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Trawling through the dustbins of the UK media

Song remains the same for UK papers when it comes to Labour leadership

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But wait – he’s got a beard! Lynne Cameron / PA Wire/Press Association Images

It’s increasingly apparent that the Labour Party is muddling through a period of existential crisis. This week’s welfare bill debacle, where 48 MPs wilfully defied the interim leadership’s call for abstention, once again highlighted divisions in the ranks which, according to the BBC’s assistant political editor, Norman Smith, run: “right up through the party to the shadow cabinet”.

Former Labour home secretary, David Blunkett, sees a party mired in “emotional trauma” while former minister for education, Kim Howells, referred to the current situation as a “total shambles” and “the most serious crisis I can remember in Labour’s history”.

Howell’s comments are not specific to Labour’s inability to unite against Tory cuts. He is also, as are many others, deeply disappointed in the candidates for Labour’s leadership. He told BBC Wales’

David Cornock:

I'm not going to vote for any of them at the moment. I don't know what they believe. Some people, I think, will simply lead Labour to a terrible defeat again.

All of which is music to the ears of a Tory press delighting in Labour's current woes to the extent that one newspaper, the Daily Telegraph to be precise, ran a "joke" feature which encouraged its readers to become registered supporters of the Labour party: so that they could the vote to ensure Jeremy Corbyn becomes leader and Labour is "consigned to electoral oblivion".

The Telegraph

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How you can help Jeremy Corbyn win - and destroy the Labour Party

Sign up today to make sure the bearded socialist voter-repellent becomes the next Labour leader - and dooms the party forever

Paper of broken record.

To be sure, the Telegraph sees Corbyn as a threat. Out of the four candidates (the other three are Andy Burnham, Yvette Cooper and Liz Kendall) he is the one with the most "traditional" left-wing track record and has been consistently targeted. He is "the bearded socialist voter-repellent" with close ties to Hamas, the IRA and Iran.

None of these Telegraph tactics should come as any surprise – in the general election campaign, didn't editor Chris Evans urge Telegraph customers to vote Conservative via the paper's marketing database?

Some, including Chris Boffey, a former news editor of the Observer and Sunday Telegraph and one-time special adviser to the Labour government, feel that this is an example of the decline in standards at the Telegraph. The "join Labour, vote Corbyn" stunt was "mean-spirited and malicious" reminiscent of the "Sun at its worst".

Speaking of "Britain's most popular paper", that The Sun should single out Andy Burnham for particular attention is also entirely predictable. Burnham is primarily known for his work bringing about the second enquiry into the Hillsborough disaster, saying at the 25th anniversary of the tragedy that taking part in the ongoing fight over Hillsborough was "the privilege of my life" with the past five years "teaching me more than a life in politics".



The Sun takes aim at Andy Burnham.


Recently the BBC reported that he had not forgiven The Sun for its coverage of the disaster indicating that if he became leader he would not be disposed to do “special favours” for papers “attacking” him or Labour.

Brave but perhaps foolhardy words because the next day The Sun responded to this with an all-out attack on Burnham’s integrity. It printed a 2010 picture of Burnham in a taxi bearing the Sun’s logo grinning broadly. The headline said: “Sunburnt: Is two-faced Burnham the most hypocritical politician in Britain?”

More was to come. On the July 16 the taxi picture was wheeled out again as a full-page analysis exposed Burnham as a “tightwad” who had over four years made 63 parliamentary expenses claims for under a pound. As Adam

Barnett pointed out, surely this was the first “expenses scandal” story to expose an MP for claiming very small amounts of money.



