Twitter Thread by Shaun Lawson



Shaun Lawson
@shaunjlawson

Yesterday, of course, Jeremy Corbyn launched his Peace and Justice Project, to much excitement on here. Laudable goals too:

Take on Murdoch ■
Green New Deal ■
Support for food banks ■
Speed up vaccine delivery in developing countries ■

That's all excellent.

I'm not sure if anyone can argue with those four aims: they're irrefutable and all massively important. You bet I'd like to see Labour doing likewise; you bet I'm frustrated that it's so quiet on all of it.

HOWEVER...

Contained within the announcement was exactly the same selective blindness which makes the entire thing all too easy to shoot down - and again, means Corbyn is pretty unlikely to persuade anyone who's not already persuaded.

The sort of blindness which makes me tear my hair out.

Peace and Justice - sounds great, doesn't it? So why did the Peace and Justice project proudly announce the support of a corrupt criminal not remotely interested in either of those things?

https://t.co/YimyrjqhCO

> We\u2019re delighted to have the backing of Rafael Correa, who cut poverty and inequality by record levels as president of Ecuador.
>
> There is no limit to what we can achieve when we bring people together to take on injustice.
>
> Join us https://t.co/w6QOdSqkeC pic.twitter.com/aT8atxSYvy

— Peace and Justice Project (@corbyn_project) January 8, 2021

Rafael Correa, former President of Ecuador. Let's run through his record, starting with the positives.

Slashed poverty from 36.7% to 22.5% ■

Reduced inequality from 0.55 to 0.47 on the Gini index ■

So far, so good. Except, um...

Rafael Correa is guilty of bribery. Sentenced to 8 years imprisonment in abstentia for corruption so vast, his political movement was financed in exchange for awarding state contracts to businessmen and his cronies.

Tremendous. How 'just'. ■

It gets worse too.

Correa was so personally interested in 'peace and justice' that:

- Ecuador defaulted on its national debt and international obligations

- He was accused of involvement in kidnapping a political opponent

- His government filed a criminal charge against a critical newspaper

- He doxxed a whole bunch of his critics on social media, leading to their being harassed

- When a 17-year-old gave him a middle finger gesture in Quito, Correa stopped his motorcade, berated the teenager, and he received 20 hours' community service.

Try imagining any of the above - except the government corruption - happening in any genuine 'peaceful, just' democracy.

When ordinary citizens and newspapers are threatened by the government for 'offending the President', that is not a democracy. It's an authoritarian state.

So why does Corbyn look the other way?

Exactly the same reason he looks the other way on Venezuela, on Bolivia, on anywhere in this continent where someone claiming to be of the 'left' is in charge.

He romanticises the place. He thinks the Latin American left is Robin Hood.

It'd be nice if he stopped for a single moment to consider just how offensive that is to untold numbers who suffer appallingly under corrupt, criminal, atrocious governments here.

But he doesn't. Because his whole world view is so ludicrously black and white.

He should be running a mile from the endorsement of someone like Correa. Instead, he flaunts it. Unbelievable.

And there's really no excuse for that. To say that it plays straight into the hands of his many enemies is a huge understatement.

On a similar note: his longstanding hostility towards NATO (tempered, I know, as he pursued the premiership) is so blind towards the whole of Eastern Europe, it drives me nuts.

These are countries which gained their independence only 30 years ago. They NEED our protection.

These are also countries which know, through painful and recent experience, what Russia would try and do to them if NATO - and the EU too - weren't there to protect them.

And that's where Corbyn's whole peace and love thing really starts to collapse. It doesn't deal in reality.

We ALL want a peaceful world of interdependence, co-existence and friendship.

We all NEED that sort of world if we're to avert climate catastrophe too.

But just as his supporters adore him for his views never having changed at all, that's also his giant, almighty flaw.

The reason other politicians don't say all the nice, instinctively agreeable things he does is because other politicians - especially, other leaders - deal with geopolitical reality.

In this continent, for example, Venezuela is a completely failed state.

One million per cent inflation. 5 million refugees. As the Inter-American Development Bank put it in July:

“There is nothing we can do for Venezuela. No country in the history of humanity has seen a contraction as deep as Venezuela without a war or natural disaster or both".

So what does Corbyn do? He only continues to support the man responsible.

That isn't supporting human rights at all. That isn't supporting peace and justice at all. It's inexcusable.

Before anyone interjects with "1973.. CIA..." - Venezuela was a rich, successful place once.

Then both right and left combined to screw it all up, and then some. As this article explains superbly.

https://t.co/58cJn2jNvz

This continent and its people deal with the appalling consequences of Venezuela's rogue regime every day.

That's their lived reality. About which, Corbyn appears to care precisely nothing.

By the way: in international affairs, he's been right on many many many things.

- A hero on apartheid (FAO Rachel Riley: get stuffed you absolute disgrace)

- An implacable fighter against Pinochet

- Absolutely correct on the Iraq war

- Quite right about US imperialism and its many evils too

He's also dead on about:

- Our horrendous coddling of and deals drenched in blood with Saudi Arabia

- The demonisation of Iran (but has he ever spoken out about its human rights record? I ask because I don't know)

- Israel's treatment of the Palestinians

But his absolute blindness on so many other issues loses him so much credibility. It makes him look completely unserious and is far too easy to highlight.

It saddens me, truly. Because he's a good man who wants to HELP PEOPLE.

That's why so many will be inspired by his announcement. Everyone on the left wants to help people wherever we can.

But his biggest failing as a politician was always that he's so damn stuck in his comfort zone. That's clearly not changed.

And if we don't persuade the unpersuaded, we'll never change anything.