

‘Jeremy and Us’

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Paper

The United Kingdom General Election on December 12th, 2019 marked a key turning point for political life in the United Kingdom. For the first time in its history the Labour Party stood in the election headed by a leader and a group of parliamentary supporters who were resolutely ‘left wing’, socialist, and openly critical of Britain’s imperial past and present pretensions. For members of Canterbury Labour Party, both young and old, who were supporters of the ‘Corbyn Project’ this election represented a key moment in their lives. As the election approached it became ever clearer that, whatever the result, the political consequences would be far reaching. For many activists the result would be life changing.

The interplay between life stories and political events is complex but ever present. Liz Stanley (1992 p. 5) points out an axiological truth, ‘if structural analyses do not work at the at the level of particular lives then they do not work at all’. The reverse implication of this truth is also undeniable; the study of ‘individual lives’ should form a part of the assessment of structural events.

As a participant in the campaign to try and ensure the election of Jeremy Corbyn I became aware of the many ways in which both the hopes and fears of my fellow ‘Corbynistas’ intensified as the day of the vote drew closer. The prevailing feeling within our various collectives was that when dawn broke on the morning of December 13th, 2019 the world we inhabited would be changed. This presentation is based on ‘life story’ interviews conducted with some of my fellow campaigners. Each person was interviewed twice, once before the election and once in the weeks which followed. In both interviews the subjects attempted to assess the implications of the election on their ‘life stories’.

In addition to the body of theory associated with life story work this study has been based on two further sets of ideas. The first is the extremely ambiguous nature of ‘hope’ as it appears in the ancient Greek myth of ‘Pandora’s jar’ (Graves, 1955 p. 145). The second is the work of the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch, whose multi volume work ‘The Principle of Hope’ is an outstanding examination of the ways in which hope is an integral and inextinguishable element of what it means to be human.

References

Bloch, E. (1955) *The Principle of Hope* (3 vols). Translated by Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice and Paul Knight. Reprint, Cambridge. Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986.

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