

Loz Hall interviewed Carla Denyer, Ella Booth, Anthony Ridge-Newman, Tim Rouse and Sam Barnett-Cormack about their reactions to the successful Corbyn campaign for the Labour party leadership.

Carla Denyer – Green Party councillor in Bristol

What do you think is behind the surge in support for the Corbyn leadership campaign?

I think people are fed-up of leaders of the two main political parties essentially saying the same thing and agreeing that austerity must stay – despite most leading economists now agreeing it has been harmful rather than beneficial to the UK economy. The Green Party has been saying this for a long time, but when a member of one of the big two Parties says it, more people take notice.

A friend put it like this:

Burnham: says the right things, but you wonder if he means them.

Cooper: says the wrong things, but you wonder if she means them.

Kendall: says the wrong things, and you know she means them.

Corbyn: says the right things, and you know he means them.

I certainly don't agree with everything Corbyn says, but to the ears of most progressive left-leaning people he says a lot more "right things" than any of the others.

'Young people' have been seen as central to the Corbyn surge. Why do you think that is?

It seems that a huge swathe of the population just had their political awakenings all at once, but honestly I'm not completely sure what triggered it. As a young person who's been interested in politics for a while, I may not be the best person to say why other young people hadn't previously been as excited by it as me. But whatever the reason, it is probably the same reason that young people are a large proportion of the "Green Surge" – membership of the Young Greens, the youth and student branch of the Green Party, has grown tenfold in the last year.

What do you think of the reaction of Corbyn's opponents?

I'm pretty bored of all the doom-mongering from them and the other senior party figures, and the OTT press coverage generally now to be honest. I just switch off.

Do you think Corbyn will win?

Seems very likely.

What does the future hold for labour, British politics & British society with the new Labour leader?

Big question! I'll give my angle on how it could affect the Greens, and leave others to answer the other bits. I'm not sure how I feel about the prospect of Corbyn winning. As a Green Party politician I know that our policies are far to the left of the Labour Party's, and our environmental policies are much better developed and interlinked (austerity measures directly threaten attempts to mitigate climate change, so both must be tackled together). Corbyn is much closer to us than the rest of his party on some social and economic policies, but still quite a long way from us on others. (On democratic reform he is sceptical of Proportional Representation, and on energy and climate change he wants to re-open Welsh coal mines, to give two stark examples.) A speculation among some pundits is that the Greens could lose a lot of voters to a Corbyn-led Labour Party, which may be true, but I don't think it will be many. Current Green Party voters include people who care mostly about social justice, people who care mostly about sustainability, and the majority who care about both, and we're likely to lose at worst just some of the first group.

If he does win then maybe a progressive alliance can be formed along the lines that Caroline Lucas was calling for a few months ago – I am tentatively in favour of that idea. If he does win I hope that the Labour Party at least does the fair thing and supports him towards the next General Election, rather than trying to move him off-stage before then.

Ella Booth – member of the Green party

What do you think is behind the surge in support for the Corbyn leadership campaign?

I think that the surge in support for Jeremy Corbyn can only be a response to his proposing a real alternative to the New Labour/ Conservative consensus. His rhetoric is completely different to other candidates': it's not playing on people's fears about the economy or the unemployed or immigrants. He talks, quite straightforwardly, about looking after people. I think many people who had become very disengaged from politics have got behind him for that reason.

'Young people' have been seen as central to the Corbyn surge. Why do you think that is?

Young people tend to be a bit less cynical about the possibilities of change, having been thwarted less often. Older people I've spoken to compare Jeremy Corbyn to Michael Foot, and say he'd make the Labour party unelectable. I think I, and other young people, tend to be more optimistic and more willing to take the risk. The other reason I suspect young people have particularly rallied around Corbyn is that young people are statistically one of the most politically disengaged groups.

Having grown up with a Labour Party that looks not dissimilar to the Conservatives, the emergence of a voice calling for change has, I suspect, made a lot of young people reconsider their disengagement.

What do you think of the reaction of Corbyn's opponents?

