

## Jacob Rees-Mogg: Memes, fees and abortion

By [Joseph Silke](#), Editor

Tuesday 3 October 2017



Image: Chris Andrew

From his maiden speech in the House of Commons in 2010, it was clear that Jacob Rees-Mogg was a man to watch. The Catholic father of six turned internet sensation with thousands of avid online followers has become one of the most recognisable Members of Parliament in the country. Questions over the future of Theresa May's leadership have even led to Jacob being exalted by some as the next Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. The new level of interest in the man has also led to controversy concerning Jacob's more traditional views. I spoke to Jacob Rees-Mogg and started with the thing most on all our minds: memes.

The popularity of meme pages dedicated to Jacob has been significant in swelling support for the man often dubbed "the member for the nineteenth century" to become Conservative leader. I asked him: does Westminster have any understanding of memes? "I don't know that I have any understanding of memes!" he chuckled. "I certainly didn't until I was told. I think you make a very good point that Westminster inevitably becomes disconnected with what is going on in the rest of the country and other age groups because politicians are older rather than younger and it is hard to keep fully informed about developments in social media because they are so rapid. This is part of the rapid change in society."

At the last general election, Momentum campaigned effectively online for the Labour Party and this was reflected in the huge number of young people who voted Labour. I asked why Activate, the campaign group set up to rival Momentum hasn't been having the same success. "Momentum emerged of its own," he said. "It wasn't, in a sense, created. Trying to create something deliberately on social media is very hard because its strength is its authenticity. Corporate style social media isn't seen as authentic."

The Conservatives' poor performance with young people is a growing concern for the party. I asked Jacob

what he thinks ought to be done to win the support of young people at the next general election. "I think you're generous when you say we performed poorly," he began. "It was a very bad result." He continued: "in my view we have to talk to people and that's all people. I'm very sceptical of those who say we should have a different message for different people. We need to put the case to all people for conservatism; why voting for the Conservatives will allow you to do what I want to do in life more than voting Labour and having a socialist government make decisions for you. Young people are interested in ideas and philosophy and we need to make the case to them.

"It's not about saying we will give young people fruit pastels," he jested. "It is about telling young people that they are serious people and just as serious as people from other generational groups and we think conservatism is an attractive offering. We need to get into universities to make the argument. Above all we need to talk to people because we didn't talk to young people at the last election."

I asked him specifically about the burden of tuition fees, student debt and whether he would make any changes. "There are issues around student loans but I do not think we made the case for why loans have helped the higher education system. You see this in the increase of people going to university, particularly those from the lowest decile economic background since loans came in. We didn't make the argument and we also failed to discuss that there are some difficulties with the current system." The relatively high interest rates on student debt have been a focus of much of the criticism of the current regime, especially during this current period of general low interest rates. "It does seem high," he confessed, "particularly when the government can borrow at a much lower rate."

The Conservative manifesto proved to be a disastrous flop with the electorate at the last election. The programme did little to impress voters and the Prime Minister and her small team of advisers were heavily criticised. I put to Jacob that the lacklustre manifesto lacked any coherent or inspiring philosophy and it was this flaw which was so devastating. "I completely agree with you," he said. "Ideally with a manifesto you want to read the policies and you should think it makes sense and is what you expected to read because you understand the philosophy of the party. As I read the manifesto I thought there were many good ideas but they didn't seem linked. There wasn't a vision."

Recent comments made about same sex marriage and abortion on Good Morning Britain with Piers Morgan and Susanna Reid sparked fierce criticism from some viewers. Jacob, a practicing Roman Catholic, stated his opposition to both same-sex marriage and abortion, claiming abortion is "morally indefensible" in all circumstances, even in instances of incest and rape. I was intrigued to hear Jacob's views, therefore, on the 'double effect' scenario in which abortion would be necessary to save the life of the mother. "The Church's teachings on this matter are completely clear," he said "the duty in those circumstances is to save life. Every effort must be made to save life. If the unborn child is at a state where it cannot survive outside of the womb and the effect of treating the mother is to cause a miscarriage then that is perfectly legitimate. There is a common misunderstanding that the baby's life comes before the mother's and this is simply not true.

"The law isn't going to be changed," he said, "as there is an overwhelming majority for both of those and I do not seek to impose my religion on other people. It would be wrong of me to impose my religion on others. People must take the religion of their choice and decide for themselves."

In response to whether he felt unfairly mistreated as a practicing Christian, he asserted that he doesn't think public life is ever unfair. "If you go into public life you must be able to take what comes and that is what public life is about. You must expect your views to be challenged. There is, however, an intolerance on the left of other views. You see this in universities with safe spaces and the censorship of speakers. I was very impressed with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Oxford who said that it is not her job to protect students from opinions they don't like. That's quite right. The whole point of university is to discuss ideas and to challenge them. As soon as you start saying that a view is too offensive to be heard you are undermining freedom of speech."

The majority of voting young people voted to remain in the European Union. I asked whether Jacob had an

inspiring message for young people who might be worried about Brexit. "It is really interesting that once we voted to leave the European Union the turnout of young people at the election went up," he said. "Suddenly it matters again and we are in charge of our future. I think one of the reasons voting went up was because now it's worth doing."

On prosperity he continued: "you have the EU's regulation of our economic activity which is not done for the benefit of our economy. This is all done because of very effective lobbying in Brussels. We'll be free from all of that." He concluded: "we will be able to regulate according to our own needs; raise the standard of living for the poorest and reassert our democratic rights. That sounds pretty attractive to me for a young person and somebody of any age!"



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## 2 comments

Jeremy Bonington-Jagworth

6 Nov '17 at 10:40 am

Why do people struggle with his views?

Is it OK to kill a toddler because it's father was a rapist or relative?

A child of a few months?

A newborn baby?

So why is it OK to kill that newborn baby, or that toddler, a second before its born?

A minute?

An hour?

The day before?

Week? Month?! Trimester.....?!?!

And if you think it's OK to kill a "clump of cells" because it would be more convenient for another clump of cells, at any stage, then run that forward again and explain why it stops being OK!

Incidentally, for a child to be born illegitimate used to be to most, and still is to many, offensive.

Does that make it OK to exterminate b@stard students?!

[Report](#)

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Jeremy Bonington-Jagworth

6 Nov '17 at 10:51 am

Strange how anti-worker Labour, "Liberals", and the racist, anti-English, Nationalist, Socialist, SNP want to give 16 year olds the right to vote (for them).

But none of them would trust a 17 year old with a pair of scissors!

When they start campaigning for age limits on guns and air pistols, top shelf mags, videos and games, fags, booze, and buying sharp and pointy things, to be lowered to 16, you'll know that kids are mature enough to vote at.....

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.....Eighteen!

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