

What the coup against Jeremy Corbyn reveals about the Labour Party

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Just ten months ago, Jeremy Corbyn was elected labour leader, pledging to recast the party as an opponent of austerity, militarism and war. Today Corbyn is a marked man who the majority of Labour Party MPs have determined must be expelled from office.

Around 170 parliamentarians and a few hundred apparatchiks are engaged in a sordid plot to overturn the express wishes of the hundreds of thousands of members and supporters, many of them young, who joined Labour because they wanted Corbyn to succeed.

Ever since he became leader Corbyn—citing his intention to inaugurate a new era of “kinder, gentler” politics and to maintain party unity—has retreated before his opponents on every single issue he claimed to stand for—including abandoning his decades of opposition to the European Union (EU) in last month’s referendum. Every retreat, every appeal for party unity has emboldened and strengthened the right-wing and demobilised Corbyn’s own supporters.

The coup against Corbyn is being led by people who should have been deselected as Labour MPs, but who he instead brought onto his shadow cabinet. It is backed by former party leaders who are all intimately associated with the lurch to the right by Labour that Corbyn promised to reverse, including Neil Kinnock, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Their acolytes will stop at nothing. Labour’s National Executive Committee (NEC) first tried to prevent Corbyn from standing in the election, by demanding he won the support of the very MPs who voted to remove him. When this manoeuvre failed, NEC members waited until Corbyn’s supporters had left the room and ruled that no one who has joined the party since January—130,000 people so far—will be allowed to vote. An obscure body known as the NEC Procedures Committee has extended this ban to cover trade union members affiliated to the party.

The NEC also ruled that no Constituency Labour Party will be allowed to meet for the duration of the contest due to “fears of intimidation.” To justify this blatant attempt to suppress dissent and sabotage Corbyn’s chance of winning the leadership contest, progressive, left-leaning people, often lifelong opponents of racism and sexism, are denounced as a mob of racists threatening to kill or rape women MPs—all on the basis of anonymous tweets and Facebook postings. Hacks such as John Harris of the *Guardian* declares of Corbyn supporters that “misogyny and antisemitism are never far away.”

The Procedures Committee are now trawling through Labour members online social media accounts for evidence of the use of words such as “traitor” as the basis for hopefully expelling a target figure of 50,000. The whole of the Brighton, Hove and District and Gorton CLPs have been suspended simply on the basis of mere accusations made by anti-Corbyn party members.

In the face of all of this, Corbyn’s key ally, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, declared that “The party won’t split.”

“Labour Party members and MPs are democrats,” he said. “We’ll have a democratic debate. It will be amicable.... And when the membership decides who will be the leader, we’ll unite behind that leader.”

Neither Corbyn nor McDonnell are so naive as to believe that the party’s right-wing have a democratic bone in their body. They know, because it has been widely reported, that their opponents intend to either successfully purge the party or they will split and form a new one firmly committed to austerity, to NATO and to renewing UK membership of the EU.

Corbyn will not say this because he would rather see his supporters thrown out and fall on his own sword than risk

breaking the stranglehold enjoyed by the Labour Party over the working class.

The central lessons that must be drawn from the bitter experiences of Corbyn's period in office and the coup mounted against him is that Labour cannot be reformed.

Corbyn is only the latest in a long line of "lefts"—including his mentor Tony Benn—who serve the political role of concealing the real character of the Labour Party.

Labour was, from its birth, dedicated to the defence of capitalism against the threat posed by the working class. Kinnock, at a July 8 meeting to mobilise the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) against Corbyn, admitted as much. He told MPs, "In 1918, in the shadow of the Russian revolution, they made a deliberate, conscious, ideological choice—that they would not pursue the syndicalist road, that they would not pursue the revolutionary road—it was a real choice in those days. They would pursue the parliamentary road to socialism...

"Because we are a democratic socialist party, committed to a parliamentary road to power, it is vital, essential, irreplaceable, that the leader of this party has substantial—at least substantial, if not majority—support from those who go to the country and seek election to become lawmakers, the way chosen by the people who established the Labour Party."

Kinnock insists that only those who are acceptable to MPs—and not Labour members—have a right to a position of leadership because Labour MPs have always functioned, in alliance with the trade union bureaucracy, as policemen of the working class and guardians against the spread of socialist and revolutionary sentiment.

If this was true in the 1900s, then to claim that the PLP will heed the wishes of its members more than a century later—after it supported two world wars and betrayed the 1926 general strike and countless other struggles before making its forced march to the right ever since the 1980s—is the stuff of political fantasy.

The birth of "New Labour" in the mid-1990s was not simply the result of the subjective machinations of Blair and Brown—to be rowed back on by placing Corbyn in the leadership and recruiting new members. It was a manifestation of a universal response by social democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies everywhere to the development of globalised production—as they abandoned any adherence

to reformist policies based on national economic regulation and pledged to the free market, privatisation and the systematic undermining of workers' wages and working conditions in the name of achieving international competitiveness.

Labour MPs are well paid representatives of the capitalist class, often with direct relations to the security services of the UK and the United States. For example Labour MP Ruth Smeeth, who recently declared that Corbyn had made the Labour Party "unsafe for Jews", was exposed by WikiLeaks as a "strictly protect" US informant.

That is why, in the aftermath of the June 23 referendum vote to Leave the EU, at a time of acute crisis for British imperialism and with the potential break-up of the EU posing a threat to NATO and US plans for staging military aggression against Russia and China, the clique around Blair put into operation a predetermined plan to get rid of Corbyn.

As far as Britain's rulers were concerned, the presence of even someone as loyal as Corbyn in such high office could no longer be tolerated—for fear that he might arouse left-wing anti-capitalist sentiments in broader layers that he would be unable to control. Defeating Corbyn is, for the right, not an end in itself but preparation for waging a sustained political offensive against the entire working class.

Likewise defeating the Blairite coup plotters must involve far more than efforts to secure Corbyn's re-election. It means workers and young people familiarising themselves with the revolutionary socialist and internationalist perspective, opposed throughout its history by Labour, and represented by the International Committee of the Fourth International, and dedicating themselves to the construction of a genuine party of the working class.



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