The prophesying of doom for the Labour Party which Corbyn's candidacy has prompted from his opponents has seemed to me to be missing the point they need to be addressing. I don't know whether they truly believe that he would be the death of the Labour party, or whether they fear the loss of personal power if the Labour party shifted to the left, but it has underlined to me how out of touch with sections of public opinion a lot of Labour politicians are. To come out roundly damning Corbyn's policies and followers, when those followers represent the majority of Labour supporters willing to vote in the leadership election, suggests to me a dangerous disregard for the priorities of the electorate.

Do you think Corbyn will win?

I really don't know whether Corbyn will win. I suspect so, on the basis of current polling, but the last election didn't go how the pollsters predicted so I don't want to rely on them in this one!

What does the future hold for labour, British politics & British society with the new Labour leader?

If Corbyn was elected Labour leader, the landscape of British politics would radically change. The Labour party itself would be the site of some fairly nasty infighting, I suspect. If he were to win the general election in five years, I suspect he would have to rely on getting people registered to vote and engaging people who don't usually turn out. Corbyn seems to have a fairly good basis in grass roots organising, though, so I'm quite willing to believe he'd have a shot in 2020. Having Corbyn as leader, regardless of his electability, would certainly be a rallying cry – not only to those who currently feel disengaged and disenfranchised, but also to the politicians who have (not???) accepted that right wing economics must dominate the political debate.

Sam Barnett-Cormack – newly registered supporter of Labour

What do you think is behind the surge in support for the Corbyn leadership campaign?

I think that this is a result of long-running disillusionment among largely younger, largely left-leaning natural Labour supporters. In the Corbyn campaign, we see a chance to show Labour what can be gained by returning to its roots.

'Young people' have been seen as central to the Corbyn surge. Why do you think that is?

Young people have been especially let down by mainstream politics in recent years, with most parties chasing the votes of older people. It's also my own personal feeling that the younger generation has a lot of people with socialist feelings for whom Labour has never spoken since they reached adulthood. After the let-down of the Liberal Democrats after the 2010 election, they had nowhere to go to in terms of mainstream parties, and that probably contributed to the successes of the SNP and the Greens (well, relative success for them) in the last election. I think younger people have also been frustrated with the methods of mainstream political discourse, the evasion and pivoting during interviews and debates, while Corbyn actually answers questions in a straightforward manner, and explains them pretty rationally.

What do you think of the reaction of Corbyn's opponents?

The other candidates and their campaigns haven't been too bad. Burnham seemed to react, in the end, by trying to be more left-wing and friendly to Corbyn and his supporters, while all have gone for the "we're more electable angle". It's the other people in Labour who have been making noise that have been really objectionable – though I don't know how Blair thinks his interventions will have a noticeable impact on Corbyn supporters. But if the party implodes or splits after a Corbyn victory, or spends time infighting so they can't make an impact, it will be at least as much due to the actions of these commentators as it will be due to Corbyn winning.

Do you think Corbyn will win?

I think it will be a close thing. If he doesn't get over 50% on the first round, then it'll be down to second preferences, firstly from Liz Kendall, most likely – and he won't get many, though it's unlikely Cooper and Burnham would get enough to overtake him. Then one of them will be out, and Corbyn is likely to get some, but not most, from them. If it goes to the third round, it will be a close final result. If it doesn't, it will probably be because Corbyn got over 50% of first preferences, and he won't get much over 50%.

What does the future hold for labour, British politics & British society with the new Labour leader?

It's important not to overstate the impact the leader of the opposition can make, but it's important not to understate it either. They will have the strongest platform to make a point in parliament, except for the government's, and they can do a lot. They also have a huge media audience. Whoever it is, though, it's important they not pander to the media. The media are complicit in the centre ground of British politics drifting to the left, and we can't use them to drag it back – we have to drag them, kicking and screaming. I don't know what the future holds – with Corbyn, it would be interesting. With Cooper, I don't see it being that much different from with Miliband, except hopefully some lessons will have been learned – hopefully the right ones. With Burnham, I'm not sure.

Tim Rouse – longstanding member of the Labour party

The Labour party has been behaving very strangely for the last few years. The Blairite legacy has been to 'pursue the centre ground', which has in effect meant chasing the Tories and then UKIP ever further to the right. The strategy didn't work, of course - because why would anyone vote for a pale imitation of Tory cuts and UKIP racism when they could vote for the real thing? You'd have to be a real 'Controls on immigration' mug to fall for that one!

