

Corbyn auditions for government before big business and intelligence agencies

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With the crisis over Brexit wracking Britain's ruling elite, Jeremy Corbyn is offering the Labour Party under his leadership as a safe pair of hands that can be trusted with the reins of power.

Once denied access to critical intelligence briefings on the basis that he was deemed by many in ruling circles as a threat to "national security," Corbyn has met with both the UK's main intelligence agencies in recent weeks. After first meeting the domestic agency, MI5, for a briefing on the struggle against "extremism," he then met with Alex Younger, the head of the foreign intelligence service, MI6, reportedly to discuss possible preparations for a snap general election in the event of the failure of Brexit negotiations. Corbyn has not said a word about the content of his meetings, but days later the head of the Armed Forces, General Sir Nick Carter, confirmed the existence of "sensible contingency plans... Whether it's a terrorist attack or whether it's a tanker drivers' dispute, industrial action or whatever else it might be."

Corbyn appeared before the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) on Monday to deliver what was billed as his main policy speech on Brexit. The event was the third successive year he has addressed the CBI's annual conference in the heart of London's Canary Wharf financial district. He spoke immediately after Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May, who received a lukewarm reception.

Corbyn insisted a Labour government was a better option for business than the Tories, telling his audience that Labour's Brexit policy was framed around their requirements. "Labour will not countenance a no deal Brexit" because "I fully understand why business, which knows how disastrous no deal would be, is so concerned at the prospect, and why some might feel under pressure to support any deal, no matter how

botched and half-baked, to avoid a worse outcome."

We're "talking about 10,000 lorries a day arriving at Dover handling 17 percent of the country's entire trade in goods, worth an estimated £122 billion last year," he continued. "Businesses and workers need certainty," so Labour insisted on "a new comprehensive and permanent customs union with a British say in future trade deals that would ensure no hard border in Northern Ireland and avoid the need for the government's half-baked backstop deal. Second, a sensible deal must guarantee a strong single market relationship."

All he was asking in return for delivering on these key issues was that, "The largest businesses that can afford it will pay a bit more towards the common good."

To facilitate delivering on businesses' demands, Corbyn proposes legislation for trade union officials to have places on the boards of larger firms. He assured his audience, "Despite the frenzied reactions in certain sections of the press this certainly isn't about any kind of war on business, rather the opposite. Labour recognises the vast and vital contribution businesses make to our economy and our society."

At the centre of this proposal is developing the competitiveness of British capital based on policies of intensified collaboration between management and employee representatives who "have an interest in the long-term success of your company—their company. They have in-depth knowledge of its day to day workings. They have so much to contribute and giving them a real voice will strengthen, not weaken, the business."

Asked his views on those who became rich through business in the CBI Q&A session, Corbyn replied, "I don't have a problem with people doing well at all.

Indeed, I know many in my own community and other places that do set up and establish small businesses, and sometimes they grow to be considerably bigger.”

He declared, “And if they do become incredibly rich, then I invite them to be happy with their wealth, but also to share it a bit by paying their taxes as appropriately so that our public services are there for them, just as much as they are there for everybody else, so that we don’t have this horribly divided society.”

There is precious little to distinguish such statements from the infamous words of Tony Blair’s leading advisor Peter Mandelson that “New Labour” was “*intensely relaxed* about people getting filthy rich.” All Corbyn wants is for the financial oligarchs to leave a few crumbs for everyone else.

Corbyn authored an article in the pro-Labour *Daily Mirror* to coincide with his CBI appearance that confirmed his evolution from a non-descript backbench Labour MP, prone to registering a protest at his party’s rotten policies, to an imperialist statesman in waiting. He denounced May’s EU deal as “an unparalleled and unacceptable loss of sovereignty, which Labour will not accept on behalf of our country.”

Corbyn speaks often of the gravity of the social situation facing the working class and the worsening threat to the wages, conditions and livelihoods of millions. He even suggests that there may be the need for a general election, but only if May’s deal proves unacceptable to parliament and she does not agree for a minority Labour government to restart negotiations with the European Union. His tortured formulations are necessitated by his not wishing to do anything that suggested to the super-rich that he would genuinely put the interests of the working class above theirs. He doesn’t want Labour to come to office as the result of an ignominious fall of the Tories, with millions of workers demanding an end to policies of austerity and militarism, but with as smooth a transition as possible.

This was demonstrated just two hours after his CBI speech, when he ensured that the May government could continue in office unhindered. Monday evening saw Corbyn and 30 other Labour MPs absent themselves, without explanation, from crucial votes on the government’s budget.

One of the amendments to the bill, on child poverty, was put by Corbyn himself. With May’s coalition partners, the Democratic Unionist Party, refusing to

back the government as a protest over a “backstop” arrangement in the EU deal that keeps the UK and Northern Ireland in the Custom’s Union, the government won by just five votes. Commenting on the debacle, Scottish National Party MP Neil Gray said, “Labour had the chance to defeat the government, they apparently knew the DUP were voting with us, and they still contrived to let the Tories off the hook.”

In 2013, two years prior to becoming prime minister, the leader of Syriza, Alexis Tsipras, went to the United States to speak before the Brookings Institution to allay any fears that he was serious about opposing austerity or threatening imperialist interests in the Mediterranean. “Is there really a reason for somebody to be afraid of the left in Greece today?” he asked. “But how are we really radical?”

Tsipras passed his audition and went on to impose far more brutal austerity than even his right-wing predecessors after coming to power in 2015. Corbyn’s own audition has been ongoing for over three years, as he has conspired with the trade unions in suppressing all struggles of the working class and made one retreat after another before his Blairite opponents. He hopes that his staunch defence of national sovereignty and the essential concerns of the CBI will finally convince the ruling elite that he is someone they can trust as British capitalism enters its most turbulent period since World War II.



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