



| Grenfell Tower tragedy shows effects of austerity, Corbyn tells May.

CORBYN'S LABOUR MUST AVOID THE FATE OF HOLLANDE'S PARTI SOCIALISTE

by Richard Angell

Following the recent close UK election that delivered a minority Conservative government, there is now every chance that Jeremy Corbyn could be the UK's next prime minister after fresh elections. Whilst Labour's manifesto was good, the leading thinktank on public finance issues, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, found serious discrepancies in the projected revenue and tax figures. Richard Angell explains how he thinks Labour can avoid the fate of France's Parti Socialiste.

Jeremy Corbyn is now the frontrunner to be the next elected prime minister of the United Kingdom. It is clear that the Tories will ditch Theresa May before

Britain next goes to the polls but the sooner it comes the more likely it is that the former backbench rebel turned Glastonbury music festival hit will be walking through the doors of No 10.

Millennials – and their successors in Generation Y – were roused into action by the result of the referendum on the United Kingdom's membership of the European Union and chose to punish May

and her cabinet of Brexiteers. The latter are about to frogmarch the UK out of the single market and take with it young people's work and travel rights. Corbyn was the conduit for their anger.



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Corbyn outstripped expectations of him

By becoming so, he outstripped the expectations of his critics, myself included, and has entrenched himself as the new establishment force in the UK's Labour Party. The leader now has total control of his top team. In June he sacked three shadow ministers – and accepted the resignation of one more – for voting to keep Britain in the single market. He has £5m in short money at his disposal annually, the ability to appoint members of the House of Lords and currently the BBC is falling over itself to put Corbyn-friendly commentators into mainstream programmes like the Andrew Marr show and Question Time. The 2017 manifesto, as Stephen Bush of the New Statesman has written, will be the basis of the next winning Labour manifesto in the way much of the 1983 manifesto's contents – dubbed 'the longest suicide note in history' – appeared in Tony Blair's 1997 successor.

The question has now changed from 'can Corbyn win?' – it is not hard to imagine a set of circumstances where the government falls and Corbyn is the one to visit the Queen – to 'what happens if he does?'

Labour's manifesto – a big success story

Labour's manifesto was the big hit of the campaign. It had vision; it had policies that were easy to explain; and, with clear appeal to very different parts of the electorate and – despite its

contradictions – very much felt like it added up to more than the sum of its parts. There was much in it that I, and every progressive in Britain, would like to see achieved under a future Labour government.

It was not, however, taken seriously, by its authors nor audience, as a genuine programme of government. It had

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associated costing, but that is not the same as it being costed. The leading thinktank on public finance issues, the Institute for Fiscal Studies, found serious

discrepancies in the projected revenue figures – raising over £11bn less by their calculations than John McDonnell's predictions in the first year alone – and found costs to be higher than Labour's 'back of a cigarette packet' sums.

During the election, Labour did not emulate the populism of Donald Trump in 2016, but that of Francois Hollande in 2012. Hollande's coalition of students, the ultra left, those in favour of high levels of taxation and the fact that the anti-establishment right voted tactically propelled the Parti Socialiste to the Élysée Palace. Labour's coalition in 2017 was remarkably similar.

Don't make undeliverable promises

Hollande's promised tax rises imposed on the rich, though extremely popular at the time, turned out to be catastrophic for the French economy. Like Nick Clegg in 2010 on tuition fees, the Socialist candidate made these promises knowing that they were undeliverable. And, in turn, the voters punished both men heavily when their promises were exposed as such and they were forced to change tack.

What should Labour do next?

So what then does Labour do with an exciting, if not realistic, manifesto?

First, it should accept the lowest estimated returns on its proposed

tax measures as calculated by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS). This would go some way to shutting down a potent line of attack. Once this is done, it should cut its cloth accordingly.

Second, McDonnell should pledge that any revenue raised above the IFS's predictions should be earmarked for deficit reduction.

Third, it must choose a path on Brexit. 2017 was a masterclass in riding both horses. It will not work next time. In this hung parliament, Corbyn possesses the power to keep Britain in the single market and customs union.

The next Labour manifesto cannot leave the party a hostage to fortune. Winning a pyrrhic victory akin to Hollande's in 2012 by offering the public a programme it knows to be undeliverable must be avoided at all costs.



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