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**Corbyn's 'Momentum' is 'malice dressed as virtue',
says former MP Alan Johnson.**

Left-wing organisation Momentum is “malice dressed as virtue,” according to former MP Alan Johnson. The Labour politician, who held several posts in Government including that of Home Secretary, was talking today with the journalist Allan Little about *Orwell on Truth*, a new collection of George Orwell’s essays, at a sold-out event at the Edinburgh International Book Festival.

When asked about what he thought of the current Labour party, Johnson said: “It’s a different party altogether. You’ve got the Labour Party, you’ve got Momentum. Momentum is unconstitutional. It organises independently both inside and outside the Labour Party, and it’s malice dressed as virtue. Orwell would have a field day with it, actually.

“All the different levers of the Labour Party are now taken over, and will be even more so after Conference, so that if you’re a sad old part of the previous Labour Government, it’ll be the calls of betrayal; that ‘you betrayed us’. Nick Cohen wrote in the Observer: ‘On the Right, they’re looking for converts; on the Left they’re looking for traitors.’ Anyone who was associated with Gordon Brown’s Government or Tony Blair’s Government are *persona non grata*; hated more than any Tories. They call us Red Tories.”

Johnson, praised for his three-volume autobiography, wrote the introduction for *Orwell on Truth*, and believes the author’s writing resonates today. “In ‘The Lion and the Unicorn’, Orwell wrote: ‘The insularity of the English, their refusal to take foreigners seriously, is a folly that has to be paid for very heavily from time to time.’ There’s Brexit summed up in one line.”

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When Little asked why Corbyn is not arguing for as “soft” a Brexit as possible, Johnson said: “Corbyn doesn’t believe in the EU and never has; he has never changed his mind on anything since he was 15. He’d march through the lobby with Jacob Rees-Mogg.”

However, Johnson insisted the current situation was not Jeremy Corbyn’s fault. “It’s bloody David Cameron’s. That any Prime Minister can be so irresponsible... He went and stole UKIP’s major manifesto commitment and decided to make it Tory party policy, just to shore up his own party.

“Here’s the one bit of optimism I can give you. I don’t believe there’ll be a [new] central party. I don’t believe that there’s any cavalry that’s going to ride to the rescue, but I think parliamentarians - 655 members of the House of Commons - are overwhelmingly ‘Remain’, they are overwhelmingly not swivel-eyed militants. My hope is in Parliamentary Democracy.

“With the small majority that Theresa May was foolish enough to land herself with, that gives power to backbenchers, and backbenchers are seeing movement among the electorate. When the deal comes back, some kind of alliance across the parties in the House of Commons - including the SNP - would be our salvation. That’s my hope.”

Johnson insisted that Corbyn’s Labour Party had failed to yet fully infiltrate the Parliamentary Labour Party, and that the threat of Momentum-inspired deselection might fail to change minds. “If you’re on the road to deselection, nothing you do over Europe is going to make a difference, but what it could do would be to start a fight back to a sensible option,” he said.

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