Paul Waugh  @paulwaugh · Jul 14, 2015



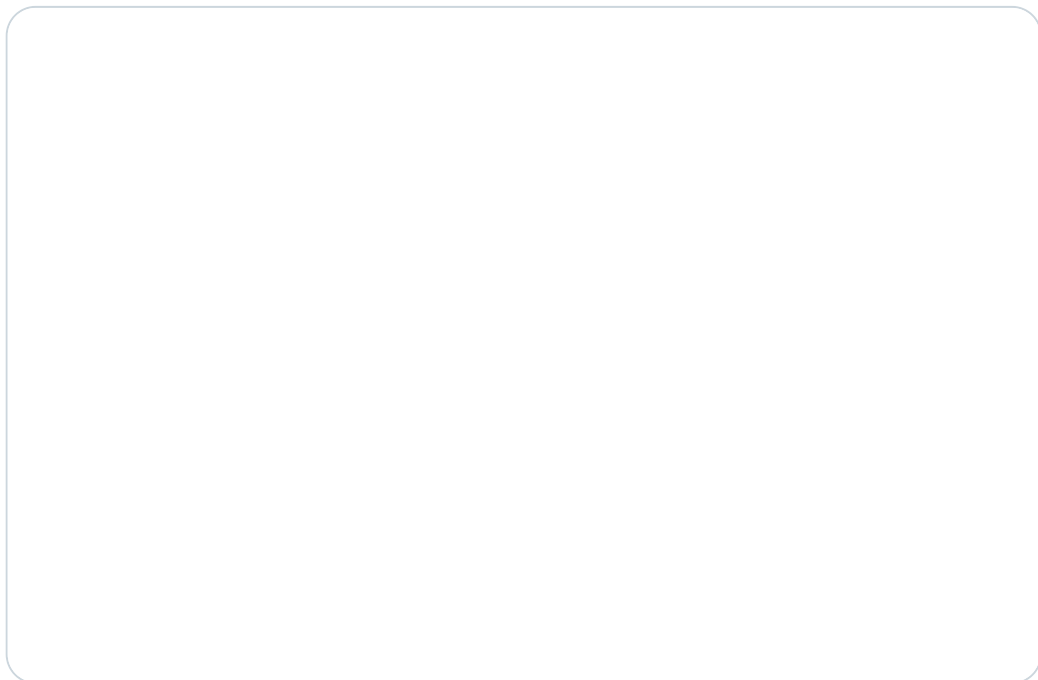
Andy Burnham hints that New Labour's fear of upsetting Murdoch papers led to delays in Hillsborough justice.
huff.to/1M3Xd00



Joe Halewood HSM

@SpeyeJoe

@paulwaugh That would be this Andy Burnham smiling for the Sun newspaper? You couldn't get any more two-faced



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The ludicrous nature of this report aside, it could well be that Burnham's relationship with The Sun is already irreparable. And that, posits Tom Latchem in the New Statesman, would be fatal to his long-term ambitions. He writes:

Unless Burnham can navigate an acceptable compromise with the Hillsborough families he is deeply loyal to and the Sun, his messages about championing the NHS and delivering a fairer austerity plan may never get a fair hearing in Britain's biggest newspaper.

Everyday sexism

As far as the two female candidates in the leadership race are concerned – it's fair to say, **once again**, that their potency as politicians is undermined by a general coverage which links their perceived characteristics to their gender. This just does not happen with men.

This was perfectly illustrated by the **Mail on Sunday's** interview with Liz Kendall. According to her interviewer, chief political correspondent, Simon Walters: "unmarried Kendall, 44" is a "power dresser" with a "lithe figure" who has "scoffed at cruel comments about being a 'childless spinster'." The reader is also treated to a detail breakdown of the cost her wardrobe and comparisons with the Duchess of Cambridge.

It's only when Walters appears to go too far in enquiring about Kendall's weight does she object. Quite forcibly, as it happens:



Darren Staples / Reuters

In an [interview with the Mail on Sunday](#), she told political editor Simon Walters to “fuck off” when he asked if she weighed the same as Kate Middleton.

Her jacket, navy blue ‘vest’ and trousers are from Reiss. L.K. Bennett and Reiss are two of the Duchess of Cambridge’s favourite fashion brands – and slinky brunette Liz, or Elizabeth Louise, to give her full Royal-sounding Christian names, looks as good in them as slinky brunette Kate. In fact she looks the same weight as the Duchess – about 8st – though when I ask she slaps me down with a raucous ‘f*** off!’, adding quickly: ‘Don’t print that.’

Weighty issues in the Daily Mail. BuzzFeed

For much of the campaign, Yvette Cooper, a working mother, has been forced to react to the “parentgate” non story, wherein her supporter Helen Goodman was reported to have implied that Liz Kendall would not make a good leader because she does not have children. It’s situation that clearly exasperates Cooper who was vocal in her condemnation of the press treatment borne by Ed Miliband. Speaking at a Unions Together hustings in June she said

I think Ed was outrageously treated. I think no one should have had to deal with the kinds of attacks ... We have to be realistic, there will be press that attack us and criticise us and we need a leader that is strong enough to be able to deal with that.

On that last point she is surely correct. Whoever wins the leadership contest will be subject to sustained scrutiny and criticism from a Conservative press emboldened by their perceived successes in the general election. And if that person is Jeremy Corbyn, with a YouGov poll for [The Times](#) finding that Corbyn would beat Andy Burnham, by 53% per cent to 47% the final round of voting, then the Labour party will descend into a civil war accompanied by a gleeful right wing press continually

raising the ghosts of Michael Foot, Tony Benn and other more recent signifiers of Labour’s “hard left” history.



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