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Labour is the new hobby for the idle rich;

Corbyn's revolution is a Woosterish indulgence for Islington millionaires. They'll join any protest, if they're not in the Dordogne

Giles Coren

I am writing to you this week from Jeremy Corbyn's parliamentary constituency of Islington North. But then I write to you every week from Islington North. You probably didn't know that, but I do.

I live in Kentish Town in the People's Republic of Camden, true enough, but every morning I cross the border into Corbynland where I have rented an office these last five years.

It is just the sort of office you would expect to find in Jeremy Corbyn's constituency, being located in a 100-year-old former borstal of brown brick, grey concrete and reinforced glass, roughly whitewashed, with exposed plumbing and electrics. Some of the radiators work, but not mine. And there's no heating in the loos. On Wednesday, I had to crack the ice in the bowl prior to embarking upon my morning stool, like a sort of reverse Eskimo.

It is exactly the kind of place, I often fancy, that Jeremy's political forefathers would have brought their opponents to shoot them, or garrotte whole families of landowners. Sometimes, when I've been working late and descend to the basement to retrieve my bicycle, I swear I can hear the cries of Princess Anastasia, begging for clemency.

It does not come cheap, this Archway Lubyanka. Eleven grand a year last time I did my accounts. But it is tax deductible and thus allows me the perverse pleasure each morning of entering Red Jeza's constituency specifically in order to keep a chunk of my income out of the hands of the needy.

And if you think that makes me sound like an evil Tory bastard, then you have not been following the political news lately. Because what it makes me sound like, in fact, is one of the thousands of new Labour party members who have given Corbyn his much-touted "mandate" and to whom he and McDonnell and Abbott and the rest have been nailing their reputations since September.

Because it turns out that these members, upon whom all Labour's dreams of "a new kind of politics" are built, are nothing but a cabal of wealthy north London professionals who have taken an interest in Labour because they haven't much else to do.

"A disproportionate number of Labour members who have joined since the 2015 general election are 'high-status city dwellers' pursuing well-paid jobs," reported The Guardian furiously on Thursday, after getting its hands on leaked data commissioned by the party.

"Groups which are over-represented . . . tend to be long-term homeowners from urban areas who have high levels of disposable income," the report goes on, stopping short of using an actual photograph of me, while those under-represented are young people and families in short-term rents and rural areas. The poor, in other words.

This sense of the new left politics as a sort of Woosterish indulgence was reinforced for me by an apparently unrelated story in The Times about how political demonstrations (Corbyn's preferred mode of self-expression) have "changed since the pre-Thatcher days . . . when workers picketed for months [and] have been replaced by high-profile Saturday marches".

Weekend japes, in other words. Because being a Labourite in 2016 is nothing but another leisure option for the seriously rich. Like sailing or collecting wine or riding to hounds.

And the party knows it. First, Labour grandee Lord Watt threw a fit about "the London-centric hard left political class who sit around in their £1 million mansions eating their croissants" and then the Labour MP for Bassetlaw, John Mann, came up with the brilliant idea that, "Members with properties valued at over a million pounds should . . . pay £1,000 a year to be a Labour party member".

For this is the Labour movement reimagined as a version of local gym membership: a frivolous expense for bored idiots. And not just any gym at that price. But one of the super-posh ones with free towels and a juice bar (and croissants). And what genius of Labour to come up with this wheeze in January, when everyone joins a gym, fails to read the terms, gets locked in for five years and never goes again.

One need only imagine Jeremy Corbyn as the novelty exercise bike they all signed up to ride but which now stands alone, ignored and going nowhere, and the picture is complete.

As this story of Labour drifting away from its northern heartlands into the clutches of the London rich developed, Mr Mann identified 40 of the millionaires who have joined Labour in the last three months as living on the same London street, thought by The Times to be Huddleston Road in Tufnell Park.

I can see Huddleston Road from here. Indeed, I am on an email circular with a set of streets adjacent to Huddleston Road, which was originally set up to organise nanny shares, dog walkers and teenagers to help with dinner parties but is now used mainly for organising protests and sit-ins. My delightful millionaire neighbours, Labour members to a soul, will protest anything. Anything. As long as it's on a weekend and they're not in the Dordogne.

In the last few months alone, there have been pickets to protest the rebuilding of a footbridge, the closure of a (private) swimming pool, the cutting down of any number of diseased old trees and the opening of a dozen perfectly harmless restaurants and bars. Anything anyone tries to do, the local Labour millionaires will protest against. And they have all the time in the world to do it, because despite being loaded they don't seem to work. It's all inherited money, I guess. With a fair amount of public sector sponsorship.

At election times, the bay windows of their huge Victorian houses are a blaze of Labour red. All day and night they canvass each other, cavilling over the tricky nuclear disarmament versus jobs in the northeast question, and poking holes in their cashmere jumpers to try to look poor. And then between elections it's all linking arms around a threatened (non-existent) owl's nest to sing The Red Flag and drink camomile tea from Thermos flasks.

All life is a hobby to them. They're exactly the sort of people to make a massive fuss about a statue of Cecil Rhodes, or the skin colour of Oscar nominees, or the politically regressive pricing of women's perfume. They can't do a thing about those inequalities, of course, or about anything else. But they can have a damn good time, singing round the brazier while the value of their houses goes up and up because the man they cunningly chose as leader looks like keeping the Tories in power for ever.