

Jeremy Corbyn (Islington North) (Lab) May I start by welcoming the right hon. Member for Maidenhead (Mrs May) and congratulating her on her appointment as Prime Minister? I wish her well in that position, and I am glad that her election was quick and short.

I commend the remarks the Prime

Minister made about the horrific events in Nice. What happened was absolutely horrific: the innocent people who lost their lives. One hopes it will not be repeated elsewhere. I was pleased she mentioned the situation in Turkey, and I support her call for calm and restraint on all sides in Turkey. After the attempted coup, I called friends in Istanbul and Ankara and asked what was going on. The older ones felt it was like a repeat of the 1980 coup and were horrified that bombs were falling close to the Turkish Parliament. Can we please not return to a Europe of military coups and dictatorships? I endorse the Prime Minister's comments in that respect, and I pay tribute to the Foreign Office staff who helped British citizens caught up in the recent events in France and Turkey.

The motion today is one of enormous importance to this country and indeed the wider world. There is nothing particularly new in it—the principle of nuclear weapons was debated in 2007—but this is an opportunity to scrutinise the Government. The funds involved in Trident renewal are massive. We must also consider the complex moral and strategic issues of our country possessing weapons of mass destruction. There is also the question of its utility. Do these weapons of mass destruction—for that is what they are—act as a deterrent to the threats we face, and is that deterrent credible?

The motion says nothing about the ever-ballooning costs. In 2006, the MOD estimated that construction costs would be £20 billion, but by last year that had risen by 50% to £31 billion, with another £10 billion added as a contingency fund. The very respected hon. Member for Reigate (Crispin Blunt) has estimated the cost at £167 billion, though it is understood that delays might have since added to those credible figures—I have seen estimates as high as over £200 billion for the replacement and the running costs.

James Cartledge (South Suffolk)

(Con):

Is not the true cost the one we remember every Remembrance Sunday—the millions of lives we lost in two world wars? Would the right hon. Gentleman care to estimate the millions of lives that would have been lost in the third conventional war that was avoided before 1989 because of the nuclear deterrent?

Jeremy Corbyn:

We all remember, on Remembrance Sunday and at other times, those who lost their lives. That is the price of war. My question is: does our possession of nuclear weapons make us and the world more secure? [Hon. Members: “Yes!”] Of course, there is a debate about that, and that is what a democratic Parliament does—it debates the issues. I am putting forward a point of view. The hon. Gentleman might not agree with it, but I am sure he will listen with great respect, as he always does.

Ian Paisley:

In the past, the Labour leader's solution to a domestic security threat was to parley with the Provisional IRA. What would his tactics be in dealing with a threat to all the peoples of this nation?

Jeremy Corbyn:

Towards the end of her speech, the Prime Minister mentioned the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and multilateral disarmament. I was interested in that. Surely we should start from the basis that we want, and are determined to bring about, a nuclear-free world. Six-party talks are going on with North Korea. China is a major economic provider to North Korea. I would have thought that the relationship with China and North Korea was the key to finding a way forward.

James Berry (Kingston and Surbiton) (Con):

How would the right hon. Gentleman persuade my thousands of Korean constituents that it is a good idea to disarm unilaterally while their families and friends living in our ally

South Korea face a constant nuclear threat from a belligerent regime over their northern border?

Jeremy Corbyn:

I, too, have Korean constituents, as do many others, and we welcome their work and participation in our society. I was making the point that the six-party talks are an important way forward in bringing about a peace treaty on the Korean peninsula, which is surely in everybody's interests. It will not be easy—I fully understand that—but nevertheless it is something we should be trying to do.

I would be grateful if the Prime Minister, or the Defence Secretary when he replies, could let us know the Government's estimate of the total lifetime cost of what we are being asked to endorse today.

It is hardly surprising that in May 2009, an intense debate went on in the shadow Cabinet about going for a less expensive upgrade by converting to air-launched missiles. The right hon. Member for Mid Sussex (Sir Nicholas Soames) said at the time that "the arguments have not yet been had in public in nearly an adequate enough way to warrant the spending of this nation's treasure on the scale that will be required."—[Official Report, 20 April 2009; Vol. 491, c. 84.]

Seven years later, we are perhaps in the same situation.

The motion proposes an open-ended commitment to maintain Britain's current nuclear capability for as long as the global security situation demands. We on the Opposition Benches, despite our differences on some issues, have always argued for the aim of a nuclear-free world. We might differ on how to achieve it, but we are united in our commitment to that end.

In 2007, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South (Margaret Beckett) embarked on a meaningful attempt to build consensus for multilateral disarmament. Will the Government address where these successor submarines are going to be based? The people of Scotland have rejected Trident's being based in Faslane naval base on the Clyde—the SNP Government are opposed to it, as is the Scottish Labour party.

We are debating not a nuclear deterrent but our continued possession of weapons of mass destruction. We are discussing eight missiles and 40 warheads, with each warhead believed to be eight times as powerful as the atomic bomb that killed 140,000 people in Hiroshima

in 1945. We are talking about 40 warheads, each one with a capacity to kill more than 1 million people.

What, then, is the threat that we face that will be deterred by the death of more than 1 million people? It is not the threat from so-called Islamic State, with its poisonous death-cult that glories in killing as many people as possible, as we have seen brutally from Syria to east Africa and from France to Turkey. It has not deterred our allies Saudi Arabia from committing dreadful acts in Yemen. It did not stop Saddam Hussein's atrocities in the 1980s or the invasion of Kuwait in 1990. It did not deter the war crimes in the Balkans in the 1990s, nor the genocide in Rwanda. I make it clear today that I would not take a decision that killed millions of innocent people. I do not believe that the threat of mass murder is a legitimate way to go about dealing with international relations.

Mr Jamie Reed (Copeland) (Lab):

As Leader of the Opposition, my right hon. Friend will be privy to briefings from the National Security Council. Will he explain when he last sought and received such a briefing and what is his assessment of the new Russian military nuclear protocols that permit first strike using nuclear weapons and that say that they can be used to de-escalate conventional military conflicts?

Jeremy Corbyn:

Britain, too, currently retains the right to first strike, so I would have thought that the best way forward would be to develop the nuclear non-proliferation treaty into a no first strike situation. That would be a good way forward. I respect my hon. Friend's wish to live in a nuclear-free world. I know he believes that very strongly.

I think we should take our commitments under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty very seriously. In 1968, the Labour Government led by Harold Wilson inaugurated and signed the non-proliferation treaty. In 2007, the then Foreign Secretary, my right hon. Friend the Member for Derby South rightly said that "we must strengthen the NPT in all its aspects" and referred to the judgment made 40 years ago "that the eventual abolition of nuclear weapons was in all of our interests."

The then Labour Government committed to reduce our stocks of operationally available warheads by a further 20%. I congratulate our Government on doing that. Indeed, I attended an NPT review conference when those congratulations were spoken. Can the Government say

what the Labour Foreign Secretary said in 2007 when she said that her "commitment to the vision of a world free of nuclear weapons is undimmed"?

Is this Government's vision of a nuclear-free world undimmed? My right hon. Friend also spoke as Foreign Secretary of the "international community's clear commitment to a Middle East Nuclear Weapons Free Zone".

Indeed, at the last two nuclear non-proliferation treaty five-yearly review conferences there was unanimous support for a weapons of mass destruction-free zone across the middle east, which is surely something that we can sign up to and support. I look forward to the Defence Secretary's support for that position when he responds to the debate.

Neil Coyle (Bermondsey and Old Southwark) (Lab):

My right hon. Friend is speaking about previous party policy. At the shadow Cabinet meeting last Tuesday, it was agreed that current party policy would be conveyed by Front Benchers. When will we hear it?

Jeremy Corbyn:

I thank my hon. Friend for his view. As he well knows, the party decided that it wanted to support the retention of nuclear weapons. We also decided that we would have a policy review, which is currently being undertaken by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich South (Clive Lewis).

