



LABOUR PARTY MARXISTS

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After Corbyn's victory

The right's failed coup presents the left with an unparalleled historic opportunity. **James Marshall** outlines a programme of immediate tasks and long-term strategic goals



Jeremy Corbyn: unacceptable to the ruling class

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Despite the unremitting hostility of the mass media, despite the MPs' no-confidence motion, despite the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' smearing, despite the court battles, despite the gerrymandering exclusion of 130,000 members, despite the ongoing witch-hunt, comrade Corbyn has trounced citizen Smith.

The right has already been adjusting

its approach accordingly. The 169-34 Labour MP vote calling for a return to the pseudo-democratic practice whereby the Parliamentary Labour Party elects the shadow cabinet - scrapped under Ed Miliband in 2011 - is not an attempt to "heal wounds". Nor is it a peace offering to Jeremy Corbyn. No, manifestly, it is a continuation of the policy of "relentless rebellion" against Corbyn's leadership.

The PLP right eyes the national

executive committee as a vital field of struggle in the organisational, constitutional and policy battles to come.

The shadow cabinet is allocated three NEC seats and the right feared that the left stood on the threshold of establishing a functional majority. But, though the NEC narrowly rejected Tom Watson's proposal to give the PLP its way over shadow cabinet elections, the

16-14 vote on Scotland and Wales might hand the right a workable majority.

Scotland and Wales will both have NEC seats - with a full vote. However, they will have to be frontbenchers. Kezla Dugdale and Carwyn Jones are the most likely to take these seats.

Another victory for the right on the NEC came with the agreement to "clamp down" on "online abuse". New members will be expected to sign a

code of conduct or be barred.

The Corbyn camp has also promoted proposals at the NEC: two more trade union seats, plus a councillor, a Scotland and a Wales NEC seat ... *elected by the membership*. The left would be expected to win the lot.

Similar Corbynista moves are afoot for the Liverpool conference to take the MP and MEP 15% nomination threshold back down to 5%. In 2015 that would have comfortably allowed Corbyn to stand for leader. He would not have had to rely on the "morons" to "lend" him their votes.

Of course, what the PLP right dreads, above all, is submitting to a genuine reselection process in the run-up to the next general election. By the same measure, anything towards that end, no matter how partial, is to be welcomed, at least as far as the LPM is concerned. Most constituency members are itching to see the back of traitor MPs.

There has been much chatter in the media about a PLP split. Needless to say, however, the right remains haunted by Ramsay MacDonald's 1931 National Labour Organisation and then the 'Gang of Four' of Roy Jenkins, David Owen, Bill Rodgers and Shirley Williams, who broke away exactly 50 years afterwards to form the Social Democratic Party. MacDonald's NLO instantly became a tame Tory satellite. It finally dissolved in 1945. As for the SDP, it merged with the Liberal Party in 1988 and shared the same sorry fate. From the early 1970s till even the late 80s, of course, the political centre enjoyed something of a revival. No longer. At the 2015 general election the Lib Dems were decimated. They remain to this day marginalised and widely despised. Given the punishing logic of the first-past-the-post election system, it is therefore highly unlikely that the rightwing PLP majority will do us a favour and walk.

Conceivably, the PLP right wing could go for electing their own leader (not the hapless poseur, Owen Smith) and constituting themselves the official opposition. The result would be two rival parties. A rightwing Labour Party with by far the bigger parliamentary presence. Then, on the other hand, a leftwing Labour Party with trade union support, but a much smaller number of MPs. That way, the right would get hold of most of Labour's £6.2 million Short money and come first when it comes to asking parliamentary questions.

However, a *de facto* split surely guarantees their expulsion and the selection of alternative, official candidates. Most traditional Labour voters are expected to remain loyal, not to opt for some SDP mark II. Premising such a split, a recent YouGov poll gave a Corbyn-led Labour Party 21% of the total vote and a "Labour right party" just 13% (and the Tories 40%, UKIP 11% and the Lib Dems 6%).¹ Doubtless, such arithmetic explains why Ed Balls, former shadow chancellor, dismisses the idea of a breakaway as "crazy".²

Political suicide certainly exerts no appeal, as far as most rightwing Labour MPs are concerned. The one thing they truly believe in is their own career. So, the chances are that the right will dig in, use its base in the bureaucratic apparatus, amongst councillors, MPs, MEPs, etc, and fight till the bitter end.

