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While Tony Blair refuses to endorse Jeremy Corbyn for prime minister; while Peter Mandelson's think tank warns against strengthening Corbyn's hand; while John Woodcock, Neil Coyle and other Labour MPs attack Corbyn's leadership - we say vote Labour on June 8 and then fight to ...



CRUSH THE SABOTEURS

Crush the saboteurs

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Theresa May's decision to call a snap general election looks more of a no-brainer with each day that passes. The prime minister might have been tempted to let Labour's right wing continue their wrecking activity until 2020, but that always carried the risk of events intervening at some point - so go for it. Rather just play safe and take advantage of the Labour Party's weakness - denuded as it is in Scotland, riven by civil war and dogged by dismal poll ratings. It is hard to imagine any Tory prime minister doing anything different.

Of course, various factors affected her decision. One of them being the growing realisation that the Brexit negotiations with the European Union are going to be extremely gruelling. Any delusions about them being a shoo-in have evaporated - reports of the 'frosty' No10 dinner with Jean-Claude Juncker confirms it.

Another possible, and related, consideration is that Donald Trump seems ready to do a trade deal with the EU ahead of any agreement with Britain following discussions with Angela Merkel - where she purportedly reminded the US president a number of times that he would not be allowed to conduct a unilateral trade deal with Germany. Obviously, Britain is small fry compared to the EU bloc, with the US exporting \$270 billion in goods to the EU last year, making it America's major trading partner - whilst exports to the UK were only worth \$55 billion. If Britain does find itself at the "back of the queue" - or not near the front, as Barack Obama warned during the referendum campaign - then the Brexit self-image of Britain as a newly liberated global player cutting 'free trade' deals here, there and everywhere is severely punctured. That would put Theresa May in a tricky situation, meaning she needs a solid parliamentary base to weather the inevitable political and economic storm.

At the end of the day though, the prime minister's calculation was simple - now is the chance to convert a slim majority into an overwhelming one. Don't dither or dally like Gordon Brown in 2007. Naturally, no-one knows what the exact size of the majority will be. But in betting shop terms, the odds of a Labour victory are pretty slim (perhaps rather generously, William Hill has it on 12 to one).

Some polls suggest that the Tories are on course for a 150 - seat Commons majority - notching up a 17% lead in marginal seats, where Labour have a majority of 15% or less, which would see Labour losing 65 seats to the

Tories (representing a swing of 130 seats between the two parties). Other polls put the Tories ahead of Labour in London, Scotland and even on course to win a majority of seats in Wales. The last time that happened was 1859. Another poll has the Conservatives winning 12 seats in Scotland, taking 10 from the Scottish National Party. But one thing we can say for sure is that Theresa May did not call an early election out of "weakness" because she was facing a "rising tide of anger" from the British working class, as suggested by Paula Mitchell of the Socialist Party of England and Wales - maybe she lives on a different planet (*The Socialist* April 18 2017). Unfortunately, the exact opposite is true - the Tories are going from strength to strength, politically and electorally.

Civil war

As for the Labour Party, the civil war continues. Even though there is an election campaign going on. Tony Blair has refused to endorse Corbyn as potential prime minister and calls for voters to back any candidate willing to oppose "Brexit at any costs" - including "reasonable" Tories and Lib Dems. Peter Mandelson's think tank, Policy Network, warns that a bad election result for Labour might strengthen Corbyn. Not to be outdone, John Woodcock and Neil Coyle have been talking about the damage being done by Corbyn's leadership to Labour's election chances. And, embracing cross-class liberalism, Jon Cruddas, Clive Lewis, Helena Kennedy, Hilary Wainwright, Tulip Siddiq, Paul Mason and Owen Jones have been calling for Labour to step aside for the Greens in Brighton Pavilion and the Isle of Wight (*Letters The Guardian* April 30 2017).

Meanwhile, rightwing Labour candidates are running campaigns which claim that they put their constituents before their party. Jeremy Corbyn does not get a mention. But that hardly applies to the Tories. They will bang on and on about Corbyn. The idea that you can somehow uninvent Corbyn, make him disappear, is for the birds - people will be asking you about him regardless. The fact of the matter is that Theresa May says she is calling this election not because she wants to massively increase her parliamentary majority (though she is and probably will), but by claiming it is a choice between stability and chaos - between a strong Conservative government and a "floundering, weak and nonsensical Jeremy Corbyn that will put our nation's future

at risk" - essentially making this a rerun of the 2015 election, in which David Cameron campaigned relentlessly about Ed Miliband being in the pocket of Alex Salmond, and so on.

