

Jeremy Corbyn re-elected leader of UK Labour Party

Chris Marsden
24 September 2016

Jeremy Corbyn was re-elected Labour Party leader today, with an increased majority and a higher turnout than when first elected in September last year.

The vote, announced just after 11:45 a.m. on Saturday at Labour's special conference, was 61.8 percent for Corbyn to just 38.2 percent for his challenger Owen Smith. Corbyn won in all categories—members, registered supporters (who paid £25 to do so) and supporters affiliated through their trade unions. Over half a million voted due to the near trebling of the party's membership over the past 12 months.

Corbyn's victory was achieved in the teeth of a coup attempt led by the party's Blairite wing, supported by the vast majority of the party's MPs and backed by every one of Britain's TV channels and major newspapers, including Britain's state broadcaster the BBC, and the nominally liberal *Guardian*. In the face of witch-hunts, membership purges and slanderous denunciations of his supporters as thugs, anti-Semites, misogynists and "Trots," the contest proved that the Blairites and Brownites are widely despised even by a majority of their own party—which is only a pale reflection of how they are viewed more broadly. In contrast, Corbyn's stated aim of opposing austerity, militarism and war has galvanised popular support—despite his own record of capitulations to the right wing since taking office.

Once again, Corbyn has sought to snatch defeat from the jaws of his victory, by abasing himself before his opponents in the name of party unity. He thanked Smith, who he hoped to continue working with, "Because we are part of the same Labour family—and that is how it is going to continue to be."

The Labour family must reunite, he insisted. "Sometimes in election campaigns, things are said that

people regret." But there was "far more that unites us than divides us. ... Let's wipe that slate clean, from today, and get on with the work we have got to do as a party together."

To add insult to injury, Corbyn accepted without demur the slanders levelled against his supporters for the "crime" of expressing hostility to the right wing—stating that there would be no toleration of "personal abuse" or "intimidation."

Corbyn's main allies joined in the unity chorus.

Shadow Health Secretary Diane Abbott said, "We're not going to hold anything said in the campaign against anybody. ... We want the party to unite."

Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell told the BBC that Labour MPs had nothing to fear and there is "no threat of deselection." Asked whether an invitation to return to the shadow cabinet would be extended to Hilary Benn, who spearheaded the walkout that precipitated the leadership contest on a pro-war, pro-nuclear weapons platform, McDonnell said yes: "Hilary's incredibly talented. We've worked together over the years."

Speaking for Momentum, the pro-Corbyn umbrella group that encompassed Labour members and the various pseudo-left groups outside the party, national organiser James Schneider said to MPs, "Come and talk to us. ... We're not campaigning for deselections."

Corbyn's overarching commitment to unity proves he is not an opponent of the Labour bureaucracy, but its last line of defence. His political role is a rebranding of Labour, which has become politically toxic as a result of its rightward lurch to overtly pro-business and pro-war policies. His aim is to prevent the emergence of a genuine struggle by workers and youth that would inevitably lead to a break with Labour.

As the scale of the defeat for the party's right

became apparent this week, its representatives retreated from earlier threats to split the party, declaring their intention to stay and fight to restore Labour as a reliable political instrument of British imperialism. (See Blairite coup to continue despite UK Labour leadership vote outcome)

The chief Blairite think tank, Progress, declared, “None of us came to this contest with sufficient ideas, organisation and supporters,” but “This is our party and we are going nowhere.”

It urged the creation of a “soft-Left” grouping to mobilise Smith supporters because “it is this grouping that halts their advance to their real aim: control of the party machine.”

The ongoing schemes of the right rest entirely on Corbyn’s efforts to demobilise the oppositional sentiment that brought him to office. For this reason, the *Guardian*, which has led the propaganda campaign against Corbyn, editorialised that Labour would now be judged above all by “the leader’s ability to bring the party together again, not force it apart.”

Its columnist Owen Jones declared that, whereas “the fury that has resulted” from the right-wing witch-hunt “may be understandable ... it will prove fatal if unchecked.”

He warned that “Leftwing politics could be subsumed into a struggle against ‘the 172’”—a reference to the MPs who supported a vote of no-confidence in Corbyn.

Referencing a recent photo op by the Labour leader, Jones counselled: “Corbyn has posed by an olive tree to demonstrate his sincerity in reaching out. In doing so, he’s setting an example his followers must surely follow.”

The main pseudo-left groups have all lined up to vouch for Corbyn, while issuing only the mildest rebuke of his “mistaken” capitulation to the right.

The Socialist Workers Party issued a press release boosting Corbyn’s political bona fides and warning of the “massive pressure” on him “to compromise and appease the right wing.” “Boldness and a break from ‘politics as usual’ won Corbyn his support. He must not back down,” it pleaded.

The Socialist Party declared his victory to be “a bridgehead against the forces of capitalism within the Labour Party” and “another step to transforming Labour” into a socialist party--provided only that its structures are “democratised” to allow them to rejoin.

The Socialist Equality Party is alone in making clear to workers and young people the central lessons to be drawn from Corbyn’s one year in office. The SEP’s statement—which was circulated at Momentum’s *The World Transformed* event in Liverpool—explained that Corbyn’s declared aim of “transforming the Labour Party into a vehicle for mass opposition to austerity, militarism and war is a chimera. While he may remain, at this point at least, Labour leader, on all substantive issues of policy the right wing continues to hold sway. ... The issue posed before workers and youth is not who leads the Labour Party, but the building of a new workers’ party based on a programme of socialist internationalism.”



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