

UK: Corbyn ally John McDonnell declares Labour's mission is to “stabilise capitalism”

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For the past week, the People's Assembly (PA) have been holding numerous events in Manchester protesting the annual conference of the Conservative Party.

The political thrust of all the protests organised by an amalgam of various pseudo-left groups, ex-Stalinists, trade union bureaucrats and a handful of Labour “lefts” is to hail the prospect of a Labour government led by Jeremy Corbyn as a likely successor to the crisis-ridden government of Theresa May.

In July, Corbyn was the featured speaker at the People Assembly national demonstration in London titled, “Not One Day More—Tories Out.”

Counterfire, one of the founding organisations of the People's Assembly, editorialised during the conference protests, “Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party has acted as part of the inspiration for the spreading mood of resistance. He has backed every strike and his emphasis on opposing austerity has helped revive the labour movement and emboldened those who want to see a socialist society.”

The reality behind such claims was exposed during what should have been the crowning achievement for the PA—the appearance October 2 by Shadow Chancellor and key Corbyn ally, John McDonnell, at a meeting held in Manchester Cathedral entitled, “An Economy that Works for All.”

Feeling himself among friends, McDonnell was at times too candid for his own good.

Instead of reaffirming his anti-austerity pose, he made clear that Labour's economic programme has been drawn up in direct collusion with big business representatives to “stabilise capitalism.” And for admitting as much, the shadow chancellor was applauded to the rafters.

McDonnell began by explaining how under a Labour government, strikes such as those recently held by

McDonald's workers and rail workers would be unnecessary as their interests would be prioritised. “This is what we call socialism,” he declared.

After taking his seat, McDonnell participated in a question-and-answer session led by *Guardian* journalist Gary Younge (who also writes a regular column for the *Nation* magazine in the US).

At one point in proceedings, Younge asked McDonnell what was meant by comments he made during the recent Labour conference that Labour was “wargaming” in advance of coming to power and looking at all scenarios, including the possibility that there could be a run on the pound and the danger that “they come for us.”

McDonnell replied this “wasn't a slip of the tongue,” but a necessary statement: “I wanted to reassure our own people, but I [also] wanted to reassure the outside world that we are prepared for anything.”

To his “own people”, if this means sections of workers looking to Labour to fight for them, “wargaming” would suggest plans for a struggle against the ruling class. Not so. When McDonnell speaks of reassuring the “outside world,” he means big business. And his reassurances are that Labour has surrendered before it even takes office—and will do what is asked of it.

“I've been sitting down with asset managers in the City [of London] for the last two years,” McDonnell explained. “I've been talking to them about our investment plans. We're putting aside £250 billion [US\$331 billion] for investment and infrastructure. Where did I get that figure from? I got it from the CBI [Confederation of British industry].”

Only a Labour government could create the conditions, in a post-Brexit environment, for the banks, asset managers and hedge funds to continue to reap

profits: “Basically what this will do is give them a stable return... a fast buck isn’t necessarily in their long-term interest,” he said. “What we are saying to them is that we are government that knows where it is going ... that has a stable programme for investment ... What more do you want?”

Concluding his remarkable explanation, McDonnell said, “In some ways, it’s a bizarre situation. They are coming to us for reassurance against a government that is falling apart. So Jeremy Corbyn and I are the stabilisers of capitalism.”

For these candid but right-wing comments, he was rewarded with another round of applause by the assembled “lefts.”

McDonnell’s comments followed an interview with the *Sunday Times* during the Labour conference, which also noted that the “shadow chancellor is trying to douse his firebrand reputation with overtures to bankers.”

He told the newspaper, “What the asset managers have been telling us is that they need investment opportunities... A relationship was being established, but since the election result it’s dramatically changed because they think there is the potential for us going into government.”

The *Sunday Times*, published by billionaire oligarch Rupert Murdoch, noted approvingly that McDonnell “has softened his antibusiness rhetoric as he begins his transformation from left-wing firebrand to chancellor-in-waiting... He has even toned down his rhetoric on class war and insists the speeches he has given supporting insurrection and urging activists to ‘bring down the government’ are part of his ‘street oratory’.”

McDonnell didn’t have to engage in “street oratory” when speaking before the People’s Assembly crowd. He could speak as frankly to them of how the CBI dictates Labour’s policies as when addressing the *Sunday Times*.

Despite the “socialist” rhetoric they spout when the occasion suits, the myriad pseudo-left and Stalinist groups are all in fundamental agreement with McDonnell—the job at hand is to defend capitalism, the system that this self-satisfied and well-heeled layer all benefit from.

McDonnell’s pro-capitalist statements have a striking and all-too recent historical parallel. The last darling of the pseudo-left to make such a confession was the

former finance minister of the Syriza government in Greece, Yanis Varoufakis.

In May 2013, Varoufakis told an audience in Zagreb, the Croatian capital, “[I]t is the Left’s historical duty, at this particular juncture, to stabilise capitalism; to save European capitalism from itself.”

Within two years, he was headhunted from his post in academia to join the Syriza government as number two to Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

Syriza had been swept to power based on its pledge to end the scourge of austerity imposed on Greece on behalf of the world’s banks by the European Union and the International Monetary Fund. Varoufakis and Tsipras were feted by pseudo-left organizations the world over and Syriza hailed as the new model for building other “mass left parties.”

The International Committee of the Fourth International and World Socialist Web State warned consistently against such illusions and were rapidly vindicated. Instead of carrying out the mandate they were elected on, Syriza spent months pleading with the EU for paltry concessions on the terms for imposing austerity measures. It then repudiated a landslide vote against further austerity in the July 2015 referendum and agreed to impose even harsher spending cuts than its predecessors.

In its 2016 Congress resolution, “Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party: The strategic lessons,” the Socialist Equality Party warned, “Should Corbyn come to power, he will play exactly the same role as Tsipras in Greece.”

Usefully, McDonnell has now made this very clear.



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