

Britain June 8 general election: Labour must present a radical alternative

Wednesday 19 April 2017, by [THORNETT Alan](#) (Date first published: 19 April 2017).

Theresa May has called a general election for June 8th hoping that Labour has been sufficiently weakened by the attacks of the right on the Corbyn leadership that she will be rewarded with a further five years in office. It is of course complete co-incidence that rumours had started to emerge that the Crown Prosecution Service were about to move against 30 individuals for electoral fraud in the last general election.

And the fact that Labour's barrage of policy announcements over the last week had started to see some improvement in poll ratings had nothing to do with it either. John Prescott's article in last week's Sunday Mirror, commenting that discussion was shifting to policy questions – such as free school meals for all or an increase in carer's allowance (to bring it in line with JSA) – rather than news of splits and divisions, was completely irrelevant in May's calculations.

A Tory victory would put May in a position to force through the hard-line 'tax haven' Brexit that the Tory right craves while going to the polls early avoids divisions in her own party unravelling in front of the electorate. It would also, were she to win, give her the opportunity to stamp her authoritarian style on a new Tory government, consolidate her position in the Tory party, and get rid of any Cameronites who might cause trouble during the Brexit process. All this will push Britain even further to the right than was the case after the referendum in June last year. A Ukipisation of the Tory party mark 2.

Jeremy Corbyn is right to welcome the announcement and pledge to fight the Tories all the way on Brexit and on social policy, the NHS, and on the economy.

The announcement represents a huge U-turn on May's part, since she had ruled out a general election on the many occasions she was asked since the EU referendum in June 2016, but it is more of a gamble than it might seem at first sight. It is effectively a rerun of the referendum and she is banking on the Brexit vote holding up, but the reality is that no one knows—almost anything can happen. She is gambling that her chances are better now than in 2020 if Brexit unravels.

The job of the left now is to get behind the Corbyn campaign and drum up every vote we can.

The key for Labour in this election is to put forward a radical left programme with socialist measures that can present a clear and attractive alternative to the Tories. It must also present an alternative to the hard Brexit being planned by May, including the retention of free movement in the event of access to the single market. Labour needs to be seen as an answer by many amongst the 48% as well as amongst the 52%—but that can most effectively be done by showing why a hard Brexit would be disastrous for all working people living in Britain.

It is crucial that Labour is prepared to work in a progressive alliance with other anti-austerity parties in Parliament (i.e. the Greens, SNP and Plaid) in order to form a government if that is necessary. This means supporting the call of the Scottish parliament for a second independence referendum. This is of course very different from the sort of alliance that Tony Blair is angling for

(again) where Labour accommodates to the Liberal Democrats by moving to the right.

And finally it is crucial that Labour takes on the issue of the electoral system. A declaration in favour of a PR system for Westminster should Labour win would strongly increase Labour's appeal in this election and ensure that we do not get elected dictatorships on the basis of minority votes in the future that we have had in the past.

Alan Thornett

P.S.

* April 19, 2017:

<http://socialistresistance.org/general-election-labour-must-present-a-radical-alternative/9986>