My hon. Friend the Member for Bermondsey and Old Southwark (Neil Coyle) is as well aware as I am of the existing policy. He is also as well aware as I am of the views on nuclear weapons that I expressed very clearly at the time of the leadership election last year, hence the fact that Labour Members will have a free vote this evening.

Other countries have made serious efforts to bring about nuclear disarmament within the terms of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty. South Africa abandoned all its nuclear programmes after the end of apartheid, and thus brought about a nuclear weapons-free zone throughout the continent. After negotiation, Libya ended all research on nuclear weapons. At the end of the cold war, Ukraine gave up its nuclear weapons, although they were under the control of the former Soviet Union and, latterly, of Russia. Kazakhstan did the same, which helped to bring about a central Asia nuclear weapons-free zone, and in Latin America, Argentina and Brazil both gave up their nuclear programmes.

I commend the Government, and other Governments around the world who negotiated with Iran, seriously, with great patience and at great length. That helped to encourage Iran to give up its nuclear programme, and I think we should pay tribute to President Obama for his achievements in that regard.

The former Conservative Defence Secretary Michael Portillo said: “To say we need nuclear weapons in this situation would imply that Germany and Italy are trembling in their boots because they don’t have a nuclear deterrent, which I think is clearly not the case.” Is it not time for us to step up to the plate and promote—rapidly—nuclear disarmament?

Mr Kevan Jones:

Like me, my right hon. Friend stood in May 2015 on the basis of a party policy which had been agreed at our conference, through our mechanisms in the party, and which supported the renewal of our continuous at-sea deterrent. He now has a shadow Front Bench and a shadow Cabinet in his own image, who, I understand, agreed last week to present that policy from the Front Bench. Is he going to do it, or will it be done by the Member who winds up the debate?

Jeremy Corbyn:

My hon. Friend is well aware of what the policy was. He is also well aware that a policy review is being undertaken, and he is also well aware of the case that I am making for nuclear disarmament.

Caroline Lucas:

As the right hon. Gentleman will know, a multilateral process is currently taking place at the United Nations. More than 130 countries are negotiating, in good faith, for a treaty to ban nuclear weapons. Does the right hon. Gentleman agree that the Government’s refusal even to attend, let alone take part in, that process raises serious questions about their commitment to a world without nuclear weapons?

Jeremy Corbyn:

I think it is a great shame that the Government do not attend those negotiations, and I wish they would. I thank them for attending the 2014 conference on the humanitarian effects of war, and I thank them for their participation in the non-proliferation treaty, but I think they should go and support the idea of a worldwide ban on nuclear weapons. No one in the House actually wants nuclear weapons. The debate is about how one gets rid of them, and the way in which one does it.

There are questions, too, about the operational utility of nuclear armed submarines. [Interruption.] I ask the Prime Minister again—or perhaps the Secretary of State for Defence can answer this question in his response—what assessment the Government have made of the impact of

underwater drones, the surveillance of wave patterns and other advanced detection techniques that could make the submarine technology—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker:

Order. Mr Shelbrooke, I want you to aspire to the apogee of statesmanship, but shrieking from a sedentary position, despite your magnificent suit, is not the way to achieve it. Calm yourself, man; I am trying to help you, even if you don’t know it.

Jeremy Corbyn:

Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Can the Prime Minister confirm whether the UK will back the proposed nuclear weapons ban treaty, which I understand will be put before the UN General Assembly in September—probably before we return to the House after the summer recess? That is an important point.

Alberto Costa (South Leicestershire) (Con):

We can all agree that nuclear weapons are truly the most repugnant weapons that have ever been invented by man, but the key is the word “invented”; we cannot disinvent them, but we can control them, and that is what this is all about—controlling nuclear weapons.

Jeremy Corbyn:

If this is all about controlling them, perhaps we should think for a moment about the obligations we have signed up to as a nation by signing the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, article VI of which says that the declared nuclear weapons states—of which we are one—must take steps towards disarmament, and others must not acquire nuclear weapons. It has not been easy, but the NPT has helped to reduce the level of nuclear weapons around the world.

Mr Angus Brendan MacNeil (Na h-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP):

I am stunned to hear the argument that has just been made from the Tory Benches that we cannot disinvent nuclear weapons. That argument could be employed for chemical and biological weapons.

Jeremy Corbyn:

The hon. Gentleman is absolutely right. We have achieved the chemical weapons convention, a ban on cluster weapons and other things around the world through serious long-term negotiation.

Angela Smith:

My right hon. Friend is fond of telling us all that the party conference is sovereign when it comes to party policy. Last year the party conference voted overwhelmingly in favour of maintaining the nuclear deterrent, so why are we not hearing a defence of the Government’s motion?

Jeremy Corbyn:

Party policy is also to review our policies. That is why we have reviews.

We also have to look at the issues of

employment and investment. We need Government intervention through a defence diversification agency, as we had under the previous Labour Government, to support industries that have become over-reliant on defence contracts and wish to move into other contracts and other work.

The Prime Minister mentioned the Unite policy conference last week, which I attended. Unite, like other unions, has members working in all sectors of high-tech manufacturing, including the defence sector. That, of course, includes the development of both the submarines and the warheads and nuclear reactors that go into them. Unite’s policy conference endorsed its previous position of opposing Trident but wanting a Government who will put in place a proper diversification agency. The union has been thinking these things through and wants to maintain the highly skilled jobs in the sector.

Our defence review is being undertaken by my hon. Friend the Member for Norwich South. I also pay tribute to my hon. Friend the Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) for her excellent work on the review. [Interruption.] Whatever people’s views—

Caroline Flint rose—

Jeremy Corbyn:

Alright, I will give way—[Interruption.]

Mr Speaker:

Order. I think the right hon. Gentleman has signalled an intention to take an intervention, but before he does—[Interruption.] Order. I just make the point that there is a lot of noise, but at the last reckoning—[Interruption.] Order. I will tell the hon. Member for Bolsover (Mr Skinner) what the position is, and he will take it whether he likes it or not. Fifty-three Members wish to speak in this debate, and I want to accommodate them. I ask Members to take account of that to help each other.

Caroline Flint:

Under the last Labour Government, because of our stand on supporting non-proliferation, as a nuclear deterrent country we were able to influence a large reduction in the number of nuclear warheads around the world. Does my right hon. Friend really think that if we abandoned our position as one of the countries that holds nuclear weapons, we would have as much influence without them as with them?

Jeremy Corbyn:

We did indeed help to reduce the number of nuclear warheads. Indeed, I attended a number of conferences where there were British Government representatives, and the point was made that the number of UK warheads had been reduced and other countries had been encouraged to do the same. I talked about

the nuclear weapons-free zones that had been achieved around the world, which are a good thing. However, there is now a step change, because we are considering saying that we are prepared to spend a very large sum on the development of a new generation of nuclear weapons. I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to article VI of the NPT—I am sure she is aware of it—which requires us to “take steps towards disarmament”. That is what it actually says.

In case it is not obvious to the House, let me say that I will be voting against the motion tonight. I am sure that will be an enormous surprise to the whole House. I will do that because of my own views and because of the way—

Mr Jamie Reed:

On a point of order, Mr Speaker.

Mr Speaker:

I apologise for having to interrupt the right hon. Gentleman, but we have a point of order.

Mr Reed:

I seek your guidance, Mr Speaker, on the accuracy of the language used by the Leader of the Opposition. We are not voting tonight on new nuclear warheads; we are voting simply on the submarines used to deploy those missiles. That is fundamentally different from new missiles.

Mr Speaker:

The answer to the hon. Gentleman is that it is up to each right hon. and hon. Member to read the motion, interpret it as he or she thinks fit, and make a judgment accordingly. It is not a matter for the Chair.

