

Starmer and Corbyn try to prop up UK government as Johnson flounders

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This weekend, the Labour Party doubled down on efforts to prop up Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative government with a declaration that it will not call a vote of no confidence.

The Tory Party has been rocked by a series of leaks showing that top government officials, including Johnson himself, held at least 11 parties in Whitehall buildings during lockdown, breaking all rules and guidance in place.

But on Sunday, Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting told *Times Radio*, “We could call a motion of no confidence in the government—we've been around the block with this before, that would galvanise the Conservative party.”

He stressed that “the only mechanism for removing the prime minister ultimately sits in the hands of Conservative MPs,” and this was Labour's goal.

Streeting argued that Labour was acting solely in the national interest.

“Boris Johnson carrying on is great for the Labour party,” he said. “If I'm thinking purely through the prism of party politics, then my message is: ‘Keep him on, knock yourselves out, you'll be literally knocked out at the next election’. But we are still in the middle of a national crisis here and the prime minister's actions and judgments matter.”

Only the leader of the main opposition party, Labour's Sir Keir Starmer, has the power to call a vote of no confidence in a government—which can lead to a general election being triggered.

Streeting's verbal contortions are a cover for Labour's real aim of preventing a popular struggle against the hated Johnson government. Instead, Labour focuses its attentions on peeling off Tory MPs from Johnson—so far, only a handful have called for him to go—by a combination of appeals to their better nature

and self-interest. In the process they seek to prove to big business their own sense of responsibility and readiness to defend the national interest.

Labour's Corbynite “left” are in full agreement on this.

Streeting's comment about having “been around the block with this before” was in reference to the no-confidence vote tabled by Labour in January 2019 against Theresa May's minority Conservative government, when Jeremy Corbyn was Labour's leader. This followed the parliamentary defeat of the Brexit withdrawal deal she had reached with the European Union. May was able to narrowly see off the confidence vote, but she was by that stage numbered among the walking dead.

She was able to survive through to July 2019 thanks to the efforts of Corbyn's Labour Party. In April 2019, May offered Corbyn talks on securing a Brexit agreement, appealing to him for “national unity”. Corbyn accepted citing his own concern for “the national interest”.

After weeks of talks Corbyn's closest ally, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell, said negotiations were like “trying to enter into a contract with a company which is about to go into administration.” But talks continued nevertheless.

Corbyn's allies in the trade unions continued with their suppression of every struggle of the working class, allowing May to stagger on. The initiative was handed to the most right-wing political forces in the Tories' pro-Brexit wing, who grouped around Johnson, with him taking over as party leader and prime minister in July 2019. Johnson routed Corbyn in the general election later that year—fought on the issue of Brexit.

Last week, McDonnell went on record to declare again that the stability of capitalism was his and the

Labour left's sole concern, telling journalist Robert Peston's news show, in words that could have been uttered by Streeting or Starmer, "[I]n the interests of the country he [Johnson] should go. We're in the middle of a crisis. You need a prime minister who people have confidence in".

McDonnell pleaded, "I also say to Conservative colleagues as well that propping him up damages not just the Conservative Party, it damages politics overall. Once they lose trust in a prime minister, they start losing trust in the whole political process as well. So he damages not just the Tory Party, he damages politics in general."

Starmer removed the party whip in parliament from Corbyn over a year ago as part of the right-wing witch-hunt, but Corbyn remains the figurehead of the stunted remains of the Labour left and continues to play the same miserable role as during his years as leader.

On Saturday protests were held around the UK against the Tories' draconian Police Bill, which is making its way through parliament. After weeks of silence, Labour finally declared on Friday that they will oppose some of the latest government amendments in the House of Lords on Monday, knowing this will do nothing to prevent the core of the Bill becoming legislation.

The main anti-Police Bill protest was held in London, with several thousand in attendance. Corbyn was the main speaker and managed to outdo himself in his display of fidelity to the political establishment.

Corbyn's speeches invariably shoehorn in the struggles of the Chartist and Suffragette movements, and he raised the same themes again in Parliament Square. But all this was window dressing to cover a determination not to rock the boat.

The protest was held under the demand "Kill the Bill", but the only way to kill, rather than pass the bill with minimal amendments, would be to organise a mass political struggle against the Tories and the Labour Party. Corbyn would have none of this.

In the most timid terms Corbyn said, "I'm not condoning anything that Johnson has done and I'm not condoning the massive amounts of money that have been poured into dodgy companies during COVID, but I am supporting the health workers who have done so much to try to keep us safe during COVID."

A refusal to "condone" is all that was said of a man

who is responsible for the deaths of over 176,000 people and the mass infection of over a fifth of the population, whose party has plunged millions of workers into a life of poverty and economic uncertainty.

He added, "What I'd also criticise this government for, is the whole agenda behind Johnson... There is an agenda here. And it's an agenda about disempowering people, empowering the authority and the state at the same time as a massive redistribution of wealth and power in favour of the powerful and the wealthiest..."

Even given this loosely defined agenda, Corbyn offered nothing by way of struggle to bring down the Tories as this would mean conflicting, albeit only verbally, with the Labour right whose own "agenda" is the same as the Tories: the defence of big business, ramping up attacks on the working class and developing authoritarian police state measures to face down emerging social and political opposition.

On Sunday, Streeting also confirmed that Labour was as fervently against any more lockdowns as the Tory government. Writing an opinion piece in the *Mail on Sunday*, he echoed Downing Street, declaring, "We know that the coronavirus is here to stay but, as Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, I don't want to see our country in lockdown ever again."

He added, "Learning to live well with Covid will prepare us to get through the next wave of infections without more restrictions on our lives, livelihoods and liberties."

A clearly ecstatic *Mail* headlined Streeting's comment with a composite quote, "For the sake of our children, we can never shut down our country again."



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