

Corbyn Elected - A Great Victory for British and European Left!

By [Defend Democracy Press](#)

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Victory for Corbyn! The genie is now out of the bottle

Ecstatic screams and cheers broke out across the country as the news came through that Jeremy Corbyn has again won a decisive victory to become Labour leader, with an even bigger mandate than last September. 313,209 members voted for him, 61.8% of the vote, compared to 59.5% last year. His challenger Owen Smith, the “unity” candidate, got 193,229 votes, or 38.2% of the vote. The turnout was 77.6%, with 506,438 members and supporters taking part.

Corbyn won a majority over Smith in every category: members, registered supporters and trades union affiliates. He won the support of 59% of voting members (10 points higher than last year), 70% of registered supporters and 60% of affiliated supporters. This result constituted a ringing endorsement of Corbyn and a massive blow to Labour’s right wing.

The mass movement behind Corbyn

Let us remember that Corbyn’s victory today was in spite of a ferocious battle by the Establishment, inside and outside of the party, to unseat him. Everything was thrown at him in a bitter campaign. 130,000 new members were debarred from voting. Tens of thousands were suspended – and even expelled – to prevent them voting. Despite this, Corbyn increased his majority!

The right wing in the Parliamentary Party never accepted his first victory and immediately worked to overthrow his mandate. This campaign culminated in the right-wing coup of a few months ago, where 80% of Labour MPs voted for a motion of no confidence in him. They moved heaven and hell to get rid of him. But their efforts have now completely blown up in their faces.

The vote was no real surprise given the pro-Corbyn feelings in the rank and file. In the end, Owen Smith was a no-hoper. This demonstrates the weakness of the right wing within the Labour Party. They had lost control of the party with Corbyn’s victory, as hundreds of thousands joined the Labour Party to defend and support Corbyn. The party has almost tripled its membership since the May 2015 general election.

Corbyn has certainly strengthened his position within the party, especially amongst the new members. As one commentator stated, he has massive support like no other party leader in history. Such a victory must not be squandered but used to transform the Labour Party into

a mass, fighting socialist party.

Unity - on what basis?

Of course, there have been immediate calls for the right wing PLP to unite behind Corbyn. All the local Labour Party meetings next month will certainly be pressing for this. There must be demands that the utter disloyalty of the PLP has to stop. It is the continual back-stabbing by right-wing MPs, who have been all over the media, which has undermined support for the party. These MPs must either accept the mandate given to Corbyn by the party or they must stand down.

It is clear that the right wing have suffered a massive blow. They have suffered a head-on car crash. Many right-wing MPs deliberately stayed away from the Labour Conference, knowing full well that they were in for a hiding to nothing. They are licking their wounds, even talking of “unity” and “listening”. Stephen Kinnock, who has been a vociferous opponent of Corbyn, sent him a text message of congratulations as “sweet as a razor”, to use the words of Dylan Thomas. A number will have seen how the wind is blowing and will now show “loyalty”. But in reality they will simply be biding their time. Some will return to the Shadow Cabinet. Others will refuse with a hungry smile. The right wing will never give up its hope of turning the tables. Clutching their heads, they talk of a new organisation being set up in the PLP - a “party within a party” - to guide and coordinate their actions. But they have had the stuffing knocked out of them.

The battles ahead

Of course, they have a massive problem: the Labour membership, which has decisively rejected Blairism and the policies of the right. They are very much looking for a real alternative, which they see in Jeremy Corbyn. It is very likely that the membership will continue to grow, meaning that the base for the right wing will continue to shrink. The boundary changes will open up selection conferences locally in which the right wing will be challenged. They will not be able to avoid this, despite pleas to Corbyn, who is in favour of democracy and the membership having its say. When this happens, all hell will be let loose. The idea that the right wing are going to roll over and accept this leftward shift is fantasy.

As *the Financial Times*, gritting its teeth, commented: “Jeremy Corbyn has returned as leader of Labour, tightening the grip of the hard left over one of Britain’s oldest political parties.” The ruling class is alarmed at this advance of the left and will do whatever they can to stop it.

The right wing is a Fifth Column of big business within Labour. They are careerists like their counterparts in the capitalist parties. They will jump ship when the time comes. Britain is heading into uncharted waters. The Tories, although repackaged, are heading for a bust up over the Brexit negotiations. The splits in the Tory Cabinet can already be seen. This is simply a foretaste. With a new economic crisis, the scene will be set for a general election showdown. At that point, the capitalist Establishment may call on the right wing in the Labour Party to split to prevent Corbyn coming to power.

Whatever the talk of “unity”, the divisions between the members and the right wing PLP are unbridgeable. The fight to democratise the party must go hand in hand with the fight for bold socialist policies to answer the crisis of capitalism.

We are in interesting times. The victory for Corbyn means that the genie is out of the bottle. There is no going back. The fight is now on to change society.

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