



THE SUNDAY TIMES

ESTABLISHED 1822

Grit, not frit, should be Mrs May's watchword

Theresa May described the vote she called in June as “the most important election this country has faced in my lifetime”. She must hope she got that wrong too. For the prime minister is now diminished in authority and leading a minority government. A hard-left opposition is looking forward to feasting on the carcass of the Conservative Party.

In Brighton last week Labour achieved something once regarded as impossible. The face it presented to the world was one of unity, even if this was achieved by sweeping the divisive issue of Brexit under the carpet. That such unity was achieved under Jeremy Corbyn – initially seen as hopelessly unsuited for the leadership by Labour moderates and most of its MPs – was even more remarkable.

Labour could unite behind Mr Corbyn's machinegun attack on the Tories – “the longest fall in people's pay since records began; homelessness doubled; NHS waiting lists lengthening; school class sizes growing and teachers leaving; over 4m children now in poverty; 20,000 police officers and 11,000 fire-fighters cut; more people in work and in poverty than ever before”. He also offered his followers hope.

While Labour's economic programme would set this country back for decades, many of its supporters are too young to remember the damage inflicted by the party's past disasters. Labour presents an alternative to the never-ending “austerity” bequeathed by George Osborne's snail-like pace of deficit reduction to his successor. While the former chancellor enjoys himself carping from the sidelines, Philip Hammond is faced with pressure from all sides to throw money at problems, from the teething troubles with universal credit through to public sector pay, while still having to confront a £50bn budget deficit.

Most of all, the Tories have been making life easy for Mr Corbyn. Today we report that in the wake of the election Mrs May cut a desperate figure, struggling to hold it together. Her rivals circled but did not strike. So Mr Corbyn was able to say: “We are ready and the Tories are clearly not. They're certainly not strong and they're definitely not stable. They're not remotely united. And they're hanging on by their fingertips.” Many Tories, looking at the past four months, would find it hard to quarrel with that.

The first task of this week's conference, then, is that it does unite. The omens are not good. Two weeks ago we praised Boris Johnson for offering an optimistic vision of Britain's post-Brexit future. His latest intervention, setting out his “red lines” for the EU negotiations, parked his tanks on Mrs May's lawn. The task of the government, and its chief negotiator David Davis, is to get into the meat of the negotiations. Noises off do not help. If this week's conference looks like the first hustings in a leadership contest, then the challengers should put up or shut up quickly. A war of attrition will play into Labour's hands.

That is not just down to ministers, MPs and party members. A year ago Mrs May read the mood of the conference exactly right. The country and the party had voted for Brexit and she, despite having supported the “remain” side, was going to deliver it efficiently. For six months all went according to plan, with her Lancaster House speech in January and over-coming legal challenges to meet her self-imposed deadline for invoking article 50 in March. Now there is drift.

Mrs May's Florence speech last month was conciliatory but also hinted at a loss of faith in her original aims. One thing the Tories do not want to see is a prime minister pushed around by Brussels. She needs to regain her earlier confidence and make clear that this is the time for give and take on the other side, too.

More than that, Mrs May needs to give the Conservatives something to lift their spirits. The current narrative is that after this year's failed election gamble, one more heave will see Mr Corbyn in No 10. Mrs May has to pledge to challenge relentlessly the ideology and innumeracy behind Labour's ideas and to win back not only the young but swing voters of all ages.

Measures seeking to do this will be unveiled this week, such as changes to tuition fees and assistance for first-time buyers, including an expansion of the Help to Buy scheme. They will assist but do not go far enough. Mrs May should lift her sights.

A government that tackles the housing crisis – building more homes for both private buyers and council tenants – would combine good politics with good economics. Sajid Javid, the communities and local government secretary, has useful ideas and is sceptical of the sanctity of the green belt. A housebuilding revolution was the making of Harold Macmillan. It should be Mrs May's domestic priority.

Cheap flights do not justify cheap behaviour

Ryanair, for years the butt of jokes about its alleged shortcomings and penny-pinching attitude, has finally given its customers something big to moan about. Its botched rostering of pilots has resulted in thousands of flights being cancelled and inconvenienced more than 700,000 passengers.

