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Pro-Corbyn

Why is Jeremy Corbyn so popular? Here’s a backbench Labour MP, a serial rebel during the Blair/Brown era, proclaiming the same ideas he’s spouted for decades without ever being listened to, and now he’s the favourite to win the Labour Party leadership. Even people, like me, who previously supported Blair and Brown, are signing up to his cause.

Some context is needed here. For people outside the UK and/or not natural Labour supporters, it may be difficult to understand the sense of betrayal that LP supporters feel about the previous Labour government. I have voted Labour since 1987, when I was first able to vote. I celebrated Blair’s landslide victory and felt that he would genuinely make Britain a better place. I was one of the mugs who initially supported the Iraq war, gullibly believing that Saddam had WMD and it was imperative to remove his corrupt regime even without a UN mandate; I thought the light touch that Blair and Brown took with the banks was the right policy; I believed that turning schools into academies would improve standards; I assumed the energy companies were better off staying as private companies. But like many people, the fallout from the Iraq War and the aftermath of the 2008 credit crunch, has radically changed my views.

Above all, the sickening sense of treachery which I feel about the Iraq war lingers with me virtually every time I watch the news about the Middle East; in so many ways, we caused the tragedy we are watching now. If Jeremy Corbyn had been leader we wouldn’t have gone to war and might now be part of the solution, instead of having to shoulder much of the blame for the terrible, bloody mess.

Furthermore, if we had been more like Norway and regulated the banks properly, we wouldn’t be in the perilous economic position we are now faced with. A Corbyn government simply wouldn’t allowed the banks to be so unregulated; I am utterly persuaded that our economic position would be better with a leader who was not in the bankers’ pockets.

As a teacher, I have seen the consequences of Blair’s academies’ programme which has been massively expanded by the Coalition and now Tory governments. Billions have been thrown at persuading schools to become independent of their local authorities and now we find out that not only does the programme not raise standards but a recent National Audit Office report shows that it nurtures secrecy, poor financial management and, in an ever growing number of cases, corruption. This current government is proposing introducing regional commissioners to oversee academies, but Corbyn’s simpler idea to bring them back under local authority control would be more cost-effective and democratic.

It has become obvious the energy companies are a cartel, making a profit at our expense and the environment’s. I agree now with Corbyn’s plan to renationalise the energy companies and to use taxpayer’s money to make a massive drive for much more renewal, green energy supplies.

When Blair said recently, “If your heart is with Corbyn, get a transplant” it totally backfired with his former supporters because we all feel that it is not Corbyn who has virtually destroyed the Labour Party but him. We have utterly lost our trust in him and all his acolytes, who include all of the other contenders in the leadership race: Liz Kendall, Yvette Cooper and Andy Burnham. They are all tarred with the brush of the Iraq war, the banking crisis, the academies programme, the energy companies’ cartel.

In a witty piece in *The Times*, Rachel Sylvester compared Corbyn in a pejorative fashion to Bing Bong, the imaginary childhood friend of the protagonist, Riley, in Pixar’s children’s animated film *Inside Out*. This fantastic cartoon takes us on a roller-coaster journey through the mind of Riley where her emotions are people who control her mind’s “command module”. During her childhood, it is the lovely Joy who is in charge, but a move to San Francisco causes Fear, Disgust and Anger to take over. As a result, Joy gets lost in Imagination Land, where she meets Riley’s imaginary childhood friend Bing Bong, a pink cat-like elephant made of sweets! Sylvester’s clever point is that Corbyn is the Bing Bong of the Labour Party with his anti-Americanism, his ideas about renationalisation and printing money to fund public works etc. A lost figure resurrected from the past.

This is very true: Corbyn is Bing Bong! This is why we love him, as he is loved in the film. And, to pursue the analogy beyond Sylvester’s piece, who is it who ultimately saves the day in the film, but Bing Bong? He gives Joy the energy to propel herself back onto the Train of Thought. Like Bing Bong, I think Corbyn will sacrifice himself to let someone younger take the helm, but I think he is necessary at this juncture to give the LP the momentum to move forward.

Most realists don’t expect the Labour Party to win the next election whoever is in charge; the wipe-out that happened in Scotland, the unfairness of the first-past-the-post system and the conservatism of much of the country mean that it is unlikely the party has much of a chance for a majority in 2020. But it does need to articulate some credible arguments against the punitive Tory regime with its miserable diet of cuts to public services and benefits, xenophobia and tax breaks for the rich. Corbyn is the only person who is offering the British public a shift in discourse, where workers’ rights, the necessity for public works and the environment will become centre stage. Hopefully, he can give the Labour Party its heart, soul and, above all, brains back.

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