Tasks

John McDonnell has been holding out an olive branch, talks of welcoming back Owen Smith into the shadow cabinet and pulling together to fight the "real enemy", the Conservatives.³ In the mind of team Corbyn doubtless that constitutes clever tactics. Divide the implacable anti-Corbyn MPs from those merely fearful of losing their seats. Divide the MPs who want an effective opposition to the Tories from those who really are Tories.

An appeasement policy presumably

based on Seumas Milne's wonkery. Back in January 2016 our director of communications produced a problem-solving spreadsheet of Labour MPs. Leaked to *The Times* two months later, it showed just 85 MPs who could be considered "core group negatives" or "hostile". Another 71 MPs were supposedly "neutral but not hostile". Just 19 MPs were put in Corbyn's "core group", while 56 were classified as "core group plus".⁴ Needless to say, though, comrade Milne's calculations were violently wrong.

After all, in June 2016, 172 Labour MPs actually signed the no-confidence motion. Then, after that, we had the 169-34 vote on shadow cabinet elections. These two PLP moments accurately photograph the *real* dimensions of the "core group negatives" or "hostile" camp. There might well be those who can be considered "neutral but not hostile". Their numbers are, though, vanishingly small. What of the Corbyn camp? The "core group", together with the "core group plus", nowhere near adds up to 75 MPs. No, there are little more than 40 of them ... in total.

Practically, we need less spiel about olive branches, coming back

and uniting. Instead, the membership must be organised, educated and galvanised. Not just to vote Corbyn. Not just to defend Corbyn. But organised, educated and galvanised for war in the wards, constituencies, committees and conferences.

There must be a strategic recognition that the right will never reconcile itself to the Corbyn leadership. Let alone the growing influence of the radical, socialist and Marxist left. And because the PLP right will pursue its civil war to the bitter end, we must respond by using all the weapons at our disposal.

In our view the Labour left has seven immediate tasks.

- Fight for rule changes stipulating that all elected Labour representatives must be subject to mandatory reselection. Reforming trigger ballots is a step in right direction, but not enough. MPs must be brought under democratic control: from above by the NEC; from below by the CLPs.

- We need a sovereign conference once again. The cumbersome, undemocratic and oppressive structures, especially those put in place under the Blair supremacy, must be rolled back. The Joint Policy Committee, the National

Policy Forums, etc, must go as a matter of urgency.

- Scrap the hated compliance unit and "get back to the situation where people are automatically accepted for membership, unless there is a significant issue that comes up" (John McDonnell).⁵ The compliance unit operates in the murky shadows, it violates natural justice, it routinely leaks to the capitalist media. Full membership rights must be restored to all those cynically suspended or expelled. More than that, welcome in those good socialists barred from membership because, mainly out of frustration, they once supported Green, Tusc or Left Unity election candidates.

- The stultifying inertia imposed on Momentum must be ended. That can only happen through democracy, trusting the membership and allowing the election of and right to recall all Momentum officials. Neither politically nor organisationally has Jon Lansman proven to be a competent autocrat. He has stopped Momentum meetings, he has blocked Momentum attempts to oppose the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' smears, he has done nothing to get Momentum to fight the ongoing purge. End the control-freakery. Membership lists and contact details must be handed over to local branches. Then we can begin to organise, educate and galvanise Corbyn's supporters.

- Securing new trade union affiliates ought to be a top priority. The FBU has reaffiliated. Excellent. Matt Wrack at last came to his senses. He took the lead in reversing the disaffiliation policy. But what about RMT? Let us win RMT militants to drop their support for the thoroughly misconceived Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. Instead reaffiliate to the Labour Party. And what about the NUT? Why can't we win it to affiliate? Surely we can ... if we fight for hearts and minds. Then there is PCS. Thankfully, Mark Serwotka, its leftwing general secretary, has at last come round to the idea. The main block to affiliation now being the Socialist Workers Party and the Socialist Party in England and Wales. Yes, PCS affiliation will run up against the Trade Disputes and Trade Unions Act (1927), introduced by a vengeful Tory government in the aftermath of the general strike, whereby civil service unions were barred from affiliating to the Labour Party and the TUC. The Civil and Public Services Association - predecessor of PCS - reaffiliated to the TUC in 1946. Now, however, surely, it is time for the PCS to reaffiliate to the Labour Party. True, when we in the LPM moved a motion at the February 2015 AGM of the Campaign for Labour Party Democracy calling for all trade unions to be encouraged to affiliate, we were met with the objection that it would be illegal. However, as NEC member Christine Shawcroft said, "What does that matter?" Here comrade Shawcroft, a close ally of Corbyn, shows just the right fighting spirit. Force a another change in the law.

