

Corbyn and McDonnell plead with UK Labour Party right wing for “unity”

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Labour Party Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell made an extraordinary plea for unity with the very MPs seeking to depose his closest ally, Jeremy Corbyn, in a coup.

Speaking Sunday to the BBC’s “Andrew Marr Show,” McDonnell broke from the interview and, speaking directly to the camera, said, “Let me say to Labour Party supporters, Labour members, members of the Parliamentary Labour Party [PLP], we have got to stop this now. There is a small group out there that are willing to destroy our party just to remove Jeremy Corbyn. We have got to stop them. We’ve got to unite.”

McDonnell was responding to the latest provocative move by the Blairite coup plotters, who claimed via accusations from Labour MP Seema Malhotra that “members of staff working for John McDonnell and Jeremy Corbyn” gained unauthorised entry to an office she had used in Parliament. The *Observer*, the sister paper of the *Guardian*, which supports the efforts to oust Corbyn, splashed this on its front page—even though its article included a statement from Corbyn’s office directly opposing the claims.

A spokesman for Corbyn said, “As an office manager on the leader of the opposition’s floor, Karie [Murphy] has a key to open all offices. She accessed the office in question to confirm when it would be vacated. It is a month since Seema Malhotra resigned as shadow chief secretary to the Treasury, and the office is intended for the person holding that position.”

This latest manufactured incident followed yet more pleas for unity by Corbyn as he launched his leadership campaign Saturday in Salford.

The previous day, Labour MP Owen Smith, who is challenging Corbyn for the leadership, spoke at a meeting in nearby central Manchester. The events could

not have been more sharply contrasted. In a city with a population of over half a million, Smith spoke in Manchester’s Friends Meeting House to just 300 people. Corbyn spoke to a capacity audience of 2,000 in Salford’s Lowry Theatre. The event was streamed live on Facebook with over 100,000 people logging in to watch and close to 200,000 having viewed it by Sunday evening. Ten simultaneous launch events across the country were held at the same time.

For weeks, Corbyn has been denounced by the right-wing acolytes of former Labour leader Tony Blair as being “unelectable” and “out of touch” with Labour voters, particularly in Labour’s “heartlands.” Using this to justify their coup against Corbyn, 172 MPs backed a motion of no-confidence in him. After trying to prevent a leadership contest taking place, Smith was chosen as the “unity candidate” who could supposedly combine a left feint with that mysterious “electability” of an inveterate opportunist.

The problem is that anyone who is fielded by the PLP is viewed with hostility by the broad mass of party members and seen as a pliant tool of those who have overseen Labour’s transformation into an openly big business, pro-war party and who are now intent on subverting Corbyn because he is pledged to oppose austerity, militarism and war.

On Saturday, the *Guardian* published a poll commissioned by Opinium and the *Observer*, which found that Corbyn is set to trounce Smith in the September 24 contest. Some 54 percent of Labour supporters said they support Corbyn, with Smith having the backing of just 22 percent.

Just 10 months ago, Corbyn crushed his three Blairite opponents, winning the support of more than 250,000 Labour members and registered supporters—more than all his opponents put together. All indications are that

Corbyn's support among Labour's members has grown since then as a direct result of opposition to the attempted coup against him.

After failing to keep Corbyn off the ballot, the Blairites attempted to cut off 130,000 Labour members and supporters who had joined in the last six months from voting in the leadership contest. They were given just two days to register and pay a prohibitive £25 fee. Nevertheless, 180,000 people signed up. Labour's membership under Corbyn's leadership is now well over half a million.

The aim of the Blairites is not merely to depose Corbyn, but to thwart growing anti-capitalist sentiment and yearning for fundamental social change among millions of people. However, every manoeuvre attempted so far by the coup plotters has backfired. Indeed, their attempt to package Smith as the new rising star "in touch" with voters has not even survived a week of contact with the real world, to the point that Smith felt it necessary to declare in Manchester, "I'm as radical as Jeremy."

The support for Corbyn is only an initial manifestation of far more profound political developments, rooted in the deep social polarisation between the classes in the UK. Nearly a decade of savage cuts carried out by successive Labour and Conservative-led governments since the 2008 global financial crash has resulted in millions of working people being pauperised. Young people, who make up much of Corbyn's support, have no future, with the avenue of a decent free education and secure employment now denied them.

But far from offering their supporters a programme of struggle against the Blairites, Corbyn and McDonnell have capitulated to them at every turn in the name of preserving "party unity."

McDonnell speaks of a "small group" opposing Corbyn, but this small group consists of the vast bulk of the PLP to whom he made his unity appeal. These MPs ignore all such pathetic appeals and instead join enthusiastically in the campaign, slandering Corbyn's supporters as "violent thugs," "anti-Semites" and "misogynists."

In Salford, Corbyn too urged his supporters to seek unity with the coup plotters, saying, "I know some people are angry at the actions of some MPs, but where we have disagreement in the Labour Party we settle it

through democratic means—no coups, no intimidation, no abuse... Whatever the result on the 24th of September, we're going to be a united movement to take on the Tories..."

No coups? No abuse? Democratic means? What does this have to do with the reality of the vicious right-wing offensive mounted against those Corbyn now urges to turn the other cheek?

Corbyn acts as a block on the aspirations of those who support him. He is all that stands between the party's right wing and a political reckoning. Under conditions of mass revulsion felt by millions towards all the institutions of the ruling elite, including Parliament and its parties, he insists that any change can be accomplished only via a Labour government and Parliament. "Many of us have sought office in Parliament," he declared, "in order to effect those changes—but changes come because people want those changes to come and Parliament has to influence how those changes come about."

To claim that Labour can be made to implement anti-austerity and anti-war measures, as does Corbyn, means to lie to the working class.

In the previous week, three quarters of Labour MPs voted to retain the UK's nuclear missile arsenal, with many advocating its use in future conflicts. Prior to this, the Chilcot report into the Iraq War was released, providing devastating confirmation of the illegal character of the war and the criminal role of those—Blair and his supporters—who organized and led it in support of US imperialism. Corbyn, despite his professed opposition to both the Iraq War and Trident renewal, said nothing about either issue in Salford—also, one must assume, to further the cause of party unity.

To take a single step forward, those presently looking towards Corbyn for leadership must consciously reject the limitations he and his supporters place on them and adopt a genuinely revolutionary socialist perspective and leadership.



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