How to Go Forward from June 8th

written by Alliance for Workers' Liberty | June 23, 2017

The 8 June election result has re-energised Labour's activist base and helped put basic working-class demands back on the agenda. The increase in turnout among young voters, and the huge Labour lead among young voters, signal a major shift in British politics. All of this opens up a new period of Labour revival and recomposition.

That gives us many opportunity to argue for socialist ideas among people attracted to the Labour Party, and to work to rebuild the labour movement. At least 25,000 people have joined Labour since the election. It is reasonable to assume that a majority of these new members are younger people enthused by the election campaign. To organise these young people Young Labour groups should be built at a constituency level.

YL groups now have a number of policies in the manifesto they can campaign around like the £10/h minimum wage, banning zero hours contracts, abolishing tuition fees and restoring grants, building council housing and rent controls. Within parliament the Labour Party should withdraw all co-operation from the Tories, making the case that the government is illegitimate and doing everything within its power to bring the government down, hasten a new general election and win it. We should denounce any cross-party cooperation to get Brexit through.

Labour's gains in the election have boosted Corbyn's leadership — his standing with the public, among Labour members and even in the Parliamentary Labour Party. Labour's popularity has increased since the election, and especially since May's disastrous response to the Grenfell Tower fire.

The latest poll by Survation puts Labour on 44 per cent and the Tories on 41 per cent. We should argue that Labour organise demonstrations and mobilise on the streets to oppose the Government outside Parliament. "Force the Tories Out" has a real resonance. industrial struggle Union militants should try to take forward potential disputes. With a weak and discredited government and a more optimistic climate for organised labour, it may be easier to argue for action. A flurry of industrial action would increase the pressure on the government and create the best conditions for positive pressure on an incoming Labour government. Labour should become "the party of strikes". Labour should explicitly, directly, and full-throatedly support and encourage industrial action.

We know a left-Labour government will need to rest for its power not on Parliament and the existing state, but a well-organised and combative working-class movement in workplaces and communities. All militant trade unionists should advocate and push for Labour Party affiliation or reaffiliation of

unaffiliated trade unions.

Labour's manifesto was the most significant statement of Labour policy since Corbyn's first election. It showed that by challenging the consensus and offering bold, left-wing policies, Labour can win back support. It nails the lie that such policies make Labour "unelectable". There were several issues on which Labour policy was wrong or severely lacking, for example on the issue of increasing police and border guards.

There are good possibilities for Labour activists to run campaigns on such issues: freedom of movement/ migrants' rights, Trident, and the Thatcher anti-trade union laws. In terms of hard policy planks, on many issues, the manifesto was not significantly to the left of the Miliband campaign. Overall the difference of tone in the manifesto was of great political importance, and so were the pledges for the £10 minimum wage, no tuition fees, and significant taxes on the rich.

The Labour left group Momentum had a very good election, using social media, phonebanking, its marginals app. It mobilised many individuals into the campaign. That helped the election result and attracted people towards the left in the most general terms. But it may encourage Momentum not to say anything to the left of the Corbyn and his team, or to reverse the undemocratic structures which stop Momentum's membership shaping the organisation.

Momentum local groups need to be built up and allow open debate so that they can play a role in organising the left in Labour both locally and nationally. With the left in Labour strengthened, we must go on the offensive in democratising the Party. We need an amnesty for all currently"auto-excluded" members. Labour's rules should be changed so that no one who supports Labour can be auto-excluded for also supporting "a political organisation other than an official Labour Party group".

The reviving Labour Party needs a radical Marxist left wing. The left swing represented by the manifesto is important in terms of relation to broad-public opinion and to raising labour-movement aspirations. But relative to what the working class needs to deal with a world capitalist system which is in depression, and may well soon lurch into a new crisis, it is meagre. The manifesto let down migrants, workers who require the repeal of the Thatcher trade union laws to be able to organise effectively, and those who have campaigned to end the threat of annihilation by nuclear weapons.

A Labour government winning office on the basis of the manifesto would, in one way or another, at one pace or another — unless the labour movement had previously been transformed, with revolutionary Marxists making an essential contribution — crumble in the face of capitalist resistance and capitalist crises. The lessons from Syriza in Greece, the Workers' Party in Brazil, and the French SP-CP alliance in 1981-3, are unambiguous. We fight to get Labour returned to office, but also to transform the labour movement. We advocate a labour movement which fights for redistributive measures such as in the manifesto, and also goes on to secure those measures and change society thoroughly, by common ownership and democratic control of the chief means of production.

The election result opens up new chances to instil socialist purpose in the labour movement, in the full revolutionary sense of the word "socialist", but it is down to us to do the instilling: it is not happening automatically or organically. Workers' Liberty works to build a revolutionary Marxist force in the labour movement.

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