

Britain: Labour extends antiwar witch-hunt to Tam Dalyell

Chris Marsden
22 May 2003

Following on the attacks levelled against George Galloway MP, another outspoken critic of the US-led war against Iraq is being targeted for vituperative press coverage, threatened with disciplinary action by the Labour Party and even legal proceedings.

Labour MP and father of the House of Commons (its longest serving member), Tam Dalyell, is being accused of making anti-semitic remarks in the course of an interview with *Vanity Fair*, conducted as part of a piece meant to celebrate Prime Minister Tony Blair's 50th birthday.

The author, David Margolick, notes Dalyell for criticising Blair's "staunch" support of Israel, before stating, "Tam Dalyell even tells me he thinks Blair is unduly influenced by a cabal of Jewish advisers. He mentions [U.K. special envoy to the Middle East Peter] Mandelson, [Labor Party fund-raiser] Lord Levy and [Foreign Secretary] Jack Straw."

None of this is in direct speech, but based on this cursory report Dalyell has been accused of racism and promulgating anti-semitic conspiracy theories. He has been called before the Labour Party's chief whip and reportedly faces internal disciplinary proceedings. Professor Eric Moonman, president of the Zionist Federation, is seeking advice on whether there is a case for referral for prosecution under Britain's race relations legislation for incitement to racial hatred.

The charge of anti-semitism has been seized on as a convenient stick with which to beat Dalyell in order to discredit and silence him. He was a trenchant opponent of the war who was often a source of political embarrassment for Blair. On February 10, he was ordered out of the House of Commons by the Speaker after he refused to stop trying to raise points of order about a government dossier on Iraq that was in part plagiarised from an American student's outdated thesis. His Linlithgow constituency Labour Party, with the MP's backing, even voted to recommend that Tony Blair reconsider his position as party leader because he gave British backing to a war against Iraq without clearly expressed support from the UN.

He wrote in the *Guardian* on March 27, "I also believe that since Mr Blair is going ahead with his support for a US attack without unambiguous UN authorisation, he should be branded as a war criminal and sent to The Hague.

"I have served in the House of Commons as a Labour member for 41 years, and I would never have dreamed of saying this about any one of my previous leaders. But Blair is a man who has disdain for both the House of Commons and international law."

It is not enough to cite Dalyell's record on war to reject the accusations of anti-semitism, however. It demands a factual and political rebuttal.

To accuse Dalyell of anti-semitism is absurd, given that his political career has at least partly been shaped by his support for Zionism and the State of Israel. He was a parliamentary private secretary to former Labour cabinet minister Richard Crossman, who was a prominent Zionist and politically close to Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann. Dalyell has asked his accusers, "Would Dick Crossman have had an anti-semitic

gentile as his PPS? I identify with the Weizmann tradition. This is not about being anti-Jewish, anti-Semitic or anti-Israeli."

He and his children have all worked on a Kibbutz at one time, and even Professor Moonman called Dalyell "a man I admire enormously," and an "old friend." He said, "I do not believe Tam is anti-semitic."

If what *Vanity Fair* reports is accurate, then one could criticise Dalyell for a serious error in referring to a cabal of *Jewish* rather than *pro-Zionist* advisers. But such a mistake is far from uncommon. Those he criticises use the terms Zionism and Jewish interchangeably; and unfortunately, the type of shorthand they employ is often echoed unthinkingly by others who are in no way hostile to Jewish people.

More importantly, Dalyell has made numerous statements that strongly suggest the brief reference made to his views is more likely to be the source of confusion than what he has to say himself. He has insisted that the only "cabal that I referred to was in the US," and went on to define this in explicitly political rather than religious or ethnic terms—as a neo-conservative tendency that also enjoys support from Christian fundamentalists.

He told the *Guardian*: "That is the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs. I was thinking of [U.S. Deputy Defense Secretary Paul] Wolfowitz, [defense adviser Richard] Perle, [Undersecretary of State for Arms Control and International Security John] Bolton, ... [Douglas] Feith, [Ken] Adelman, [Elliott] Abrams and [White House press secretary Ari] Fleischer. Those people drive this policy."

He told the *Telegraph*, "They very much have captured the ear of the president of the United States. I said [to *Vanity Fair* that] I thought that Blair was very sympathetic to them. I cannot understand why."

In the *Scotland on Sunday* he added, "Blair and Straw have become far too close to these people, and Lord Levy, who is an unaccountable ambassador in the Middle East, is part of this group. They are acting on an extremely Zionist, Likud-nik agenda. In particular I am concerned that some of them are pushing for an attack on Syria, for reasons of Israeli security."

In the *Sunday Telegraph*, Dalyell added, "I am fully aware that one is treading on cut glass on this issue, and no one wants to be accused of anti-Semitism, but if it is a question of launching an assault on Syria or Iran, ... then one has to be candid."

"The trouble is that anyone who dares criticise the Zionist operation is immediately labelled anti-Semitic," he said. But, in fact, his opposition to Israeli expansionism was shared by many Jews, who were "desperately unhappy about it."

Generally, the thrust of Dalyell's statements cannot be refuted. Indeed, the most sustained and vitriolic attack on him yet in the *Guardian* on May 7 only confirms what he says about how accusations of anti-semitism are employed to stifle criticism of Zionism.

