



OPINION



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I Used to Love You, but it's all Over Now...

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If a rolling stone gathers no moss, what can conceivably congregate beneath one that's long been going down hill and has come to a complete stop? Squashed ideals? Maggoty ideas? Faded dreams?

A long, cold hard look at the goings on at the recent Labour Party Conference, in Brighton, revealed as much disgust and disquiet as ever could be imagined and has rocked me to the core.

My red flag topped sandcastles in the air all but dashed to the ground before my disbelieving eyes. Brighton's infamous rock hard beach of stones

and pebbles; ever at the mercy of the prevailing tide; all a-crashing and a-clashing, together, as if to provide a suitably percussive soundtrack to the carnival of empty noise that had billed itself as being a conference of minds: 'For The Many Not The Few'.

Yet things tend to look very different in the cold light of day, and from afar. And it's all too clearly been revealed, now, that the Labour Party I grew up with and, truly, used to love, has become so hidebound in its demands for rank and file adhesion to party purity and ideology, I can no longer count myself a believer or supporter. And as hard as it would have once been for me even to think it, let alone say it: It's all over now.

And by the looks of it I'm not the only one to have come to the same, sad conclusion. As what passes for the Labour Party, today, no longer represents or even seems to reflect the many things it, once, so very proudly stood for: Freedom. Democracy. Progressiveness. Public-mindedness. And dare I say it: Efficiency.

The old saw; one of the few with any real teeth to it; that only those who have loved something very deeply are free to criticize it. All of which is to say: It's time to say 'goodbye' to the party. Just, as a good friend has done, recently: an esteemed British author, long noted for his political savvy, with long-standing family ties to the Labour Party. A defection, you can be sure, only taken after much thought and no little contemplation.

As, also, has just happened with an old Liverpool friend of mine; who, like me, has been a loyal Labour supporter since he were a nipper in clogs; and who contacted me last week to say: "Labour's in a right old mess! The swing to the left is getting worse and worse all the time. And, this, at a time, when it should be the easiest thing in the world to be leader of the Opposition, but Jeremy Corbyn and Labour can't even begin to get their act together! It's truly pathetic."

Then, in all but one and the same breath, heaping high praise on his local Labour MP Luciana Berger who, he said, had worked so very hard for the people of Wavertree. But who, because she'd so adamantly refused to turn left and left, again, when ordered to do so, had fallen foul of party hard-liners. And had been targeted by "political activists" who not only threw anti-Semitic slurs at her, but bullied her with a constant barrage of vile insults levelled at her, locally, and in the national press. After which, she very reluctantly quit the Labour Party and joined 'Change UK', the centrist party that support a second referendum on European Union membership. And, then, to ensure her voice was truly heard, she joined the Lib-Dems. "Three political parties in less than three months. Shows you just how nuts everything is here. But she's shown courage, as well as the way forward."

And the news, just in, that Luciana Berger, former Labour MP, announced she'd be leaving her Liverpool constituency to stand as a Liberal Democrat for Finchley and Golders Green, in North London, at the next election.

My Liverpool friend; no slouch, himself, in local political and social circles; concluding, that people of all political persuasions, up and down the entire country, are utterly fed up to the teeth with politicians because of the never ending 'Brexit' nightmare. "You end up trying to decide which politicians aren't telling as many lies as the others! We can't trust any of them anymore. A truly sad state of affairs."

My own view of the Labour Party brought sharply into focus after having heard multiple reports about all the behind the scenes machinations meant to oust Labour Party deputy leader Tom Watson. One of the all too few Labour officials with any sense of history, let alone any sense of what the mass of non-party members, yet life-long Labour voters, truly want.

As he said, but a few weeks back, clearly signalling his position for the looming party conference: "The only way to break the 'Brexit' deadlock, once and for all, is a public vote in a referendum." Crisply adding, that in

the likely event of a general election in the coming months, Labour must be "crystal clear" about where it stands on 'Brexit' if it ever wanted to get any sort of hearing on the rest of its domestic policy agenda.