Jeremy Corbyn:

The issue of course is the submarines, but it is also the new weapons that will have to go into those submarines and when they have been built—if they are built.

We should pause for a moment to think about the indiscriminate nature of what nuclear weapons do and the catastrophic effects of their use anywhere. As I said, I have attended NPT conferences and preparatory conferences at various times over many years, with representatives of all parties in the House. I was very pleased when the coalition Government finally, if slightly reluctantly, accepted the invitation to take part in the humanitarian effects of war conference in Vienna in 2014. Anyone who attended that conference and heard from British nuclear test veterans, Pacific islanders or civilians in Russia or the United States who have suffered the effects of nuclear explosions cannot be totally dispassionate about the effects of the use of nuclear weapons. A nuclear weapon is an indiscriminate weapon of mass destruction.

Many colleagues throughout the House will vote for weapons tonight because they believe they serve a useful military purpose. But to those who believe in multilateral disarmament, I ask this: is this not an unwise motion from the Government, giving no answers on costs and no answers on disarmament? For those of us who believe in aiming for a nuclear-free world, and for those who are deeply concerned about the spiralling costs, this motion has huge questions to answer, and they have failed to be addressed in this debate. If we want a nuclear weapons-free world, this is an opportunity to start down that road and try to bring others with us, as has been achieved to some extent over the past few decades. Surely we should make that effort rather than go down the road the Government are suggesting for us this evening.

Mike Gapes (Ilford South) (Lab/Co-op):

My hon. Friends the Members for Barrow and Furness (John Woodcock) and for Chesterfield (Toby Perkins) referred to their mothers, who were at Greenham Common. So was I. I did not meet their mothers, or at least not as far as I am aware, but there were tens of thousands of us who protested against nuclear weapons and the decision on the Cruise missiles, the Pershings and the SS20s. CND had hundreds of thousands on demonstrations. At that time many people believed that we faced the possible advent of a nuclear war. There was real fear in society.

The leader of the Labour party, Michael Foot, has been compared in some debates with our current leader. I worked for and with Michael Foot. He was a great patriotic anti-Fascist. He stood up to the generals—the junta that took over the Falkland Islands—and he spoke in this House on a Saturday morning and made the case for why we had to liberate the Falklands from Fascism. I believe that Michael Foot tried his very best to unite the Labour party, even though he had divisions in his shadow Cabinet. He would not have taken the position that is being taken today by the right hon. Member for Islington North (Jeremy Corbyn).

Michael Foot strove for international agreement and he worked for disarmament, but I and many others who were parliamentary candidates in 1983 know that we went into that election with what became known as “the longest suicide note in history”. In Ilford North where I was the candidate, the Labour vote almost halved and I only just kept second place from going to the new Social Democratic party. The Conservatives were rampant.

Afterwards, I was working in the party's headquarters on the defence policy. We tried to square the circle by producing a policy document called “Defence and Security for Britain”. It had a Union Jack on the cover. We emphasised strong conventional defence. We called for a defence diversification agency, and we thought that that would be sufficient under Neil Kinnock, our leader, to do much better in 1987. We did do better, but defence policy was still a factor in our losing in 1987. So we had a policy review, which included visiting Moscow, which we did in 1989. Gorbachev was talking about a nuclear-free world by 2000. In that context the Labour party shifted its policy towards one of independent steps, but within a global multilateral framework.

That policy was denounced by the historian E. P. Thompson. I do not have time today to elaborate on this, but I will write about it. In 1989 he denounced the Labour party for going back on its unilateralist position. I wrote in the CND magazine, “What is this unilateralism? Is it a tactic to get something better or is it a quasi-religious totem for left-wing atheists?” I stand by that description of some of the views that we hear today. It has become a quasi-religious totem, rather than a practical means to take measures that bring about real and profound international change. That is why I will be voting for the Government's motion this evening.

Of the 117 MPs who voted against the motion there were 54 SNP members, 48 Labour, 3 Plaid Cymru, 3 SDLP, 1 Green (Caroline Lucas), and 1 Conservative (Crispin Blunt).

The 48 Labour were: Diane Abbott, Graham Allen, Paul Blomfield, Nicholas Brown, Richard Burden, Richard Burgon, Dawn Butler, Ruth Cadbury, Ronnie Campbell, Sarah Champion, Ann Clwyd, Jeremy Corbyn, John Cryer, Paul Flynn, Vicky Foxcroft, Roger Godsiff, Helen Goodman, Margaret Greenwood, Nia Griffith, Louise Haigh, Fabian Hamilton, Carolyn Harris, Kate Hoey, Kelvin Hopkins, (Dr) Rupa Huq, Imran Hussain, David Lammy, Rebecca Long Bailey, Rachael Maskell, John McDonnell, (Sir) Alan Meale, Ian Murray, Lisa Nandy, Kate Osamor, Stephen Pound, Angela Rayner, Marie Rimmer, Naz Shah, Tulip Siddiq, Denis Skinner, Andrew Smith, Jeff Smith, Jo Stevens, Graham Stringer, Jon Trickett, Keith Vaz, Catherine West, Daniel Zeichner.

What Happened to the Parliamentary Labour Party?

by Eamon Dyas

Blair's legacy in the Parliamentary Labour Party

Nothing prepared the Labour Party for the election of Jeremy Corbyn as leader. It came as a complete shock not only to the party establishment but to the political culture to which the party had become acclimatised. His appearance on the ballot paper was an aberration only made possible by the play-politics which had come to dominate the way the party did business. Twelve of those among the Parliamentary Labour Party who proposed him did so merely to enable him to reach the required nomination threshold without which he was not eligible to stand. They held no brief for his policies or belief in his prospects of winning. As they admitted at the time, they proposed him as leader just to ensure that the procedure had the appearance of a contest. In so doing they were acting true to their belief that politics was first and foremost all about appearance, all about the show – something that the party, in all its years under Blair as its ringmaster, had managed to become.

Those who nominated Corbyn in defiance of their belief did so as a matter of duty – a duty to the smoke and mirrors of the performance. Corbyn was to be cast in the role of the honourable loser, the impractical idealist put there to act as a foil for the more pragmatic realism represented by the other three candidates. While he might offer principles that elevated the people above the dominance of the market everyone knew the world was now a place where the power of the corporations had long since buried such possibilities and what the modern world demanded was a continuation of the moderation, accommodation and compromise that had become the hallmark of New Labour. While he spoke a language that was based on humanity and common decency – something that might resonate on the streets – the others spoke a language that could be understood in the real power centres of the land – the corporate boardrooms and media editorial centres. Corbyn's old-world socialistic views had been left behind by the advance of the sociologically derived perspectives that had been blended

with the showmanship of Blair and had continued to fill the vacuum of his departure during the Brown and Miliband years. Consequently, the Labour Westminster elite knew in their bones that if they could not be certain of the winner they could at least know that it would not be Corbyn.

And even if the ordinary Labour member's sense of reality faltered the mathematics of the election procedure was stacked against Corbyn. Although the ballot paper had four candidates the script said that the real contest was between Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper, and Liz Kendall. In reality Corbyn was pitched against a coalition of the other three candidates within which the vast majority of their second preference votes would be distributed in the event of nobody getting more than 50% in the first round. In that situation the only way that Corbyn could possibly win would be by gaining over 50% of the first-preference votes – something that was so outrageous that it wasn't even considered a remote possibility.

Then the unthinkable happened. As the day of the election drew closer opinion polls were showing that Corbyn's chances of winning were not as remote as his opponents had originally envisaged. At this point we had interventions from most of the Mandarins from New Labour. Alongside Tony Blair, people like Gordon Brown, Alistair Campbell, David Miliband and Jack Straw rushed to the media to warn the membership that Corbyn's election would be a disaster for the party. Yet, despite this and despite an incessant and concerted anti-Corbyn media campaign Corbyn won with nearly 60% of the vote on the first ballot. *The Guardian* headline on 12 September 2015 reluctantly read "Labour leadership: Jeremy Corbyn elected with huge mandate".

