



Labour's Just Cuddly moment

Who'd have thought it? Jeremy Corbyn, the silent figure of a Labour MP for 32 years becomes a focus for those who say they want something different from the Labour Party after the Blair years. Well it's true he's not Blair in name, but he's certainly riding high from Blair's legacy.

In the run up to my first election, a Labour Party canvasser knocked at our door and I was only too keen to engage them in conversation. I'd been political throughout school, being a lone voice against my entire 6th form class over assisted suicide, ardent opponent of British militarism abroad and keen advocate of Tony Benn and socialism. Alas, the Labour Party canvasser at our door had never been asked for a copy of their manifesto and was a little taken aback at me wanting to join them. I think I voted Green in the end as a protest at my experience of them being a machine party uninterested in involving supporters. And that was in the early 80's when things were a little more lively politically.

Since the relative dynamism of politics in the 80's, the Labour Party isn't even a shadow of what it was then, completely hollowed out before and during the Blair years into being a rump

organisation of individual professional politicians who organise more around personalities than politics. Not only was Tony Blair a beneficiary of the decline of the Labour Party, but the fairly systematic insulation of the Westminster machine from the historic base of Labourism in the trade union bureaucracy was progressed through Ed Miliband's period as leader. Indeed, the £3 for a vote scheme much ridiculed for being open to exploitation by small numbers of potentially unrepresentative bodies, was Ed's great initiative to democratise the Labour Party from the union structure that helped bring him to office.

Jeremy Corbyn is as surprised as anyone to become a Labour Leader candidate after such a long slumber as an MP, but he's mastered the state's avoidance of responsibility approach he's been responsible for managing for so long. In the Independent he's quoted as saying "I have this desperately old fashioned point of view that policy making and decision making should not come from the top, passed down the food chain for the foot soldiers to go and knock on doors and release it on the unsuspecting public," he said. "I'd rather it started with the suspecting public putting their ideas forward of the kind of society, the kind of housing, the kind of health, the kind of social security systems they want so that it works through and we end up with a very broad range of support, very valuable ideas in our country that have been suppressed for so long by this ridiculous consensus in Westminster about how policy is made by party leaders." He's clearly mindful that there is no longer a Labour Party infrastructure to develop a manifesto or programme.

At Manchester's rally for Jeremy Corbyn on Saturday, ex-Coronation Street luvvie Julie Hesmondhalgh, ended her pitch in favour of JC by declaring, to rapturous applause: "Welcome to the vibrant, [mass movement of giving a toss about stuff](#) ." Everyone who doesn't support Just Cuddly for leader of the Labour Party is by implication someone who doesn't give a toss. Smug and self satisfied in their detachment from wider society somewhat understates that viewpoint. The avoidance of responsibility and smugness central to today's Labour Party is one thing, but it's the authoritarianism based on a demeaned and degraded populace that enrages me much more.

Just Cuddly's proposal to consult over the introduction of women-only train carriages seems innocuous in the way it's presented - neutral tones of a civil servant accommodating demands in society, but it's clearly judgemental what he's prepared to consult on and what he isn't. The ability to respond to proposals that are clearly barmy and backward in the separatism they represent indicates just how detached Jeremy Corbyn is, alongside the rest of the political elite for that matter. What's consistent about the message of future direction the Just Cuddly one offers was probably best summed up for me in his Radio 4 interview on Woman's Hour. Using the language of 80's radicals but with the truly vicious content of a classic civil servant's view of the populace, he said that bringing up the next generation was too important to be left to individuals and the state needed to intervene and take control - because ordinary people can't be trusted.

Ok, I was schooled in state led socialism as a kid, but when the working class express no independent agency and the state flounders for a sense of purpose to respond to a society in stasis, politicians like the Just Cuddly one offer a solution with radical sounding programmes that represent a step back in time to patrician led organisation of society. The mistrust of the wider population by Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters may well be obscured by the histrionics of Blair and the old guard talking about the 'Alice in Wonderland' character of his proposals, but I can't see anything positive about his programme offerings, when he feels confident enough to articulate his own programme.

There's clearly a desire by some to react against an old order of professional politics, clearly expressed by the support for the SNP at the general election, but the politics of those who appear to stand apart from the old elite are often much worse in the way they denigrate the wider population. Entertaining the notion of separate carriages for women indicates a degraded view of the travelling public who can't be trusted to freely associate and need an external third party to manage their behaviour based on the biology of passengers. Such biological determinism was fairly well lampooned as Victorian justification for structural difference in society, but is now back in fashion within elitist circles, and this doesn't warrant any support, however much we may dislike our current political order.