Meanwhile, the working class, particularly in Labour heartlands like Wales and the north of England, have felt ever more deserted by Labour. With public service cuts and stagnant wages hitting the poorest hardest, many have defected – in Scotland to the SNP, on the coasts to UKIP - and many more have simply stopped voting at all. And then came our Jezza.

The Corbyn campaign has been called old fashioned. But it says a lot more about the Blairite consensus in the Labour party that these fairly moderate social-democratic, and eminently sensible ideas haven't received an airing in years. And these are ideas which enjoy popular support - like ending austerity, and investing to promote economic growth and better living conditions. Like ending the fortune we throw away each year on maintaining an irrelevant nuclear weapons programme. Like nationalising railways so that subsidies can go towards improving services and lowering fares rather than into shareholders' pockets.

The strength of the Corbyn surge is that his campaign has been putting forward policies that people want to see – 60% of people want the railways renationalised, and 78% of Labour voters – that are otherwise neglected. These are ideas that excite people - and that's what Labour needs to win a general election.

The Corbyn campaign isn't about Jeremy Corbyn, really. It's one of the many things it gets right – it's not about which bland face in a suit is leader of the opposition, it's about proposing policies and ideas. 'The Corbyn campaign' includes a 66-year-old MP from North Islington, yes, but it's driven by a wide range of people putting forward left-wing ideas to make the country a better place.

It's no coincidence that many of those people are young. The millennial generation, as they call us, are feeling the effects of Thatcher and her successors – sky-high rents, hardly any work, and huge debts for anyone who goes to university. Young people are most in need of an alternative – and we have the vision, the openness to new ideas, that is needed to realise the massive benefits of exploring different solutions.

I'm writing this before the result is announced, but I'm hopeful that Corbyn will win the vote - and, depending on whether the parliamentary Labour party respects party democracy and supports him, the movement that has arisen from this campaign will be able to start the momentous task of building a Labour party which stands for something - a party with a renewed internal democracy, which is willing to work with progressive partners such as the Greens and the SNP, and which lays out a clear, electable, and left-wing vision of a better society.

Anthony Ridge-Newman – Conservative party academic and moderate socialist libertarian

There seems to be a yearning among the British electorate for a personality change in politics. People are rather fed up of the same old elites controlling things in Westminster. This sounds a bit like Scottish National Party (SNP) rhetoric. (I can hear Nicola Sturgeon's voice in my head as I write.) But it is not just rhetoric.

Voting shows that large numbers of people in Britain do want change. They don't necessarily know exactly what policy change they want, but they want leadership that inspires them - not simply glossy politicians who grew out of the Westminster establishment. They want demonstrable passion and character. This is not about left or right. It is not even about policy change. It is about character.

The Corbyn surge is a vote against the stage-managed politics of the last 18 years. Corbyn now has his own style of celebrity. That very British attraction to a lovable underdog can do this sort of thing (think Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards (1988 Olympic British Skier)). In addition to Corbyn, there are a bunch of other political characters the electorate are quite taken with - they include Sturgeon (SNP), Nigel Farage (United Kingdom Independence Party - UKIP) and Boris Johnson (Conservatives).

Personality is becoming a large part of British politics and you have to have the likability factor to successfully lead a party in 2015. Dare I say, the Tories could be more popular with Boris at the helm – perhaps?! (But then then GE2015 demonstrated that the Tories are not quite so unpopular after all – something that has angered, united and enthused aspects of the left). Aside from the policies, Boris can make people smile and command an audience. Corbyn has quite a different style of course, but he has captured the imagination of a new generation, because every new generation wants and needs something to fight against if they feel life could be better.

Naturally, the left like to blame the Tories for things when the Tories are in power (and often when they are not in power) – and vice versa, the right often take the same approach to Labour. The newer generation of New Labour candidates don't really appear all that different to the Tory front bench in terms of their entrenched establishment approach. Corbyn symbolises a significant change in personality and style from the tops of both of the recent Labour and Conservative parties. Furthermore, the media like a good story and they have whipped up the Corbyn phenomenon and helped it along with greater impetus.