

# UK Labour right calls for cross-party pro-EU alliances in general election

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A significant section of the Labour Party and its media backers are working for the defeat of their own party in the snap June 8 election, sprung last week by Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May. They calculate that a defeat for Labour will enable the removal of Jeremy Corbyn as leader, after their previous attempts failed.

Former Labour leader Tony Blair has called on voters to pressure candidates to commit to holding “the Government properly to account in the interests of the country. This should cross party lines.”

Although Blair claimed he was “not urging tactical voting,” his emphasis on backing candidates opposing Britain leaving the European Union, Brexit, was a clear signal to support the Liberal Democrats. According to reports, Blair will join Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron to “make pro-European Union interventions” during the election campaign.

Last September, Lord Peter Mandelson openly expressed his desire for a snap election that would see Labour defeated and Corbyn slung out of office. Speaking at a Royal Television Society conference, he called on May to “bring it on so we can deal with the awful situation in the Labour party earlier than 2020. I get up every day and pray that will be the case.”

Mandelson worked closely with Blair to ditch Labour’s reformist programme and launch New Labour as another version of the Conservative Party in the 1990s. He is part of the cross-party Open Britain group, formed to oppose a “hard Brexit,” where the UK banks and corporations lose access to the European Union’s Single Market.

Since the shock Leave vote in last June’s referendum on UK membership of the EU, hostility to Corbyn’s leadership on the part of the Labour right has become entwined with efforts to reverse or mitigate the result. Efforts to this end have nothing to do with concern for immigrants or the defence of the free movement of labour. They regard the Leave outcome as a grave threat

to the interests of British and American imperialism on the continent, not just on accessing Europe’s markets but especially as regards NATO’s military aggression against Russia and China.

Labour MP Helen Goodman, former Work and Pensions minister, said that there was no hope of her party winning on June 8.

“I don’t think this election is about changing the Government,” she said. It is “about preventing the Tories from getting such an overwhelming majority that there is no possibility of dissent in this country.”

Goodman has previously called for Corbyn to be replaced. She was speaking after 13 Labour MPs, including Michael Dugher, a former shadow minister, and Dave Anderson, shadow secretary of state for Northern Ireland, announced they would not contest the election.

A Green Party call for a “Progressive Alliance” together with the Liberal Democrats and Labour, based around support for the EU, has thus far been rejected by Farron and Corbyn. But as Blair’s statement indicates, sections of the Labour Party are actively working on this basis.

Surrey Labour Party is reported to be ready to back a Liberal Democrat candidate next week. The *Daily Telegraph* said the local branch will vote on a motion that Labour should not contest the election, but instead “swing behind a single progressive candidate.”

The move, which is against party policy, is being co-ordinated with the Labour-aligned Compass think tank. Its head, Neal Lawson, has insisted that cross-party alliances are necessary to deal with the “threats, challenges and opportunities” facing the country in the referendum’s aftermath.

Compass has set up a £30,000 crowd funding appeal to finance a “Progressive Alliance”, calling on “Labour, Greens, Liberal Democrats, the SNP [Scottish National Party], Plaid [Party of Wales], the Women’s Equality Party—people of all progressive parties and none must

come together to make this happen—from the local to the national.”

At the anti-Corbyn Labour blog, “Left foot forward”, Ranjit Sidhu, urged, “We must demand that the parties of the Left work together.”

Sidhu urges the pro-Remain parties to agree on “single preferred candidates for each seat based on current control and which party has the best candidate to challenge... we must accept, regardless of the individual parties results that the next government will be a Green/Liberal Democrat/Labour Coalition government after the election.”

For the pro-Blairite Prospect think tank, this alliance can have no limits. In an article, “How should Remainers vote on 8th June?” Edward Docx urged his readers to “put party politics completely to one side,” arguing “if you care about the welfare of your fellow citizens and consider the EU preferable to, say, Messrs Putin or Trump, you must now vote Lib Dem wherever they have a chance... Yes, even if you’re Labour ‘through and through,’ even if you’re a ‘lifelong’ Tory.”

A key element of the defence of the EU is its role in aiding NATO-led provocations against Russia. Those masquerading as “progressives” are some of the most ferocious warmongers against Russia.

In “Lib Dem free zones”, Docx calls for the parties to “get the consent of their nominating officers and run on a pre-agreed joint ticket” under the name “The Labour Party and The Liberal Democrat Party.” Failing that, the “progressives” must vote “for whichever of the candidates is pro-Europe and against Hard Brexit,” including Tory candidates.

This is in line with another crowd funding campaign launched by Gina Miller, the multimillionaire investment manager for SCM Private, who took legal action against the government’s attempts to trigger Brexit without a new parliamentary vote. Miller was represented in her legal action by Mishcon de Reya, a leading advocate of the finance and banking sector in London.

Her Best for Britain group is aimed at funding the largest ever tactical voting drive to endorse those candidates who back the need for a “meaningful” vote by MPs, at the end of the two-year negotiations with the EU. This will almost certainly be directed against pro-Corbyn Labour MPs.

Dan Hodges, a Blairite *Telegraph* columnist, took to Twitter to announce, “I’m going to vote Conservative. And I’m not going to think twice.”

At the Huffington Post, Leon Spence, a former Labour

councillor who defected to the Conservatives following Corbyn’s second election victory last year, calls on Tory activists to go “toe to toe” with Labour campaigners.

In the face of this concerted campaign, Corbyn is once again determined to avoid any confrontation with the right wing. He has pledged to unveil the most “radical” Labour manifesto in decades and his first speech on the election was the most left-sounding he has ever made. He stated that the dividing line in the election was “the establishment versus the people,” he said, pledging that Labour would not “play by the rules” of the “cosy cartel” that had rigged “the system in favour of a few powerful and wealthy individuals and corporations.”

“We will not let the elite extract wealth from the pockets of ordinary working people any longer,” he continued. Labour would govern in the interests of “The nurse, the teacher, the small trader, the carer, the builder, the office worker, the student, the carer.”

Corbyn hopes that he can overcome the right-wing saboteurs by appealing above their heads to widespread social discontent and anti-war sentiment that presently finds no outlet. But genuinely acting on these sentiments would require mobilising workers and youth in a political struggle against the Labour right, who constitute a vital element of the “cosy cartel” Corbyn denounces, and who have made clear their vehement opposition to even the most minimal redistribution of wealth in favour of working people.

This is a struggle that Corbyn, a loyal defender of the Labour Party, which has functioned as the main political prop of British imperialism for more than a century, will avoid at all costs.



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