The impact on Westminster politics was seismic and Corbyn's opponents were at a loss to know how to respond. They could not deny the mandate that Corbyn had just received and yet they felt him an alien in their midst. Although united in their anti-Corbyn instincts the majority of Parliamentary MPs did not have access to a political route which would have enabled them to traverse the distance between the

world they knew and had come to rely on and the reality of what had actually happened. The thing that would have made this possible was something that either they never knew, or, if had known, they had long since forgotten. They did not understand politics. What they understood as politics was nothing more than a mixture of what was left over of Blairite showmanship, outlooks that conceived the world in terms of sociological sensibilities, and well-trod strategies of public relations determined by personal ambition.

Here, at last, for all to see, was the real legacy of Tony Blair. Although nobody knew it at the time, the commanding achievement of Tony Blair was his success in making the parliamentary Labour Party a politics-free zone. His policies were not constructed around any real guiding principles but rather a blind groping towards that political no-mans-land called the middle ground. After becoming leader he had set his sights on this landmark and in his subsequent journey across the intervening terrain he was compelled to jettison any political baggage which might slow him down. But the middle ground was a mirage and the closer it seemed to get the further it withdrew until pretty soon the parliamentary party had discarded all meaningful politics that had previously defined it. No doubt the parliamentary party never set out to do this but it was a price enough of them felt was worth paying if it succeeded in bringing the party to power.

Measured in such terms Tony Blair was a success for the Labour Party but it was he who had gained the reins of power and not the party. The party in the meantime had been reduced to a hollowed out hulk that had lost any idea of itself and what it was supposed to represent. Under Blair, politics in the party had been replaced by issues and issues were chosen or discarded not on the basis of how they might fit into a wider strategy for social change but rather on how they may or may not contribute to easing the path to power. Issues like protecting the mutual friendly societies in order to provide an alternative to conventional for-profit banking were jettisoned early on because Blair instinctively

felt that depriving the members of building societies of the windfall that came with their privatisation would be a vote loser. Similarly with the issue of council house sales. Aware of the vote-winning track record of this policy for the Conservatives, rather than abandon it he in fact expanded it. Underneath all of this of course was an awareness of the power of big business and its capacity to do damage to Blair's ambitions in the event of its access to the market being thwarted. So even when there were votes in a particular issue, if that issue had the capacity to offend the free market ideologues, he backed off (as was the case regarding the issue of the re-nationalisation of the railways).

The example of decisions such as these, taken as they were on issues that still resonate as major ingredients in any politics that claims to have as its object real social change, show just how far the party had moved from any form of coherent politics. Blair could never view such issues for what they were in terms of a traditional Labour perspective - as the defining atoms which when bound together define the politics of the party. Blair was always fearful of the prospect of Labour's politics being defined by any series of issues or any combination of policies that rendered the result unchangeable. Viewing issues in such a fashion ran the risk of congealing into something that restricted the party's ability to evolve and move - something that was essential if it was to continue to have the ability to chase down and occupy the forever shifting middle ground. Far better to view issues as disparate things that had no relationship with each other. That way the party could constantly reinvent itself in the context of the prevailing needs of the moment.

But his way of viewing politics as a form of fashion is not conducive to its development but rather its abandonment. As far as the Parliamentary Labour Party was concerned the situation was compounded by the fact that Blair, in order to advance his project, made it his business very early on to loosen the ties of the Party with the trade unions. It was the trade union connection that had always kept the parliamentary party grounded. As long as they represented an alternative power base Labour in parliament

would have a route to the wider world outside the Westminster bubble and keep the issue of social change to the fore. Once that tie was loosened the Labour Party at Westminster became even more remote and with it any danger (as Blair saw it) of politics re-emerging within the Parliamentary Party (the trade unions finally showed their resentment at this treatment when they provided the defining factor in ensuring the election of Ed Miliband as leader in 2010). Of course the party also had to be provided with something that continued to give it a reason to exist - something that the members could view as the purpose behind the pursuit of power. Blair provided that in terms of preaching principles of "fairness", "tolerance", "opportunity", and "equality". But just as wars are made up of contending armies who believe that God is on their side and not on the side of the enemy such principles in politics are always also claimed by the opposition.

The Conservative Party was also claiming that similar principles underlaid its policies and in the absence of a coherent political philosophy it was impossible for anyone to know what, if anything, was the purpose of the Labour Party. Such a relationship with abstract principles is not what is required if the party in question makes any claim to represent the underdog and the oppressed. Principles such as these need to be interpreted in terms that genuinely challenge the status quo. Issues need to be taken up on that basis and policies made to cohere around such issues in a manner that provides a real alternative to the current way the world is organised. But for Blair such a thing was beyond his capacity to accept. For Blair the game was all about gaining power and retaining it at all costs, even if that cost was the loss of any capacity of the party to define itself politically. Nothing he did was advanced on the basis of providing any real alternative that offered the prospect of society being reconstructed but rather on the basis of how the existing arrangement could be tweaked in order to gain, or retain, the voter beyond the Labour heartlands.

The question of leadership.

Consequently, when the Labour Party was elected into government Blair's relationship with the country

and the party was similar to that of an enlightened despot. The only sense in which the relationship differed lay in the fact that, instead of policies being constructed on the basis of the whim of the despot they were constructed on the basis of what Blair identified as the middle ground. In such a situation the shifting middle ground was just as problematic as the whim of the despot. In both instances the relationship between despot and policies is one that is not conducive to the development of party politics.

Apolitical party, with a membership that cohered around a particular political perspective, was the last thing that Blair's project required. What Blair required in the role of enlightened despot was not a political party but an organisation capable and willing to implement his policies at any given time without establishing the credentials of such policies in terms of a defined political outlook. Unable to guarantee control of the wider party he could and did manage to exert control over the main prize, the Parliamentary Party. It was through the Parliamentary Party that he could ensure the compliance of the wider membership - a membership that in the final analysis remained susceptible to arguments mustered on the basis of Blair's promise of the party in government. Blair was very aware of the need to refashion the relationship of the Prime Minister with his cabinet for the cabinet plays an important role in establishing discipline among the ranks. The capacity of the Prime Minister to exert control over his or her parliamentary colleagues has always been dependent upon the power cabinet appointments provide to dispense rewards and issue punishments. Although in Blair's time the Parliamentary Labour Party retained the power of electing the shadow cabinet while in opposition (something that was abolished in 2011) it was the prerogative of the Prime Minister to make the actual appointments while in government and Blair used this power very skilfully.

This, in tandem with the fact that the wider party had been convinced that the main purpose of its existence was to retain power at all costs, meant that a fire blanket could be thrown over any spark of dissenting politics that might emerge within the parliamentary party. Such was the influence he

held over the cabinet that the peculiar talents of such diverse individuals as David Blunkett, John Prescott and Clare Short, rarely felt the need to offer dissent but rather they became the enthusiastic advocates of Blair's way of doing things. An example of how effective Blair's methods were at stifling actual politics was illustrated in the case of Clare Short. In early March 2003, she threatened to resign at the prospect of Blair taking the country to war in Iraq, only to announce just over a week later, in what must be one of the most dramatic and inexplicable *volte faces* in modern politics, that not only would she remain in the cabinet but vote in support Blair's resolution for war in the House of Commons! Such was the level of personal and organisational control that Blair exerted over his cabinet. It was only in the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq that Blair's power began to wane. By 2005 the implications of that decision was beginning to be felt. On 28 April 2005 the BBC's Political Correspondent, Nick Assinder, observed:

"It is precisely Tony Blair's allegedly presidential style of government and leadership - previously used to Labour's advantage on campaigns - that is now being played down, even abandoned. Where he was once seen as a guaranteed vote winner for Labour he is now seen by many as a liability."

