UK Labour Party adopts pro-business, militarist election manifesto

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On Wednesday, a draft of the Labour Party's manifesto for the June 8 general election was leaked, with several newspapers publishing its contents Thursday amid screaming headlines denouncing it as tantamount to communism.

Later that day, Labour's Clause 5 committee discussed the draft. The committee includes the nominally left Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, his fierce right-wing critic and deputy leader Tom Watson and other leading party and trade union officials. After the meeting, Corbyn declared to the press that the document had been unanimously agreed and would be officially released next week.

The manifesto has been agreed because it contains all the main demands of the Blairites.

It reaffirms Labour's commitment to NATO and the renewal of the Trident nuclear weapons system. On the terms of Britain leaving the European Union, it affirms that Labour's central concern is for British business to retain access to "the benefits of the Single Market and the Customs Union."

The manifesto is so entirely dedicated to the interests of Britain's ruling elite that the *Guardian* newspaper praised its contents, along with a number of its columnists who have been demanding Corbyn's head since he was elected leader in September 2015.

Leading supporter of the party's Blairite wing, Polly Toynbee, wrote that the manifesto was a "cornucopia of delights." In contrast to Labour's 1983 manifesto—dubbed by the Labour right as the "longest suicide note in history"—she wrote, "There is no reprise here of the killer pledges that caused the party to split back then – pulling out of Europe, out of NATO with unilateral disarmament, protectionist exchange and import controls, or nationalising pharmaceutical, building materials and many more industries."

Columnist Jonathan Freedland said the policies in the manifesto were "highly popular," negated only by the party's "leader and its perceived ability to run the economy."

The word "socialism," mentioned nine times in the 1983 document, does not appear in the manifesto. Neither do the words, "capitalism" or "working class." Instead, the document, in order to prevent any appeal on a class basis, is titled, "For the many not the few." This is a slogan associated with Blair's New Labour.

The manifesto opens with Labour's economic strategy, which retains the ditching of Clause IV carried out by former leader Tony Blair over 20 years ago—a clause that had committed a Labour government to nationalisation of basic industry. It states, "Labour understands that wealth creation is a collective endeavour—between investors, workers, public services, and government. Each contributes and each must share equitably in the rewards."

Labour will develop an "industrial strategy [that] will make Britain a better place to do business, and give businesses the confidence to invest in Britain.

"Corporation tax in the UK is the lowest of any major developed economy, and so we will ask large corporations to pay a little more while still keeping UK corporation tax among the lowest of the major economies."

The 1,000 individuals that comprise the super-rich, who have total known wealth (excluding bank balances) of £686 billion, have nothing to fear from Labour. Any tax increases are aimed at income, and not the wealth, of those earning £80,000 and above.

All public spending commitments in the manifesto—including an extra £6 billion annually for the National Health Service, the abolition of university tuition fees and building "affordable homes"—are to be

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subjected to Labour's Fiscal Credibility Rule, which stipulates, "that Government should not be borrowing for day-to-day spending." Labour states it will task the "Office for Budget Responsibility [OBR] with overseeing our Fiscal Credibility Rule." Any public spending outlined in the manifesto can be vetoed, with the OBR "responsible to Parliament with a clear mandate to 'blow the whistle' on government breaching these rules."

The manifesto articulates the interests of the dominant section of the British ruling class in demanding access to the European Union's "Single Market and the Customs Union—which are essential for maintaining industries, jobs and businesses in Britain." It commits to scrapping the Conservative government's Brexit negotiating strategy.

The "nationalisations" pledged in the document are phony. On the National Health Service, its privatisation "reversal" only pledges to ensure that "excess private profits are not made out of the NHS at the expense of patient care."

Royal Mail's nationalisation will take place only at the "earliest opportunity." The privatised rail system will be brought "back into public ownership," but only as the current private "franchises expire."

Labour's commitment to militarism and British imperialism's war drive is emphasised. It states, "We live in a period of growing international tensions. A strong, viable and sustainable defence and security policy must be strategic and evidence led." On this basis, "A Labour government will order a complete strategic defence review when it comes into office—to assess the threats facing Britain and the necessary defence requirements. We will ensure that our Armed Forces are properly equipped and resourced to respond to wide-ranging security challenges. Labour will commit to effective UN peacekeeping, including support for a UN Emergency Peace Service."

The manifesto complains that Tory governments "have put Britain's security at risk, shrinking the army to its smallest size since the Napoleonic wars. The scrapping of Nimrod, HMS Ark Royal and the Harrier jump jets, have weakened our defences…"

In deference to the Blairites, it states, "The last Labour government consistently spent above the NATO benchmark of 2% of GDP on defence." It commits to "spending at least 2% of GDP on defence…"

Far eclipsing all its public spending promises, the manifesto commits to the renewal of the Trident submarine nuclear weapons system, at a cost of more than £200 billion. Using nuclear weapons is not ruled out, with the document stating only, "Any prime minister should be extremely cautious about ordering the use of weapons of mass destruction which would result in the indiscriminate killing of millions of innocent civilians."

Despite all this, *The Sun* featured Corbyn alongside red flags and hammer and sickles and described the manifesto as an "extraordinary socialist blueprint for power." The *Daily Mail* described it as a "socialist manifesto that is red in tooth and claw and dripping with class envy."

This response reveals the extent to which the dominant sections of capital will not tolerate anything that impinges even slightly on their accumulation of vast wealth. Any hint of a redistribution of wealth is considered blasphemy.

The manifesto in fact confirms that Labour is run by a right wing, pro-austerity, pro-war cabal.

On Friday, Corbyn spoke on his foreign policy at the Royal Institute of International Affairs (Chatham House) think-tank in London. While reassuring his audience that he was "no pacifist," he stated, "Labour is committed actively to pursue disarmament under the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and we are committed to no first use of nuclear weapons."

This is not true. Asked last month if she agreed with Corbyn's declaration that he would not authorise the launching of a nuclear bomb, Labour's Shadow Defence Minister Nia Griffith said this was not Labour's policy. "We are prepared to use it, and I'm certainly prepared to use it."

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