

Grass roots politicians are refusing to prop up the rem...

Published: January 13, 2026, 12:48 pm

Anne Perkins [wrote in the Guardian](#) yesterday:

Think what kind of country you want for you and your children and, even more importantly, think how you might get there. Now think, is Jeremy Corbyn in the middle of that picture?

I have to admit that until very recently the idea of Jeremy Corbyn fulfilling that role would not have occurred to me. But what I can also say with certainty is that Burnham, Kendall and Cooper would not have been in the frame either. The names Caroline Lucas and Nicola Sturgeon would have been rather more obvious choices.

So what does that say about me? And what [does the Guardian suggesting](#) that 'senior Labour figures queueing up to prove it is not possible to be too rude about 66-year-old Corbyn' say?

First it says that it was time to cancel my Guardian subscription: I have done that. If this is how dedicated the paper is to balanced reporting I have given up on it.

More importantly, it says that I, like many others, have little confidence in the triumvirate of centre right politicians seeking to lead the Labour party. Having been observing the political scene for a long time now (since 1970) I can think of few more uninspiring choices for leader, whatever talents each might have as a minister.

There is though something much more to this than the issue of personality, including that of Jeremy Corbyn, to which the debate in the media is currently reducing this issue. The truth is that the unlikely rise of Jeremy Corbyn suggests that there is a rise in discontent with the politics of the mainstream. Cooper, Burnham and Kendall are all from the mainstream and mainstream no longer appeals.

There is, I think, good reason for that. We are, I think at the end of a political era. The post war consensus was actually built during the war and died during the late 70s: a period of thirty years or so. Thatcher's control of the consensus was really established in 1983: that was 32 years ago. And that consensus is also now dying.

This explains the paranoia of Kendall, Umunna, Cooper, Blair and others with power: they can feel it slipping from them. Of course they are angry: this is very personal for them. The SNP has shattered the myth that the only alternative to Tory government is Labour. The ability of George Osborne to wrap the Tories in Labour clothing whilst delivering something quite different has undermined their confidence in whatever ideas they had, and the cupboard for new initiatives is bare. The reality is that all they are really offering is a version of neoliberalism with softer edges is all too apparent when the truth is that neoliberalism is itself morphing into neo-feudalism and the Labour mainstream has yet to react.

That move to neo-feudalism is happening across the world, and not just in the UK. Power elites are clearly usurping the authority of politics, with the consent of mainstream politicians who are willingly playing the role of paid agents for financial power. And everywhere people at the grass roots are sensing this and realising that change is inevitable if the threat that this represents is to be challenged.

I am also quite sure that people do not know what they want in the place of neoliberalism as yet: that's why the far right can do well in politics at present, and candidates like Donald Trump can make headlines in the USA. It's also why a candidate with a distinct, different and obviously consistent, and so authentic, voice like Jeremy Corbyn is doing so well in Labour. It is why the SNP has swept Scotland. It is why the Greens are noticed much more, if still squeezed.

What all these movements suggest is underlying deep mistrust of the neoliberal consensus and the way it is now developing, and with very good reason: that consensus and all that goes with it is harmful to very large numbers of people and they know it, although because there is little discussion of why as yet: the media is making sure of that. In that context the arguments of conventional leadership candidates in Labour that they must be supported for the sake of power is, in itself, almost counter-productive to their cause. People - especially political activists - sense that what these candidates want and what is in their own best interests are not the same thing, and are withholding their consent.

It saddens me in this context that the Guardian is quite definitely at present part of the consensus of neo-liberal power.

What I look forward to is a growing awareness that what is happening is fundamental, necessary and, of course, risky. There is a need for change. The power base of ideas that has sustained politics for so long is dying. In that case it seems to me that it is only by looking more broadly, and most certainly across party lines at present, that anything that can really effectively deliver change can be created. Right now no one has universal claim to know what that alternative is, but the grass roots of British politics that is dedicated to economic, social and environmental justice knows that an alternative is needed to the thinking that is currently dominating Westminster. As a result I suspect they are going to get their way in creating real, fundamental and lasting

change because across the country people grass roots politicians on the left are refusing to prop up the remains of a dying political era, and that's when change happens.