Michael O'Leary, the airline's chief executive, has a chippy response to most criticism but could not laugh this one off. Ryanair, like the cab-hailing app Uber, has been a highly effective disrupter, shaking up the airline market and bringing huge benefits to consumers. Even disrupters get it badly wrong sometimes, however.

While the Irish regulator has largely pulled its punches in dealing with Ryanair, its UK counterpart has been more effective. Andrew Haines, the chief

executive of the UK Civil Aviation Authority, had to warn Mr O'Leary it was wrong to say Ryanair was not legally obliged to reroute customers whose flights had been cancelled. He said the airline could be breaking the law by omitting material information that “is likely to cause the average consumer to take a transactional decision he or she would not have taken otherwise”. Facing the threat of a fine, the company bowed to pressure and updated its website on Friday, detailing passengers' full rights.

That is as it should be. The cheap flight revolution has brought huge benefits and should continue to do so – but cheap does not mean a free-for-all. The regulator's touch has been fair but firm. Business needs to play by the rules and Ryanair is no exception.

Lashings of lashings

There was a light snack of cold pork, salad, egg sandwiches, ham sandwiches, bacon, potted meat, sardines, crusty bread rolls, ginger cake, lemonade and ginger beer set out in front of the Famous Five. But for the first time in living memory nobody seemed hungry.

“What's the matter, Dick?” said George.

“A professor at Kansas State University says children's books are racist,” said Dick.

“We're not racist, are we?” said Anne. “Oh come on, Anne! Just look at us,” said Dick, gloomily. “We're all hideously white and awfully, awfully middle class.”

“It's no good,” sighed Julian. “Unless we can demonstrate a commitment to diversity and equality, we're finished in children's literature.”

“But Timmy's ever so diverse,” said Anne. “He's a mongrel.”

“Hurrah!” said the Famous Five. “Tuck in, everybody.”

Dominic Lawson

New and nice? Not these old and angry Marxists



The young idealists joining Labour must learn about their militant comrades

Jeremy Corbyn wants the whole country to be “infected” by the “unity, love and affection” that, he told his ecstatic party members in Brighton last week, was what they were demonstrating. Rather different sorts of demonstration lie in wait for the Conservatives as they assemble for their conference in Manchester.

The police are preparing for trouble, estimating that 50,000 people will be descending on that great city with the aim of making it as uncomfortable as possible for the delegates. A Conservative “gin-tasting evening” has already been called off because the organisers felt they couldn't guarantee the safety of guests.

If things do get a bit tasty, it won't just be the mob who'll feel exhilarated by the intimidation of the “evil Tories”. I'm thinking of John McDonnell, Labour's shadow chancellor, a man who regards physical violence as an essential element of the class struggle. During the Conservative and Liberal Democrat coalition, he described those trashing public property in protest against its policies as “the best of our movement”. He praised students who resorted to this form of violence for “kicking the shit out of” the Tory party headquarters and insisted that an undergraduate who hurled a fire extinguisher from a roof – a potentially lethal act – was “not the criminal”, but “victimised”.

None of this should be a surprise from a man who lists as his hobby in Who's Who fomenting “the overthrow of capitalism” and cites not just Marx but also Lenin and Trotsky – for whom the slaughter of unrepentant bourgeoisie was not a hobby but a vocation – as his inspiration. Equally unsurprisingly, many of those associated with the Militant tendency – the far-left group excised from the Labour Party more than a generation ago – have now returned. But they make odd brothers-in-arms for the young men and women with no record of political activism who have flocked to the party because they believe Jeremy Corbyn represents a “new, nicer politics”.

He is indeed nicely mannered and never less than courteous in debate. But as for the “new politics”, it is novel only to those too young to remember the 1970s. They do not, for example, recall the time before the Thatcher government, when foreign exchange controls meant strict limits on how much you could spend when holidaying abroad.