- Not only should we commit ourselves to securing further trade union affiliates. Within the existing affiliates we must fight to win many, many more members to enrol. Just over 70,000 affiliated supporters voted in the 2015 leadership election. A tiny portion of what could be. There are well over four million who pay the political levy.⁶ Given that they can sign up to the Labour Party at no more than an online click, we really ought to have a million affiliated supporters as a minimum target figure.

- Every constituency, ward and other such basic unit must be won and rebuilt by the left. The right has done everything to make them cold, uninviting, bureaucratic and lifeless. The left must convince the sea of new members, and returnees, to attend meetings ... and drive out the right. Elect officers who defend the Corbyn

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 Grays Inn Road,
London WC1X 8JR

leadership. Elect officers who are committed to transforming our wards and constituencies into vibrant centres of socialist organisation, education and action. As such our basic units would be well placed to hold councillors and MPs to account.

Far reaching

Our main goal should not be the attempt to win the next general election by courting the capitalist media, concocting some rotten compromise with the right, let alone going for a "broad political alliance" with the Liberal Democrats, Greens, Scottish and Welsh nationalists. A well trod road to disaster. No, our main goal should be to transform the Labour Party, so that, in the words of Keir Hardie, it can "organise the working class into a great independent political power to fight for the coming of socialism".⁷

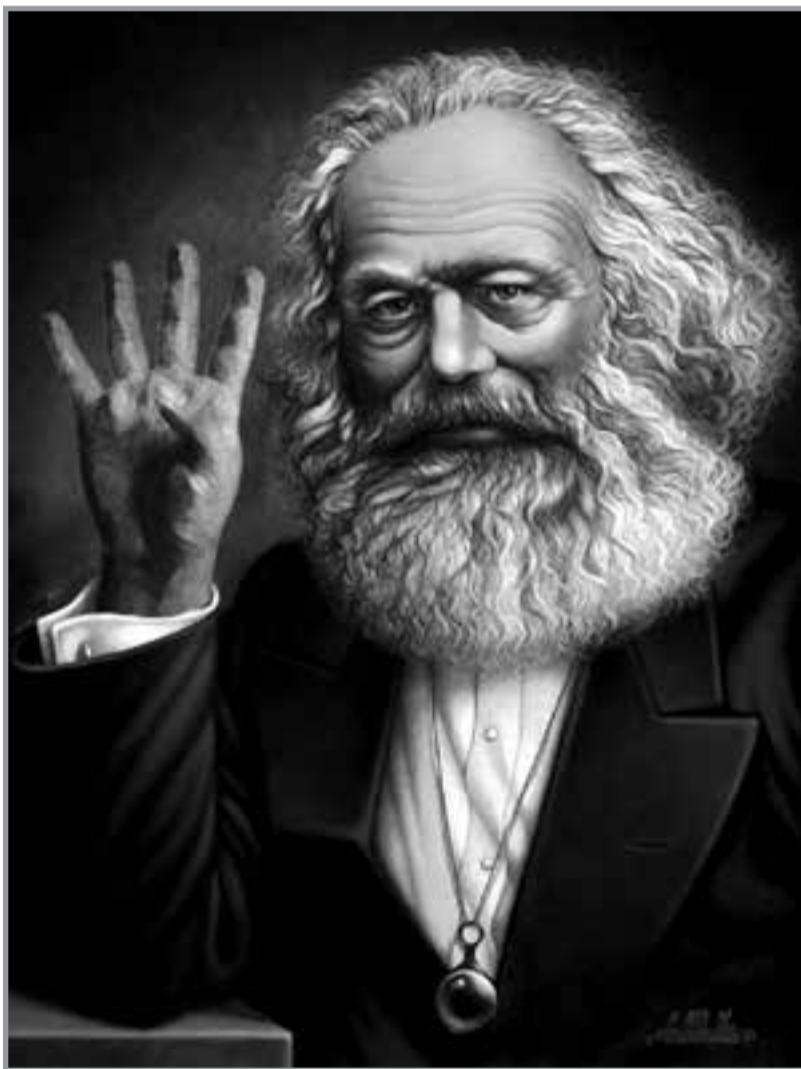
Towards that end we need rule changes to once again permit left, communist and revolutionary parties to affiliate. As long as they do not stand against us in elections, this can only but strengthen us as a federal party. Today affiliate organisations include the Fabians, Christians on the left, the Co-operative Party ... the Jewish Labour Movement and Labour Business. Allow the SWP, SPEW, CPGB, the *Morning Star's* CPB, etc, to join our ranks.