It wasn't so much that Blair had committed Britain to an illegal invasion that bestirred the majority of the parliamentary party at the time, it was more that the decision had become a vote loser. If, as had been the case with Margaret Thatcher and the invasion of the Falklands, the thing had turned out to be a vote winner (as Blair no doubt thought it would) there is little likelihood that there would have been such a rounding on him as began in 2005 and which led to his resignation in 2007.

But Blair remains the only Labour leader, since Harold Wilson in 1974, who has been successful with the electorate. That is an awesome fact and one that continues to exert an influence on the parliamentary party and provides the only model of success for many, if not the majority, of them. With the exceptions of Gerald Kaufman and Dennis Skinner, no serving member of the Parliamentary Party has known any other template for success. So, even

though the Chilcot Inquiry found that Blair's autocratic style of leadership was one of the central components in the disaster of Britain's involvement in Iraq, and despite the fact that the Blair style was abandoned under the leadership of Ed Miliband, that leadership style remains one that is associated with success for many in the Parliamentary Party and no doubt fashions their current perception on how a proper leader should behave.

The peculiarity of Corbyn.

When the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party considers Corbyn as an alien in their midst, they are right. Corbyn is indeed an alien force to that majority but he remains an alien because the Parliamentary Party has been gutted of politics by Blair's New Labour project. Corbyn came from a tradition within the party that was always a minority and had been left relatively undisturbed by the Blairite project. It was treated by Blair as a harmless eccentricity neither capable of gaining ground nor disrupting his grand plans. The problem was, when the general membership was given a voice under Miliband and that voice had long been crying out for a political alternative to the Tories, there was nothing in the party capable of providing it except the eccentricity of Labour's left wing. In the past it would have been instinctive for the party to generate a coherent right-social democratic response to meet any challenge.

In 1981, after the election of Michael Foot as leader, four leading right-wing members of the parliamentary party resigned to form the Social Democrats and were subsequently joined by 28 Labour MPs (most of whom were already in danger of de-selection). Nonetheless the vast majority stayed loyal and cohered around an alternative social democratic position epitomised by the likes of Denis Healey and Gerald Kaufman. There was no concerted campaign of rushing to the media to feed its ongoing anti-Foot campaign and no systematic leaking of damaging material. There was no such campaign because those within the party who opposed Foot believed that the party continued to have a role in opposition and did not want to damage that role by allying themselves with the hostile press. Instead, for the most part, they

held their own counsel and bided their time. The party, to all intents and purposes, continued to present the face of unity to the electorate and did so until the next election in 1983 three years after Foot had become its leader. The party overwhelmingly lost that election to the Conservatives but it retained its cohesion in the context of a virulent anti-Foot media campaign (the *Daily Mirror* being the only paper which supported the party) and despite, or maybe because of, the fact the ex-Labour Social Democrats had gone into an electoral alliance with the Liberal Party in the years leading up to the election.

The post-Blair Parliamentary Labour Party has been rendered incapable of such a response. Those who differ from Corbyn cannot formulate an organisational or political alternative and remain disunited and incoherent. Made up as the dissidents are, of "moderates", believers in "good causes," Zionists, sociologists, residual Blairites, and careerists, they have failed to produce any identifiable political position and because they view the party as an organisation which serves no purpose unless it holds the reins of government they retain no sense of responsibility for preserving unity in the party while in opposition. In their frustration all they can do is to flail about in a disjointed, irrational, and irresponsible manner - something that would not have happened if the individual MPs involved had not long since jettisoned any concept of themselves as part of a movement that has an important role to play even while in opposition.

The response to Corbyn's election

On 22 November 2015, *The Telegraph* published a piece by its Political Correspondent, Ben Riley-Smith, on Corbyn's first 10 weeks in office. It is revealing now to look back at that time and see just how hostile was the establishment and the media to his leadership from the outset. But hostility from these quarters was only to be expected. What is more revealing is to see how the dissidents within the parliamentary party coalesced in ways which provided the headlines on which the hostile media gorged. It was not just a matter of the media reporting on the dissension inside the

Parliamentary Party; the media was being actively recruited in the service of those dissidents. No longer capable of generating an honest debate inside the party because they lacked a coherent political position they resorted to providing the mud and smears which they knew the hostile media would lap up and regurgitate in ways which suited their agenda. They wanted rid of Corbyn. He was the spider in their hair that distracted them from looking good for the electorate. It has been said with justification that the majority of those who oppose Corbyn are not Blairite but that is beside the point. They are the product of an apolitical culture which has been created through decades of Blair's influence on the Parliamentary Labour Party and their rush to the media as an ally for changing the Labour leadership is testimony of his abiding influence. In such circumstances it is no surprise that the only tactic they can employ is the manipulation of the media. In that sense they remain Blairites in an era when Blair has gone out of fashion.

Within days of Corbyn's election some dissidents within the Parliamentary Labour Party were already briefing the press on the formation of Corbyn's first shadow cabinet – briefings that led *The Telegraph* to castigate the process as "chaotic" and describing Corbyn as "begging Labour MPs to serve in his defence team." Then into the second week of his leadership that quintessential Blairite Mandarin, Lord Mandelson, leaked a paper to the media in which he gave direction to the dissidents by providing them with a focus they would later adopt as a substitute for policy. Mandelson said that the election of Corbyn was akin to "putting two fingers up to the voters." He was, according to Mandelson, unelectable – a mantra that has been repeated almost non-stop ever since.

It has to be said that Corbyn was not helping his case at this point. The establishment media were at this time on the prowl seeking any remark or comment they could extract from Corbyn in order to damage him and he, unused to handling the media from the position in which he now found himself, made the mistake of facilitating them. In his third week six members of his Shadow Cabinet publicly criticised him for saying that he would not use nuclear weapons

if Prime Minister with Maria Eagle, his defence secretary, among them. What the situation, and the interests of the Labour Party, required at this time was for those with front-bench experience to provide Corbyn with the benefit of their experience of handling the media. Instead, during this initial sensitive period, on this issue and in response to his gaffe regarding the "Shoot-to-Kill" policy, his opponents within the parliamentary party showed an over-eagerness to be part of the establishment's strategy to undermine him. As a result, at a time when trust could have been constructed among all who were prepared to defend the party at this vulnerable time, we had the spectacle of a party in turmoil being handed to the media and Corbyn's attempt to form a cabinet along broad lines being deliberately thwarted from the outset. Responsibility for this lies full-square on the shoulders of Corbyn's opponents. Since then the situation has gone from bad to worse with claims of Corbyn's unelectability being the cornerstone for the continuing attacks on him and the focus of what passes as a debate by his opponents taking place in the media rather than the party.

Much was invested by Corbyn's opponents in the prospect of a bad showing by the party in the local government elections in March. Surely that was going to be the occasion when their castigation of him as an electoral liability would be borne out by events. In fact, considering the level of public undermining embarked on by his opponents, the local government elections were remarkably successful for Labour. Voices were raised claiming that Labour should have done better but such voices were mainly from the direction of those who had done all in their power to ensure a bad electoral outcome for Labour.

Corbyn's lack of leadership and the anti-Semitic smear campaign

An important element in the attempt to bring about this outcome was the scurrilous and artificially-generated row about the alleged growth of anti-Semitism in the party since Corbyn became leader – a row, timed as it was, a few days before the local government elections, could not have been designed to do more damage. On 27 April the Labour Party Member of

Parliament for Bradford West was suspended from the party for reposting a cartoon map originally posted by an American anti-Zionist Jew on social media. It carried an obviously humorous and ironic caption the context of which was the migration of American Jews to the illegal settlements in Israel and it posited the alternative scenario of Israeli Jews being compelled to move to the United States. No reasonable reading of the social media posting which had been posted nearly two years earlier would warrant a charge of anti-Semitism, though it was anti-Zionist. However, it has been the object of Israeli propaganda for years past to ensure that the term anti-Zionist is perceived as being synonymous with anti-Semitic and those who serve this object in the UK are always on the lookout for issues on which they can advance this agenda. Here then was an ideal opportunity to trade on the ignorance of the general electorate to use the issue to smear Corbyn's leadership as being responsible for an alleged growth of anti-Semitism in the party. Of course it was never mentioned that the MP involved, Naseem Shah, was not a Corbyn supporter. Although she had been appointed by Corbyn to the unpaid post of Parliamentary Private Secretary to his right-hand man, John MacDonnell, Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer, Naseem Shah was in fact one of the new intake of Labour MPs' (she had defeated George Galloway in the 2012 election) and had adopted a neutral position in the conflict between Corbyn and those who opposed him.