Jonathan Freedland, a liberal Zionist and opponent of the Sharon government, nevertheless comes to the defence of Zionism as an ideology. He insists that Dalyell's remarks are "a racist slur," denounces the MP for

McCarthyism and for crossing the line “between anti-semitism and anti-Zionism”—comparing his remarks with the anti-Zionist rhetoric employed by the fascist British National Party. He asks the question, “If Zionists are constantly accused of having dual loyalties, of wielding untold power, of pursuing a secret agenda to reshape the world, all classic charges long hurled at the Jews, then one has to wonder whether one is hearing the same racist slur now voiced by Tam Dalyell—just expressed less openly.”

Freedland’s argument centres on efforts to deny any connection between the right-wing views of the “neocons” named by Dalyell and their pro-Zionist agenda. He insists that they are above all advocates of “a world dominated by American power and made safe for western-friendly democracy. Crucially, this is an American aim pursued for American reasons. The people urging it are dedicated proponents of US might—the Jews among them included. They do not construct these grand designs for Israel’s sake, but for America’s. It just so happens that in some cases—though not all—those strategic goals are consonant with Israel’s.”

On this basis, Freedland then asks, “Is there any connection between the Jewish neocons and their Jewishness? Perhaps a good university dissertation could be written on that, drawing on the Jewish tradition of seeking to change the world—from Christ to Marx.”

One could argue that the stress Dalyell places on the role played by hard-line Zionists in formulating Washington’s policy is overstated. But he is, after all, under direct attack for having dared draw attention to it at all and would naturally focus on the issue. In any case, he is hardly ignorant of the fact that the war against Iraq was conducted in the interest of US imperialism.

In September 2002, the *Sunday Herald* published a secret policy document, “*Rebuilding America’s Defences: Strategies, Forces And Resources For A New Century*,” written for the neo-conservative think tank Project for the New American Century in 2000 and authored by Dick Cheney (now vice-president), Donald Rumsfeld (defence secretary), Paul Wolfowitz (Rumsfeld’s deputy), George W Bush’s younger brother Jeb and Lewis Libby (Cheney’s chief of staff). It made clear the future Bush cabinet’s intention to launch a war against Iraq as part of an “American grand strategy” and a “blueprint for maintaining global US pre-eminence, precluding the rise of a great power rival, and shaping the international security order in line with American principles and interests.”

Dalyell was quoted at the time, saying, “This is a blueprint for US world domination—a new world order of their making. These are the thought processes of fantasist Americans who want to control the world.”

But Freedland is attempting to portray the coincidence of views between advocates of Likud-style Zionism and a fanatical belief in US might as a happy accident. This will not wash.

The fact that the Zionist establishment may occasionally have tactical disagreements with the Bush administration, as Freedland indicates, does not change their essential relationship, any more than disagreements between the Unionist bourgeoisie in Northern Ireland and the Conservative political establishment in Britain mean that they should be viewed as entirely separate tendencies.

Just as Northern Ireland is a territorial, economic and political adjunct of Britain, Israel exists only as a garrison state upholding the interests of US imperialism in the Middle East. Without US sponsorship, Israel would collapse, economically and militarily. Without tacit backing from the White House—or more specifically, from the “neocons,” including those identified by Dalyell—the Sharon administration would not be able to perpetrate its crimes against the Palestinians with impunity.

Efforts to cultivate support within the US thus occupy the central place in Zionist politics. The Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs (JINSA) describes itself as being “committed to explaining the need for a prudent national security policy for the United States, addressing the security requirements of both the United States and the State of Israel” and explaining “the role Israel can and does play in bolstering American

interests, as well as the link between American defense policy and the security of Israel.” Its mission statement calls US-Israel strategic cooperation “a vital component in the global security equation for the United States”:

“Although there is no longer a Soviet Union seeking hegemony in the region, the Middle East remains important because of its strategic location. It is a source of much of the world’s energy and it is an area where many regimes are amassing weapons of mass destruction. However, the inherent instability in the region, caused primarily by inter-Arab rivalries, leaves the future of the region in doubt.

“Though the United States has other friends in the region, it is universally acknowledged that none are as stable, capable or as consistent with American interests as Israel. It is important for the United States to maintain a continued presence in the region for the reasons mentioned above. The ability to project force in the region depends unquestionably on the cooperation between the US and Israel as well as on a militarily secure Israel.”

To understand this makes clear why the hard-line neocons, Jewish and Christian fundamentalist alike, can be the advocates of an extreme right Zionist agenda at one and the same time. One barb that Freedland fires at Dalyell is the fact that “Among the neocons the heavyweights are not Jewish: they are Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld.” It should be noted that Cheney is far clearer on the difference between “Jewishness” and political support for Zionism than Freedland. He was a member of the Jewish (read Zionist) Institute for National Security affairs before he took office as Vice President in 2001.

The *World Socialist Web Site* holds no political brief for Dalyell. He is a bourgeois politician whose opposition to the war against Iraq was motivated by his concern that it was damaging to the long-term strategic interests of British imperialism. But he must be defended against this attack.

Firstly, because the accusations against him are slanderous. He is no racist or anti-semitic, and no one has offered any real evidence to suggest otherwise.

Secondly, because once again there is an attempt by the Blair government to silence all those who are critical of its warmongering in the Middle East and elsewhere.

And thirdly, because all attempts to prevent a genuine discussion of the perfidious role played by Zionism in world affairs serve to disarm the working class internationally, reinforce the grip of their misleaders over the Jewish people, and by doing so, play into the hands of those who genuinely seek to propagate anti-semitism rather than those who are falsely accused of doing so.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact