



# Socialist Labour

Brighton Conference Bulletin 2015

## DEFEND CORBYN - REFUSE TO RETREAT!

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### Socialist Labour - Who We Are

Socialist Labour is a brand new bulletin issued by a wide range of Labour Party socialists and trade union militants who want to see the working-class take power in society and create a socialist Britain and world. We welcome any socialists to our discussion groups and open editorial board. If you would like to join the discussion group or find out more about Socialist Labour contact:

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**THERE HAS BEEN** no greater hypocrisy than the attempt by the BBC to ignore #piggate and the crisis of the Tories whilst continuing to spread stories of disunity in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Jeremy Corbyn has been right to stand above this and continue to confront the issues of housing, wages and health that concern Labour Party members and voters.

What the allegations and facts against Cameron have shown is that the Tories come from a privileged culture that hates working people and those in need of support from the state.

This is the message that the whole Labour Party needs to drive home and the best way to do so is to increase campaigns and strikes against employers and cuts to demonstrate our anger at Tory Britain.

In this context, with over 60,000 members joining the Labour Party since Corbyn's election, we have the means to build a huge electoral and community force, but we are being sabotaged by some so-called 'Labour Grandees' (no comrades, you are no grander; we are all party members) and some parts of the Parliamentary Labour Party who backed one of the three pro-austerity candidates.

Those who attended the Special Conference will not be surprised, for within seconds, Blairites and others were briefing the media against Corbyn.

What they fear most is that Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell will be able to persuade voters that austerity is not necessary and that we can tackle the social ills of Britain. Policy issues are up for debate and decision by this Conference, but if any MPs cannot halt their sniping and plotting against Corbyn and McDonnell then there can be only one clear message:

**GO NOW and join another party.**

The media onslaught and the PLP disloyalty appear to be driving Corbyn and McDonnell away from some of the positions that led to 60% of the Party – some 250,000 individuals – voting Jeremy in.

### Rail Nationalisation – No Compensation

The promise of rail nationalisation is hugely popular – anyone who travels on lines with different train operators knows why – but trimming the policy so that only when contracts are up will mean only 25% of the network is in public hands by 2025.

This is nonsense – instead we should make clear to rail operators and investors, the whole rail network will be nationalised with no compensation so sell your shares now. After all, this is the instant measures the Tories took when privatising gas, mail and other utilities.

### NATO – We want no part of the neo-con alliance

Around the world, NATO and US forces prop up some of the most vicious regimes in the world. Jeremy Corbyn used to say that new alliances were necessary to counter the evils of the Saudi type states and the brutality of the Israeli occupation in Palestine and many others.

There must be no backsliding on this or, as argued overleaf, on the right of Irish people to self-determination. It is early days, but Corbyn and McDonnell need our support and we need to give them the message; **No Backsliding**, no airstrikes on Syria and Iraq, no imposition of a no fly zone to assist the USA to overthrow Assad, no retreat on British withdrawal from Nato, or on not renewing Trident by shadow defence secretary Maria Eagle, or shadow foreign secretary Hilary Benn.

# If Donkeys Dictate Policy Corbyn will Lose the Lions By Ella Downing

ON 15 SEPTEMBER the campaign of the mass media against the election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader reached a new frenzy. He had failed to ask God to save the Queen in commemorating the fallen Few in the Battle of Britain. Having wrongly accepted that the old Jacobite/Tory anthem was inextricable linked to commemorating the memory of those Few who fell in the belief they were defeating Hitler and fascism. 'Labour sources', representing capitalism and right wing Labour MPs, asserted that Jeremy Corbyn will sing the national anthem at future events. He should have said he could not because he was an atheist, republican and socialist.

The Sunday Times reported that a senior serving unnamed British General has threatened "direct action" by the armed forces against a future Corbyn Labour :

"The Army just wouldn't stand for it. The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul to prevent that... The intelligence services will refuse to let Corbyn see information on live operations because of his sympathy towards some terrorists."

Further they claim that four of the party's five-strong foreign affairs team, Hilary Benn, Tom Watson and four other shadow cabinet members and three whips are ready to back action in Syria in alliance with the Tories.

I agree with William Hague who wrote in *The Telegraph* last week that Corbyn can either water down his principles to suit his MPs, or begin the fight back against the Blairites who would stage a coup if he sticks to his guns.

The first approach is essentially reformist and in a post-Blair Labour party, with its abject deficit of

democracy coupled with many reactionary MPs in safe seats, like Simon Danczuk, John Mann, Lord Falconer, Sadiq Khan, etc. we cannot move forward without a radical restructure. That so many CLPs nominated Corbyn, that he won among affiliate members, registered supporters and the majority of long-term full members, and overwhelmingly in all three categories, demonstrates that we can trust the grass-roots. Democratization of candidate selection and a fairer procedure in our annual conference is both possible and desirable at this time.

We were always lions led by donkeys, a mass workers' party in hock to the ruling class. If Corbyn lets donkeys dictate policy he will lose the lions. The movement has not yet been consolidated to the extent that the establishment can't destroy it. There's a race against the clock when it comes to the right-wing press and major broadcasters, that is to smear and discredit Corbyn as much as possible before the mass of the population realises their game. If he steers true and manages to evade 'operation ice-pick' he will become hugely popular. However he must negotiate this first challenge, and declare the style and manner with which he intends to proceed.