The following morning Ken Livingstone was approached by the media for his impression on the growth of anti-Semitism in the party in the context of the Naseem Shah incident and in the course of his reply in which he defended Naseem Shah he quoted the historical fact that in the 1930s the Hitler government had sought to introduce a policy which would involve working with the Zionists to move large numbers of Jews to Israel. This then became the main focus of the campaign, and sensing a big pro-Corbyn scalp, the Zionists and their supporters in the party descended on Livingstone. Nothing highlighted the relationship of many of the current members of the Parliamentary Labour Party with the media than the sight

of the pro-Zionist John Mann, with television cameras conveniently in tow, ambushing Ken Livingstone on the streets as he was on the phone. Livingstone was then subjected to an avalanche of abuse and followed in a threatening manner by Mann along the street and inside a building. Such was the crescendo of attacks on Livingstone that he was suspended from the party the same day on a charge of “bringing the party into disrepute.” No similar charge was brought against John Mann for the prolonged public abuse he inflicted on Livingstone in front of the television cameras.

The suspension of Livingstone encouraged the further intensification of undermining activity among the anti-Corbyn camp and a concerted effort by the pro-Zionists, ex-Blair people of various hues, and the seaweed MPs who ebb and flow with the predominant current, was invested in another propaganda push. The issue of anti-Semitism in the party was to be used to construct another line of attack on Corbyn’s avowed unelectability. His failure to get to grips with the problem was depicted as a lack of leadership. On 1 May the Shadow Education Secretary, Lucy Powell told Channel 4 News: “There clearly is an issue with anti-Semitism in the Labour Party otherwise we wouldn’t have spent the best part of the last six or seven days talking about it.” So her only evidence of there being a significant problem with anti-Semitism in the party was the fact that there had been a media-generated furore about it over the previous week – a furore that had been fed by those opposed to Corbyn inside and outside the party. Lacking any substantial evidence of this she was compelled to admit that the anti-Semitic element was “probably a small element within the Labour Party and probably a small element in the wider society as well.” Yet, the fact that the media, in collaboration with pro-Zionist MPs, had defined the existence of this small element as a significant problem for Labour did not lead to her questioning that definition. Instead, she was prepared to suspend her own experience of what was happening in the party, in order to defer to the reality generated through media over-reporting and exaggeration.

Lucy Powell provides another example of how the predominant default

position of the younger generation of Labour MPs is to defer to the media for the construction of their reality – something that is inevitable in the absence of a coherent political outlook through which it could be filtered. As the local elections approached the narrative of Jeremy Corbyn’s inability or, as was being claimed in some quarters, unwillingness, to tackle the anti-Semitism in the party became the major tangible example of his lack of leadership and this lack of leadership was appended to his perceived unelectability. Tom Watson, Labour’s Deputy Leader, was reported in *The Telegraph* (2 May) as voicing concern “that the anti-Semitism row could damage the party’s prospects in the local elections.” *The Telegraph* also reported that Sadiq Khan, the party’s candidate for Mayor of London, “has also raised concerns that he might lose because of the row.”

Although there seems to have been a plan to mount a coup attempt in the aftermath of the local government elections, this was shelved as the plotters lost their nerve in the face of a YouGov poll which showed that any challenge to Corbyn’s leadership was bound to fail (see: “Jeremy Corbyn’s Critics Forced to Put Possible Coup on Hold,” *The Guardian*, 3 May 2016). The unelectability argument was not reinforced sufficiently by the results of the local government elections on the 5 May, when Labour, predicted to lose more than 100 seats, more or less held its own. Nor was it reinforced by the election of Sadiq Khan for London Mayor. This undoubtedly weakened the cause of the coup-planners but it did not cause a rethink. According to *The Telegraph* the event that had now become the trigger-point for the coup was the Brexit referendum:

“There is growing pressure on the Labour leader ahead of the local elections on Thursday, in which his party is forecast to lose more than 100 seats. Senior figures are now so concerned about the row that they are openly discussing the possibility of an attempted coup following the EU referendum.” (“Labour has secretly suspended 50 members for anti-Semitic and racist comments.” *The Telegraph*, 2 May 2016).

So, having been convinced by the YouGov poll to abandon any attempted coup in the aftermath of the local

government elections they planned to wait until the next test of Corbyn’s leadership with the electorate – the EU referendum. It needs to be remembered that all of this was planned in early May and that the media were aware of it to the point that they were actually reporting it! Yet when it came, it was reported as some kind of spontaneous action.

The favourable (under the circumstances) results of the local government elections did not inhibit the coup planners but they needed to keep up the pressure and the war of attrition continued unabated. Almost immediately after his election as Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan went on the offensive against Corbyn. In an article in the *Observer* on 8 May he said, in a thinly veiled criticism of Corbyn’s leadership, that Labour would never win a general election without reaching out to Tory voters and businesses and that the party would “never be trusted to govern unless we reach out and engage with all voters. Labour has to be a big tent that appeals to everyone – not just its own activists.” There was nothing in Kahn’s position that was new (he had been one of the MPs who nominated him to maintain the show of a leadership election in 2015 leadership contest but famously said at the time that he would not be voting for him because he didn’t believe that Labour could win a general election under him (see: “Sadiq Khan Didn’t Turn his Back on Corbyn – He Never Really Supported Him,” *Business Insider*, 22 August 2016).

Brexit and the Coup Attempt

The right wing press proved to be uncannily accurate in reporting the intentions of the leaders of the anti-Corbyn group of MPs. On 2 May *The Telegraph* had predicted that there would be an attempted coup in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum and the same day *The Sun* ran a story headlined, “Jeremy Corbyn ‘to face leadership challenge from veteran Labour MP Margaret Hodge.” *The Telegraph* the next day ran the more accurate headline: “Revealed: plot to oust Jeremy Corbyn by using veteran Labour MP Margaret Hodge to spark leadership contest.” According to *The Sun*:

“Senior Labour MPs believe they have persuaded party grandee Dame Margaret Hodge to stand against

Jeremy Corbyn to spark a leadership contest. The plotters are also close to signing up 50 Labour MPs to publicly back her potential challenge this summer. A fifth of the Parliamentary Labour Party must support her to make it formal and start a full blown contest. Under the plan, Mrs. Hodge would then drop out and, having soaked up a furious backlash from Corbynistas, allow other challengers to come forward without blood on their hands. The former minister, 71, is seen by moderates as a highly credible figure who could inflict serious damage on Mr. Corbyn.

Any Labour MP who tries to oust him is likely to face a bitter deselection battle. But Dame Margaret will be 75 at the 2020 General Election and may be ready to stand down. She is respected party-wide and Jewish – which allows her to make a stand on Labour’s anti-semitism crisis.

One MP who is part of the plotting told *The Sun*: ‘Margaret is our perfect candidate – she has a lot of gravitas but is also expendable. She is weighing it all up now but we think she sees it as her duty and will do it.’

Mrs. Hodge has known Mr. Corbyn since the 1970s as Left-wingers on North London’s Islington Council. Former Home Secretary Alan Johnson has also been approached to be a stalking horse but refused because ‘he prefers an easier life’, another Labour MP plotter claimed.

