

Britain's Labour Party Purge is Underway. Preventing "Supporters" from Voting for Jeremy Corbyn

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Kerry-anne Mendoza explains how Labour Party leaders have banned her and many others from voting for Jeremy Corbyn.

The first wave of the UK Labour Party's purge of registered supporters has begun, and I and many others outside of the Blairite wing of the Labour movement were disenfranchised by our own party on Thursday.

At a little after 5:00 am yesterday, an email arrived in my inbox from Labour HQ.



I read it once, then again. Then I just sat there.

First of all I was embarrassed, like I'd been caught out, even though I'd done nothing wrong. It's being made out that voting for Jeremy Corbyn in the Labour leadership race is an act of sabotage, rather than an expression of my democratic rights. Once I realized that, I got angry. Really angry. I shared the news on my Facebook page and Twitter, and found that I was far from alone.

In a purge being referred to internally as '[Operation: Ice Pick](#)', Labour HQ is purging the party of suspected 'entryists'. The name is a particularly sick joke, referencing the weapon of choice in the 1940 assassination of [Leon Trotsky](#) by Stalinists. Supporters of Corbyn have been consistently derided as 'Trots' throughout the campaign.

Comedians [Mark Steel](#) and [Jeremy Hardy](#), along with renowned author [Marcus Chown](#) and 'Spirit of '45' director [Ken Loach](#) – all have been banned from voting in the Labour purge. Why? Marcus Chown joined the executive of the National Health Action Party in the 2015 election because his priority was saving the NHS, and he felt that was the best way to highlight the issue. Jeremy Hardy and Mark Steel have supported fundraisers for the Green Party in the past. Ken Loach was once a member of the now-defunct Socialist Alliance. As [Mark Steel](#) so aptly puts it: 'Labour – you can't join as a new member unless you're already a member.'

In the first wave of the wider purge on Thursday, many more lost their vote. In a process reminiscent of the US McCarthy witch hunts of the 1960s it appears that anyone with (or suspected of having) leftwing sympathies is being ousted from the party. Twitter user [Rebecca Day](#) reported this appeal among members of the Oxford University Labour

club:



Hundreds took to the [#LabourPurge](#) hashtag to share their stories of rejection. Peter Sinclair summed up the story of many.

In April, Sinclair donated £20 (\$31) to Labour. In response, party official Iain McNicol sent him a note of thanks. McNicol told Sinclair that 'The Labour Party is built on donations like the one you just made.'



But Iain McNicol sent him a decidedly frostier email this morning.



So what changed in that time?



In the hours I have been scrolling through the hundreds of rejections, I have yet to find a single person who had not already voted for Jeremy Corbyn, or would have once their ballot papers arrived. Some [are pulling together a database](#) of all those hit by the purge, which will give us a better idea of numbers in coming days. But this is merely the first wave.

For what it's worth, I have never raised funds or been a member of another political party. Like many who have been rejected in the purge, I felt Labour left me rather than the other way round. While we stayed true to the 'aims and values' of the Labour Party, others ran it as a neoliberal Conservative-lite option.

The Blairism of the Labour Party, in honour of former party leader and British prime minister Tony Blair, means the curtailment of civil liberties, illegal foreign wars, privatization of the NHS, and more; things that are not aims and values to be supported by any self-respecting social democrat.

First they lost us in government, then in opposition. After losing all but one seat in Scotland to the Scottish National Party, 4 million votes to working-class populists the United Kingdom Independence Party and 1 million to the Green Party (where my vote went in 2015) - Labour responded by swinging right in hopes of picking up the [24%](#) of the electorate who voted Conservative, not the 76% who didn't.

In their first act of the new parliament, the Conservative Party's Welfare Bill brought forward plans for another \$19 billion of cuts to public services. The Labour leadership [whipped their MPs to abstain](#). To abstain! Of the 4 Labour MPs running for the leadership, [only Jeremy Corbyn defied that order](#) and voted against the cuts.

This man of principle, in politics and in life, presents the kinds of policies that many of us disillusioned Labour voters had been dreaming about.

His [policies](#) are a progressive prescription, rather than the Victorian-era poison chalice on offer to date:

- Quantitative Easing for people, as opposed to the [\\$588 billion that New Labour, the Coalition and the Conservative Party have printed and handed to banks since 2009.](#)
- A National Investment Bank, dedicated to developing our national infrastructure and housing. This would bring Britain's public transport networks into the 21st century, while beginning to deal with a housing crisis that is becoming the Number One issue facing working and middle-class families.
- He would seek to lower the welfare bill, but by creating sustainable and worthwhile jobs, not just kicking poor people off their benefits.
- He would bring the railways and energy sector back under public ownership, ending the debacle of exponential fare and rate rises.

On every measure, Corbyn is bringing the principles of social democracy to bear on today's problems. He is progressive on civil liberties, a humble and collegiate worker, and an award-winning peacemaker. He is the anti-Blair. He is the 21st-century Clement Attlee, bearing both a radical programme of change and the fidelity of principle to actually deliver it if we grant him mandate. I want to vote for him now, and I want to vote for him in 2020.

But Labour HQ says no. Without producing a single shred of evidence, the Party has asserted that I and countless others 'do not support the aims and values of the Labour Party.'

So what do we do? Well, I suggest we give them the biggest fight of their lives. We appeal, we pester, we argue, and we get our damn vote. They silenced us once; let's never let them do it again.

You can get involved now:

- Tweet [@UKLabour](#) and tell them what you think about this.
- Tell Labour what you think on their [Facebook page](#).
- Appeal your rejection by calling 0845-092-2299
- Send your details to [Matt Beresford](#) so they can be included in his database.
- To establish what information or investigation the Labour Party has made against you to come to its decision, you can make a subject access request. To do so, the [Information Law Blog](#) explains that you will need 3 things:

1. A written request, setting out your name, address and the email address you registered with as a supporter.

2. Proof of your ID. Send a copy of a passport or driving licence and ask them to destroy it when they have validated your request. They can refuse to deal with your request without proof of ID, so don't give them the opportunity to delay by asking for it.

3. A cheque for £10. Having already lost the £3 supporter fee, this will be annoying, but I doubt Labour will accept a subject access request without the statutory fee, and they can refuse to process the request without it. If you want to know what happened (or find out that it was a flawed process), you will have to sacrifice the tenner. If they are feeling generous, they won't cash the cheque. The Information Commissioner cannot order them to waive the fee, so don't waste your time asking them.

Kerry-anne Mendoza is author of [Austerity](#), published by *New Internationalist*. A version of this blog first appeared on the [author's website](#).

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