

Britain: Inside Labour is the heart of the class struggle

Thursday 29 September 2016, by [STOWE Andy](#) (Date first published: 24 September 2016).

Andy Stowe writes about Jeremy Corbyn's election victory for leader and the process of change of the Labour Party.

The Labour right, its friends in the press, the commentariat and their allies threw everything they had at Jeremy Corbyn and he trounced them. He and his supporters were accused of antisemitism, intimidation and misogyny on the basis of nothing approximating to evidence and the charges were repeated endlessly throughout the mainstream media. Rarely has such a mendacious and well-resourced disinformation campaign been so utterly rejected by its intended audience. Corbyn increased his share of the vote to 62% from last year when he got 59.5%. He won support from 59% of party members, 70% of registered supporters and 60% of affiliated supporters. And that is despite a purge of many tens of thousands who would have voted for him.

Not just that. More than 183,000 people paid £25 over two days in July so that they could vote. About 128,000 joined in the two weeks after the EU referendum and the party has increased from 200,000 members to an estimated 515,000 since the 2015 general election. So when Corbyn said in his victory speech that he wants a membership of one million to go out to campaign for a change in British politics he was setting an achievable ambitious target rather than idly daydreaming.

He also committed the membership to street campaigning activity against Tory plans to extend selective education. He intends to shape Labour into a social movement with deep roots in communities to change the political situation. That is something that his opponents among Labour MPs, the party machine and the hostile union leaderships just don't seem to understand, no matter how many times it's explained to them.

This rapid transformation of the Labour Party is taking place at a time when organised industrial action is at an historically low level. What we are seeing instead is a huge influx of working class people, including many tens of thousands of young people into a party many of them had begun to despair of. And the struggle between these newly organised hundreds of thousands and the demoralised, self-satisfied Labour right is now the centre of the class struggle in England. (Wales, and particularly Scotland are rather different.)

The Labour right is still clinging to its Blair period shibboleths but it showed during the election campaign that it knows how to fight dirty and to use its control of the party machine. The next big battle will be over the attempt to hobble the Corbyn leadership by enabling the MPs to elect the shadow cabinet. That can't be allowed to happen and we are confident that it will be resisted every step of the way on the basis of the resounding mandate the new leader has received.

Owen Smith, the defeated challenger, was an empty vessel. He pulled together a ragbag of left policy ideas for which he'd not previously shown any enthusiasm. His major contribution to the process was that his egregiously inept challenge has made it much harder for another opponent to

enter the ring against Corbyn before the election. For that alone he should be thanked.

Socialist Resistance enthusiastically welcomes the re-election of Jeremy Corbyn. It's a massive victory for socialist and progressive politics. It demonstrates that a real mass movement can overcome even the most determined, well-connected and deep pocketed opponents. Everyone who supports him and is able should take up his invitation to hit the streets next weekend to campaign with Labour against selective education. We encourage our readers to get involved with Momentum's campaigning activities.

The Labour Party is now on the road to becoming a mass social movement. Socialists can no longer watch that from the sidelines.

Andy Stowe, September 24, 2016

P.S.

* <http://socialistresistance.org/inside-labour-is-the-heart-of-the-class-struggle/9002>