Displaying their confidence, Philip Hammond said that the May government will not be tied to David Cameron's pledge not to increase income tax, national insurance or VAT. So tax rises are on the horizon. Earlier, infuriating rightwing Tory backbenchers and grassroots activists, Theresa May said she would retain a pledge to allocate 0.7% of national income to international aid and - more significantly - would not commit her government to the so-called triple lock for pensioners, which ensures that the state pension rises by the higher of the inflation rate, average earnings or 2.5%.

Of course, the daft Cameron-Osborne 'promise' to achieving a budget surplus by 2020 was ditched long ago - but the recent comments, or non-comments, by both Hammond and May represent another scrubbing away of the past: Cameron and Osborne seem like distant memories now. The distinct message from today's Tory government is that pensioners are far too well off and should be made to feel guilty about the fact that their pensions have been going up each year - obviously it is their fault that young people cannot get jobs and houses. Therefore punish 'rich' pensioners and help out young people.

Utterly idiotic from any rational, economic point of view - if not downright deceitful, though some people might fall for it. But the calculation is that most pensioners who traditionally vote Tory will continue to vote Tory. Who else are they going to vote for? Not the Lib Dems, as most of them voted 'leave' - definitely not Corbyn's Labour Party. After all, the Labour right seems to have persuaded the majority of Labour voters - reinforced endlessly by the colluding media - that, although Corbyn may be a thoroughly nice bloke, he is completely incompetent. Not a devil, but more a fool - a bit like Ed Miliband, who could not even eat a bacon sandwich properly. If his own party, or at least the Parliamentary Labour Party, do not think Corbyn should even be the leader, never mind prime minister, then why should you trust him or vote for him? This is the story so far.

Our own expectation, for what it is worth, is that the media and the Tories have plenty of things up their sleeves to use against Corbyn if necessary - multiple examples of his 'anti-Semitism', statements

on the Soviet Union, pro-IRA sympathies, etc. Pictures of him alongside whoever at some rally, demonstration or meeting. They are just waiting to be deployed if he appears to be making tangible progress in the run-up to June 8.

Stay or go?

Yes, of course, it is possible that Labour will not do quite as badly as we fear - but we strongly suspect that things will turn out badly. We have been going on for some time about the likelihood of some sort of repeat of 1931 and the national government - when Ramsay MacDonald joined a coalition with the Tories and Liberals because at least some in the Labour cabinet refused to sanction cuts, especially to unemployment benefit. As a result, Labour was hammered at the polls, because they faced not only Tories, but Liberals too - who were still a significant force at the time. It is interesting to note that MacDonald did not want to go for an early election, but the Tories forced his hand - wanting to crush Labour, which they did.

What is most crucial is not the actual election result, but what happens after June 8. In other words, will Jeremy Corbyn stay or will he go? History, for about the last 30 years, has been of leaders falling on their sword to make way for someone fresh. We are no wiser than anybody else about what Corbyn will do, but the left should be urging him to stay on and fight the right. But if you look at the Owen Jones version of events, apparently there is a bright younger leftwinger ready to take over from Corbyn. Well, he or she might be bright and younger than Corbyn - but leftwing? Clive Lewis, Rosie Winterton, Jon Cruddas? You must be kidding. There is no-one obviously credible in terms of a sustained history of principled leftwing politics.

Anyhow, replacement candidates for sitting Labour MPs who stand down are being chosen by the national executive committee - so there has been a bias towards safe rightwingers rather than dangerous leftwingers.

Having said all that, the chances of Corbyn staying on as leader has increased due to the recent Unite election - which saw Len McCluskey beat the right's candidate, Gerard Coyne, albeit on a depressingly low turnout of 12.2%. McCluskey won 59,067 votes (45.4%) and Coyne got 53,544 (41.5%), with Ian Allinson - a member of the

Revolutionary Socialist in the 21st Century split from the Socialist Workers Party - on 17,143 (13.1%).

In our view, it was a wrong call by RS21 to stand a candidate against McCluskey. The fact that Allinson was backed by other sections of the left, including the SWP, shows that they are incapable of *strategic* thinking. Clearly, the election was far less about actual internal Unite politics and far more of an *overspill* of the Labour civil war - that was certainly how the Labour right saw it and the media too.