Actually, McDonnell gave us a sense last week of Labour's preparedness to return to the status quo ante Thatcher, when he said he was “war-gaming” capital and exchange controls

in anticipation of a flight of capital “when” Labour wins the next general election.

That would be the fastest way to convince investors that the UK would be as attractive a place for their money as Cuba or Venezuela. But that, too, is hardly surprising, since Corbyn and McDonnell have long regarded those two nations (under the late Fidel Castro and Hugo Chavez) as models of socialist excellence, in contrast to the shameful capitalist excesses practised by their wicked neighbour, the US.

There is nothing wrong in the Labour top two having such views and promulgating them. It's the duty of politicians to preach what they believe in and to attempt to persuade the public, via the ballot box, to endorse their opinions. Corbyn and McDonnell are also right to sense a weakness of intellectual nerve in their centre-right opponents: it is 10 years since the credit crunch, but the political shockwaves from that massive market seizure ripple as powerfully as ever through the democracies of the western world.

At the Bank of England last week, Theresa May, provoked by Corbyn's claim to be “now the political mainstream”, declared her desire to defend the free-market economy against its socialist enemies. But she did so with such a lack of passion – reading somewhat haltingly from a script – that it would not have convinced anyone whose opinion was open to change. Indeed, given that her manifesto in June had nothing good to say about what May now extols as “free-market capitalism”, I even wondered if she herself, who has never worked in a profit-making business, was convinced by what she was reading out.

I would also advise her speechwriters – and all who want to win the battle of ideas against socialism – to stop defending “capitalism”. The word itself is derived from Marx's Das Kapital and conjures up images of men in pinstriped suits smoking fat cigars and resting their feet



There is hatred at the heart of Marxism, expressed by the man himself

Sarah Baxter

A little birdie told me the far left hates a free press



Can the watchdog Impress rule fairly on the smearing of Laura Kuenssberg?

Here is some fake news about the BBC's political editor, masked by a veneer of half-truth. “We need to talk about Laura Kuenssberg,” tweeted The Canary, a left-wing Corbynista digital fanzine. “She's listed as a speaker at the Tory party conference. Impartial and accurate?” it mocked. Kuenssberg was listed as “invited” by the Centre for Social Justice think tank, which is closely tied to the Brexiteer Iain Duncan Smith. But in fact she had not agreed to speak at its fringe meeting in Manchester this week and remains politically impartial.

The tweet went viral. It was clickbait, pure and simple, designed to stoke anger against Kuenssberg after a week of vicious attacks on her reported use of a bodyguard at the Labour Party conference in Brighton (itself the result of months of misogynistic trolling by the left). And it wasn't true. Even the former Labour leader Ed Miliband called on the website to withdraw its remark, because “Jeremy said today we don't tolerate abuse”. After protests, The Canary posted a weaselly update pretending it was basically correct all along.

Perhaps you would like to join in the complaints about its sly form of hate speech to Impress, Britain's first and only state-backed press regulator, approved under a royal charter last year. The Canary, along with The Ferret and other curious print and digital flora and fauna, has signed up to the press watchdog funded to the tune of £4m by the former Formula One boss Max Mosley's family trust. Hurry up, though! Impress is itself in the dock and may not be long for this world.

I did wonder last year whether it was wise for the state to coerce Britain's free press into control by a body whose very existence depends on the son of two fascists, Oswald and Diana Mosley. People like me “probably need counselling”, Max Mosley replied smoothly in a letter to The Sunday Times (an authoritarian

trope if ever I heard one). But I never dreamt Impress would become so chaotic so fast.

By its own standards, Impress has failed. Last week it recommended banning its own chief executive, Jonathan Heawood, and two members of its board from dealing with publications with a turnover exceeding £20m, which includes all mainstream newspapers, because of their public hostility to large swathes of the press. Heawood reserved his worst Twitter tirades for Paul Dacre, the “degenerate libertine” editor of the Daily Mail, but few newspaper groups have escaped the trio's scorn. In future a new subcommittee will have to handle their work. Honestly, you couldn't make it up.

