

Now finish off Boris

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WITH THE COMMONS' VOTE TO TAKE CONTROL of its agenda and the passage of a Bill preventing No Deal, the constitutional coup of Boris Johnson and his sinister advisor Dominic Cummings has been thwarted ? for now. If the Bill becomes an act of parliament and is transmitted as a request for delay until January then a general election becomes a near certainty.

The attempted coup was why hundreds of thousands joined the wave of protests and direct action across the country to stop Johnson's rogue regime. Millions of people recognised this for what it was. The suspension of parliament to prevent it voting to stop a crash out was a Bonapartist coup, i.e. one in which the executive raises itself above, and thwarts the operation of, the democratically elected (and supposedly sovereign) parliament. It revealed some fundamental things about the unwritten British constitution, its powerful undemocratic elements that could be used against a Corbyn-led Labour government.

Johnson's coup was carried out using the unelected parts of the British state; the royal prerogative, wielded by a prime minister who was not elected by the people but by 90,000 Tory party members. Marxists have long warned that in any deep national crisis the ?picturesque pageantry? of Britain's monarchy can suddenly spring to life and override the democratic elements of the constitution.

Johnson even threatened to ignore a vote by the Commons to ask the EU for a postponement or arrange a vote of no confidence that would allow him to request the Queen to dissolve parliament and go for a general election on October 14.

Jeremy Corbyn correctly said Labour will vote against dissolution, as long as the October 31 deadline hangs like a sword of Damocles over any election campaign. It was clear this was a pretext for Cummings to run an election campaign as Bonapartist plebiscite ? ?the people vs. parliament?. But, once that threat has passed the time will be ripe for a vote of no confidence that finishes Johnson off and installs a Labour government under Jeremy Corbyn. Such an interim government should then request from the EU an extension in order to conduct a general election followed by a referendum on the current deal.

Corbyn in Number Ten

Labour should reject any proposal for a caretaker government under a supposedly neutral figure like the Tory Ken Clarke, such a compromise would open the way to unprincipled alliances in the subsequent general election and even to Labour participation in a coalition government with Lib Dems or even the anti-Brexit Tories.

We must step up and maintain the pressure on MPs to make all this happen. Intransigence on Labour's part will be necessary to force the Liberals and Tory rebels to choose between a Corbyn caretaker government and Johnson's No Deal. Intransigence over principles is the only realistic policy in this situation.

Meanwhile, the Labour party and the TUC need to throw their full weight behind mass protests in every town and city until Johnson is brought down. This means occupations, blockades and walkouts. If it proves impossible to remove Johnson by parliamentary or electoral means, the TUC must be prepared to call a general strike to force him out.

The movement in the streets needs to prepare itself for this potential next step by setting up committees of delegates from trade unions, Labour parties, and the wider movement to coordinate the resistance.

Labour's programme

Unless a general election is called in the next few weeks, we need to use the time, not only to prepare for it but to deploy the maximum pressure from Labour and trade union members for a really radical manifesto that genuinely delivers "for the many, not the few". Labour needs to abandon all ambiguity about Brexit and declare it is opposed to it full stop. It needs to make clear that it is for free movement, for defending the right of workers and students from the continent to come to work and study in Britain. It must pledge to end deportations and to close the vile detention centres and put all these policies in its manifesto.

This means launching an offensive against the institutions of international capitalism from a position of strength, including a Europe-wide fight against austerity and the EU's neoliberal treaties and against the rising racist right, based on democratic international social forums. It should do so in solidarity with the working class movements of the continent under the slogan "Against the Europe of Capital! For a Socialist United States of Europe!"

Labour should denounce the Tories' promises of billions for education and the NHS as a cynical bribe, just to buy support for No Deal. Labour should abandon its own timid spending limits and pledge a major investment in housing, public services, and the environment – funded not by borrowing on the bond markets or printing money – but by taxing and expropriating the wealth of the rich, and investing it in a democratically controlled plan of production.

It should make clear it will launch a huge house building and environmental restoration programme, specifically targeting areas that have been left behind since the days of Thatcher. That would give real substance to the talk of a green industrial revolution.

Last, but not least, Johnson's coup has revealed the undemocratic reality of the British Constitution to millions of people. A Labour government should sweep away the Fixed Term Parliaments Act, and call a Constituent Assembly, elected by universal 16+ suffrage, to sweep away the reactionary feudal rubbish of the monarchy, the Privy Council, the unelected House of Lords and defend the Scottish parliament's right to call a referendum on independence.

The Election Campaign

Labour, Momentum and the unions need to mobilise a general election campaign that is radically different from the usual knocking on doors and ticking boxes. We need hustings in city centres, demonstrations and mass political canvassing, mobilising the youth and the working class and black and minority ethnic communities, including EU workers. We need to show beyond all doubt that the people, the real working people, are overwhelmingly on Labour's side and we must demand a government whose anticapitalist measures will open the road to a social revolution, and a socialist republic of Britain within a socialist united states of Europe.