For instance, look at the response to the election result by *The Economist*. It ran the instructive headline, "The tragedy of Len McCluskey's re-election as head of Unite" (April 22). The article touchingly claimed that McCluskey's narrow victory is a "tragedy for the British left", as it "condemns Unite to another five years of incompetent leadership, while significantly increasing Mr Corbyn's chances of holding onto the leadership of the Labour Party after losing the general election" - which, of course, is the real point.

Naturally, various MPs and grandees of the Labour right have lined up in the media to attack McCluskey for being far too close to Corbyn - exactly why Allinson's participation in the election was so mistaken, as he could have been responsible for McCluskey's defeat. Not that we should have any illusions in the left bureaucrat, Len McCluskey, it goes without saying, but it is far more likely that he will urge Corbyn *not* to fall on his sword post-June 8.

McCluskey's Unite - as opposed to Coyne's Unite - could provide an organisational base for the left to do what they ought to be doing: that is *attacking the right* for losing the election. Ever since it looked likely that Corbyn was going to win the leadership, the right has conducted a civil war that has continued all the way through. Corbyn's re-election on an increased mandate did not stop the civil war - no, they just toned it down a bit whilst plotting away.

But once the election is over we should expect an *explosion* of anger from the right, magnified by the enemy media, the likes of which we have not seen before - more no-confidence motions, more parliamentary harassment and scheming, more attempts to give Jeremy Corbyn a nervous breakdown, and all the rest. Full of vindictiveness, rage in their heart, the right will get the *really* sharp knives out and fight to retake the party, guided by the slogan, 'Never again' ●

Eddie Ford

Thousands found themselves barred, suspended or expelled in 2016, yet Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson are still members



Total intellectual collapse

The general election exposes the political bankruptcy of the far left, argues **Paul Demarty**

Theresa May's snap election call brought forth no end of statements, editorials and rallying cries from every little group going. The details differ, but the overall picture is of dreary homogeneity. May has called the election because she is in a position of weakness. Never mind the polls: Jeremy Corbyn can lead Labour to victory. His policies are popular. All he needs to do is take a strong line on such-and-such an issue which is our group's particular hobby-horse, and the great escape is on.

Take, for example, the *Morning Star* and its ebullient April 22 editorial. "When Theresa May says that the general election result is 'not certain' despite opinion polls giving the Tories a huge lead," writes (presumably) editor Ben Chacko, "for once her words can be taken at face value." May is bottling debates with the leaders of other parties because she is scared; after all, "many Labour policies are popular with the electorate"; better to concentrate "on flimsy pretexts such as parliamentary frustration of the 'leave' decision". "Corbyn and his team have hit the ground running", and "[May's] lead may dwindle more quickly than expected."

On closer inspection, Chacko does not seem sure - *may dwindle more quickly than expected* - how much more, and expected by whom? You know the polls are looking bad when this is the best the *Star* will do; anyone who got all their news from this grovelling daily could be forgiven for thinking that the last two years have consisted entirely of a single, continuous red tide of Labour success, and a statue of Jeremy was already on order for Parliament Square.

The final words of the editorial - "all labour movement activists need to give full backing to Corbyn, move beyond media obsessions with establishment obsessions and image and argue the case for a Labour victory" - at least nod to the problem, which is that the whole labour movement is *not at all* united in giving full backing to Corbyn, but instead riddled with saboteurs. All along, of course, the *Star* has acted as a mouthpiece for the leader's office line of compromise, which is what has landed us here, with Labour's electoral campaign beset constantly with outright and unchallenged sabotage.

Bold tendencies

The *Star* seems to think that Corbyn's programme is acceptable in itself: abolishing grammar schools, raising the minimum wage and four entire new bank holidays - a cornucopia of socialist progress! Backsliding on Trident is, at least, regretted, although blamed on "an anonymous party official".

Other groups, in the grand Trotskyist tradition of positioning oneself a meagre few seconds of arc to the left of the prevailing Stalinist wisdom, demand more. From the Socialist Party in England and Wales comes the call for a "bold socialist campaign" (*The Socialist*, April 25). Socialist



Election call: but not because of Tory weakness

Resistance cries out for a "radical left programme" (April 19). Socialist Appeal wants a "bold socialist alternative" (April 18) ... and so on.