"There is no such thing as a good 'Brexit' deal," he said, "which is why I believe we should advocate for 'Remain'. That is what the overwhelming majority of Labour Party members, MPs, and trade unions believe."

All of which was immediately met by an unrelenting tide of invective from Labour Party purists. Together, with a veritable flood of admonishments; nay, open threats to any and all ditherers who might have been, momentarily, swayed by such a clear-headed vision for the party's future.

Demands of adhesion to party purity, aside, one can only imagine all the back-room politicking and arm twisting that was called for to ensure Tom Watson's vision; even if the dismissal of the man ultimately proved to be unsuccessful; was roundly defeated and Jeremy Corbyn's 'officially' sanctioned proposals were enthusiastically passed. The result assured before the so-called "democratic" process was ever permitted to come to the conference floor and proceed in all its tawdry theatrics. The entire charade, sadly, very much taken for granted by almost all there assembled.

This followed, hard on, by the news that Andrew Fisher, one of Jeremy Corbyn's senior aides; not only his 'head of policy', but also the man responsible for the latest Labour manifesto; had announced his intention to resign by the end of the year "to spend more time with his young family."

The result, do you think, of Mr Fisher having had the temerity to warn his "great friend" Jeremy that his continued dalliance on the question of 'Brexit' would ensure that he'd lose the next general election? Or was it, because he also criticised others in Mr Corbyn's "inner" team for their continuing "blizzard of lies"? Maybe Seumas Milne knows the truth of it.

I have to say, though, I find it very telling that, following the plot to oust him at the start of the annual conference, it was none other than Tom Watson who, in the end, called for “party unity.”

Since, when, there’s been yet another sign of the party turning, ever inexorably, in upon itself: Margaret Hodge, a long-serving Labour Party MP who’s repeatedly challenged Jeremy Corbyn over the insidious issue of anti-Semitism that seems forever to dog the party, is the second Labour MP to be “triggered” through the party's new ballot procedures. All of which makes it much, much easier for local party members to force a re-selection “contest” that translates to “political assassination,” by other means.

Thus, more and more does it seem the Labour Party no longer reflects the views of the ordinary workingman or woman. And, by its demand of party purity and adherence to out-dated ‘extremist’ dogma is as unelectable, today, as ever it was in the good old, bad old days of the 1970's.

‘Momentum’; the purist party within the once people’s party; those with their Trotskyite trotters firmly in the trough of the ideological stew; have already vowed to remove any sitting Labour MP who has the gall to defy what ‘Grand Poobah’ Jeremy Corbyn says, does, or demands.

The on-going purge of Labour moderates showing little or no sign of letting up; the need for universal animus in the face of Tory oppression overriding everything else, including, it seems, common sense. “Four legs good; two legs bad,” the slogan, hidden within the folds of the official party slogan that now might as well be recast as: ‘For The Few, Not The Many’.

For ‘Momentum’; as bald-faced an example of Orwellian ‘Newspeak’ as has been seen in Britain in a long time; casts an all too ominous shadow; every dark inch of it by design. An all too clear indication of the blind obedience party hard-liners now demand of all fully paid-up Labour Party members. The rule: “Don’t divide us; just, unite behind us and do as you’re told.”

I'm sure, though, that many voters will judge a party that doesn't allow question and dissent, within its ranks, and that severely punishes any and all those who do push back, as more than suspect. And that, in the end, it will force more and more once loyal Labour voters to look to other candidates and, indeed, to other parties.

Where, oh, where are the likes of much-missed brother David Miliband and, personal hero, brother Alan Johnson, when both the party and the country so sorely need them to stand shoulder to shoulder with brother Tom Watson, brother Andrew Fisher, sister Luciana Berger, and sister Margaret Hodge, an' all, and all the others as yet unnamed and un-stoned?

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