

UK Labour leader Corbyn refuses to oppose denial of vote to party members

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British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn has confirmed his capitulation to the decision of the party's National Executive Committee (NEC) to exclude up to 150,000 members from voting in the upcoming party leadership contest.

On Friday, the Court of Appeal in London handed down a politically motivated ruling supporting the NEC in denying a vote to those who have joined the party since January. This decision overturned a High Court ruling just days earlier in favour of legal action by five party members on behalf of those disenfranchised. The High Court had ruled that all members had the right to vote in the contest.

The leadership election is the outcome of an ongoing coup against Corbyn organised by supporters of former Labour prime minister and war criminal Tony Blair.

Speaking to the BBC Saturday, Corbyn went no further than to lament that the Court of Appeal had "denied those members a vote in this election, which I think is very sad."

Speaking at a rally in Milton Keynes the same day, all he could manage against the Labour right wing was to complain that they "don't like the way things are going" and are not "prepared to play ball." This was followed by yet another plea for party unity. "Come September 24," he said, "this election campaign will be over. Come September 25, get on board, join in, take the fight to the Tories."

The BBC described Corbyn's speech as an "appeal for unity."

On Sunday, Corbyn used an extensive interview with the *Observer* newspaper to play Pontius Pilate regarding the denial of the right to vote to fully a quarter of the party's membership. He said he was "very disappointed," as "people joined the Labour Party in order to take part in the party and were

specifically told that they were able to vote in the leadership election and that was decided by the High Court that they could."

But when asked if the members would achieve anything by taking their case any further, possibly through legal action in the Supreme Court, Corbyn replied, "Probably not."

He then played down the red-baiting of Labour deputy leader Tom Watson, who last week described as "Trotskyist entryists" members who have joined the party in mass numbers in support of Corbyn over the last year. Using language legitimating this anti-communist witch-hunt and playing into the hands of the right wing, Corbyn stated: "At no stage in anyone's most vivid imagination are there 300,000 *sectarian extremists* at large in the country who have suddenly descended on the Labour Party [emphasis added]."

Labour's NEC nominated a Procedures Committee, whose members include Watson and General Secretary Iain McNicol, which then imposed a membership cut-off date designed to disenfranchise party members. Alongside Watson, McNicol then forced through the appeal of the High Court's ruling.

Corbyn refuses to move for the removal of McNicol, as demanded by many Labour members. Asked three times if he had confidence in McNicol, Corbyn stated, "I have been happy to work with him."

The current NEC has already been repudiated by the membership. On Tuesday, it was announced that Corbyn's supporters won all six positions up for grabs from Constituency Labour Party members in the latest elections to the 33-member NEC, giving him a clear majority on the body. In contrast, the right wing won no NEC seats in voting by the Labour Party constituencies.

Even with this additional mandate to fight Watson,

McNicol, et al., Corbyn pledged to do nothing. He told the *Observer*, “We will receive a report from Iain [McNicol] about the process that has gone on over the last few months. And the NEC will no doubt ask him questions and he will give answers on it. But let’s look at that when the new NEC takes over.”

The new NEC will not take over until October, after the leadership contest, thus handing the initiative, yet again, to the right wing.

To add insult to injury, Corbyn again denounced expressions of hostility to the right wing by his own supporters. On Friday evening, Corbyn held a second hustings with leadership challenger Owen Smith, during which Smith was booed. The *Observer*, sister newspaper of the *Guardian*, which is leading the campaign for Corbyn’s removal, said of the hustings, “This campaign is turning a little nasty. There was a lot of booing at the event last night.”

In reply, Corbyn said nothing about the truly sordid activities of the Blairites, while stating, “People should treat each other with respect. I don’t do abuse and I don’t think that anyone else should, whoever they are.”

Corbyn never once sought to utilise the *Observer* interview to denounce the Blairite coup plotters or detail the political skulduggery employed against him. Instead, he legitimised their efforts as a democratic expression of the wishes of the electorate.

The *Observer* said to Corbyn that MPs opposing him “get their mandate from their constituents” and it was “perfectly reasonable for MPs, who are taking soundings from voters, to say they are unwilling to support you as leader because they don’t see you as being electable as a prime minister.”

To this lie Corbyn answered, “Of course, it is perfectly reasonable.”

He concluded with yet another plea for unity: “They can take a position, and they have done. And they are welcome to make the comments that they do. But I just remind them that we are all members of the Labour Party. We are all selected and promoted and supported by members of the Labour Party.”

The extent of Corbyn’s cowardice in the face of the right wing’s onslaught will no doubt shock many among the hundreds of thousands of workers and youth who voted him into office based on his pledge to oppose years of Labour-backed spending cuts, militarism and war. But Corbyn’s actions are not

fundamentally the result of either naiveté or spinelessness. He constantly invokes the integrity of the party, calling for unity with the right, and deliberately plays down of the coup against him and the lengths to which the right wing are prepared to go because to do otherwise would confront workers with the reality of the Labour Party as an instrument of the British state.

It would mean politically repudiating his central assertion that Labour can be transformed into a party representing the interests of working people.

The Labour Party is, by virtue of its programme and history, a pro-business party of warmongers. Its MPs view the influx of new members, who represent the growing left-wing sentiment of millions throughout the UK, with horror and undisguised hostility, viewing it as an impediment to carrying out Labour’s political mission of serving British imperialism.

On Sunday, the five Labour members who took out the legal challenge to the NEC stated they could not afford to take the case against the NEC any further. They revealed that more than £93,000 had been donated by supporters since the Court of Appeal ruling to help them pay their legal costs of £30,000. The Court of Appeal ruled that the five had to pay back this amount to the Labour Party.



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