

Jeremy Corbyn's Your Party founding conference: Witch-hunts and expulsions against the left

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Your Party's founding conference held in Liverpool on November 29-30 confirmed the extraordinary decline in the party's political fortunes since it was announced by former Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn and ex-Labour MP Zarah Sultana.

It was a conference of crisis. Months of bitter and unprincipled factional warfare between Corbyn and Sultana, centred on control of financial assets and membership lists, saw a wave of enthusiasm among workers and young people collapse. From 850,000 who signed up as supporters, just 55,000 had joined by the eve of conference.

Your Party has been eclipsed in the polls by Zack Polanski's Green Party, which now has more than three times as many members, including over 50,000 in its youth section, and is seen by many as a better "left" alternative to Keir Starmer's despised Labour government.

From a forecast attendance of 13,000 two months ago, and 4,000 a week ago, fewer than 2,000 members arrived at Liverpool Arena and Convention Centre. A conference livestream attracted just 1,700 viewers. Online voting that began pre-conference on the party's name and a series of vetted amendments never surpassed 17,000.

The conference saw Corbyn and his main backers—led by chief enforcer Karie Murphy—ride roughshod over basic democratic norms—beginning with a witch-hunt and expulsions targeting the left, and continuing with every conceivable form of bureaucratic skulduggery.

Jeremy Corbyn: the witch-hunter

On Friday, Corbyn's Independent Alliance of MPs and their appointed conference steering committee expelled Socialist Workers Party (SWP) national secretary Lewis Nielsen and SWP members Samira Ali and Hector Sierra. So zealous were the witch-hunters that Alex Callinicos, the SWP's leading theoretician, was also sent an expulsion email, despite his never having joined. Michael Lavalette, former Preston councillor and Counterfire member was refused entry, alongside James Giles, former political advisor to George Galloway and councillor from Kingston, south London, a close ally of Sultana.

Corbyn's "Day of the Long Knives" sent an unmistakeable message to the founding conference: no opposition will be tolerated toward the party's founding as a Labour Party Mark 2 and all efforts to shift it in a more left-wing direction will be blocked.

Yet Nielsen, speaking that night at Sultana's pre-conference rally, proclaimed, "I'm filled with the possibility of hope for the first time in a long, long time". Faced with Corbyn's factional assault, he insisted: "we can make this thing work... we can turn Your Party into a political force

that can win."

Silent on his own expulsion until midway through his seven-minute speech, Nielsen refused to name those responsible, referring only to "a clique of people running the party from the top".

He insisted, "this weekend has to be a turning point", pledging the SWP would support Sultana "all the way", and stating, "We don't need a Labour Party Mark II".

But Corbyn's backers delivered exactly that, safe in the knowledge that Sultana and her cheerleaders in the SWP, Counterfire and other pseudo-left groups had already declared the overriding need for "unity".

Bureaucratic stitch-up

The conference was a stitch-up, with Corbyn's clique retaining their grip over the organisation.

Your Party's founding documents—the Constitution, Political Statement, Standing Orders and Organisational Statement—had been opened to "grassroots member feedback" over the preceding month via a dubious online crowd-editing tool created by Yanis Varoufakis' DIEM25. Its opaque algorithms would supposedly identify where "consensus" was reached and where documents had "evolved".

Members had just 36 hours to respond to these "evolved" founding documents. Out of 560 amendments proposed by members, only 100 were deemed "approved". A handful were selected by YP's unelected steering group as Roadmap Amendments for debate at conference, framed to block any threat to the Corbyn clique.

Above all, no amendments to YP's reformist Political Statement were accepted. It was not debated at conference.

In opening the conference, Andrew Jordan (ex-Labour Party and Momentum), chair of the Standing Orders Committee (SOC) appointed by Corbyn's Independent Alliance of MPs, announced a ban on amendments or points of order by YP members from the conference floor. Those with either were directed to a separate room, where SOC members would decide which (if any) would be presented to conference.

Members who spoke against such bureaucratic procedures were threatened with ejection, or had their mic cut. The live feed to members watching remotely was repeatedly suspended. Members of the SOC who chaired conference—Jennifer Forbes, Claudia Webbe, Laura Smith and Aghileh Djafari-Marbini—ruled any criticism of Corbyn's Independent Alliance MPs out of order, with Djafari-Marbini dressing down members who booed, declaring arrogantly: "You don't scare me!"

The SWP's Samira Ali was physically removed from the conference

venue by security guards who confirmed they were acting on the orders of Corbyn's former Chief of Staff, Karie Murphy. The SWP's Stand Up to Racism stall was dismantled. If this is how YP's leadership treats loyal critics like the SWP, how would they respond in government to striking workers or to mass popular opposition to austerity and war?

