

UK: Antidoto: Transform - new party or a waste of time?

Tuesday 15 August 2023, by [DENHAM Jim](#) (Date first published: 28 July 2023).

A report in the Morning Star of 26 July announced “Starmer’s benefits stance prompts bid for new party”. It was a news item, but it read more like a plug: “Figures from the labour movement have called for the creation of a new party ‘Transform’, warning that Sir Keir Starmer is ‘planning to follow the same brutal policies as the Tories’.” The report informed us that the initiative includes the Breakthrough Party, Left Unity and the People’s Alliance of the Left, “with more groups reportedly set to join in the coming weeks.”

Wikipedia informs us that the Breakthrough Party was founded in 2021 “in response to the 2020 Labour Party leadership election” and in January 2022 announced a “memorandum of understanding” with the Northern Independence Party, the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition and Left Unity “under the name People’s Alliance of The Left”. Somewhere along the line, TUSC jumped ship, but essentially it seems that the three component parts of Transform are, in fact, the same people under different names.

According to the MS report, “other supporters include former Labour women’s committee and Momentum NCG member Solma Ahmed and writer and former Green Party speaker Derek Wall”. The report also quotes the Bakers’ Union president Ian Hodson saying something that could be taken as support for a new left-wing party.

This appears to be a welcome for Transform. Not so simple, given another article in the same issue of the MS.

A welcome would be consistent with the MS’s increasingly shrill (though often justified) denunciations of the Labour Party and Starmer, its hero-worship of Jeremy Corbyn, its support for the conspiratorial antisemitic film *Oh Jeremy Corbyn: The Big Lie*, and its enthusiasm for Jamie Driscoll running as an independent. It has to be said, though, that the repeated denunciations of Starmer’s “authoritarianism” ring a little hollow, coming as they do from a paper that uncritically eulogises Xi Jinping’s leadership of the Communist Party of China. The equally uncritical adulation of Welsh Labour First Minister Mark Drakeford remains a mystery.

The other article in question in the 26 July MS is by regular columnist and former Corbyn adviser Andrew Murray. It itemises the “heavy legacy of failure” that litters “the well trodden road” of attempts to form a new socialist party in recent years ... the Socialist Labour Party (“secured little traction”) ... the Socialist Alliance (“the ‘war on terror’ provided the coup de grace”) ... the Scottish Socialist Party (“It fell apart in a baroque story involving Sheridan, a sex club in Manchester and allegations of perjury”) ... Respect Mk1 (“fell apart in another painful dispute”) ... Respect Mk2 (“its second going triggered by an unedifying argument over Julian Assange’s alleged sexual conduct”) ... Left Unity (“tried to transpose experiences from abroad without success”) ... the Trade Union and Socialist Coalition (“still in the field attracting derisory votes”) ... the Workers Party (“borderline moribund and its pitch – ‘for the workers, not the wokers’ – borderline Daily Express”).

Interestingly, Murray makes no mention of the recent electoral fortunes of the party of which he is a member, the Communist Party of Britain. Nor of his assessment now of his argument within the CPB around 2004 for supporting Respect (the CPB majority demurred). Or of the No2EU coalition in 2009, which the CPB did back, alongside the RMT and the Socialist Party, doing the legwork.

“Can any general lessons be drawn from this sorry narrative?” asks Murray. He goes on to provide a rambling semi-answer that amounts to “don’t bother” but, maybe, look to “some alliance of independent socialist candidates coming together from Jeremy Corbyn to Jamie Driscoll, and any number of councillors.” But this rather pathetic hope, which would of course result in the expulsion of any Labour members who got involved, is not put forward with any degree of enthusiasm and is at least partially contradicted by Murray’s final proposition... wait for a Labour government and let Starmer do the heavy lifting:

“It may be that the experience of Starmer in power, a continuation of neoliberal authoritarianism, allied to growing working-class militancy and still-fresh memories of insurgent Corbynism will generate the required momentum (no pun) to make a new effort at socialist organisation sustainable.”

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