

Johnson government plunged into crisis, the working class must bring it down

Chris Marsden
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Britain's Conservative government has been plunged into a desperate crisis by further revelations of its indifference to the human suffering and deaths resulting from its criminal handling of the pandemic.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has been described as a “dead man walking” after leaks confirming that he attended a “Bring Your Own Booze” garden party at Downing Street, attended by 40 leading Tories and staffers.

His forced and desperate apology in parliament yesterday, in which he still claimed that the May 20, 2020 gathering was a work-related meeting and therefore exempt from pandemic lockdown rules, was described by COVID-19 Bereaved Families for Justice as pouring “more salt into the wounds of those who have already lost so much to this pandemic... He's incapable of telling the truth and he needs to go.”

On the day Johnson et al were taking advantage of what an invite from Martin Reynolds, Johnson's Principal Private Secretary, described as “lovely weather”, 329 people were reported dead of COVID, bringing the accumulated death toll at that time to almost 35,000.

Millions throughout Britain want nothing more than to see the back of Johnson, who remained true to his herd immunity agenda even when forced by public pressure to impose partial and belated lockdowns between March 23 and June 23, 2020 and again on January 6 to July 19, 2021. He is a hated serial liar and mass murderer who will be forever associated with the angry declaration, “No more fucking lockdowns! Let the bodies pile high in their thousands!”

Getting rid of Johnson means striking out on an independent course of political and social struggle, in opposition to all the political representatives of big business.

No one will believe for a moment that Johnson's targeting by his fellow gangsters on the Tory right-wing has anything to do with the popular outrage provoked by the prime minister's behaviour. Utilising leaks provided by Johnson's embittered former advisor Dominic Cummings, the Tory party is preparing the ground for a massive offensive against the working class as it escalates the murderous agenda of letting the virus tear through the population without any mitigations whatsoever.

The 1922 Committee and Covid Recovery Group backbenchers' central complaint is that Johnson is weak-willed for ever making any concessions on the pandemic, denounced by one MP as “rule by Sage [the government's scientific advisory group]”. They want him replaced by someone who can take on opposition in the working class to a policy of mass death, brutal levels of workplace exploitation and social austerity.

The Tory house organ, the *Daily Telegraph*, set out its stall with columnist Allison Pearson declaring, “Never again must we let a government assume so much control over our lives. Never again should we accept the imposition of cruelly disproportionate measures by rank hypocrites who knew what the real risks were and did as they pleased.”

Editorialising that Johnson's “tangled mess” is because “the lockdown in 2020 was replete with disproportionate prohibitions on perfectly benign activities”, the *Telegraph's* editors continued, “We are in a similar position now, with rules in place that are no longer justified, assuming they ever were.”

Listing measures such as requiring pupils to wear masks in the classroom, work from home guidance, and not yet cutting COVID isolation to 5 days, the *Telegraph* insists, “There are compelling arguments for ending the remaining regulations forthwith rather than

waiting until January 26, when they are due to expire... Mandatory masks and mass testing should go, too.”

Writing in the *Express*, Sir Bernard Ingham, Margaret Thatcher’s key adviser, made clear the scale of the attacks planned against working people. Noting that the government faced a budget deficit of £300 billion and a £2 trillion national debt and comparing this with Labour Prime Minister Gordon Brown’s “2010 legacy to the Tories” of a budget deficit of £153 billion, he stated, “That produced what the Left—and even some Tories—described as ‘austerity’, thereby proving that some politicians have no sense of proportion... the fact that it took 10 years for reasonably responsible Tory leadership of the nation to come close to eliminating that deficit demonstrates beyond any doubt what today’s situation demands of Boris Johnson’s administration.”

It is not necessary to speculate as to how long Johnson can continue in office. He is already forced to hide behind appeals for everyone to wait for the findings of an official inquiry by civil servant Sue Gray, into four separate lockdown parties. His parliamentary majority means that the Tories must remove him. But several backbenchers and the leader of the Scottish Tories, Douglas Ross, have already called for him to go and Chancellor Rishi Sunak pointedly spent yesterday in Ilfracombe.

What is fundamental is that the real calculations of the Tory right are how to wage a class war, next to which the austerity measures imposed following the 2008 economic crash will pale into insignificance.

The calls for Johnson’s resignation by Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer and his counterparts in the Liberal Democrats and Scottish National Party (SNP) are politically duplicitous. They advance no opposition to the Johnson government’s herd immunity agenda and will gladly cooperate with Johnson’s Tory replacement.

Starmer became Labour leader on April 4, 2020, pledging his party to only “constructive criticism” of the government less than seven weeks before Johnson’s garden party. He has supported the Tories at every turn ever since, including by insisting that Johnson had a “moral duty” to reopen schools in September 2020. His first ever call during Wednesday’s Prime Minister’s Questions for Johnson to “do the right thing” and resign was only finally made

after his policy advisers concluded the prime minister was already a “busted flush”.

The same holds true of the Liberal Democrats, who focused their attack yesterday not on the deaths Johnson is responsible for but the “hypocrisy” of his government fining others for lockdown breaches. The SNP heads the devolved government in Scotland and is directly responsible for implementing policies that barely differ from Johnson’s.

Even if Johnson resigns the Tories will remain in office able to continue their attacks—and they will still be supported by Labour and by the trade unions that have actively suppressed every attempt by workers to fight back since the pandemic began more than two years ago.

A massive well of anger and opposition exists in the working class to this hated government. It has presided over a social catastrophe of unimaginable proportions that has led to over 176,000 dead, leaving families to mourn terrible losses, and millions infected and living with Long COVID. Yesterday alone, close to 20,000 were in hospital and almost 400 died.

Millions more, including children, will become ill, and tens of thousands will die unless Johnson and his entire government is removed. Workers must refuse to place any confidence in the parliamentary manoeuvres now filling the media and wage an independent struggle involving strikes and mass protests, based on a socialist programme. This must necessarily take the form of a rank-and-file rebellion against the Labour Party and the trade unions, including the party’s left led by Jeremy Corbyn who are seeking to confine workers to building miniscule “progressive alliances” in parliament while every real struggle is sabotaged.

Such a movement is already emerging, with strikes mounted by teachers in the US and France, and will inevitably erupt here in the UK. The Socialist Equality Party must be built to lead this fightback.



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