

UK government sets up “overarching” inquiries into child sex abuse

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The UK government has convened two inquiries into allegations of child sex abuse that reach into the heart of the political establishment.

The first, to be headed by Peter Wanless, head of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), is to investigate missing Home Office documents said to relate to a paedophile conspiracy reaching from Westminster, the prime minister’s office to the royal family and spanning more than six decades. It will report in eight months.

The second, described as “overarching” by Home Secretary Theresa May, will be into whether public bodies have done enough to investigate allegations of child sex abuse. All national institutions are to be scrutinised, from the BBC and National Health Service to the Westminster political parties.

Anticipated to be the largest of its kind, it will not report until after the General Election in May 2015. Presently a non-statutory panel inquiry, May said it may be given the power to compel witnesses to testify.

The inquiries are the outcome of allegations that first emerged following the death of Jimmy Savile in 2011, charging the former DJ and TV presenter of using his celebrity status and charitable activities to abuse women and children.

Just as damningly, it was asserted that he had been protected while alive by friends in high places—he was said to be friends with Margaret Thatcher and Prince Charles amongst others.

There is little doubt that Savile was a sexual predator, whose media-endowed status as a “national treasure” meant, at best, that complainants were ignored.

An internal review by the Crown Prosecution Service found that he could have been prosecuted while alive over three allegations of sexual offences. Another review, by the Metropolitan Police and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC), recorded 214

criminal offences against Savile’s name between 1955 and 2009. The BBC agreed to pay £33,000 each to 120 of Savile’s alleged victims.

The disturbing revelations led to accusations that Savile may have been working in concert with other abusers.

In October 2012, Labour MP Tom Watson used Prime Minister’s Questions to charge there was “clear intelligence suggesting a powerful paedophile network linked to parliament and number 10.”

Watson’s assertion was based on information passed to him by whistleblower Peter McKelvie. The retired child protection team manager had been involved in the 1992 conviction of Peter Righton, founder of the Paedophile Information Exchange (PIE). According to McKelvie, evidence gathered at that time suggested that “20 MPs and Lords over the last three decades, some still alive and some dead,” had been involved in child sex abuse or had covered it up.

This led to the police investigation, Operation Fernbridge, centred on a London guest house where it is alleged boys from a local children’s home were abused in the late 1970s and 1980s. Amongst those frequenting the premises was former Liberal MP, Sir Cyril Smith, who has been posthumously accused as a paedophile.

Watson also said that the late Conservative MP Geoffrey Dickens had sent a series of memos to various Home Secretaries, beginning in the 1980s with Leon Brittan, alleging child sex abuse by leading public officials.

A search of Home Office files found that 114 “potentially relevant” files were lost, possibly destroyed. An internal review claimed there was nothing untoward but it fuelled the stench of a cover-up over the appalling treatment of vulnerable boys.

So too, has the unearthing of a 1985 BBC documentary in which Tim Fortescue, Conservative whip between 1970 and 1973, explains how, if faced with an MP involved in a

“scandal with small boys,” the whip’s office could get him out of trouble in return for the MP following party line.

Dickens said in a 1983 interview that he had passed his information, in which he named eight public officials as paedophiles, to then-Director of Public Prosecutions Sir Thomas Hetherington. Nothing came of it and the information is missing.

Despite a number of complaints against Smith alleging sexual abuse of young boys, he was never prosecuted in his lifetime. Neither was Sir Peter Hayman. The former diplomat and army officer, thought to be connected to MI6, was a secret member of PIE in the 1970s. It is reported that even when paedophile material was found in his possession by the Obscene Publications Squad, he was let off with a caution.

Lord Norman Tebbit, a Conservative minister under Margaret Thatcher, has admitted that it was “likely” there had been an “enormous” cover-up of instances of abuse in order to protect the “system.”

No confidence, however, can be placed in any the inquiries to establish the truth.

The desperate efforts of the main bourgeois parties to recover some moral authority are a travesty. Millions of people are only too familiar with the lies over Iraq’s “weapons of mass destruction” and numerous other examples of corruption, criminality and abuse of power and influence on the part of Britain’s ruling elite.

Even before it has got underway, the appointment of Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss to head the second inquiry led to further charges of an establishment cover-up. The retired judge is the sister of the late Lord Michael Havers, who some claim tried to prevent Dickens raising his complaints. On Monday, barely one week after she was first put forward, Butler-Sloss stood down from the inquiry.

What is guaranteed is that the inquiries will be used in the same manner as every other before—to shift politics to the right and further curtail democratic rights.

The refusal to act on allegations of abuse by members of the political establishment is in marked contrast to the recent prosecutions of a number of high profile celebrities over “historic” sex offences.

The UK has no statute of limitations on criminal offences. In many instances, the charges against those accused went as far back as the 1960s.

Solicitor Chris Saltrese has raised concerns at the “case building” techniques used by police in instances of historic sex abuse which, he warned “may be

indistinguishable from case manufacture.”

Known as “trawling”—following an accusation against an individual—police will contact others and ask if they have similar complaints. The objective is to build up a “pattern of behaviour”—which can stretch back decades—that is used to corroborate the first accusation. That is why many of the latest celebrity trials incorporated allegations ranging from rape to sexual innuendo.

In 2003, a parliamentary committee had criticised police trawling in historic sex abuse cases. It was given legitimacy, however, by the Criminal Justice Act passed under the Labour government the same year. Under the guise of “putting victims first,” this enabled the introduction of evidence of “bad character” into criminal proceedings.

In the last year alone, 700 people have been convicted through historic sex abuse cases.

Meanwhile, *Telegraph* journalist Tim Stanley welcomed the “era of the permanent paedophile hunt” as a “moral corrective to a sexual anarchy.”

Noting approvingly that “witch hunts tend to occur at moments of social tension,” he opined that there is “something rather exhilarating about the sense of cohesion that [the paedophile hunt] brings.” This “means that we are finally building up the courage to do what we should’ve done years ago: censor the Internet.”

Stanley’s reference to “social tensions” is revealing. Social inequality is at a record high in the UK, with the five richest families controlling more wealth than the poorest 20 percent of the population.

Such a class divide is incompatible with democratic forms of rule. While the media seek to divert revulsion over child abuse in a right-wing direction, the ruling elite is already using the inquiries to conceal advanced preparations for state repression.

May’s announcement of the inquiries was made just two days before the government, with Labour’s support, declared it would railroad emergency laws through parliament to enforce state surveillance powers ruled unlawful by the European Court of Justice.



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