What counts as a socialist programme nowadays? SPEW provide some details, as comfortably familiar as a pair of slippers - "renationalisation of [all] privatised public services", and the banks, and the pharmaceutical industry, all of which should be "linked to the need for fundamental socialist change". The last phrase sounds radical, but is actually entirely meaningless - linked *how*, comrades? When Theresa May 'links' such plans to the gulag, will that count? If the 'link' is so important, why not just demand Corbyn puts the actual transformation in his programme?

Remarkably, neither Resisting Socialism's Alan Thornett nor the relevant issuers-of-statements of *Socialist Appeal* have *anything* much to say on the matter of "radical left" or "bold socialist" policies. Both, however, urge Corbyn to permit the Scottish nationalists their second referendum (and indeed both endorse a 'yes' vote, though neither say so in their election statements). *Socialist Worker* went further in an article prior to May's election call, suggesting that Labour's poll ratings could in part be repaired by "backing Scottish independence".

The SWP version of this is useful as an extreme point of the sheer *madness* of this method. If Jeremy Corbyn came out tomorrow with a statement backing Scottish independence, the immediate response would likely be a unilateral declaration of independence of the *Scottish Labour Party*. Theresa May would gladly cash the blank cheque, and denounce Labour on the basis of English chauvinism. Labour would be crucified both sides of the border.

We need to be clear about the point of all this. If it were a matter of principle to support Scottish independence, then that might be a sacrifice worth making. But *Socialist Worker* sells it not as a sacrifice at all, but as a sure means of victory; and likewise do SA and SR sell their milder versions of the same as a promising electoral gambit; and so also does SPEW claim that wide nationalisation is the royal road to popularity ... This logic is so common on the far left that it barely

passes notice, but under the circumstances we must insist that it is nonsensical; for it consists of utterly marginal forces in society imagining that their particular combination of shibboleths *already possesses enormous mass support* which has somehow heretofore gone unnoticed.

A particular case of this syndrome is Brexit, where our comrades are at sixes and sevens, having taken entirely different lines on the matter. Thornett demands that Labour "present an alternative to the hard Brexit being planned by May, including the retention of free movement in the event of access the single market [sic - presumably this should be 'losing access to the single market' - PD]". In similar mood the ultra-reformers of the Alliance for Workers' Liberty call "for opposition to the Tories' Brexit plans, for defence of free movement and migrants' rights, for remaining in the single market" - otherwise "Labour will go into the election echoing, or scarcely contesting, the Tories' main message" (April 18). Equal and opposite are the left Brexiteers of the *Morning Star* and SPEW.

Both sides argue that a clear line on Brexit is fundamental to success - *their* line. And for both sides the argument is substantially *negative*, in that choosing the opposite line is an error. For the AWL, a firm perspective for Brexit will leave Labour indistinguishable from the Tories; for *The Socialist* a 'soft' Brexit or 'remain' position would alienate "workers who voted for Brexit [who] did so primarily because they were in revolt against all the misery they have suffered over the last decade". The problem is that they are *both right*: if Corbyn drifts towards the remainers, he will be torn apart for being 'out of touch' with 'ordinary people', in his 'cosmopolitan elite bubble'. If he hardens on Brexit, the pace of Blairite sabotage will be accelerated, and he will be lambasted for losing control of his party.

In short, *the game is rigged*, and all this 'tactical advice' from well-meaning lefts is utterly facile. It reveals the serried ranks of Britain's Marxists as what they are, which is to say, merely pale echoes of *Labourism*. What has Corbyn been up to, after all, if not casting around for wizard wheezes and gimmicks to shore up his short-term popularity? The Corbyn office's strategy has been to give all the ground asked of them on issues of 'high

politics', and fight purely on a platform of modest economic reforms. The result is that he and his allies *refuse to confront* the actual arrangement of power against him, leading to the present situation, where he must fight a general election under constant assault from his own side. The far left does not seriously confront this problem, merely recommending a different slate of gimmicks.

We live in strange times, and it may be that there is a startling reversal before June 8. Yet that is in many respects besides the point. The left so fears defeat that it refuses to even think it possible, insisting that May could come unstuck, or isn't as strong as she looks, or whatever other comforting delusions are available. But, on the basis of all currently available evidence, the left will not wake up on June 9 with a friend in Number 10. *What then, comrades?* Do we go back to our papers, and write in sadness that everything would have been different if Corbyn had promised to nationalise Pfizer under democratic workers' control? Or do we fight to purge the labour movement of traitors and build it into a social force that can withstand the attacks of the bosses' media?