Moreover, programmatically, we should consider a new clause four (see box). Not a return to the old, 1918, version, but a commitment to working class rule and a society which aims for a stateless, classless, moneyless society which embodies the principle, "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". Towards that end the Labour Party should commit itself to achieving a "democratic republic". The standing army, the monarchy, the House of Lords and the state sponsorship of the Church of England must go. We should support a single-chamber parliament, proportional representation and annual elections. All of that ought to be included in our new clause four.

The PLP rebels are out and out opportunists. Once and for all we must put an end to such types exploiting our party. Being an MP ought to be an honour, not a career ladder, not a way for university graduates to secure a lucrative living.

A particularly potent weapon here is the demand that all our elected representatives should take only the average wage of a skilled worker. A principle upheld by the Paris Commune and the Bolshevik revolution. Even the Italian Communist Party under Enrico Berlinguer applied the partymax in the 1970s. With the PCI's huge parliamentary fraction this proved to be a vital source of funds.

Our MPs are on a basic £67,060 annual salary. On top of that they get around £12,000 in expenses and allowances, putting them on £79,060 (yet at present Labour MPs are only obliged to pay the



Our Clause Four

1. Labour is the federal party of the working class. We strive to bring all trade unions, cooperatives, socialist societies and leftwing groups and parties under our banner. We believe that unity brings strength.

2. Labour is committed to replacing the rule of capital with the rule of the working class. Socialism introduces a democratically planned economy, ends the ecologically ruinous cycle of production for the sake of production and moves towards a stateless, classless, moneyless society that embodies the principle, "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs". Alone such benign conditions create the possibility of every individual fully

realising their innate potentialities.

3. Towards that end Labour commits itself to achieving a democratic republic. The standing army, the monarchy, the House of Lords and the state sponsorship of the Church of England must go. We support a single-chamber parliament, proportional representation and annual elections.

4. Labour seeks to win the active backing of the majority of people and to form a government on this basis.

5. We shall work with others, in particular in the European Union, in pursuit of the aim of replacing capitalism with working class rule and socialism ●

£82 parliamentarians' membership subscription rate). Moreover, as leader of the official opposition, Jeremy Corbyn not only gets his MP's salary. He is entitled to an additional £73,617.⁸

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

Imposing a party maximum would give a considerable boost to our finances. Even if we leave out our 20 MEPs from the calculation, it would amount to a £900,000 addition. Anyway, whatever our finances, there is the basic principle. Our representatives ought to live like ordinary workers, not pampered members of the middle class. So, yes, let us agree the party maximum as a basic principle.

Given the huge challenges before us, we urgently need to reach out to *all* those who are disgusted by corrupt career politicians, *all* those who aspire for a better world, *all* those who have an objective interest in ending capitalism. Towards that end we must establish our own press, radio and TV. To state the obvious, tweeting and texting have severe limits. They are brilliant mediums for transmitting simple, short and sharp messages. But, when it comes to complex ideas, debating history and charting political strategies, they are worse than useless.

Relying on the favours of the capitalist press, radio and TV is a game for fools. True, it worked splendidly for Tony Blair and Alistair Campbell. But as Neil Kinnock, Gordon Brown and Ed Miliband found to their cost, to live by the mainstream media is to die by the mainstream media.

No, to set the agenda we need our own full-spectrum alternative.

