

Left- Horizons

Vote Labour on 12th !

This election is not an end, but a beginning

It is clear from our articles that the writers, readers and supporters of *Left Horizons* are working hard for the Labour Party. But for the record, let us emphasise again that we urge all our readers to VOTE LABOUR, wherever they happen to be, in all parts of the United Kingdom.

After nearly ten years of austerity, when we have seen the longest freeze on real wages since the Napoleonic Wars, when public services have been cut to the bone, when the NHS is on its knees, this election is an opportunity to move in the direction of real change.

There is not one measure of living standards or quality of life that has *not* got seriously worse under ten years of Tory rule. Britain is still one of the wealthiest countries on the planet, yet we have seen an unprecedented increase in real poverty in the last ten years. Fourteen million, around one in five of the population, is either in poverty or on the threshold of poverty. Tens of thousands are homeless or living in hugely over-priced private rented accommodation. Young people cannot afford to buy or rent in a market geared to *unaffordable* housing.

Rip-off Britain

Many of those forced to jump through hoops to get some meagre respite from state welfare benefits are actually people *in work*. Valuable workers like nurses are so poorly paid that some are forced to use food banks. There is no such thing as a fair days' pay for a fair day's work. Insecurity, uncertainty and low pay are the prevailing characteristics of millions of jobs today, and particularly for younger people.

Once upon a time, we had government departments, local authorities, a civil service and an NHS which aimed to provide public services and some public benefit to the population. Nowadays, after the decades of Tory-lite 'New Labour' followed by real Tory governments, what remains of these public bodies are merely vehicles for private contracts and private profit. Whether it is local authorities, the NHS, the Ministry of Justice, or any government department, the provisions of a public service now comes a very poor second to the drive to provide lucrative out-sourcing contracts to private businesses.

It doesn't matter what aspect of the public sector or public utilities we look at today – each one is like a body covered from top to bottom with leeches, as out-sourcing contracts diminish the quality of service and undermine the wages and conditions of workers, all to provide a fast buck for some private company. A river of public money from local authorities, government departments and the NHS is flowing into the coffers of private business. This is the reality of rip-off Britain today: a drive to the bottom in wages, conditions and quality of services and a drive to the Mercedes showrooms for the rich and super-rich.

Most vicious press campaign for decades

There has never been such a wide disparity of wealth as there is in the UK today. The last ten years has seen a huge increase in the gap between the wealth and income at the top, compared to the rest of us. For the poorest households, there are no savings or 'safety net', only debt and worry. For the richest, there is more money than they know what to do with. For this tiny privileged minority income tax is *optional*, and usually non-existent, thanks to a variety of tax dodges. Taking into account British Sovereign territories like the Virgin Islands, the Channel Islands and many other Crown dependencies, Britain is the *world leader* in the provision of secret tax havens for dirty

money and tax-dodging billionaires. This is the morality of British capitalism. This is what 'British values' mean to the ruling elite.

Labour has fought its campaign against the most vicious, lying and slanderous press and TV campaign for generations. When Labour fought in 1945 the *Daily Express* carried the headline, *Gestapo in Britain if Socialists Win*. That has been the flavour of most of the press today, most of which is owned by tax-dodging billionaires. The supposed 'neutrality' of the BBC has been laid bare in its completely uneven coverage of Labour and Tory campaigns, twice doctoring footage of Johnson to put him in a better light. On the issue of the anti-Semitism, wall-to-wall coverage was given of Rabbi Mirvis's *political* intervention, with barely a word from the many Jewish Labour supporters, including rabbis, who denounced Mirvis. Even the more sober *Financial Times*, expressed its fear of Labour, as it bemoaned the danger of Labour "rolling back" the years of Thatcherism.

And the reason for the hysteria of the press and media? - the fear of a Labour government that offers a real promise of change. Labour has campaigned on its most radical manifesto since 1945 and its programme chimes with the needs and aspirations of ordinary working class people. As we have argued, it will not be easy for a Labour government to carry through its programme in the teeth of the most bitter opposition of the capitalist class – those who own and control the press, the TV, the judiciary, the armed forces, the monarchy and the tops of the civil service. Labour will need to mobilise its maximum support, way beyond even its half million members – in every community and workplace, to carry through its programme. Only by a complete transformation of society, with public ownership and democratic control of the banks, finance houses, industry and all public utilities can Labour guarantee even the reforms of its manifesto. We must support all those reforms outlined, but we see them as a *starting point* in the struggle to change society.

'One-nation' Toryism is a smokescreen

In contrast to the Labour manifesto that is based on the real day to day conditions of life for the big majority of the population, the Tories offer nothing to the majority. Their mantra about 'one-nation' Toryism is a *smokescreen* for policies that will benefit only the top 1 per cent of the population, if that.

Boris Johnson, supported by the Tory media and the BBC, have tried to keep the focus of the election entirely on Brexit. If elected, Johnson claims that Brexit will be 'done' on January 31st. Even that is a lie, because that date will simply mark the beginning of a protracted period of

negotiations with the EU. The 'deal' negotiated by Johnson specifically removes the so-called 'level playing field' by which workers' standards in Britain will be kept the same as those in the EU. The Tory aim for Brexit is for a low-tax, low-pay, unregulated economy where anything goes, especially workers' rights. Those EU citizens who are currently resident in the UK, in many cases for decades, will be faced with monstrously expensive bureaucratic hurdles to establish the right to remain. The disgraceful scandals of the Windrush generation – where the grown-up children of 1950s migrants have been harassed, detained or even deported – will be repeated ten-fold with EU citizens currently living in the UK. A Tory Brexit will be a disaster for working class people.

Hidden away in the Tory manifesto, but without so much as a single column-inch of publicity, there are all kinds of measures that will make life more difficult for workers. The Tories would carry through gerrymandering boundary changes. They want to suppress voting, especially among the poorest, most vulnerable sections of the population, by introducing ID restrictions for voting. The Tories also want to ban strikes in transport and possibly for other public sector unions so we would face another round of anti-union legislation. Workers cannot afford another Tory government.

Political convulsions in all corners of the world

Labour Party members will be making one last 'push' to win this election, and supporters and readers of *Left Horizons* will be taking part in this. But when it is all over and the dust settled, we have to keep on an even keel. *Win, lose or draw our primary task will be, not to laugh or cry, but to understand*. Above all we have to understand that even though this is the most important election for decades, it is not the end of British politics.

What is happening in Britain is an integral part of the massive changes taking place on a global scale, from Hong Kong to Chile to Iran to France, and many other places in between. These are political convulsions that will dramatically and *permanently* affect the consciousness of hundreds of millions of people over the coming years. The ideas of socialism will have more relevance in this era of austerity and climate crisis than they have ever had in a hundred years.

On Friday morning, therefore, we should not see ourselves at some end point. We will be merely at the *beginning* of a turbulent political process that will continue into the foreseeable future.

Editorial, December 11, 2019