We would hope for a renewed commitment to the latter. Yet we must admit it is probably a more forlorn hope than the most dewy-eyed Corbynite expresses for June's election. The *Morning Star* and its Communist Party of Britain are incapable of political lines that seriously oppose the left wing of the bureaucracy; SPEW prefers to obey the orders of the RMT union rather than actually get involved in the Labour Party struggle; the SWP *actively discourages* its members and periphery from engaging in such internal struggles; the AWL involves itself, but often on the *wrong side*; Socialist Appeal has fallen so utterly into flighty eclecticism and millenarian crisis-mongering that we cannot be sure when their attention will stray elsewhere; and Resisting Socialism is reduced to hopeless liberal philistinism, and will abandon Labour as soon as they deem something else sufficiently attractive to 'the youth' they (and, these days, most of us) so conspicuously lack.

Thus the paradox of the situation: the greatest opportunity the left has had in a generation coincides with its political nadir ●

AIMS AND PRINCIPLES

1. The central aim of Labour Party Marxists is to transform the Labour Party into an instrument for working class advance and international socialism. Towards that end we will join with others and seek the closest unity of the left inside and outside the party.

2. Capitalism is synonymous with war, pollution, waste and production for its own sake. Attempts to rescue the system through Keynesian remedies are diversionary and doomed to fail. The democratic and social gains of the working class must be tenaciously defended, but capitalism must be superseded by socialism.

3. The only viable alternative is organising the working class into powerful and thoroughly democratic trade unions, co-ops, and other schools for socialism, and crucially into a political party which aims to replace the rule of the capitalist class with the rule of the working class.

4. The fight for trade union freedom, anti-fascism, women's rights, sexual freedom, republican democracy and opposition to all imperialist wars are inextricably linked to working class political independence and the fight for socialism.

5. Ideas of reclaiming the Labour Party and the return of the old clause four are totally misplaced. From the beginning the party has been dominated by the labour bureaucracy and the ideas of reformism. The party must be refounded on the basis of a genuinely socialist programme as opposed to social democratic gradualism or bureaucratic statism.

6. The aim of the party should not be a Labour government for its own sake. History shows that Labour governments committed to managing the capitalist system and loyal to the existing constitutional order create disillusionment in the working class.

7. Labour should only consider forming a government when it has the active support of a clear majority of the population and has a realistic prospect of implementing a full socialist programme. This cannot be achieved in Britain in isolation from Europe and the rest of the world.

8. Socialism is the rule of the working class over the global economy created by capitalism and as such is antithetical to all forms of British nationalism. Demands for a British road to socialism and a withdrawal from the European Union are therefore to be opposed.

9. Political principles and organisational forms go hand-in-hand. The Labour Party must become the umbrella organisation for all trade unions, socialist groups and pro-working class partisans. Hence all the undemocratic bans and proscriptions must be done away with.

10. The fight to democratise the Labour Party cannot be separated from the fight to democratise the trade unions. Trade union votes at Labour Party conferences should be cast not by general secretaries but proportionately according to the political balance in each delegation.

11. All trade unions should be encouraged to affiliate, all members of the trade unions encouraged to pay the political levy and join the Labour Party as individual members.

12. The party must be reorganised from top to bottom. Bring the Parliamentary Labour Party under democratic control. The position of Labour leader should be abolished along with the national policy forum. The NEC should be unambiguously responsible for drafting Labour Party manifestos.

13. The NEC should be elected and accountable to the annual conference, which must be the supreme body in the party. Instead of a tame rally there must be democratic debate and binding votes.

14. Our elected representatives must be recallable by the constituency or other body that selected them. That includes MPs, MEPs, MSPs, AMs, councillors, etc. Without exception elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker, the balance being donated to furthering the interests of the labour movement ●

LONDON COMMUNIST FORUM

Sundays, 5pm: Weekly political meeting and study group organised jointly by Labour Party Marxists and CPGB. Details in *Weekly Worker*.