The established media can be used, of course. But, as shown by the run-up to the anti-Corbyn coup, when things really matter, we get hardly a look in. Indeed the capitalist press, radio and TV were integral to the anti-Corbyn coup. There are, of course, siren voices to the contrary. Those who think we can win over *The Guardian*, the *Mirror*, etc.⁹ But, frankly, only the determinedly naive could not have anticipated the poisonous bias, the mockery, the hatchet-jobs, the implacable opposition.

Once we had the *Daily Herald*. Now we have nothing. Well, apart from the deadly-dull trade union house journals, the advertising sheets of the confessional sects and the *Morning Star* (which is still under the grip of unreconstructed Stalinites).

We should aim for an opinion-forming daily paper of the labour movement and seek out trade union, co-operative, crowd and other such sources of funding. And, to succeed, we have to be brave: iconoclastic viewpoints, difficult issues, two-way arguments, must be included as a matter of course. The possibility of distributing it free of charge should be considered and, naturally, everything should be put up on the web without paywalls. We should also launch a range of internet-based TV and radio stations. With the abundant riches of dedication, passion and ideas that exist on the left, we can surely better the BBC, Al Jazeera, Russia Today and Sky.

Of course, the Jeremy Corbyn-John McDonnell leadership faces both an enemy without in the PLP and an enemy within in their own reformist ideology. They seriously seem to believe that socialism can be brought about piecemeal, through a series of left and ever left Labour governments. In reality, though, a Labour government committed to the existing state and the existing constitutional order produces not decisive steps in the direction of socialism, but attacks on the working class ... and then, as we have

repeatedly seen, beginning with the January-November 1924 MacDonald government, the re-election of a Tory government.

History lessons

Naturally, knowing our history, real Marxists, not fake Marxists, have never talked of reclaiming the Labour Party. It has never been ours in the sense of being a "political weapon for the workers' movement". No, despite the electoral base and trade union affiliations, our party has been dominated throughout its entire history by career politicians and trade union bureaucrats. A distinct social stratum, which in the last analysis serves not the interests of the working class, but the continuation of capitalist exploitation.

Speaking in the context of the advisability of the newly formed CPGB applying to affiliate to the Labour Party, Lenin had this to say:

[W]hether or not a party is really a political party of the workers does not depend solely upon a membership of workers but also upon the men [sic - JM] that lead it, and the content of its actions and its political tactics. Only this latter determines whether we really have before us a political party of the proletariat.

Regarded from this, the only correct, point of view, the Labour Party is a thoroughly bourgeois party, because, although made up of workers, it is led by reactionaries, and the worst kind of reactionaries at that, who act quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie. It is an organisation of the bourgeoisie, which exists to systematically dupe the workers with the aid of the British Noskes and Scheidemanns [the executioners of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht].¹⁰

An assessment which still retains its essential purchase. The PLP is a 172-strong bourgeois party, which acts "quite in the spirit of the bourgeoisie". However, the election of Corbyn, the "core group" of 19 pro-Corbyn MPs, the massively expanded membership, gives us an unparalleled historic opportunity to refound the Labour Party as a party that "is really a political party of the workers."

Today the Labour Party is a chimera. Instead of a two-way contradiction between the leadership and the membership, we now have a three-way contradiction. The left dominates both the top and bottom of the party. That gives us the possibility of crushing the rightwing domination of the middle - the councillors, apparatus and PLP majority - from below and above.

No wonder the Tories, the army top brass and the bourgeois media want an immediate end to the Corbyn leadership. In this context, note David Cameron's genuinely impassioned entreaty to Corbyn during one of their set-piece PMQs jousts: "It might be in my party's interest for him to sit there. It's not in the national interest. I would say - for heaven's sake, man, go."¹¹ Tory MPs cheered to the rafters the "for heaven's sake, man, go" phrase. It is, of course, directly borrowed from that great bourgeois *revolutionary*, Oliver Cromwell. Most Labour MPs kept glumly silent. But obviously they agreed - having the day before voted 172-40 for the no-confidence motion.

In the exact same spirit, Sir Nicholas Houghton, the outgoing chief of the defence staff, publicly "worried" on the BBC's Andrew Marr show about a Corbyn government.¹² There were accompanying press rumours of unnamed members of the army high command "not standing for" a Corbyn government and being prepared to take "direct action".¹³ Prior to that, a normally sober *Financial Times* ominously warned that Corbyn's leadership damages

Britain's "public life".¹⁴ So, in the event of a Corbyn-led government, expect a "very British coup".

