

# **An outbreak of reality hits Labour while Mrs May's europhile credentials are further questioned**

We are hoping to offer you some informed comment about the implication of Jeremy Corbyn's re-election in the coming days. In the meantime, however, it is encouraging to know that an outbreak of reality regarding the EU referendum has hit a number of Labour MPs.

As most readers will be aware, Labour Brexiteer MPs were very few in number. CIB's patron Kate Hoey, who addressed our annual rally back in May, had little company on the opposition benches. However, it was Mr Corbyn's lukewarm support for the EU during the referendum which provided the trigger for his critics to launch their leadership challenge, with his rival Owen Smith promising a second referendum if he ever became Prime Minister.

Now the dust has settled on the leadership vote, a more sober note is being sounded. In particular, Ed Miliband, the former Labour leader, warned the party at its annual conference that it must not become "the party of the 48%" – i.e., solely the voice of those who voted to remain. Chuka Umunna, the former Shadow Business Secretary, struck a similar note, saying it would be "an incredibly patronising way" to treat those voters who voted to leave the EU.

While Miliband was heckled by a German national in the audience, who said she felt betrayed by the party's opposition to a second referendum, her concerns will carry less weight among many Labour MPs than those of their constituents. Some of the highest Brexit votes came from traditionally Labour-

supporting areas. In Doncaster, which includes Miliband's constituency, over two-thirds of those who voted supported Brexit. Hartlepool, which once boasted Peter Mandelson as its MP, voted even more strongly to leave.

A survey by YouGov found that over half of Labour voters who supported the party in last year's General Election but who subsequently supported leave would not currently vote for Labour. The party is clearly facing a challenge to reconnect with its traditional voter base.

This website is not the appropriate place on which to dissect the troubles which the Labour party is currently facing. Furthermore, the reasons for Labour voters' disillusion with the EU have been endlessly debated elsewhere. We will say, however, that with Conservative MPs having already come together in recognising the Brexit vote (even if they are still far from united on any sort of leave strategy), it is good to see Labour MPs following suit.

There still remain a few incorrigibles, including Lib Dem leader Tim Farron, who pledged that his party would fight for a second referendum and Craig Oliver, Cameron's former spin doctor who has recently published a new book described by the columnist Dominic Lawson as a "cry of rage from an ousted establishment." Not only does it savage Michael Gove and Boris Johnson but it also attacks the only serious challenger to Jeremy Corbyn for the title of most unenthusiastic high-profile remainer – Theresa May.

Mr Oliver informs us that Mrs May had to be bullied by Cameron into endorsing the campaign to remain in the EU. When she did make a rather lukewarm speech, Oliver noted that "she isn't fully signed up." The very fact that this speech, which did include a claim that "the sky would not fall" in the event of Brexit, seemed to have kept off most people's radars indicates just how little impact she made on the remain campaign.

Mr Oliver is therefore pretty scathing about her. For those of us willing her to make the best possible success of Brexit, however, it is very encouraging, as it shows that she was even less enthusiastic about the EU than we were hitherto led to believe.

Photo by RiotsPanel 