

UK police frame up Conservative MP

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Three months ago Andrew Mitchell MP resigned as Conservative Party Chief Whip following allegations that he had abused police officers on duty in Downing Street, calling them “plebs”. It is now clear that much of the evidence against Mitchell was fabricated by police officers. CCTV footage does not support the police version of events, and a supposed civilian eyewitness whose account agreed with that of the police has now been revealed to be a police officer himself.

The events reveal the erosion of the democratic norms of the bourgeois state, with police fabricating claims against parliamentary ministers and parliamentary parties reluctant to move against them. Such moves against the structures of bourgeois democracy pose a stark warning of the sharpening rightward developments within the ruling class.

On September 19 Mitchell left his office at 9 Downing Street on his bicycle. Police officers refused to open the main gates of Downing Street for him, telling him he had to leave by the pedestrian side gate, which he did. Both officers later wrote in their pocket books that Mitchell had insisted they open the main gates for him, repeatedly reminding them of his cabinet position. When he finally agreed to use the pedestrian gate, the officers recorded him saying, “Best you learn your f**king place ... you don’t run this f**king government ... You’re f**king plebs”. His last comment to them was “You haven’t heard the last of this”.

This account was written up into a log report and emailed to several senior officers. The following day Tory Deputy Chief Whip John Randall MP received an email from one of his constituents, who claimed to have been walking with his nephew past Downing Street at the time of the incident. His account agreed with the pocket book record of events. He said passers-by were shocked and claimed that some had filmed the

exchange. The correspondent sent two emails, one on September 19, the second six days later.

CCTV footage now released shows a timeline making it all but impossible for the extended dispute with Mitchell to have taken place and very few passers-by present, and none matching the account in the emails. It has now emerged that the constituent was in fact an officer from the same Metropolitan Police unit as the diplomatic protection squad. He has been arrested. A second man, not a police officer, has since been arrested in connection with encouraging or assisting the commission of an act of misconduct in public office.

From the beginning Mitchell strenuously denied the comments but, under advice from Tory Central Office, did not pursue accusations that the police had falsified their log record it appears. At a October 12 meeting in his Sutton Coldfield constituency with Police Federation representatives Mitchell acknowledged, “I did say under my breath, but audibly in frustration: ‘I thought you lot were supposed to f**king help us’. I did say that. It is for that I apologise”.

Mitchell recorded this meeting without the knowledge of the Police Federation representatives, and passed the recording to Channel 4 News. Immediately after the meeting Ken Mackaill chairman of the West Mercia Police Federation, lied to the press that Mitchell “will not tell us what he did say” and pressed for his resignation.

The Police Federation of England and Wales has now admitted that it “stoked up” the dispute. Local officers campaigned outside Mitchell’s constituency office in the week following the incident, demanding Prime Minister David Cameron launch an investigation. But it continues to back the officers, expressing “great regret” at the arrest. Spokesman Paul McKeever promised to apologise if Mitchell “has been done a calumny”, but said this was purely hypothetical “as currently there is no suggestion that the officers’ accounts are in question.

Bernard Hogan-Howe, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, has made that quite clear”. Hogan-Howe continued to express his confidence in the two officers this week.

Two days after the incident Rupert Murdoch’s *The Sun* led with the story and called for Mitchell to be sacked. Labour pledged to support the police, with MP Bill Esterson stating that the issue was whether “a government minister can get away with questioning the integrity of the police”.

Mitchell had been trying very hard not to question the integrity of the police and even now has confined criticisms to individuals such as Hogan-Howe.

At a Trades Union Congress march in October, Labour leader Ed Miliband made a point of thanking “all the off-duty police officers here today ... Let us say we stand with them as they seek to protect front-line policing and improve communities across Britain”. Earlier in the week he had said Mitchell was “toast”. Mitchell resigned from office two days later.

There was an enthusiastic and uncritical acceptance of this right-wing pressure movement from sections of the ex-left, in their capacity as cheerleaders for the TUC march. Echoing Labour’s solidarising, the Socialist Workers Party reported that marchers “delighted in yesterday’s resignation of Tory chief whip Andrew Mitchell after he called a cop a ‘pleb’”. Everywhere people carried placards declaring themselves ‘plebs’ against the Tories”.

There was “a very strong sense of class anger”, they added. “This came out in the placards and the chants about ‘plebs’”. The Socialist Party included Mitchell’s alleged comments in a column marking the difference between “Them & Us”, identifying Mitchell’s comments as evidence of “The government’s opinion of the public sector”.

The *Independent* now reports that Cameron was aware of the deception perpetrated by the police weeks before Mitchell’s resignation, but did not pursue them for fear of disturbing relations with the police. Cameron backed Mitchell in his job, but declined to take the matter up with police commanders or to make the footage public.

The support of the Murdoch press points both to the lawlessness of the police and to the police’s campaign to preserve their funding during savage austerity cuts in public spending. The police and sections of the

establishment are angered at the government’s idea that, to make austerity measures seem “fair”, they should be applied to the police.

The “plebgate” arrest was made in connection with ongoing investigations into links between the police and the media, launched in response to the evidence of widespread media criminality, including the bribery and corruption of police officers focusing initially on Murdoch’s now defunct *News of the World*. Former officers were taken on as columnists for Murdoch’s News International. News International editors and journalists have also had a privileged place in Cameron’s immediate circle.

The PR company that represents several local Police Federations, including those that campaigned outside Mitchell’s office, is Gaunt Brothers, set up by former *Sun* journalist Jon Gaunt. It was Gaunt Brothers that promoted the attack on Mitchell by connecting it to threatened cuts to the police.

The *News of the World* scandal revealed the depth of the network of collusion between police, media and politicians—one that enabled oligarchs like Murdoch to dictate state policy in a mutually beneficial relationship. “Plebgate” shows that when governments do not do as they are told under these arrangements, democratic niceties are dispensed with. The police have lied in order to remove a sitting minister and overturn government policy.

The ability of their apologists in the political establishment and the media to generate popular support for this anti-democratic turn by fraudulently linking their campaign to opposition to austerity measures is evidence of how the pseudo-left disarm the working class. This is not a case of “toffs” versus “plebs”, any more than it is true that the police are there to simply protect “law and order”. The police are guardians of capitalism, and their role is to control and suppress the working class.



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