**The new PM**

Kenneth Surin

Thursday, Oct 27, 2022

Under Boris Johnson the Tory party had morphed into NewUKIP – UKIP being the far-right party led by Nigel Farage, and Truss was thus made Tory leader by 160,000 elderly, xenophobic, mainly white and prosperous Tory party members.

The gerontocratic Tory membership parallels the fact that the average Conservative voter is now older than they ever have been. The balancing-point at which someone becomes more likely to vote Conservative rather than Labour has risen to 57 years old, up from 43 in 2019, the year of the last general election.

These party members weren’t going to make a brown-skinned individual leader of their party, some phoning-in to radio chat shows to say the English-born Sunak wasn’t even “English”.

The completely insubstantial Truss turned out to be a disaster, and was forced to resign after 45 days in office. This time the 1922 committee wasn’t going to repeat its mistake.

Nominations for party leader required the support of 100 MPs, there would be no debates and hustings, and given that there are 357 Tory MPs, there would only be 3 finalists at the most. The top 2 would then be sent to party members for their vote.

The twist this time was BoJo Johnson cutting short yet another of his luxury vacations on Greek or Caribbean islands to throw his hat in the ring.

Realizing that BoJo 2.0 would be an even bigger disaster than Truss, only 58 Tory MPs publicly declared their support for him. The ever mendacious BoJo declared he had the support of 102 MPs, but was withdrawing from the race “in the national interest”. Penny Mordaunt fell 10 short of getting the requisite 100 MP nominations, and so Sunak, with 193 MPs declaring their support for him, became party leader/PM without the benighted Tory members getting a chance to vote.

Sunak, who had been pretty useless as chancellor of the exchequer under BoJo, is deeply problematic, not just because as the chancellor he was in charge of the tax laws/loopholes that served his billionaire wife and himself all too well; but also because he retained his Green Card while being chancellor, which meant he was a permanent resident of a foreign country while having oversight of the UK’s economic dealings with that country.

Sunak also failed to do due diligence on crooked Covid contracts given to donors and Tory chums, resulting in billions worth of fraud that was simply written off at great cost to the public purse.

Here are some snippets affording insight into Sunak: In a leaked video, Sunak boasted to Conservative party members in well-off Tunbridge Wells that he took public funds out of “deprived urban areas” to help wealthy towns. Sunak said in the video: “We inherited a bunch of formulas from the Labour party which shoved all the funding into deprived urban areas”. He then bragged that he started to reverse those policies as chancellor.

Sunak was accused of pretending to be less wealthy during a PR stunt to mark a minuscule decrease in the price in petrol. It was discovered later that the modest Kia car he filled up in front of the cameras actually belonged to an employee at the service station. When he went to pay at the desk, it turned out that he did not know how to use his contactless card. Sunak later said: “The most embarrassing thing that’s happened to me is I struggled to pay for the petrol in a car that wasn’t my own”.

He later confessed that someone had to teach him how to use the debit card. More digging by the media showed that Sunak owns several high-priced luxury vehicles.

In a 2001 BBC documentary titled Middle Classes: Their Rise and Sprawl, the then Oxford undergraduate Sunak boasted about his aristocratic friends and his privileged education.

“I have friends who are aristocrats, I have friends who are upper class, I have friends who are working class … Well, not working class”, he said. “I mix and match and then I go to see kids from an inner-city state school and tell them to apply to Oxford and talk to them about people like me and then I shock them at the end of chatting with them for half an hour and tell them I was at Winchester and one of my best friends is from Eton and whatever and they are like: ‘Oh, OK.’”

“We all say silly things when we are students,” he later confessed.

Unlike the rumpled and dishevelled BoJo, Sunak wears Gucci shoes and bespoke-tailor suits. He’s allowed himself to be photographed at his desk alongside a £180/$203 coffee mug.

As the local swimming faced closure because it was struggling financially, Sunak’s indoor pool and tennis court at his multi-million-pound mansion in North Yorkshire was nearing completion.

Those expecting Sunak to be different ideologically in comparison to Truss will be disappointed. He will be cannier and more adroit, but he is an unreconstructed Thatcherite like Truss.

In his campaign to succeed BoJo, Sunak wrote in the Daily Telegraph, that his values are “Thatcherite” and that he was running as a Thatcherite.

In a speech in February Sunak called for a “new culture of enterprise” and lower taxes to promote growth. He must know that Thatcherite dogma has never worked in practice, but the signs are that Austerity 2.0 will be on the agenda when he takes office.

The UK has for decades faced what the political economist David Hay calls “catastrophic equilibrium” (a term borrowed from Gramsci).

In this catastrophic equilibrium, the UK economy remains fairly stable, but is simply unable to move beyond stasis and stagnation. Brexit, of which Sunak is a supporter, has drilled this immobility even deeper into the economic ground.

There is little or no hope that the richest person ever to lead the UK will understand the situation represented by catastrophic equilibrium, let alone do anything beyond window-dressing to address its complexities.

Excerpted: ‘The Tory Party’s Endless Gyrations’.

Courtesy: Counterpunch.org