Of course, in the medium to long term we Marxists want the abolition of the Bonapartist post of leader. In the meantime, however, we favour Corbyn using *to the full* all the *dictatorial* powers accumulated by Ramsay MacDonald, Clement Attlee, Neil Kinnock and above all Tony Blair. From bitter first-hand experience, former Labour MP Alan Simpson writes: "When Blair talked of 'an unbroken line of accountability', he meant everyone, and everything, being accountable to him."¹⁵ We need a similar ruthlessness from Corbyn. Indeed, when dealing with the 172 rebel MPs, he too should borrow from the revolutionary Oliver Cromwell:

Is there a single virtue now remaining amongst you? Is there one vice you do not possess? Ye are grown intolerably odious. You were deputed here to get grievances redressed, are yourselves become the greatest grievance. Go, get you out! Make haste! Ye venal slaves be gone! Go! In the name of god, go!¹⁶

Corbyn's much publicised admiration for Karl Marx, his campaigning against Israel's occupation of the West Bank, opposition to US-led imperialist wars, call to junk Trident and nuclear weapons, his commitment to increase the tax take from transnational corporations, the banks and the mega rich, his Platonic republicanism, even his timid mumbling of the royal anthem - all mark him out as completely unacceptable to the British ruling class. It does not want him as the leader of the official opposition. It certainly does not want him as prime minister.

Of course, there is the danger that the Corbyn-McDonnell leadership will have their agenda set for them by the attempt to establish PLP unity. Put another way, in the attempt to placate the right, it will be the right that sets the political agenda. We have already seen the abandoning of principles, staying silent and putting them onto the backburner. Eg, John McDonnell's pusillanimous statements on Ireland. Eg, Jeremy Corbyn's refusal to defend the victims of the 'anti-Zionism equals anti-Semitism' witch-hunt. Now there is the call from the Corbyn-McDonnell leadership to have a "sensible" discussion on immigration. After the EU referendum McDonnell says we are no longer obliged to defend the principle of the right of people to free movement (he was disgracefully backed by Unite general secretary Len McCluskey). Such a course is meant to pander to working class EU exiters. But it disorients, demobilises and demoralises Corbyn's base.

Outside

What about those on the left who stand on the sidelines? Eg, members of SPEW, SWP, the *Morning Star's* CPB, Socialist Resistance and Left Unity? Do not dismiss them. Do not shun them. Instead they, or at least their cadre, should be viewed as a potential asset. If they throw themselves into the fight to transform the Labour Party, I am sure they would make an outstanding contribution. Necessarily, towards that end, there has got to be thoroughgoing self-criticism ... beginning at the top.

If Peter Taaffe, general secretary of the Socialist Party in England and Wales, wants to be treated seriously, it is obvious what he must do. Firstly, openly and honestly, admit that his characterisation of the Labour Party as a bourgeois party, as being no different from the US Democratic Party, was short-sighted, impressionistic and fundamentally mistaken. Secondly, he should immediately put an end to standing candidates against Labour. Close down the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition forthwith. Thirdly, comrade Taaffe must own up that his

repeated attempts to get trade unions to disaffiliate from the Labour Party amounted to sabotage. He should tell his comrades in RMT, PCS, NUT, etc to join us in calling for affiliation or reaffiliation. Unless he does that, a suitable replacement should be found.

The Socialist Workers Party is little different. Charlie Kimber, its national secretary, claims to "stand shoulder to shoulder with all those seeking Corbyn's re-election".¹⁷ But the SWP has likewise dismissed the Labour Party as a trap, backed Tusc, supported trade union disaffiliation and opposed affiliation. Indeed comrade Kimber sees the Corbyn re-election campaign as little more than an opportunity to "build for the 'Unwelcome the Tories' demo in Birmingham on Sunday October 2 and the 'Stand up to Racism' conference the week after on Saturday October 8".¹⁸ Myopia still rules.

Charlie Kimber says that what really matters is not changing the Labour Party, but "strikes and demonstrations". A Bakuninist, not a Marxist, formulation. Because the Labour Party is historically established, because it involves all big unions, because it has drawn in hundreds of thousands of new members, because it provokes bourgeois fear and anger, what is happening in the Labour Party is, in fact, a far higher form of the class struggle than economic strikes, let alone ephemeral protests or fake front conferences. In fact, the civil war raging in the Labour Party is a *highly concentrated* form of the class struggle.

