

# DAWN PORTER

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### Politics is not a dirty word

My first introduction to politics was when I was six – I was standing in the kitchen with my gran, stirring a pot of baked beans. I'd followed her in there because there was a really scary-looking old lady in our living room – my grandpa's sister, Aunty Ada.

Nana had been acting most unsociably since Ada arrived, and this was the moment where she had pretended that I was hungry so she could leave the room. While we were stirring the beans I didn't even want, she leaned down to me and said, "I don't like her, Dawn. She's Labour." I had no idea what she was talking about, but I do remember presuming that "Labour" must be what you called someone with a hairy chin.

My grandparents couldn't have been more working class. They never earned much money but grafted really hard. Surprisingly, they were Tory supporters due to the fact that they were both furriers by trade. During the Seventies the Labour party introduced high tax rates on luxury goods, therefore people like my grandparents, who tailored furs for some of London's most prestigious



haute couture houses, lost work. Ada, supporting Labour, was so aggravating to my grandmother that she looked at her as though she was going to skin her alive. Which, due to Nana's unfortunate financial situation, might not have been such a bad idea. Ada's chin could have made a cracking pair of earmuffs.

I have not been hugely involved in politics until now, largely due to

feeling intimidated by it. I don't mean I was intimidated by Parliament itself, but very often just socially. I am sure that comes directly from Nana's scathing opinion of Aunty Ada. I had it ingrained in me that politics were completely black or white, or perhaps more specifically, red or blue. And to be honest, I never felt that I was.

This recession, which affected me very directly, means that my interest

is considerably more significant than it was during my 20s, when I foolishly underestimated the direct impact of what happens over there in Whitehall on me as an individual. I now understand, better than ever, why Nana and Ada were so regimented in their beliefs, and why Ada was so frustrating to my gran that she had to remove herself from the room to

**"I DO REMEMBER PRESUMING THAT 'LABOUR' MUST BE WHAT YOU CALLED SOMEONE WITH A HAIRY CHIN"**

refrain from saying something she might regret. And I have to say, crazy as she came across in that moment, I admire her for that. Who was she to tell Ada she was wrong?

Oddly enough I learned a lot from my gran that day. Firstly to stick to my guns regarding what I believe in but at the same time to not force my opinion upon other people, and secondly, that faking a child's hunger and heating up a pan of baked beans is a brilliant way to get out of an unpleasant situation. Unfortunately for me I don't have a child, so I have adapted this ruse to be more in keeping with my own life, and excuse myself by announcing I have to feed the cat. Works every time. Thanks, Nana! x

This baby thing...

**I know this comment isn't going to make me any friends but I really feel I have to say it... I don't like some people's babies. I don't mean to be horrible, but I just don't. Most of my friends have babies and I really love them, but when people I hardly know put their babies on me sometimes the only thing I feel is a dead arm. I mean, you can't like everyone and they are people after all. Right?**

'YOU MIGHT BE CUTE, BUT I STILL DON'T LIKE YOU'

*I do so enjoy moments of madness, and this one was a cracker. I recently woke up late, went into the bathroom and turned on the shower. I then, for some odd reason, went into the kitchen to make a cup of tea. I spent the next 10 minutes in a panic trying to work out where the sound of gushing water was coming from before I realised it was the shower. Slick!*

