

Editorial: Left-Horizons is launched

More appetite for Marxist ideas than ever before

October 16 2017

The *Left Horizons* website is launched today with the aim of developing and promoting the Marxist strand of opinion within the Labour and trade union movement. Last week, Chris Leslie, Labour MP for Nottingham East, declared in relation to Momentum, that “there is no place for Marxism” inside the Labour Party. Leaving the aside the rather dubious link between Momentum and Marxism, even a cursory study of Labour history will show that there has *always been* a Marxist strand of opinion within the Party. We welcome the fact that for the first time in generations front bench Labour MPs are happy to describe themselves as “Marxists” or at the very least to pay tribute to Marx’s ideas.

In contradiction to Chris Leslie, in our opinion, there should be “no place” in the Labour Party for candidates *imposed* undemocratically on a Constituency Labour Party, as happened to Nottingham East when Leslie was made the candidate. Neither should there be a place for any Labour MPs to be *equivocal* on the question of austerity and the living standards of working-class people. When Ed Miliband and Ed Balls lost the 2015 general election for Labour, Chris Leslie was one of those right-wing Labour MPs who implied that the Labour manifesto had at that time been *too radical*. “We should have done more about welfare reform and public-sector reform”, he said, “not just giving the impression it was all about spending more or less money.”

When the Tories were hell-bent on pauperising the disabled by cutting their welfare benefits in July 2015, Chris Leslie was one of those 184 Labour MPs who did *not* vote against the second reading of the Tories’ Welfare Reform and Work Bill. As Labour’s then Treasury spokesperson, he said that Labour needed to advocate “sensible” savings and “proper welfare reforms”. He positioned Labour, in other words, in a place where it was *agreeing with the rationale of Tory cuts*, even if it opposed the *depth* of the cuts.

It was the Tory-lite policies of Labour MPs like Chris Leslie who lost Labour the general elections in both 2010 and 2015, and once the Tories got back in 2015 it was their *equivocation* and their *lack of opposition to austerity* that won the Labour leadership for Jeremy Corbyn. In truth, Leslie has not been reconciled – and is unlikely *ever* to be reconciled – with a mass-membership and radical Labour Party. Chris Leslie is simply *wrong* to argue that there is no place for Marxism in the Labour Party. What he really means, of course, is that there is no place for *any* radicalism in the Labour Party.

The shift to the left which has taken place in the Party is no accident. It is a direct result of years of cuts in living standards for working class people, both in terms of their *actual* wages and in terms of the *social* wage – access to decent homes, education, health and welfare. It is the lack of a secure future under capitalism which has made socialist ideas more popular than ever before. Within the Labour Party, Marxism sits within its most radical wing and it provides, in our opinion, its most scientific, consistent and coherent expression.

We would encourage all our visitors and readers to share our ideas on social media, to discuss them with other activists and debate them in the movement and on the website. There has never been a better time and place for a serious appraisal of socialism and what it means than today in the Labour Party. In our opinion, Marxist ideas are more relevant now than at any time. Despite all the attempts of academics, journalists and the political spokespersons of capitalism, who have many times in the past declared Marxism to be ‘dead’, they have never been able to eliminate a thirst for Marx’s ideas. Indeed, there is more appetite for socialist ideas now than at any time in modern history.

In any case, every label that has ever been used for socialists, like “Marxist”, “Trotskyist” and many more, has been used by the right-wing media to *demonise* socialists and to throw dust in the eyes of workers, all the better to *avoid* any discussion of real political policies. This is an approach followed, unfortunately, by the right-wing of the Labour Party. Having used the M-word here, therefore, **Left Horizons** will as a rule leave it aside and *let our ideas speak for themselves*.

We refuse to be demonised by labels and epithets; we will speak in the language of facts, figures and arguments, addressing particularly those activists in the labour movement who wish to seriously engage in political discussion and debate. We will provide the political and factual ammunition to give confidence and articulation to those genuine socialists engaged in discussions and arguments in the workplace, in the pubs and in the bus queues. Our website will give voice to socialist ideas and socialist analysis and we will be an authentic voice of socialists in communities, in the workplaces and in union and Labour meetings.

When the next Labour Government is faced with the choice of carrying through its programme of reforms or bending under the enormous pressure of big business and the Media, then the current debates and discussion within the Party will be raised to new heights. We hope to participate in that debate and, hopefully, to influence its outcome.