

Disastrous Capitalism - But Is a U.K. Labour Government the Solution?

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Class War

Consider the Grenfell Tower inferno as an expression of a new kind of class war, but not a class war as we have known it-between organised workers, political parties and capital-but between ordinary citizens and the local fiefdoms of the capitalist state as increasingly, big business has taken over the running of what's left of our public and collective life, through 'outsourcing', public-private-partnerships and what have you, where making a profit is the bottom line, not serving the public.[1]

Worse still, in order to justify this thievery on a national/international scale that runs to trillions, the state and its partner the corporate/state media, has had to resort to the 'trusted' Victorian method of blaming the victim for their own poverty, their own shortcomings, their own misery. *Ergo*, Grenfell.

Hence Grenfell Tower is an entirely predictable end product of the neoliberal agenda, just as flattening Syria is a product of the same sociopathic ideology. Or flattening the NHS for that matter.



Hence it's also no surprise that a person like Corbyn would come along at the same juncture in space and time as Grenfell this utterly ruthless but totally incompetent ruling class has dumped on us and done it in the name of democracy.

Depressingly, it seems Corbyn is all we've got right now and he's glued to the Labour Party, so we really have to ask ourselves at this critical juncture; can a Labour government deliver us from evil or will we just get a slightly different kind of evil instead?

The reality is that Corbyn's aspirations are also the aspirations of twenty million citizens,

maybe more. That's one-third of the population. It also means that at least one-third are not afraid of the word *socialism*. What an opportunity! Or will it be a missed one?

But can these aspirations be transformed, not even into a socialist programme, but a Keynesian one aka 1945 by some future Corbyn-led Labour government? As regular readers of mine will know, it didn't surprise me that Corbyn almost won the election, *for Labour*. All the ingredients were there for a perfect storm: the unemployed, the working poor, students, pensioners, and of course the awful **Theresa May**, all of whom saw in Corbyn the answer to their prayers. Here was a man they could believe in, he offered them hope.

Add to this an increasing number of so-called middle class voters, who might be materially unaffected by Austerity, but be motivated by things like climate change/global warming, the destruction of natural habitat, pollution and war, endless war that now blows back big time, never mind Brexit. In other words, quality of life.

So desperate in fact, that in spite of the Labour Party's treacherous record of back-stabbing its members and its voters, it seems millions of us are prepared to give Labour yet another chance. So is it different this time? Will a Labour government (theoretically) under Corbyn's leadership, initiate the process of dismantling disaster capitalism before it's too late? Before the psychopaths in charge terminate human life on the planet in the pursuit of profit? Maybe we really are waking up at long last, at least that's what *I want* to believe and clearly so do millions of other people. But can a Labour government deliver?

The role of the Middle Classes

"The Middle Class Proletariat — The middle classes could become a revolutionary class, taking the role envisaged for the proletariat by Marx. The globalization of labour markets and reducing levels of national welfare provision and employment could reduce peoples' attachment to particular states. The growing gap between themselves and a small number of highly visible super-rich individuals might fuel disillusion with meritocracy, while the growing urban under-classes are likely to pose an increasing threat to social order and stability, as the burden of acquired debt and the failure of pension provision begins to bite. Faced by these twin challenges, the world's middle-classes might unite, using access to knowledge, resources and skills to shape transnational processes in their own class interest." — ['UK Ministry of Defence report, The DCDC Global Strategic Trends Programme 2007-2036'](#) (Third Edition) p.96, March 2007

The 'middle class' have always been a thorn in the side of the radical left; are they just upscale workers or actually of a different class? After all, they're employees not employers so the real issue comes down not to their class but to where their class allegiance lies. In a traditional, industrial capitalist society their role has always been seen as some kind of buffer between worker and capitalist, their allegiances firmly with the ruling elite on whose largesse they depend but is this still the case and if it isn't, is the MoD's assessment of their potential new role, correct?

It would seem that the government thinks that the 'middle classes' (or those who think of themselves as middle class) can no longer be relied upon by the state or by capital, to support the status quo and even contemplate the idea of them withdrawing their labour and uniting with what's left of the organised working class.

But it begs the question of how, exactly this newly class conscious middle-class would 'lead' the working class. They would first require an organisation and a programme. What would their programme consist of? Socialism? Some kind of technocratic state? And how long would it take I wonder, for the 'middle classes' to get their act together and realize that ultimately, their interests and the interests of the ruling class are not necessarily synonymous?

But in theory anyway, they are the best placed to comprehend and plan for a radical transformation of society. As the Whitehall mandarins say, '[f]aced by these twin challenges, the world's middle-classes might unite, using access to knowledge, resources and skills to shape transnational processes in their own class interest.'