The claims made subsequently by the SWP (and others) that Corbyn's unelected cabal suffered defeat at conference, via members' backing dual membership, a collective leadership structure and funding to branches, are a whitewash.

Conference was presented with just two options on dual membership. Option A, which carried by 69.2 percent, allowed members of "aligned parties" to join, but only from a list approved by the Central Executive Committee (CEC). The most widely accepted option at regional assemblies, that members of other parties should be free to join unless their party fielded candidates against YP, was excluded by the steering group.

Members voted for collective leadership against a single leader model, by 51.6 percent. This means Corbyn will be spared a leadership contest with Sultana, but still guarantees ongoing warfare at the top. Corbyn's cabal will seek to bolster their position on the CEC through the inclusion of "organised sections" and "party affiliates". The steering group is tasked with drawing up a list of these as part of a 12-month strategic review.

The same ruthless methods employed by the Labour Party against any challenge from below have been transplanted *in toto* by Corbyn, Murphy and their Stalinist backers.

One of the most popular amendments, receiving hundreds of online endorsers, was the demand that Your Party MPs and office holders receive a wage equal to that of an average worker. This amendment was suppressed, and members who called for its inclusion, to sustained applause, also had their mics cut.

Zarah Sultana

Your Party's founding conference confirmed Corbyn's eclipse as leader by Sultana.

Corbyn, who broke with Labour only reluctantly, years after he was expelled from the Parliamentary Labour Party, was bounced by Sultana into supporting Your Party. He has done everything in his power to confine it to the minimal reformist nostrums he pursued as Labour leader.

Sultana has argued for a more radical presentation, seeking to channel an insurgent mood in the working class, especially its younger generations, behind an alliance of pseudo-left parties (including the SWP, Counterfire, the Socialist Party) and left-talking trade union bureaucrats. The support she has won on this basis was evident at conference.

On Friday night, at a pre-conference rally of 400 people, most of them aligned with the SWP et al, she declared: "I don't want the policy of witch-hunts, stitch-ups and psychodramas. I want to work with every socialist in a spirit of comradeship and equality, and I want the working class to control Your Party as they should someday control the world." She boycotted the first day's proceedings, telling reporters outside the venue that she was opposed to expulsions and witch-hunts by "nameless and faceless bureaucrats" who are "working in the shadows."

A rival event by Corbyn on Friday night, called as a spoiler, attracted fewer than 150 aging supporters. His opening address at conference Saturday morning met a lukewarm response, with many refusing to join a standing ovation.

Sultana, who attended on Sunday, won repeated standing ovations, cheering and applause as she denounced Starmer's right-wing

government, defended immigrants and refugees, attacked war, occupation and genocide, demanded abolition of the monarchy, an end to rule by the billionaires and the socialist transformation of society. Corbyn listened with evident discomfort and has since ridiculed her call for nationalisation of the entire economy.

Britain's pseudo-left groups have united to insist that Sultana's campaign can transform Your Party into a vehicle for socialism. In doing so, they are seeking to repeat, under far more dangerous conditions, their earlier promotion of Corbyn, who was said to be transforming Britain's Labour Party into an instrument for 21st century socialism.

The real measure of Sultana's "insurgent campaign" is her continuing declarations of unity with Corbyn. The SWP follows suit. Even after their own members were expelled by Corbyn's clique, the SWP wrote on Sunday that Your Party's "best chance is if it is united with a collective leadership with both Corbyn and Sultana."

In her speech to conference Sunday, Sultana hailed Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) politician elected Mayor of New York City last month, describing him as "unapologetically socialist, unapologetically Muslim, unapologetically immigrant", who "built a campaign that proved what is possible when the working class unites people who look different, pray differently and love differently".

Mamdani's victory expressed a leftward shift among workers and young people in the heart of world imperialism, but he and the DSA have worked with the Democratic Party machine, Wall Street executives and the state to row back on policies that propelled him into office. This process culminated in Mamdani's abject surrender to fascist president Donald Trump inside the Oval Office on November 21.

Workers and youth looking for a socialist alternative cannot afford to place their trust in words. It is urgently necessary to review parties, their leaders and programmes, based on their history and the class interests which they serve. The indispensable political and theoretical resources for achieving this task are to be found in the struggle waged by the world Trotskyist movement, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its daily publication, the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The WWSW thanks readers who sent letters protesting Your Party's decision to ban our reporter from conference. While the ban on WWSW was maintained, our statement of protest had one positive outcome. A reporter from the right-wing *Daily Express* complained they were de-credentialled following our statement's publication.

Speaking outside conference Saturday, Zarah Sultana opposed the ban on WWSW and other left-wing publications. She pointed out that Your Party officials had credentialled the *Daily Express* despite its senior political correspondent, Christian Calgie, having called for her deportation from the UK.



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