It's worth noting that The Sunday Times and other national newspapers refused to join Impress – under threat of severe financial penalties in libel and privacy cases – precisely because the organisation, which is supported by the campaign group Hacked Off, seemed riddled with bias. Now it has emerged that Impress itself agrees with that verdict. A self-respecting boss would have resigned when the damning internal report came out. All Heawood said was that he “let the side down”.



Impress has now proved it is unfit for purpose

on the backs of the workers. “Free market” will do on its own, as people like both freedom and markets.

But if we must get involved with the language of Marx, it is worth informing the younger admirers of Corbyn – assuming they are interested – of the historical baggage that comes with Marxism. It's not just the matter of the countless millions slaughtered in the name of that doctrine by followers in the 20th century. It is the hatred at its heart, expressed by the man himself in the 19th century. Specifically, the hard-left anti-semitism that now disfigures the Labour Party – emanations of which on social media have been denounced by the Labour Party chairman John Cryer as “redolent of the 1930s” – is all of a piece with the “anti-capitalist” agenda. It was from the very beginning.

In Marx's 1844 essay On the Jewish Question he wrote: “What is the worldly religion of the Jew? Huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money... Money is the jealous god of Israel... The bill of exchange is the real god of the Jew.” And 12 years later, in an article called “The Russian loan” for the New York Daily Tribune, Marx declared: “The real work is done by the Jews, and can only be done by them, as they monopolise the machinery of the loan-mongering mysteries... Thus do these loans, which are a curse to the people, a ruin to the holders and a danger to the governments, become a blessing to the houses of the children of Judah.”

The “newer, nicer” Labour took a swipe at another stereotypical Marxist foe, the aristocracy, last week. The MP for Kensington, Emma Dent Coad, launched an attack on the Duchess of Cambridge for her “disgusting” behaviour in buying jumpers that cost – allegedly – £150 each. Dent Coad told her audience in Brighton that this was “absolutely outrageous”, because each jumper cost the equivalent of “a food bill for a family of four”.

There are many, many members of the Labour Party whose motivation is only to improve the lot of the least favoured. But there has always been an element on the left driven much more by hatred of the well-off than by love of the poor. Such types tend never to have experienced poverty themselves and to be, like Dent Coad, resoundingly middle-class. If Britain does become infected with their outlook, then love and affection will not be the discourse of politics. Rather the opposite, actually, Jeremy.

dominic.lawson@sunday-times.co.uk

Come on, Corbyn, make this Labour's day of atonement, News Review, page 24



The Press Recognition Panel is now going to consider whether Impress still deserves its seal of approval on the grounds that it may have seriously breached the royal charter's requirements. A judicial review of the original decision to grant it official status will also conclude shortly.

Heawood has closed his Twitter account – presumably because he can't trust himself not to indulge in anti-media bilge. His own board warned him that, should any national papers join Impress (they won't), his position would be “untenable”. It already is. This is a man who joined far-left efforts to deprive the press of advertising, retweeting hostile comments such as “Voltaire... never said I will defend to the death your right to get advertising revenue.” It's tantamount to saying: “I'd like to starve you of resources and shut you down.”

For Heawood and friends to adjudicate on whether The Canary was fair to Kuenssberg is a joke. For an Impress “subcommittee” to regulate national newspapers is out of the question. It has already proved it is unfit for purpose. Newspapers have set up their own, far more respected watchdog, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (Ips), which recently showed its teeth by ordering The Mail on Sunday to publish two very prominent corrections. Unlike Impress, it neither has nor seeks government approval.

As the far left grows in strength, so do the dangers to a free press. Decades-old attacks on the “right-wing tabloids”, in particular The Sun and the Mail, have lately spread to perceived enemies of the people at the BBC, such as Kuenssberg, and left-of-centre newspapers. Click on The Canary's Twitter page and you will see it is now turning its guns on Nick Cohen of The Observer, an exemplary supporter of the democratic left who it claims is an “arch-neoliberal”. The Canary really is in the coalmine.

[@sarahbaxterSTM](https://twitter.com/sarahbaxterSTM)