So we face the old dichotomy, evolutionary vs. revolutionary change? And right now it is absolutely critical that Corbyn facilitates the deselection of many right wing Blairite MPs, not because that is a revolutionary move in itself, but because it advances the possibility of radical change - the freedom to achieve freedom if you like. To water down the policies which made him so popular in the first place so that they might seem more viable within the existing capitalist framework sets the stage for a fall, and settles on



Sir Tony Robinson and Rowan Atkinson as Baldrick and Blackadder. WWI and WWII were the slaughter of workers for the profits of capitalism.

a fundamentally reformist programme. It's a matter of reining back the proposals to fit the mould, or breaking the mould itself.

It's often said within the left that we should vote Labour but do so 'without illusions', that is to say we know Labour will do better by us than the alternative, the Tories and their ilk, but that they won't in the long-term win us the liberation we seek. This is still the case with a Corbyn led Labour Party. He may be the most rebellious MP ever, the most left-leaning leader of the Labour Party yet and provide an outlet for the expression of the radical tenancies of the British working-class, but he is not the panacea for all our ills.

A successful Corbyn Labour party may allow the vanguard of the working-class to emerge. However this possibility will either be realised or not in the coming months, and will absolutely depend on whether Corbyn decides to conciliate or democratise, that is to say whether he and his people settle for reformism or implement the radical change which would quite possibly lay the foundations for revolutionary change.

# John McDonnell and the IRA; no need to apologise By Frank Conroy

ON 16 SEPTEMBER Nigel Dodds, deputy leader of the DUP, attacked John McDonnell, the newly appointed shadow Chancellor, because in 2003 he had said: "It's about time we started honouring those people involved in the armed struggle. It was the bombs and bullets and sacrifice made by the likes of Bobby Sands that brought Britain to the negotiating table."

John issued an apology "from the bottom of my heart". He said, "I abhor the killing of innocent human beings... Irish republicans have to face the fact that the use of violence has resulted in unforgivable atrocities... [and they] need to accept that the time for violence has gone. Only the political process offers the real prospect of a united Ireland at peace with itself." But the apology only opened up yet more questions.

In commenting on this the Daily Mail posed two questions; does he still believe that IRA violence was as "a result of British occupation in Ireland"? Secondly does he still believe that "bombs and bullets" against an occupying force was what led to negotiation and, eventually peace?

Of course Nigel Dodds is a consummate hypocrite. He attended the funeral of UVF leader John Bingham in 1986. The UVF are far right terrorists who regularly acted as death squads for the British state. Lord Stevens told BBC Panorama that thousands of agents and informants were recruited during the Troubles, and that just one of the agents - Brian Nelson - may be linked to "dozens and dozens" of murders.

Baroness Nuala O'Loan, Northern Ireland's first police ombudsman, also found evidence that state agents were involved in murder. "They were running informants and their argument was that they were saving lives, but hundreds and hundreds of people died because these people were not brought to justice. There was impunity really for these people to go on committing their



Bobby Sands as a child; monuments and streets are named after him internationally; one in Teheran where the British embassy is. He was a heroic fighter against oppression. John Bingham was a UVF neo-fascist killer and agent of the British state. His only memorial is in Ballysillan Road, north Belfast.

crimes. Many of them were killers, some were serial killers." (Panorama: *Britain's Secret Terror Deals* BBC One 28 May 2015)

Marxists are totally opposed to methods of individual terror; planting bombs in public places inevitable leads to civilian casualties, intended or not. It alienates their biggest potential supporters, the British working class.

The sympathy and understanding of the British miners during the 1984-5 strike for the oppressed in 'Ulster' shows what can be accomplished against the common enemy in times of major class struggle. But individual terror not only alienates this but fosters the notion in the oppressed nationalists that this will solve their problems by forcing the oppressor to concede.

As in the 1921 Treaty and the 1998 GFA concessions thus conceded will not solve the fundamental grievance of the oppressed let alone tackle the underlying cause, the partition of Ireland and British occupation to impose its neo-liberal agenda of exploitation on the whole of Ireland.

We welcome the end of mass killings but we cannot forget that when the Civil Right movements began in 1968, peacefully demanding an end to appalling discrimination by the Orange state (defended by Westminster since 1921), they were met with brutal Orange state violence and then with massacres by the British state in Ballymurphy Aug. 1971 and Bloody Sunday Jan. 1972.

So much for Dodds' assertion that democratic roads were open to them, the IRA arose because democratic solutions were obviously closed.

The will of the people of the whole of Ireland is still denied; British imperialism imposed partition and an unjust settlement by its own violence and the violence of its sponsored agents, the Free State government in the Irish civil war in 1922-3 and the Orange State plus UVF terrorists latterly.

So not only was there no need for John McDonnell to apologise for the IRA his justification for doing so; that it forced the British to concede the peace process, was also not helpful. Sooner or later mass struggle will return because the problems of Ireland remain unresolved.

That struggle must be in alliance with the British working class itself to force British withdrawal and defeat the Loyalist murder gangs. Significantly the current threat to the Executive is caused by Loyalism playing the Orange Card to prevent a united working class struggle; Sinn Fein's opposition to the imposition of austerity was because of pressure from its grass roots which caused the initial threat to 'power sharing'.

That was the same sentiment that motivated the movement that elected Jeremy Corbyn. Both he and John McDonnell have no need to apologise for past support. It will not appease capitalism, right wing Labour MPs and bureaucrats, who fundamentally agree with the Tories on forcing the working class to pay for the crisis of capitalism; they risk alienating the movement that brought them to the leadership of the Labour party.