Senior figures within the party plan a media blitz to attack Mr. Corbyn, 66, after Thursday’s local elections, when Labour is expected to suffer humiliating losses of 150 councillors. They will hold back from launching a coup until after June 23 so as not to hurt the pro-EU referendum effort.” (*The Sun*, 2 May 2016).

This shows quite clearly that the effort to oust Corbyn had nothing to do with the Brexit vote and had been planned nearly two months earlier. Yet it has been justified by all involved as something that has resulted from what they claim was Corbyn’s inept “Remain” campaign. Everything, it seems has to feed into this issue of leadership, even the cynical way that Margaret Hodge was seen as a useful instrument in the anti-Semitism line of attack.

Then, as predicted by *The Sun* and *The Telegraph* nearly two months earlier, in the aftermath of the vote for Brexit Dame Margaret Hodge, duly

walked onto the media stage on 24 June to announce that she had reluctantly submitted a motion of no confidence in the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn to the chief of the parliamentary Labour party, John Cryer. The same day she appeared on television explaining that she had struggled long and hard with her conscience before making the decision to submit the motion of no confidence. We were treated to the quite astonishing sight of the media reporting all of this as if it had been fresh news and a decision that Hodge had only arrived at in the aftermath of the Brexit vote whereas everyone knew full well that she had been part of the planning of it for nearly two months.

Intimidation and abuse

One of the early exponents of the intimidation and abuse claims against Corbyn’s supporters was from *Telegraph* columnist, Dan Hodges (son of the actress and ex-Labour MP, Glenda Jackson). Hodges is an avowed Blairite propagandist and anti-Corbyn zealot who retains links with elements in the Parliamentary party that share his views. On 28 November 2015, a couple of months after Corbyn’s election as leader Hodges was invited to a debate on the BBC’s Daily Politics programme and used the occasion to claim that MPs who supported the upcoming government proposal to expand the use of the RAF in air strikes in Syria had been subject to systematic intimidation by Corbyn supporters. His justification for making such claims was that MPs of his acquaintance had received letters threatening deselection in the event of them voting with the government on this issue. Hodges continued his campaign in the aftermath of the parliamentary vote on Syria but with a vehemence that just fell short of accusing Corbyn of orchestrating the intimidation.

“Harassment and intimidation of those who have the temerity not to throw in their lot with the Corbyn revolution have been part of Labour’s discourse since the leadership election. Jeremy Corbyn has been aware of this, and has done nothing. And the reason he has done nothing is because the harassment and intimidation are being conducted by his supporters on his behalf. . .

When Jeremy Corbyn issues another of his regular statements calling for ‘respectful debate’ I don’t believe him.

I think he actually welcomes the intimidation. And I believe he welcomes it because it helps pile pressure on his political opponents at a time when he is struggling – and failing – to assert his authority.

But there is a simple way Jeremy Corbyn could prove me wrong. There is an easy way for him to show he is serious about stopping the intimidation. He could stop talking. He could stop issuing statements. And he could do something.” (Corbyn Should Stop Talking and Start Acting on Intimidation, *Total Politics*, 4 December 2015.)

The three things that Corbyn could do according to Hodges was for him to bar Labour members from joining Momentum the same way that that they banned membership of Militant; he should do the same for membership of the Stop the War Coalition; and he should remove Ken Livingstone from his position on Labour’s defence review.

Presumably because Corbyn was not receptive to his advice Hodges resigned from the Labour Party later in December (he had previously resigned during the Miliband leadership and returned). Then, free from what he must have felt were the restraints of membership his pen plumbed new depths. The reason this journalist is significant is because of his contacts within the Labour Party and because he has consciously established for himself the role of Blairite propagandist in the post-Blair age and his writings do carry weight among those who are intent on the destruction of Jeremy Corbyn. Also, he is prepared to hack a path through the truth where no respectable Blairite or anti-Corbyn MP would lead but are prepared to follow.

The Labour MP, Jo Cox, was murdered on 16 June 2016 by a deranged individual who reported as shouting the words “Britain First” or something to that effect during the assault. His insanity manifested itself in an extreme right-wing hodge-podge of beliefs. Five weeks after her murder Dan Hodges wrote an article for the *Daily Mail* entitled “Reckon he’s a nice bloke? Well let me show you the dark, menacing reality behind ‘The Great Corbyn Myth’”. The article begins:

“The last time I talked to Jo Cox she was scared. It was 12 days after she had expressed her regret at nominating Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour leadership. Her office had been inundated with phone calls. Many of them were

aggressive, some were openly abusive.

She told me she wasn't overly concerned for herself, but that she was worried about the effect on her staff. 'It's been virtually non-stop,' she said. She was a Labour MP, and she and her team were being confronted by Labour members conducting a campaign of hate on behalf of the leader of the Labour Party.

On Thursday, Jeremy Corbyn formally launched his re-election bid. 'I hold out the hand of friendship,' he said. Then he announced all Labour MPs would be facing mandatory reselection.

Just in case they didn't get the message, he added: 'It's the job, it's the duty, it's the responsibility of every Labour MP to get behind the party.' Two hours later, it was announced that police had advised Angela Eagle to cancel all her public surgeries on safety grounds." (*Daily Mail*, 24 July 2016).

The purpose of this piece was to somehow connect the murder of a Labour MP by a patently disturbed individual of right-wing beliefs with a narrative constructed along lines that sought to implicate Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters in her murder. In the case of Angela Eagle, the person arrested for the death threat she received turned out not to have been a constituent but someone who was living in Renfrewshire in Scotland. It also emerged that Angela Eagle always closed her surgeries during August and her decision to close her constituency surgery meant her closing it a week earlier than usual. This is not to say that there was no threatening or abusive behaviour from Corbyn supporters. That would require his supporters being an army of saints. Given their numbers there was bound to be examples of bad behaviour but such behaviour did not serve Corbyn's interests, but did serve that of his opponents. Whenever there was any hint of such behaviour the media was very quickly enlisted in propagating it by Corbyn's opponents as proof that the constituency of Corbyn's support was rife with such people.

And so it went on. On 27 June 172 members of the Parliamentary Labour Party voted in favour of the motion of no confidence tabled by Margaret Hodge the previous week. In the couple of days leading up to this vote the vast majority of his shadow cabinet resigned in the midst of a well-organised media circus. However, Corbyn refused to be intimidated and

referred to the mandate given to him by the general membership just nine months earlier. If the anti-Corbyn majority among the Parliamentary Labour Party had counted on his resignation they were mistaken and quickly realised that they would have to find a replacement that was acceptable to the general membership in a new leadership election. Since then the party has been in a state of perpetual warfare with the anti-Corbyn PLP prepared to throw all kinds of accusations against Corbyn, the latest as this piece is being written is the claim by an ex-member of his shadow cabinet that he is racist, or at least has behaved in a racist manner.

The difficulty of defining intimidation

Alongside this drip-feeding of negative stories about Corbyn to a compliant media there has been an increase in accusations of intimidation and abuse against Corbyn supporters. While such behaviour undoubtedly exists it is nowhere near the levels being complained of and media reporting of such incidents fail to provide any context where such behaviour, inexcusable as it is, might have taken place. Intimidation can take many forms and is often in the eye of the beholder. It may vary from aggressive body language to raised voices to abusive language in emails or letters, or it may be something that is described as intimidation because the recipient prefers to define it so. There have been instances where an MP has refused to engage with a member of the local party and that person, in their frustration at not being provided with an explanation of the behaviour of their local MP pays a personal visit to the MP's surgery. Undoubtedly angry words are sometimes used in that situation and undoubtedly some MPs are all too eager to define this as intimidation. Occurrences of this nature are almost made inevitable because the NEC has decided in its wisdom to suspend all constituency meetings until after the leadership election leaving constituency Labour Party members no choice but to visit the local MP's constituency surgery with all the potential for any MP so inclined to accuse the visitor of intimidation. There have been many such accusations flying around but few actual police charges made.

