

Corbynites rewrite history of their refusal to fight UK Tories’ “herd immunity” policy

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The Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) of British Labour MPs issued a statement Thursday evening declaring that the “government’s mishandling and deliberate decisions throughout the Covid pandemic amounts to social murder.”

The signatories state that they “have no confidence in this government delivering justice or learning the lessons of this crisis. Those that have overseen this crisis should resign.”

An epic level of cynicism is involved here, in what is an attempt by the Labour “left” to cover its own rotten record throughout the pandemic.

The letter was issued in the wake of the testimony given to parliament by Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s former adviser Dominic Cummings on Wednesday. He provided forensic detail of the government’s refusal to implement any measures to combat the pandemic for months as they contemplated herd immunity being established on a mountain of human corpses.

Over 150,000 people are dead and nearly four months have passed since the BMJ (formerly, the *British Medical Journal*) levelled the charge of social murder against Johnson’s government. Only now, more than a year since the start of the pandemic, does the SCG publicly acknowledge what has taken place and call for heads to roll. The SCG’s own owl of Minerva doesn’t fly at dusk; it is, to paraphrase Monty Python, a dead owl.

Earlier the same day the most prominent member of the SCG, former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn made his first comments on the Cummings revelations—in an interview with RTÉ Radio One’s *Drivetime*.

His choice of such an obscure platform, reported by a single newspaper, the *Irish Independent*, says everything about his desire to minimise the political impact of Cummings’ declaration that “Tens of

thousands of people died who didn’t need to die.”

Not a word has been posted on Corbyn’s Twitter account, which has a following of 2.4 million people—close to half the entire population of the Republic of Ireland, even if reposts are not factored in.

Corbyn presented himself as having offered an alternative to the Johnson government’s handling of the pandemic. He “would like to think” he would have done better and stated that he “immediately started challenging the government” during the early stages of the crisis while he was still Labour leader.

In fact, as the rest of Corbyn’s interview demonstrates, he and his co-thinkers in the SCG were complicit in the crimes carried out by Johnson and the Tories.

Corbyn told RTÉ, “We had meetings with the government: several with the cabinet office, and one with Johnson later on and with other ministers. They simply would not take it seriously. They believed in this herd immunity nonsense.”

This is the second time Corbyn has admitted, in an off-hand fashion, that he was informed of the government’s murderous strategy while Labour leader. In August last year, he told a *Tribune* magazine podcast, “We were involved in meetings with the government throughout the spring of this year and Jon Ashworth and I remember distinctly going to a meeting at the Cabinet Office, where we got a lecture about herd immunity... And so, while the government was going into eugenic formulas and discussing all this stuff, they were not making adequate preparations.”

The *Tribune* interview was the first the working class heard of this from the putative left leader of one of the largest political parties in Europe. He kept silent on the issue for months.

Even now, Corbyn recounts these meetings so

vaguely that the most significant exposure of the Johnson government to date has come from the right-wing axe-grinding of Dominic Cummings!

While he was being lectured on herd immunity in private, Corbyn used his public appearances to begin the de facto coalition with Johnson now continued by his replacement as Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer. In a parliamentary debate on the coronavirus pandemic in March 2020, Corbyn stated, “Our immediate task as the Opposition is to... support the government’s public health efforts while being constructively critical where we feel it is necessary to improve the official response.”

“Constructive criticism” has since become Starmer’s byword justifying collusion with the Tories’ every effort to abandon containment measures and fully reopen workplaces, schools, and universities.

Corbyn used his final appearance in the House of Commons as Labour leader to once again preach national unity: “The wellbeing of the wealthiest corporate chief executive officer depends on the outsourced worker cleaning their office. At times like this, we have to recognise the value of each other and the strength of a society that cares for each other and cares for all.” Johnson happily proclaimed his agreement with such stupid “all in it together” bromides.

Once the Labour Party was peacefully returned to its Blairite masters in April, Corbyn and the SCG dedicated themselves to buttressing Starmer and the trade unions acting in partnership with Johnson.

With all the leading Corbynites safely retired to the backbenches, the SCG suddenly discovered in a statement last May that the Tory government was waging “class war” by forcing workers back to their jobs in unsafe conditions. The sole purpose of this brief political awakening was to direct mass anger at the Johnson government into safe channels. The statement concluded, “There has never been a more important time to either join or become more active in a trade union.” At the time, SCG members were also spearheading the “Don’t Leave, Organise” campaign trying to stem the flood of disgusted Labour members leaving the party.

Meanwhile, the trade unions, led by the Trades Union Congress, suppressed any independent action by workers to ensure their safety and close unsafe or non-

essential facilities and Starmer supported every government pandemic policy and headed the efforts to reopen schools.

It was not until September, six months after the start of the pandemic, that the SCG even released a statement calling for the proper suppression of the virus through a zero Covid strategy, a transparent farce given that its implementation would demand political war against the very party they all loyally represent. Only in its most recent statement does the SCG politely suggest that “the role of Labour in this crisis should never have been to primarily support the government.”

Members of the SCG, including Corbyn, broke ranks with Starmer just twice in the last year over the pandemic: to vote against the 10pm pub curfew in October and the December return to a regional tier system. They did this officially on the grounds that these measures were inadequate and ineffectual, but by offering no fight for an alternative policy only succeeded in lending a hand to the anti-lockdown Tory right.

After deliberately throwing away control of the party, the SCG is once again reduced to a rump in parliament while Corbyn is not even a Labour MP, suspended based on the slanderous “left anti-Semitism” witch-hunt that he also refused to fight. Yet even now they do all they can to continue blocking any independent political development of the working class on behalf of their supposed opponents on the right.

The Socialist Equality Party and the *World Socialist Web Site* have insisted throughout the pandemic that Johnson’s and capitalist governments internationally are pursuing a ruthless campaign of social murder and class war on behalf of big business. Fighting back will involve a struggle not just against the Tories, but also against the trade unions, the Labour Party and its left appendages in the SCG. It means building independent rank-and-file committees in the workplaces and, above all, a new and genuinely socialist leadership. *Find out more about the Socialist Equality Party in Britain.*



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