VENUE:

The Calthorpe Arms,
252 Gray's Inn Road,
London WC1X 8JR

Cohering the Labour left

Carla Roberts reports on the first meeting of the Grassroots Momentum steering committee on April 22 in London

This was a surprisingly positive and constructive meeting. Surprising for a number of reasons. Firstly, the committee was elected exactly six weeks previously at Grassroots Momentum's first, fractious conference on March 11. And, if 'a week is a long time in politics', these six weeks certainly felt like an eternity. Not a single decision has been made and the only thing the majority of committee members had agreed on was to *oppose* the proposal to intervene at the Momentum 'conference' on March 25 with our own leaflet. The rest of the email communications were concerned with an argument over the length of our lunch break (30 minutes, since you ask) and if there should be a pooled fare system (no).

Secondly, Momentum itself is disappearing down the plughole with ever-increasing speed, which naturally has an impact on the left within it. Momentum meetings are becoming smaller and smaller. The demobilisation and depoliticisation of Momentum branches that followed Jon Lansman's January 10 coup has become particularly marked.

Grassroots Momentum's steering committee is made up of a lot of people who - how to put this nicely - really hate each other's guts. The Alliance for Workers' Liberty (which has six members and supporters on the committee) have played a deeply disgusting role in the entirely fabricated 'anti-Semitism scandal' in the Labour Party, joining in the witch-hunt of Ken Livingstone - and, of course, Jackie Walker, who also sits on the steering committee (and also has about half a dozen allies there).

Considering all these factors, I expected a rather fractious, ill-tempered meeting with very little outcome. But I guess we can thank Theresa May for focusing our minds. The snap election, plus the fact that Momentum has almost been playing dead, have actually opened up a space on the left of the Labour Party.

Under the experienced chairmanship of Matt Wrack (leader of the Fire Brigades Union), the meeting began with a frank and open assessment of the current situation and the general election. There was a healthy sense of realism evident. Everybody in the room agreed that Labour's chances of winning were pretty slim. To the committee's credit, nobody voiced the moronic idea peddled by the likes of the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party in England and Wales that Theresa May has called this election because of a *weakness* of the Tory Party. Matt Wrack, for example, admitted to being "quite demoralised when I heard about the election", because clearly Theresa May has called it for one reason and one reason alone: to crush the Labour Party and increase the Tory majority, aided by the entire media establishment.

Speaker after speaker bemoaned the fact that the right wing in the Labour Party continues with its assault on Corbyn and his leadership. Worse, Corbyn continues to let them to get away with it in the vague hope of 'party unity'. John Woodcock MP took the biscuit when he pronounced that he "will not countenance ever voting to make Jeremy Corbyn Britain's prime minister". In our view, Woodcock should be expelled, along with Tom Watson, Iain McNicol and, of course, good old Tony Blair. Blair has come out of the woodwork to call for a "tactical" vote against Labour Party candidates who support Brexit - an offence that would have seen a leftwinger expelled immediately by the NEC's rigged compliance unit. But instead of cleansing the party of its saboteurs, the NEC has decided to prevent Labour Party members



Matt Wrack: sound politics, able chair

from having any say over the choosing of parliamentary candidates - which is, of course, part of the civil war against the left.

Graham Bash (a leading member of the Labour Representation Committee) was perhaps the most 'officially optimistic' speaker on the day. He thought that "we need to fight to win and we need to give a really positive message. We should say that we can win against the odds. We should not spread demoralisation and fear. Because the cost of failure will be huge and the left will face a carnival of reaction."

True, of course, it would be pointless to start any fight in order to *lose*. But other speakers pointed to the fact that "demoralisation" will be equally widespread (or worse) if we pretend that we, for example, just need to point to Corbyn's "10 pledges" (as committee member Jan Pollock suggested) and hope that it will win Labour the elections. Because it will not.

Most on the steering committee thought that the Labour Party would manage to close the current gap in the polls somewhat come June 8, but that the Tories would very likely win. Which would, of course, lead to the next leadership challenge - probably fronted by Yvette Cooper, who has done nothing to dispel those rumours. In this situation, "we must convince Corbyn not to give in, not to step down, but hold on and continue to fight to transform the Labour Party", said Matt Wrack, to the visible agreement of the meeting.

"Any candidate who is not Corbyn or McDonnell will be a defeat for the left", comrade Wrack added - though some people later questioned if McDonnell really is still a reliable ally. It is not just his various U-turns and cringing apologies - some in the room also have not forgiven him for breaking his promise to send a video message to Grassroots Momentum's launch conference. Clearly, that hope was a bit naive. After all, the Corbyn team (which includes McDonnell) had *sanctioned* the Lansman coup. Why would he then support an organisation that was founded on opposition to that coup? My guess is

that McDonnell nodded his head politely when the request was put to him, but never intended to fulfil it.