So for example, who is better placed to 'neutralize' the security state's apparatus (eg the GCHQ and its surveillance apparatus)? After all, the 'middle classes' design, build and run it on behalf of the capitalist state.

So most definitely, a progressive, revolutionary middle strata is indispensable for the success of any socialist revolution, but lead it as well, as a 'class'?

But perhaps there is some basis for the MoD's analysis. After all, with the diminished role of the organised industrial working class as the 'leading revolutionary force' in society as envisaged by Marx and Engels, who is to take over their role? And it's true to say that as information technology, in all its various forms, has taken on the central role in the economy, are these 'middle classes' the new working class as the Mod alleges?

But still we have to ask the question: how are the 'middle class' and the working class (including the unemployed, students, the old etc) to unite their forces and challenge the capitalist order? Is the Corbyn phenomenon a harbinger of things to come, with such things as Momentum that has so effectively used the new communication tools available to us-to reach out to such disparate sectors of society-actually initiating this new alliance? And if so, what does it tell us about the role of the Labour Party in the process? Does it even have one in this new situation?

Corbyn

Corbyn makes all the right noises. People believe him largely because he sounds sincere. We are sick of being lied to continuously, and he comes across as genuine, and I've no doubt he is, but is this enough? Where do Corbyn's *real* allegiances lie, with the voters or with the Labour Party? Forgive me for being somewhat cynical but the history of betrayal by the Labour Party is legion and Corbyn is a *party* man first and foremost and when push comes to shove, what comes first for Corbyn, the Party or the People? Surely, his capitulation over the emasculating changes made to his Election Manifesto by the Blairites is proof enough that for Corbyn, the Party comes first.

So where does this leave the millions who have placed their faith in him (or is it the Labour Party)?



Had the millions who voted for Corbyn actually won, they would have gotten, *not* Corbyn, but a Labour government populated mostly by Blairite neo-liberals who continuously undermined Corbyn (and as I write, continue to do so!), even though he saved the Labour Party and a good many of the MPs who want him gone. Not a good start. The revised Election Manifesto already gives us a clear indication of who is actually in charge in the Labour Party and it ain't Corbyn! To paraphrase **William Morris**, is Corbyn no more than the cat's paw? I think so.

The organised industrial working class, through its representative, the Labour Party joined the political class of the capitalist state when it entered Parliament, as Morris once more pointed out, whatever it was, it weren't socialist. Essentially, the elite of the organised working class, mainly up until quite recently, made up of trade union bureaucrats who became an integral part of the ruling political class, accepting the rules of the 'game' and repressing any genuine revolutionary urges, telling us that they would 'reform' capitalism and that takes time. Well they've had over 100 years and since the 1970s, as a class, as a society, as the Left, we have been going backwards not forwards to socialism. Far from 'reforming' capitalism, with no opposition to speak of, it reverted to form; gangsterism, cold-blooded exploitation and, probably worst of all, the British state is attempting to justify, nay reclaim its colonial Empire! And we know where the Labour Party stands on this score!

I really would like to think that Corbyn represents the beginnings of real change, and by himself along with the grassroots Momentum-led mobilisation that put him where he is now, I would agree. But it stands *outside* the Labour Party and derives its strength *precisely* because it *is* extra-parliamentary.

What we are really asking of Corbyn and whether they are aware of it or not, so are the hundreds of thousands who joined the Labour Party *because* of Corbyn, is a revolution *inside* the Labour Party *first*, never mind society at large. And there are those, not enough to make a real difference, who joined the Labour Party precisely with that objective in mind, but it's not like it's the first time this tactic has been tried (entry-ism). And again, the history of the Labour Party in this regard bears this out. It will go to inordinate lengths to neutralise or remove anybody who presents a challenge to the Party hierarchy and its ideology, especially from its left and the left in general.

I might add that many of those on the organised left who try this method tend to be opportunists of the worst kind, ready to jump on whatever bandwagon that comes along and when it crashes, the first to jump off.

1945 could have changed the relationship between the left and the Labour Party, but it didn't happen, the Cold War and our colonies made sure of that. Concessions were made by

the capitalist class that ensured their survival within what appeared to be socialism with the Labour government adopting particular *methodologies* of socialist economic planning e.g., nationalisation of key (bankrupt) sectors of the economy, the establishment of a national health service, public housing and so forth but without touching the basic elements not only of a capitalist state but an *imperialist* one!

So not only did the Labour government preserve capitalism for future generations, they got the people to pay for it under the guise of calling it socialism!

But what are the chances of a Labour government reversing, even in a timid fashion, the catastrophic impact of Austerity and global warmongering? Are we to believe that the capitalist state would just stand by and do nothing? Remember the [plot](#) against **Harold Wilson's** Labour government organised by MI5 and the Army?

