

Havering Post

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Democracy Denied

READERS OF the *Havering Post* will be aware that both Labour and Tory MPs have recently resigned. In mid-February, seven MPs set the ball rolling by turning their backs on the Labour Party. They were soon followed by three Tories – all now sit in Parliament as part of The Independent Group (TIG).

The ex-Parliamentary Labour Party MPs are: Luciana Berger, Ann Coffey, Mike Gapes, Chris Leslie, Joan Ryan, Gavin Shuker, Angela Smith and Chuka Umunna. The Tories are: Heidi Allen, Anna Soubry and Sarah Wollaston. Ian Austin also quit the Labour Party but didn't join TIG as he fully supports Brexit. All of these MPs are probably unknown to most people outside of the Westminster bubble.



Havering Town Hall. We feel that the electorate has been denied democracy. Is it right that councillors who're elected under one political banner can jump ship so easily? The *Havering Post* feels that they should do the honourable thing by resigning and fighting any by-election under their new flag.

The majority of the Labour MPs jumped ship because they claimed that Labour was 'institutionally anti-Semitic', had an 'ongoing culture of bullying' and had been hijacked by the 'machine politics of the hard left'. In addition, the influence of Momentum – effectively the group which led the campaign

to get Jeremy Corbyn elected as Labour leader – meant that internal debates had been closed down with a 'narrow, outdated vision'.

The three Tories who resigned are all Remainers and are totally opposed to Brexit.

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Editorial

THE RIGHT THING

OUR MAIN article looks at just one of many reasons why so many people are 'turned off' by politics and politicians at both a national and local level.

It examines two cases – both national and local - whereby politicians have got elected on a particular set of policies contained in their party manifesto. They've subsequently quit as elected representatives of the various parties they previously represented. In doing so, they've then turned their backs on all of those who have supported them – the most important of which are the electorate.

Crucially, none of them have done the honourable thing by resigning and fighting any by-election under their new flag.

The *Havering Post* believes this is what needs to be done here. Last May three Residents Association and one independent councillor immediately switched over to supporting the Tories. This represents a democratic deficit.

The next set of local elections are a long way away. There's still ample time for the 'Back Stabbers' to resign their seats and fight as Tories. Will they do the right thing?

In fact, opposition to Brexit is one of two things which unites all of those who have joined TIG.

The other unifying factor is that they've all refused to resign their seats and intend to stand as candidates for TIG in any subsequent by-elections. In doing so, they have shown that they have no morals or honour.

But what has this all got to do with Havering?

The answer is that what's happened at a national level (for the Labour Party and the Tories) effectively reflects what happened here after last May's local elections. In short, democracy has been denied.

Readers will know that the Tories have ruled Havering for more years than they would care to remember (17 years in fact). However, last May it looked like their stranglehold was over. Several Residents Associations (RA) and Independent groups had united under the 'Independent Havering' banner and were really giving the Tories a run for their money.

Things were so tight that the local Tories had to do some horse trading. It appears that some Residents Association and Independent councillors were approached by the Conservative Party and were offered positions to help them to set up a Havering Council Administration. In the event, four of them jumped ship. Known as the 'Back Stabbers', they are Michael-Deon Burton (who even joined the Tory Party), Brian Eagling, Martin Goode and Darren Wise.

This action meant that the remaining loyal Residents Association and Independent councillors were denied the opportunity to run Havering. This disgraceful situation was summed up by one voter, who noted at the time:

"It is sad to think 8,038 residents in Harold Wood voted for the Residents Association and 1,312 in South Hornchurch voted for an independent. A total of 9,350 fellow citizens have been cheated by these four defectors.

It's not like they defected half way through their term, but on the first day. This cannot continue - some judicial review needs to be put in place to stop councillors swapping sides. I am totally disgusted. They have no morals.

I find it a personal insult to hear that some people in the RA and Independent coalition feel it is OK to lie to us, your electorate, by way of selling their soul to the Conservatives, just so they can form a majority party to lead our council.

I can assure you I will personally do my best to make sure that the people in those wards know full well what they voted for. If we the electorate wanted to be lied to, we would vote Labour or Conservatives.

Independent Havering is a new and fresh political movement in modern politics and should be supported to the hilt."

The *Havering Post* doesn't know what made the 'Back Stabbers' jump ship. However, we believe that those councillors who switched sides are guilty – at the very least - of betrayal and bad faith. Some may say that they're also guilty of deliberately deceiving voters.

Whatever the case may be, they've all stabbed the electorate in the back. If people in their areas wanted a Tory councillor they would have voted for one. Instead the electorate opted for non-Tories – but got Tories by the back door! That's an out-and-out denial of democracy.

Earlier we noted that none of the Labour and Tory MPs who've quit have had the

decency to resign their seat and fight a by-election under their new colours. This has prompted many people to demand that if a MP decides to leave the party they were elected under, then they should be required by law to call a by-election and stand as an independent or for another party if they wish to remain a sitting MP. In fact, an on-line petition can be found at www.petition.parliament.uk to this effect.

We feel that there's a reasonable case for this being applied at a local level as well.

Councillors Michael-Deon Burton, Brian Eagling, Martin Goode and Darren Wise all made campaign promises as Residents Association candidates. They all issued election literature to that effect.

And they all got elected as non-Tory candidates. The electorate expected them to deliver what they had promised and they should have finished what they had started. But they sold the voters a lie – because no-one was aware that they were Tories in disguise.

By doing this, Havering's 'Back Stabbers' also turned their backs on their policies, manifestos and the people who campaigned so hard to get them elected. These four local councillors should do the right thing and resign. They should then fight any by-election. This is the only way that we can reverse the denial of democracy here.

- FUTURE ISSUES of the *Havering Post* will examine other ways in which we can make both national and local politics more representative of the people. Thus we'll look at Proportional Representation, a 'None Of The Above' (NOTA) option on ballot papers, Referendums, Preferendums and Voter Recall.