In any case, most seemed agreed on the need to continue to support Corbyn and McDonnell when they're being attacked - but to criticise them when they are attacking socialist principles or continuing to try and appease the Labour right.

The meeting went on to decide a couple of concrete actions:

1. Grassroots Momentum will publish a weekly email and launch a website, which will "do what Momentum does not do", as one speaker put it. The intention is, for example, to publish good, political scripts for phone banking sessions; give people ideas on running stalls; work with other campaigns and encourage Momentum members to go beyond the official Labour canvassing tactic of simply surveying voting intentions and instead have actual political discussions with people on the doorstep. There has been a suggestion that the website should feature comments on disputed issues like Labour's apparently "united" climbdown over immigration. We will have to see if that will be picked up by the small team running the website and email bulletin.

2. Grassroots Momentum will organise a post-election conference of the 'Labour left' on June 17 (or a week later). The idea is to use this meeting to fight against the likely disillusionment of the Labour left after June 8 and to convey the message that - no matter what the outcome of the elections - the key task remains: to transform the Labour Party to make it fit for purpose.

Detailed plans for the day have yet to be finalised, but the general idea is to have a smaller 'strategy meeting' during the day and a bigger rally in the late afternoon. Of course, those details are the place where the devil likes to hide and the preliminary discussions of the seven comrades planning the event have shown a fair amount of disagreement on how to move forward:

● Should the strategy meeting allow

motions to be heard? Or encourage groups to bring general position papers on the future of the Labour Party (that are not up for voting)? Should we invite both? Or should there be a general statement instead? Who is going to prepare it? Will we allow a proper discussion on any amendments?

● Should only "big names" on the Labour left (LRC, Campaign for Labour Party Democracy and Red Labour) be officially invited? Or should we also include smaller groups like Red Flag, Labour Party Marxists, Alliance for Workers' Liberty, Nick Wrack's Labour Socialist Network, etc? All of them are, of course, centrally involved in GM and its steering committee.

● What about Momentum branches? Should only those groups 'affiliated' to GM be allowed to send representatives? Or do we want to encourage those in branches with pro-Lansman majorities to come along? How many per branch?

All of these issues are still being discussed. It is no doubt a good idea to get the Labour left together in the same room. Even better if we can actually discuss what we think is the right strategy for transforming the Labour Party. An excellent initiative, in our view. But it should be transparent, politically honest and prepared to openly say what needs to be done to transform the Labour Party in a meaningful way - primarily, to take on the right. Corbyn is being undermined, briefed against and belittled by his 'colleagues' every step of the way. Unless we take on the saboteurs, the left will lose this fight and with it the best political opportunity it has had for many decades.

This begs the question as to why we should place such emphasis on the LRC and CLPD. They've been around a while, that's true. But so has cancer. At least one person on the conference arrangements committee wants to make the staging of a conference *dependent* on the active participation of those groups.

But the CLPD - just like Momentum - has consciously decided to support Corbyn *without any criticism*. It has given

up the fight for mandatory selection. It shows no interest in taking on the right in the party. The recent CLPD AGM voted against condemning Jon Lansman's coup in Momentum. Why would they want to get involved in an event initiated by GM, an organisation that was founded in *opposition* to the coup?

We don't know what the LRC leadership thinks about anything at the moment - maybe even they don't - but it is probably safe to assume it is along similar lines to those of the CLPD. After all, they have now closed shop and will reopen only after the June 8 election.

The politics of Red Labour are another matter entirely. This group exists only online and does not really have any identifiable politics, as it is made up of people from a variety of political backgrounds. Clearly, while we should invite those organisations to participate in our conference, we should not subordinate ourselves to them or their politics. In particular the CLPD's 'strategy' towards the Labour Party is fatally flawed. And even if the CLPD and LRC agreed to sponsor the conference (very doubtful), it begs the question if they would actually *do anything* with any motions or statements agreed there. It would simply be empty posturing, not the beginning of a real campaign to consciously and actively transform the Labour Party. So what's the point? ●

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SORT CODE 30-96-26; ACCOUNT NUMBER: 22057060

OR SEND CHEQUES PAYABLE TO 'LPM'
LPM, BCM BOX 8932, LONDON WC1N 3XX.

OR CONTACT US VIA EMAIL:
SECRETARY@LABOURPARTYMARXISTS.ORG.UK