

Blairites declare UK Labour party unelectable

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Labour's right wing is now openly campaigning for a defeat for the party in the June 8 snap general election.

Yesterday, the old war criminal himself, Tony Blair, went on Rupert Murdoch's Sky TV and refused to endorse Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, stating that Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May would win the election.

The issue was not to run a "conventional partisan election" that relegated Britain's exit from the European Union to one issue among many, he asserted. The task was to build a parliamentary opposition across party lines to a Brexit that takes "membership of the single market and the customs union off the table." On this basis, Blair urged voters to consider also backing Liberal Democrats and anti-Brexit Tories.

In the Labour Party and in the media, Blair's followers are taking up the theme of Labour's un-electability under Corbyn with less reserve than even their political mentor. A striking feature of this offensive is how it centres on denunciations of any and all calls for social equality.

On Wednesday, *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee asked, "How can Labour survive this Tory tidal wave?"

She cited a Tuesday morning meeting at the Smith Institute where Labour MPs heard a "presentation by Deborah Mattinson, of Britain Thinks, and Nick Pecorelli, of The Campaign Company—leading pollsters and focus groupers who have followed Labour's fortunes over decades."

These "leading pollsters," Toynbee declared in apocalyptic tones, had explained that Labour was doomed because "[t]he class and culture divide between Labour leaders and its putative voters yawns too wide to bridge."

Mattinson and Pecorelli had explained "[t]he thinking" of working class voters "now is that Labour doesn't like 'people like us', is neither 'one of us' nor 'on our side'. Whose side is it on? It's the party of posh metropolitans who defend only immigrants and people on benefits."

She continues, "The words the leadership uses have little meaning or resonance with erstwhile Labour voters. 'Austerity' is empty verbiage to them, says Mattinson. Social justice, equality, fairness—these have no traction; they are abstractions that, if understood, are viewed with suspicion: more money for immigrants and people on benefits."

The meeting cited by Toynbee is properly understood as one hosted by a right-wing Labour Party think tank, featuring two right-wing Blairites advising right-wing Labour MPs on why a further shift to the right is the order of the day.

Mattinson and Pecorelli, the apparently disinterested pollsters, told the Labour bureaucracy precisely the message it wants to hear because they are both political creatures spawned from out of the bowels of the party machine. And both have played their own role for decades in helping shift Labour to the right under Blair and his ally and successor, Gordon Brown.

Campaign Company boasts that Pecorelli was an adviser to Brown and a "Labour Party Assistant General Secretary covering Policy and Campaigns, economic consultancy and NHS management."

Mattinson was Brown's chief pollster when he was Blair's chancellor from 1997 to 2007 and remained in the role after Brown succeeded Blair as prime minister in 2007. She has written numerous articles for *Progress*, the main Blairite think tank.

The Smith Institute, named after former Labour leader John Smith, is directed by Paul Hackett, previously "Special Adviser to the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott MP and other ministers at the Department of Communities and Local Government (1997-05)."

All of them traded on their political connections with the bureaucracy to go private, so they could be paid more handsomely for their so highly valuable insights.

Mattinson began her career under political consultant

and former advertising executive Philip Gould, the man enlisted by Blair's director of communications, Peter Mandelson, as a strategist and polling adviser to Labour in the general elections of 1987, 1992, 1997, 2001 and 2005.

A *New Statesman* article in 2010 notes that she was in on the ground floor and assisted Gould in running "something called the Shadow Communications Agency, which had been tasked with helping to make Labour electable again. Thus was born the focus group, a phenomenon familiar to advertising agencies, but hitherto unknown in the world of British politics."

The article notes that, under Blair and Brown, "there was scarcely a domestic policy announcement that had not first been road-tested on Middle England."

Mattinson's previous work on behalf of Labour includes "Emerging from the Darkness," an internal report commissioned by the party's then-interim leader, Harriet Harman, in 2015, following Labour's defeat in the 2015 general election under Ed Miliband.

Based on interviews with 10 focus groups in Watford, Croydon, Nuneaton, Edinburgh and Glasgow, the report said that, under Miliband, the Labour Party was "in thrall to the undeserving." It had to "redefine and revitalise its brand," and be "for middle class voters not just down and outs."

The report was hailed by the Blairites as pointing the direction of travel for the party, before Corbyn's landslide leadership contest victory on an anti-austerity, anti-war ticket temporarily cut across such moves.

This heralded an 18-month campaign to get rid of Corbyn by any means necessary, leading to the present offensive meant to guarantee the party's defeat on June 8.

The contempt for the "undeserving" and hostility to "social justice, equality, fairness" points to the real social layers represented by the Labour Party.

To return to Mattinson, she was a co-founder of Opinion Leader Research Limited (OLR), which was owned by Chime Communications. By 2007, she owned about 2 million shares worth around £1 million in Chime Communications. OLR's accounts showed that its three directors, including Mattinson and co-founder Viki Cooke, took home in 2007 aggregate emoluments, excluding pension contributions, of £445,502. The highest paid of the three, who is not named, took home £223,000.

After Brown was kicked out of office in 2010, Mattinson and Cooke left Chime to set up Britain Thinks later that year.

While spewing out right-wing propaganda denouncing

benefit claimants, it is the social layer epitomised by Mattinson and Pecorelli who have amassed enormous wealth via their parasitic relationship to the Labour and trade union bureaucracy, which they have now negotiated into a personal fortune.

A 2007 investigation by the *Sunday Telegraph* found that in the previous two years, OLR won nearly £3 million worth of contracts "across an astonishing array of government departments and agencies." These included the Treasury run by Brown and the Department of Constitutional Affairs "when it was led by Labour's deputy leader, Harriet Harman, a close friend of Miss Mattinson."

Britain Thinks, whose latest work on the upcoming June election was described by Blair himself as "required reading", boasts of its relationship with clients including McDonald's, E-Bay, British Gas, Centrica, Barratt Development's, Morrison's and Waitrose. Other clients listed are the UK government's Home Office and, lo and behold, the *Guardian*.

Mattinson, Pecorelli, Cooke and Toynbee represent the political dregs of New Labour. The opinions they cite are those of "focus groups" that are used to reinforce a political message that serves a privileged social layer grown exceedingly wealthy as a result of the pro-business, privatisation agenda championed by Blair and Brown.

They have far more in common with May than with her government's victims. Only such selfish and venal creatures could describe references to the austerity measures that have ruined the lives of millions as "empty verbiage."

The meeting referenced by Toynbee and the views expressed therein underscore that, regardless of Corbyn's leadership, Labour remains the political vehicle of this grasping social layer, which is filled with fear and contempt for the working class.



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