In any case, is even a progressive, capitalist (Keynesian) programme possible after over 70 years has passed since it was introduced and under entirely different circumstances? I can't emphasise enough that the changes made to Corbyn's (draft) Election Manifesto are so drastic as to totally undermine his programme and make even his rather modest proposals simply unworkable. How can Austerity be reversed if the Election Manifesto states that it *can't* be reversed? How can a future Labour government under Corbyn, stop waging war on the planet, if the idea of waging war is still an acceptable tool of capitalism? Okay, so Corbyn fudged it a bit by using NATO and no doubt the word *reluctantly*, in other words, the liberal's version of compromise.

Then of course, there is the penultimate challenge; the Parliamentary Labour Party, its bureaucrats and its intimate relationship with the capitalist state.

The Parliamentary Labour Party

The PLP consists only of Labour MPs, some of whom are nominated by Trade Unions. The PLP also gets to nominate 15% of the Executive Committee (EC) that theoretically anyway, formulates policy based on decisions made at the annual conference of the Labour Party. I might add that there's plenty of room for manoeuvre at the conference as it's where proposals from CLP branches can vanish in a maze of backroom committee meetings that only the 'chosen' (ie the Party hierarchy) know about.

After Blair came to power in 1997, he changed the rules by adding yet another layer of control that actually trumped the EC. It's called The National Policy Forum:

The **National Policy Forum** (NPF) of the [British Labour Party](#) is part of the policy-making system of the Party, set up by Leader **Tony Blair** as part of the [Partnership in Power](#) process.

The NPF is made up of 186 members representing government, [European](#) and devolved assemblies, local government, [affiliated trade unions](#), [socialist societies](#) and others, and individual members of the Labour Party, who elect representatives through an all member ballot.

The body is responsible for overseeing policy development. It meets two or three weekends a year to discuss in detail documents produced by the policy commissions, of which there are six, jointly set up by the NPF, the Party's [National Executive Committee](#) and the Government. It submits three types of documents to [Labour Party Conference](#): pre-decision consultative, final

policy documents and an annual report on the work of the policy commissions.
- [Wikipedia](#)

This is the Party bureaucracy, which is in the hands of the neo-liberals. But could that change with the enormous inflow of new blood (Labour Party membership apparently is now some 800,000 strong) into the CLP? Moreover, a key section of this new blood doesn't come from its 'traditional' sources, the white industrial working class. Its new activists are young and from diverse class backgrounds. What it lacks however, is the political experience to see through the smoke and mirrors of 'democracy'.

The Constituency Labour Party

Constituency parties are organised firstly by individual Parliamentary constituencies which in turn are broken down into Ward branches (the number of Ward branches is determined by the size of the constituency).

Anybody can join the Labour Party, well almost anybody and exceptions are difficult to pin down, in advance. So for example, if you leave a comment somewhere on the Web and Head Office doesn't like it, you're likely to be denied the right to join or get yourself kicked out. Likewise, if you belong to another political party that Head Office don't like (and they find out), that will also get you ejected. And, to be fair, Head Office does have point but it's a moot point in the light of the behaviour of the PLP and the Party bureaucracy toward the majority of members. Breaking ranks publicly really depends on whose ranks you're breaking with but theoretically, contradicting official Party policy, *in public*, is grounds for your expulsion. It's called toeing the party line (elsewhere it's called democratic centralism).

Be that as it may, the next hurdle progressive members of the Labour Party have to jump is the relationship between Constituency/Ward members and the Party bureaucracy. So for example, the bureaucracy will try to limit the number of delegates to the Party conference who are opposed to their Blairite line, either through a manipulation of the rules or by browbeating members into supporting the status quo and if that fails, expel them.

It's all about being in control of the party's machinery, where rules can be bent/broken, amended or ignored by the bureaucracy in order to maintain control of the apparatus and the Party's (current) Blairite agenda. Thus it comes down to a battle between the Constituency Party members (all 800,000 of them) and the PLP/bureaucracy (along with the corporate/state media), best illustrated by the desperate, and ultimately unsuccessful, two-year fight to remove Corbyn.

Well over 500,000 of the Labour Party's new members are probably also new to political involvement, attracted by Corbyn's message (and no doubt their own misery). This is a staggering number of people (by comparison, the Tory Party had around 150,000 members as of December 2016).

They call it Democracy

So Corbyn finds himself nominally at least, the head of an entrenched political party that is an integral part of the capitalist state. We have, after all, had a two-party system imposed on us for decades, a regular Tweedledee, Tweedledum between Tory and Labour and the vast contradiction between the actual votes cast and the number of seats each party gets 'awarded' (first-past-the-post). The corrupt nature of our Parliamentary system (expenses

scandals, coverups and lies, lots of lies), whereby the MPs 'police' themselves and write the rules that allegedly govern their behaviour, this is democracy? I don't think so. It's a corrupt and entrenched system that is impervious to reform.

