Angela Eagle chosen to front anti-Corbyn coup in UK Labour Party

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There can be few examples of political cynicism as naked as yesterday's launch of Angela Eagle's challenge for leadership of the Labour Party.

Eagle is the candidate chosen by Labour's right wing to front its efforts to depose Jeremy Corbyn, who was elected by 60 percent of the party's membership and supporters last September.

The campaign to remove him by 172 MPs pits the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP), unelected grandees such as former leader Neil Kinnock, and above all former Prime Minister Tony Blair and his inner coterie of war criminals, against the vast majority of the party and those who vote for it.

Supposedly acting in order to make the party electable, they are intent on either a putsch to insulate it from any popular pressure and a takeover of its assets, or its destruction in order to give birth to a new right-wing formation. Even as Eagle was declaring her candidacy, the media was filled with reports of high-level discussions with senior Tories on a potential new party of the "centre" and a yet more likely possibility of a merger with the Liberal Democrats to provide Labour's 170 plus anti-Corbyn MPs with a party machine to share with the eight Lib Dems.

Eagle is a typical representative of the forces involved in this attempt at political engineering. Her launch meeting made great play of her being a woman and a lesbian, with a gaudy pink backdrop consisting of the word's "Angela" super-imposed on a union flag that was also cast in pink hues in an appeal to identity politics and patriotism at the same time.

She said of herself, "I'm not a Blairite. I'm not a [former labour leader Gordon] Brownite. I'm not a Corbynista. I am my own woman. A strong Labour woman."

"I can bring our Party together again," she concluded.

Eagle has voted in favour of the party's right-wing, pro-business and militarist agenda on every central issue. She famously voted in favour of the Iraq war in 2003. But in addition, according to the *They Work For You* website, she has "consistently voted against an investigation into the Iraq war," in September 2014 voted in favour of air strikes in Iraq, in December 2015 voted in favour of air strikes in Syria, supports the retention of the Trident nuclear weapons programme, has "generally voted for a stricter asylum system," voted in favour of increased university tuition fees, supported the Blair government's 2006 plan to detain terrorism suspects for up to 90 days without charge, and abstained on the vote on the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition's 2013 workfare programme and on the vote for the 2015 Welfare Bill.

Her candidacy was planned in secret by the Blairites and Brownites weeks before it was announced. She had even commissioned a website, "Angela for leader", days before she announced her resignation from Corbyn's shadow cabinet with tears in her eyes for the cameras.

She spoke of uniting the party just one day before Labour's National Executive Committee rules on whether Corbyn will even be allowed on the ballot. Corbyn insists that he should automatically appear on the ballot, but his opponents are marshalling a legal case that he needs the support of 20 percent of the PLP, 51 MPs—knowing that he only has the support of 40.

Eagle's claim is that ditching Corbyn and electing her will enable Labour to win a general election. However, just six minutes before she was accepted as a leadership challenger, Jon Trickett, Labour's election coordinator and a member of Corbyn's shadow cabinet, greeted news that pro-Brexit Tory Andrea Leadsom had abandoned her own leadership challenge to Theresa

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May by stating, “It now looks likely that we are about to have the coronation of a new Conservative prime minister. It is crucial, given the instability caused by the Brexit vote, that the country has a democratically elected prime minister. I am now putting the whole of the party on a general election footing.”

The Blairites have no intention of challenging the Tories at such a time of national emergency. In the *Daily Telegraph*, one Labour MP described Corbyn’s demanding a snap election as equivalent to “running full pelt off the edge of a cliff.” Once again they hid their collusion with the Tories behind claims that Corbyn had made Labour unelectable, even portraying calls for an election as an attempt to “exploit the instability in Westminster to cling to power” by sacrificing up to 100 Labour MPs who would lose their seats!

Corbyn is still determinedly opposing any struggle to drive these forces out of the party, which he would have to do if he were to honour a single one of his pledges to oppose austerity and militarism. Speaking on his behalf, Diane Abbott MP told the BBC’s “Today” programme that the “best hope” of getting a good result at the general election was for people to unite and “get on with taking the fight to the Tories.”

She reassured Labour MPs that, “There will be no split.”

Len McCluskey, leader of the Unite trade union, again urged Labour to step back from what he described as a “squalid coup” that has “snowballed into a wrecking operation against the Labour Party itself, destroying it at least temporarily as a parliamentary force.” After which he urged, “There needs to be reconciliation with the Parliamentary Labour Party. We must re-establish mutual respect and unity and address real concerns over campaigning, policy, image and the rest. That is what I was working for over the last week—to try and hold our party together, as the trade unions have done so many times in the past when politicians have let us down.”

Some fear that the best efforts of Corbyn’s supporters and the trade unions will not be enough to save Labour as a vital instrument for policing the working class and defending the interests of British imperialism—under conditions in which Eagle herself faces a vote of no confidence in her local Wallasey Constituency Labour Party, which has swelled from 900 members before June 24 to 1,200 today.

The *Daily Mirror’s* Kevin Maguire warned that his experience at last week’s Durham Miners Gala convinced him that “The masses of decent Labour voters I met in Durham, enthused by Jezza’s [Corbyn’s] anti-austerity alternative platform, would feel cheated by a procedural fix. And that would strengthen, rather than weaken, the Cult of Corbyn. It would also leave the party ungovernable and a split certain.”

Writing in the *Independent* in support of Corbyn’s removal, Louis Staples wrote that it was “unfortunate that Eagle isn’t up to the job... In the aftermath of Chilcot, rallying around Eagle as a potential leader shows how deeply out of touch Labour MPs are with their membership and the public mood.”

Staples suggest that someone who is not widely seen as “Blairite scum” should stand.

Also in the *Telegraph*, Tony Blair’s former director of political operations, John McTernan, indicated that Eagle is viewed by at least some Blairites as little more than a stalking horse. “We should expect the NEC to confirm that Corbyn needs nominations,” he said. “Angela Eagle’s challenge will force the clarification of the rules—for which she should be praised—but if Corbyn is off the ballot she will not be standing alone for long... Expect Owen Smith to mount a serious challenge.”

Last night, *Politics Home* announced that Smith, the former shadow work and pensions secretary, would stand, and announce his candidacy as early as today.

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