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young member of Renzi's Pd. He said that: *thanks to the refuse from Genova and other localities there has been €800,000 additional income in the last year. Welcoming the refuse from Rome, could lower the refuse charges for the people of Asti.*

Raggi believes that she will be able to have solutions in place by December 2016. Perhaps she will. She came into office saying that she would lead a *revolution of normality*. Perhaps she will be given the space and support to do what is an almost impossible job.

WHEN UNCLE SAM COMES TO VISIT

He comes to the house
and knocks on the door,
It's Uncle Sam
whom the children adore.
Dad is strict and there's one boy
in particular he damns.
Mum agrees he's more a pit-bull than
her little
lamb.
He'd wreck the house if given half a
chance.
Uncle has brought gifts,
our armaments to enhance,
like guns, planes, bombs, bullets
and poison gas.
Dad laughs, as much as his triple-
bypass
allows:
you accused ayatollah,
you next door,
yes, you you whore,
you religious missionary
wallah!
Thank you, Uncle,
and all those lads and lassies at
Porton Down.
It's time to lance that carbuncle.
Our neighbour will now wear
a shroud with a perpetual frown.
A wink from Uncle and we
take
over another home.
Then Uncle says get out.
But Uncle!
We've fallen into a trap,
it wasn't our reward.
to take what's ours,
to roam.
Worse now – Uncle calls us
short-sighted,
and,
he's far from happy.
It seems we're now too
powerful,
so,
we're indicted
through our action being untoward.
That boy, the would-be
wrecker, now has a
thick beard.
He's Uncle's favourite to be
feared.
Our house is wrecked.
Dad's been hanged.
Mum's in prison.
It's chaos but Uncle says there's
order
in that vision.
Doesn't he mean his eating
disorder
with we his fodder.

Wilson John Haire.

Listening to Italy

by Orecchiette

WHERE THERE'S MUCK

The 89 year old 8th King of Rome is currently under house arrest, protesting his innocence to mafia-related charges. Manlio Cerroni's ironic title recognises the immense wealth accumulated during his long career dealing with Italy's and, specifically, Rome's rubbish. In the 1960s he took control of the four small private refuse companies that serviced Rome. Thereafter his business interests grew quickly and by the 1980s his Malagrotta landfill site in Rome became the largest in Europe. His involvements subsequently spread to Sydney, Abu Dhabi and Oslo, amongst other places. At issue in law is his alleged fraud, extortion, non-compliance with competition rules and the fact, prosecuted by the EU, that toxic waste was not treated and therefore leached into the ground. Cerroni denies all of this and brazens it out by saying that he has done so much for Rome that they should build him the biggest monument in Europe.

Malagrotta was closed after EU intervention. But it is just one part of a mafia-led network of waste mismanagement in wider Italy. Toxic waste has been dumped, buried, given to be used as fertilisers and burnt – releasing dioxins into the atmosphere. Politicians were bribed and acquiesced for years. Roberto Saviano has a chapter on this in his book *Gomorrhah*, about the mafia. *The land of fires*, as it is called in his book, is a previously immensely fertile area north of Naples which now suffers under heavy, ruinous and long-term poisoning. It is also referred to as the *triangle of death* because of the high numbers of cancers in adults, but also an unusually high incidence in babies and children.

Like Naples to its south, Rome has had its own refuse scandals. The communist trade union Cgil called a one day strike in May because of the bad conditions of the contracts of its workers. Romans pay £250, which is 50% more per annum for their refuse disposal than other Italian cities. Rome now only processes 36% of its waste locally. In contrast London, Berlin, Paris and Madrid are almost self-sufficient in their processing. Having said that, The West London Waste Authority recently agreed a 25 year contract to send waste by train to Pilning near Bristol for incineration, which will later produce power. Previously waste had been sent to landfill in Lincolnshire. (Richmond and Twickenham Times, 26. 08. 16.).

Rome's waste is now sent to many sites across Italy for dumping and or treatment.

It is also transported to Bulgaria, Romania and Portugal and will also be sent to Germany and Austria. The cost of this is huge and the mayor Virginia Raggi is having to confront this, although there are other issues that complicate the solution.

The long history of corruption and mafia involvement in Roman governance is a huge complication. The infamous *Mafia capitale* case is a large and hugely complex series of prosecutions which can be dated from the start of the first arrests and charges made in 2014. These involve a wide field of criminal activities including the misappropriation of funds, bribery, threats and misuse of public contracts. It involves a previous Roman mayor, Gianni Alemanno, an ally of Berlusconi and also, ironically, Italo Politano, Berlusconi's anti-corruption czar. Plus the notorious criminal Salvatore Buzzi, who said recently that the new money is not to be made from the traditional mafia drugs trafficking but from immigrants. Or, rather from the mis-use of funds directed towards their housing and support. He has been in jail in the past for, amongst other offences, murder.

Previous heads of *Ama*, the body dealing with the capital's waste, have been prosecuted for various illegal activities. These include not putting contracts out to open tender, or then giving work to new companies. A new head has recently been appointed to *Ama*. (Difficulties in Raggi's cabinet: 31 Aug/1 Sept has resulted in this new appointee resigning as this article goes to print.)

The previous mayor of Rome, a member of Prime Minister Renzi's Partito Democratico (Pd) party also had to step down before his term was over and the position was taken by a caretaker appointee. The Pd was then still expected to win the June mayoral elections but Raggi, a member of Beppe Grillo's 5 Star Movement (M5S), won with 67% of the vote in the second round. This was clearly a vote for change, a vote against the ruling party both in Rome and nationally. The Pd is currently sliding in popularity nationally making Renzi a worried leader.

Thirty eight year old Virginia Raggi is a female lawyer with a short career in politics. She ran for the City Council as an M5S candidate for the first time in 2013 at the same time as her husband. She was elected, he wasn't. There are interesting aspects to her legal career. Her law firm had past associations with Cesare Previti, a convicted criminal and long-time

ally of Silvio Berlusconi. Raggi had also previously worked as a junior trainee in Previti's office.

One of the further complications within Raggi's cabinet is that there has been a flurry of criticism over the appointment of her Councillor in charge of the environment. Paola Muraro worked for *Ama* for 12 years in various roles including that of a consultant. There is loud criticism that she has conflicts of interest. Raggi is supportive of her and her work so far. But, a *La Repubblica* article of 11 August, clearly questioned Raggi's choice. It said that Muraro had strong links with Daniele Fortini, the previous head of *Ama*, who resigned after accusations of illegality. Perhaps more incriminating is that she also had telephone contact with the previously mentioned criminal Salvatore Buzzi. M5S and Raggi still support her.

Refuse disposal is a long-standing problem for Rome and the question that has to be asked is why has it become so prominent at this time? The easy answer is: politics. Raggi is obviously working towards resolutions here for financial, environmental but also political reasons. The headlines of three different newspapers hint at political spin. *La Repubblica* of 11 August has an article with an alarmist headline: *Health risk...* or their next day's headline: *From Lazio to Umbria a "no" to taking the refuse of Rome*. This was accompanied by a photo of Raggi with her head tilted downwards looking defeated. *Corriere della Sera* headed their piece with a damning: *The loads sent to Bulgaria...* No supportive words there for Raggi. *Il Fatto Quotidiano* was less negative with a headline on 12 August that said, *No refuse emergency, only a critical period. The mayor of Asti is quick to help the capital*.

Il Fatto is more supportive of M5S than the two other mainstream publications. It could be that political capital is being made of a problem not of the new mayor's making, because at that point she had been in office for less than two months. Raggi has attempted to find temporary disposal facilities as an interim solution. Some Italian areas have obviously refused to help. There could be political reasons or even common capacity ones for their refusals to offer this emergency assistance.

However the mayor of Asti in northern Italy welcomed Rome's rubbish. He is a

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