So what can Corbyn achieve at the head of this future Labour government and what do his supporters expect of him? Can Corbyn deliver what his supporters expect of him? And what will they do when they realise that in order to 'lead' the Labour Party in government, he has had to dump pretty much everything that made it worthwhile supporting him and his programme in the first place?

If Momentum teaches us anything it's about the power and centrality of extra-parliamentary actions. It's how people were mobilised to put Corbyn where he is today, by Momentum and other 'grassroots' structures as well as the left in general.[2]

But above all, it's the idea that the Labour Party can be transformed into a radical, socialist vehicle for change that I find impossible to accept. If it couldn't be done in 1945, when the nation was behind it why should it be possible now, in the worst of all situations? Is it wishful thinking or sheer political naivety about the real nature of the Labour Party? And this without considering what the security state would do about a genuinely radical government in the UK:

British Army 'could stage mutiny under Corbyn', says senior serving general

Generals would not 'allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of the UK'
- The Independent, 20 September 2015

The unnamed general, in an interview with *The Times* newspaper said:

Feelings are running very high within the armed forces. You would see a major break in convention with senior generals directly and publicly challenging Corbyn over vital important policy decisions such as Trident, pulling out of Nato and any plans to emasculate and shrink the size of the armed forces.

'The Army just wouldn't stand for it. The general staff would not allow a prime minister to jeopardise the security of this country and I think people would use whatever means possible, fair or foul to prevent that. You can't put a maverick in charge of a country's security.'

Of course the general's comments have been disowned but the ruling elite knows how easy it would be to topple an unwanted government, simple flight of capital would do it without recourse to force to bring the country to its knees. And as we know, Corbyn backtracked on Trident, and then there's the fiasco of Corbyn's (draft) Election Manifesto mauling. Corbyn knows all too well what's possible and what isn't. Compromise is all well and good when the final outcome is positive but when the compromise is so total as it was with the Manifesto, the battle is over before it's even been fought.

But does this mean that we shouldn't support Corbyn along with the millions who do? Of course not but the question is whether the Labour Party is the right vehicle to do it with. I'm positive it's the very last institution to bring about radical change. Surely the experience of Momentum in mobilising the citizens gives us a good idea of the way forward. The problem

of course is Corbyn himself, he's a Party man and will be till the day he dies. To my way of thinking it's a lost opportunity to shake up this degenerate and moribund system of which the Labour Party is an intrinsic component.

Notes

1. The estate where I live used to be managed directly by the local council. Prior to its transfer to a housing association, the tenants on the estate were asked whether they wanted to stay with the council or move to the new housing association (it contains a some dwellings purchased from the council). They voted for the housing association, though most now regret it, for as bad as the council had been, it was infinitely superior to the endless flow of contractors and sub-contractors that now flood into the estate almost every day, mostly repairing 'repairs' and 'refurbishments' performed by the previous contractors and sub-contractors, who no doubt replaced the ones before them, with cost not quality being the bottom line. So not only do we get inferior service, it actually costs a lot more and the housing association is even less accountable than the council had been (at least we could vote them out, or try to). This why Grenfell's are inevitable, it's a product of a rampant and unrestrained capitalism, shorn of its veneer of civilisation, where only money and power count.

2. If you visit the Momentum website, you will see this, newly added since the General Election:

I am a member of the Labour party and no other political party. I also support the aims of Momentum and agree to abide by its constitution, including the code of ethics and equal opportunities policy. I am 14 years old or over. You must tick this box to be eligible for Momentum membership.

And it's now called Peoples Momentum. Peoples Momentum is now (and apparently has been since June or July of 2016), officially part of the Labour Party. So before the election the 'official' Labour Party completely ignored it but now it's proved its worth, it simply exerts its authority over it and brings 'in-house' so-to-speak. End of story and in all likelihood the end of Peoples Momentum as a grassroots movement.

So no more grassroots except that is for [Grassroots-Momentum](#) that's popped up, which looks like it's picked up where Peoples Momentum left off now that Momentum has been hijacked. But is it an official Labour Party structure and if it is, why does it exist? It certainly reads like it's official but it's mired in all kinds of paradoxes not the least of which is its attempt to duplicate Peoples Momentum. Visit its website and you will see that the website is not actually Grassroots Momentum at all but it's piggy-backing on a site setup in 1980 called *Labour Briefing*, a left-of-Labour Party publication that attempts to move the Labour Party leftward, from within.

Grassroots Momentum appears to be everything the 'old' Momentum was except the name. But when you click on the '[About](#)' link, you'll learn absolutely nothing about Grassroots Momentum but everything you need to know about *Labour Briefing*. Brilliant!

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