

# Labour conference sings “God Save The King” amid rout of the Corbyn “left”

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Delegates opened the Labour Party’s annual conference in Liverpool with a minute’s silence for Queen Elizabeth II and a rendition of the national anthem, *God Save The King*, for the first time in the party’s history. Both were observed without protest.

The stage consisted of a giant Union Flag backdrop design behind the podium and above that an enormous video banner—spanning the width of the entire stage—with a photo of the queen reading, “Queen Elizabeth II - 21 April 1926 - September 8 2022”.

This was the latest episode in Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer’s effort to prove the party’s right-wing, nationalist credentials to big business. It follows two weeks, since the queen’s death, in which Labour MPs have been forbidden from posting anything other than their own or party tributes to the queen on social media.

Previous edicts ordered shadow cabinet members to stay away from workers’ picket lines and for all Labour MPs to show “unshakeable support” for NATO.

Speaking ahead of the conference, Shadow Foreign Secretary David Lammy told the *Independent*, “I think the Queen’s passing reminds us all of what unites us and I think that Keir feels that very keenly. I support him in that. We are the party that set up Nato after the Second World War.”

The same day Shadow Health Secretary Wes Streeting, a strong favourite to succeed Starmer as leader, told the *Spectator* that the private sector was “one of the levers” for tackling National Health Service backlogs, adding, “The Labour party can’t just rely on the same old hackneyed slogans on the NHS”.

Shadow Justice Secretary Steve Reed revived Tony Blair’s “tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime” slogan in an interview with the *New Statesman*, adding his own, “Punish, Prevent, Protect”.

Neither the devastating cost-of-living crisis, producing

the worst fall in real incomes in generations, nor the imminent danger of war with Russia escalating toward a nuclear conflict warranted a mention. Labour is in lockstep with the Tory government on pursuing class war at home and imperialist war abroad.

As Labour MPs gathered, #GeneralStrike and #GeneralElectionNow were trending on social media. Millions of workers are pressing for strike action. The mood in the country is for a showdown with an illegitimate Tory government planning an all-out assault on the working class amid the largest wave of strikes in close to four decades. Rail, post and telecoms workers have responded with disgust at Starmer’s overt hostility to their struggle for a living wage.

That the Labour leader is still able to organise his right-wing spectacle on top of this social powder keg is due to the prostration of the Labour “left”, which is in a state of collapse two-and-a-half years after Jeremy Corbyn resigned as leader. Protests against Starmer’s policies were kept to the conference fringes, without the slightest hint of a fight against his leadership.

Pro-Corbyn pressure group Momentum organises events under the title The World Transformed. At one of these, former Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell joined MPs Dawn Butler and John Trickett in criticising the ban on picket line attendance. But this stopped at a humble appeal to the leadership to change course. McDonnell told the audience, “We’ve got to say to the Labour leadership and others, don’t think you can win this next general election by default just because of the unpopularity of the Tories.”

Corbyn expressed slight discomfort with the “very, very odd” singing of the national anthem, which he told the BBC’s Nick Robinson *Political Thinking* podcast was “excessively nationalist”. But once again dashing the hopes of those who still look to him to form a new party, Corbyn repeated his desire to see the Labour whip

restored, allowing him to sit as one of Starmer's MPs.

Corbyn was rewarded for his slavishness in the usual fashion, with a shadow minister briefing the *Daily Mail*, "Only Corbyn would try to wreck Sir Keir's tribute to the late Queen. It's because Corbyn was seen as unpatriotic that we've got to build bridges with so many former traditional Labour voters who deserted us while Left-wing 'Jezza' was wrecking our party."

Corbyn and McDonnell's fellow Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) member Richard Burgon chose to direct his own ire exclusively at the monarchy, attending a Labour for a Republic event to ask politely, "How can we not talk about whether or not a head of state should be elected?"

Zarah Sultana, the SCG's main point of contact with the Enough is Enough campaign, told a World Transformed event, "Not everyone in the Labour Party is clear about the class they represent." She was speaking alongside Mick Lynch, the head of the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union, frontman of Enough is Enough campaign and touted as Britain's "real leader of the opposition". But he also gave another full-throated endorsement of a Starmer-led government, calling on Labour to "show that it's on the side of ordinary people in this country who are really struggling."

Lynch gave Starmer license not to attend a picket line himself—"I'm not that naïve"—but suggested that he should "show a way that he identifies with the struggles working people have got...."

"We want him to win the election but we want him to do it on a basis working people can get behind—he can't cosy up to business and the *Daily Mail* all the time, he's got to cosy up to working class people."

Unite union General Secretary Sharon Graham, marketed by the pseudo-left as the other chief working-class leader alongside Lynch, cheered the supposed increasingly "clear blue water" between Labour and Tories in an interview at the union's headquarters. She called on Starmer to "be brave," adding, "We need to be really clear what it is that we are offering as Labour."

The rump of the Labour left and what passes for the "left" within the trade unions question Starmer's class loyalties, but their own loyalties are to the bureaucracy and not the working class. All their polite criticisms and suggestions of a change in course have one aim only—to preserve the hold of the Labour Party and the trade unions over the working class so they can continue to throttle it.

The left's craven response was underscored by *Al Jazeera*'s release Friday of the first of a three-episode exposure of the Labour right's conspiracy against

Corbyn's leadership and left-wing members. Based on 500 gigabytes of leaked documents, emails, video and audio files, the investigation reveals in great detail the use of false allegations of antisemitism and homophobia against party members supportive of Corbyn, their harassment, and the protection of right-wing provocateurs.

*The Labour Files* adds to the clear evidence of a conspiracy by the party's Blairite MPs and apparatus against the membership put forward in the "Labour leaks" document in early 2020.

However, if anyone believed that *Al Jazeera*'s findings would be taken up as a weapon by the Corbynites, they were immediately disappointed. At a World Transformed event discussing Labour's Forde Report into the Labour leaks, Corbyn did not even mention Starmer's name, let alone *The Labour Files*, or go further than accusing the right-wing of trying to "obstruct" his leadership. The most he gave his audience was a promise that his book would give "the full story", but only after "all the legal cases I've been dealing with" had concluded—"I'm not allowed to say anything more at the moment."

He called on his supporters to "go forward determined, hopeful, optimistic, in unity".

The impression given by Corbyn and his allies is of a political group hermetically sealed from reality. They refer to his 2017 election manifesto as having "changed the course of labour movement history" and discuss the fight for a "socialist alternative" while sitting as members of a proudly right-wing party out for their blood—their friends and colleagues being gradually picked off by Starmer's relentless witch-hunt. A real socialist alternative will only be built in a determined fight against the Labour Party, including its dwindling "left" faction.



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