Then there is the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain. When not promising to shop "entryists" to our witch-finder general, Iain McNicol, we have, in essence, a continuation of the SWP's movementist politics. *Morning Star* editor, Ben Chacko, wants to focus attention not on decisively winning the civil war in the Labour Party. Idiotically, even at this crucial stage, he sees "a task far bigger than the Labour Party". Fighting for a mass revolutionary party? No. Forging the links necessary for establishing a new workers' international? No. What comrade Chacko, laughably, wants is "organising at a local level in groups such as the People's Assembly, Keep Our NHS Public, Black Activists Rising Against Cuts and many more".¹⁹

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

Hopefully members of SPEW, the SWP, the *Morning Star's* CPB, Socialist Resistance and Left Unity will as a matter of urgency deal with their sectarian, their benighted, their nincompoop misleaders and join us in the history-making struggle to transform the Labour Party ●

Notes

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5. <http://labourlist.org/2016/02/mcdonnell-and-woodcock-clash-over-plan-to-scrap-member-checks/>.
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7. *Independent Labour Party Report of the 18th annual conference* London 1910, p59.
8. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leader_of_the_Opposition_\(United_Kingdom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leader_of_the_Opposition_(United_Kingdom)).
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10. VI Lenin *CW Vol 31 Moscow 1977*, pp257-58
11. *The Guardian* June 29 2016.
12. *The Mirror* November 8 2015.
13. *The Sunday Times* September 20 2015.
14. *Financial Times* August 14 2015.
15. <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/inside-new-labours-rolling-coup-the-blair-supremacy/>.
16. http://www.emersonkent.com/speeches/dismissal_of_the_rump_parliament.htm.
17. *Party Notes* September 12 2016.
18. *Party Notes* August 22 2016.
19. *Morning Star* September 10-11 2016.

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 ●

Skewered by moralism

An old-fashioned tabloid scandal? **Harley Filben** looks at the Keith Vaz affair. Sex between consenting adults should be their business

Spare a thought for Keith Vaz - a man who, having weathered a brief flurry of scandals in the early noughties, might have thought himself in the clear. He certainly seemed to us the sort of Teflon-coated careerist who thrived under the Blair and Brown regimes; who would retire at a time of his choosing to become Lord (Keith) Vaz of Somewhere-Or-Other: the full lifecycle.

Much of that, of course, is still perfectly possible. Yet it seems a great deal further away, after his resignation from the chairmanship of the home affairs select committee following allegations that he had consorted with male prostitutes, offered to buy them cocaine (he seems to have had the good sense, or taste, not to indulge himself), asked them to bring amyl nitrite to a carnal encounter, and - quite understandably - spent much of a tedious select committee session examining young gentlemen on Grindr.

Add it all up, and it's catnip for tabloids. Rent-boys, poppers and blow; what's not to love?

Vaz's misfortune in all this consists, in part, of his being - at 49 - a little too old. He started contesting seats in 1983, the same year as the infamous Bermondsey by-election, which saw a vile wave of anti-gay bigotry mobilised against Labour candidate Peter Tatchell; he was elected in 1987 in Leicester East, with the culture war over sexuality raging. This was certainly a time at which - for the aspiring politician - a wife was a very important accessory. Today, things are certainly not as bad, at least for candidates in most urban constituencies; there are many openly gay MPs, although the married and civilly-partnered probably still have a better time of it on the whole. (It is probably also true that those in search of casual sexual encounters will find paying for it more and more necessary, as the years roll on by.)

Thus Vaz has ended up cornered - a bisexual, presumably, for longer than the last month (although sexuality is, of course, a more fluid thing than is often acknowledged), he has been forced to repress one side of his sexuality as a concession to mores far stronger in his day than they are in 2016. In still earlier - and even more barbaric - times than the 1980s, homosexuals were hunted down in the state apparatus and other 'sensitive' senior positions in society as a 'security risk', given that they could be blackmailed. Vaz's experience reminds us that there is more than a grain of truth to that impulse: for, as soon as you have to conceal your innermost urges, you will *always* be at risk of exposure and potentially personal ruin. Vaz's political career may well survive this, as it would not have done 20, 30 or 50 years ago; but his private relationships may not.

For every victim of blackmail, there is a blackmailer. In this case, however, victim and perpetrator alike are not individuals, but collectivities. The beneficiaries, in this case, are obvious - the tabloid press. The benefits are, on one level, equally obvious: as noted, there is nothing more tabloid-friendly than a politician making the beast with three backs with some young gentlemen of the night. That kind of thing sells papers. It's a prestigious scoop, and hacks at the *Mirror* are no doubt as chuffed to break it as those at *The Sun* are livid about missing it.

Yet there is a wider issue, which



selling sleaze ... not holding an MP to account



consists of the fact that these 'incidents' in their *totality* amount to a permanent threat against elected politicians, prominent officials and the like. Keith Vaz did not want to end up like Peter Tatchell; the next fellow will not want to end up like Keith Vaz. Just as the police thrive in a society in which more or less everyone is guilty of some trivial infraction - speeding, smoking weed, pirating *Game of Thrones* - and thus can be interviewed under appropriately heavy manners at all times, so the press gains much of its power from hypocritically imposing a deformed and unattainable morality on its subjects.

There are other beneficiaries, of course - the more sincere guardians of public morality. Historically the most prominent among such people were conservative Christians of various stripes, but the multicultural breakthrough, and related endeavours, have fragmented moralism most spectacularly. There are, of course, other religions to consider (Islamist-inspired campaigns against strip clubs in east London spring to mind), but equally new secular contenders.

Thus, prominent among the voices calling on Vaz to resign as select committee chair was that of a pressure group - Nordic Model Now. NMN, as the name suggests, is a group advocating the implementation of laws similar to those in Sweden that criminalise the purchase of sex (but not the sale). NMN is entirely non-transparent about who is involved ("a diverse group of women from a wide variety of backgrounds"), but seems to have crawled out from the rotten caucus of anti-sex feminists and evangelical groups, who ally to provoke panics over prostitution and sex trafficking.

The last great 'achievement' of the home affairs select committee under Vaz, after all, was a long inquiry into prostitution that - much to the dismay of these creatures - ended

with a report explicitly opposed to the criminalisation of sex purchase and explicitly commending the "success" of decriminalisation of prostitution in New Zealand.¹ Some now want the report thrown out, on the basis that Vaz had a vested interest in the result.

This is utterly tendentious. For a start, select committees are not unanimous mouthpieces for their chairpersons - are they *all* punters? For seconds, Vaz is a longstanding supporter of the Nordic model; assuming that he agrees with the report as written, then he has changed his mind, but simply glancing at the names called before the committee on this matter will reveal as nonsense the idea that it was systematically biased towards decriminalisation advocates - quite the reverse. NMN and its friends had an open goal in front of them - we politely suggest that they managed to miss the target because it is a violation of basic formal logic to criminalise only one side of a transaction. In the end their model is a proposal designed to assuage feminist consciences and conform to the strictures of Christian *agape* love, rather than empower prostitutes; thus its extraordinarily thin evidence base and the propensity for its advocates (especially when it comes to the supposed plague of sex trafficking) to just *make shit up*.²

It is worth going into this not only because the issue itself is an important one, and for the left highlights a difference of *principle* (to wit: is liberation the conscious self-activity of the masses, or the rescue of the masses by benevolent policemen?). There is also, in fact, something deeply corrosive about sex scandals *as such*; it is one thing for a tabloid to publish a kiss 'n' tell, and quite another for people - be they writers for the same tabloid or others - to turn that kiss 'n' tell into an instrument of some political hobby horse of theirs. The effect is to encourage people at large to view political questions through 'non-political' spectacles, and thus to depoliticise politics, and finally to open the way to demagoguery of a more basic kind.

The best prophylactic against this, of course, is to build up its opposite - a political culture where opposing perspectives meet on the grounds of their disagreement, rather than shuffling about in committee rooms and doling out opportunistic press releases ●

Notes

1. See the conclusions here: www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201617/cmselect/cmhaaff/26/2602.htm.
2. For an old but admirably forensic takedown, see N Davies, 'Prostitution and trafficking - anatomy of a moral panic' *The Guardian* October 20 2009.

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