Corbyn leadership bows before Blairite's anti-Semitism witch-hunt

Robert Stevens
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Labour's Blairite right-wing has doubled down on its smear campaign against party leader Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters, citing bogus claims of widespread anti-Semitism on "the left."

On Monday evening, MPs making up the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) passed a motion giving Corbyn a week to tackle cases of anti-Semitism in the party and report back to them on the handling of any disciplinary action.

The motion was proposed by Catherine McKinnell and seconded by Ruth Smeeth, who have played a central role in the attempts to smear Corbyn and force his resignation.

Smeeth was exposed in a WikiLeaks publication of US embassy diplomatic cables as a "strictly protect" asset.

Labour's general secretary and close supporter of Corbyn, Jennie Formby, was subjected to hysterical tirades at the meeting by right-wing MPs who denounced a letter from her stating that since her appointment last April, any genuine cases of anti-Semitism in the party had been dealt with. Labour had managed to "clear all of the previously outstanding anti-Semitism cases from the investigation and disputes panel stages of the process," she wrote.

Just short of calling Formby a liar, Wes Streeting MP said her statement "stretches the boundaries of credibility."

The aim of the latest offensive is clear. Just two days before the meeting, the *Observer* reported that it had been told "at least six" leading Labour right-wingers were preparing to set up a breakaway party. The MPs were opposed to "Jeremy Corbyn's leadership on Brexit and other key issues including immigration, foreign policy and antisemitism," it noted.

Among those named as part of the six were Angela Smith, Chris Leslie and Luciana Berger. Four days prior to the PLP meeting, Berger spoke at the annual dinner of the Yad Vashem UK Foundation, declaring how she was "thoroughly ashamed, angered and appalled by the rise of antisemitism on the left and inside the Labour Party." She followed up with an article in the *Times* declaring, "I am sick of being tainted by the stain of Labour anti-Semitism. I am increasingly concerned that Labour's disciplinary committees are turning a blind eye to hatred towards Jews."

The motion to the PLP was written according to this template, asserting that "10 months ago the British Jewish community [meaning themselves, Zionist groups and sections of the Conservative Party] took to Parliament Square for the Enough is Enough demonstration to demand the Labour Party take action against anti-Semitism. … In the months that have followed, the PLP is dismayed that there remains such a backlog of anti-Semitism cases that are still to be investigated and a decision reached—in particular the high-profile cases that it was promised would be concluded by July 2018."

The motion demanded the personal details of Labour members who may be under investigation. When Formby refused to hand over this data, the witch-hunters declare it proof that anti-Semites were being protected by Corbyn. Outside the PLP meeting, leading Blairite Margaret Hodge declared that there remained the "cancer of anti-Semitism in the Labour party." She denounced Formby, stating, "The resolution was unanimously supported by the parliamentary Labour party, and then the general secretary of the Labour party basically said she wasn't prepared to give us the information that was required in the resolution."

A Labour spokesman later confirmed that Formby was correct not to hand over data on members: "Complaints processes are confidential and the party has a responsibility to protect members' data."

A report issued this week by the Zionist Community Security Trust (CST) was cited as proof of how Corbyn's leadership of the Labour Party had unleashed a wave of

anti-Semitism.

Even by its own criteria, it does nothing of the sort.

The CST claimed that last year there were 1,652 reported incidents of anti-Semitism in the UK—a 16 percent increase on 2017. Its chief executive, David Delew, said, "Since the early 2000s, there has been growing awareness that overseas conflicts cause sharp, sudden increases in domestic anti-Semitism. Of course, this was most obvious when Israel was in the news.

"Now, 2016, 2017 and 2018 are all the worst years on record, but there is a very different dynamic. Put simply, Israel has not been fully at war and this latest anti-Semitism is about the condition of Britain today."

In fact, the report states that the highest monthly incidents occurred last April and May (151 and 182 incidents) during protests when Israeli soldiers killed and injured thousands of Palestinians protesting at the Gaza border. In addition, around a third of the incidents (456) "involved language or imagery related to the far-right or the Nazi period; far-right."

Without specifying what incidents it refers to, the CST states that there were "148 incidents in 2018 that were examples of, or occurred in the context of discussions about, anti-Semitism in the Labour Party."

Even if one were to take these figures at face value, it means that less than 9 percent of all anti-Semitic incidents in the UK relate, in some way, to "discussions" in the Labour Party. The report is also forced to note that such instances were only recorded in the period *after* the Blairites resurrected their filthy campaign, accusing Corbyn of transforming Labour into a sanctuary for anti-Semites. It states, "While no Labour-related incidents were recorded in January or February, nine were recorded in March and 15 in April. This coincided with high-profile stories related to allegations of antisemitism in Labour …"

The only attempt in the report to give any concrete examples of anti-Semitism within the party include, as a "case study," a letter supposedly hand delivered to Berger's constituency office signed anonymously by "Corbyn supporters," who say they are black, refer to Corbyn as "Jezza" and includes the fascistic statement that "Jew Scum" should be killed in gas chambers. It closes with a citation from Nation of Islam black nationalist leader Louis Farakhan, a virulent anti-Semite.

In the face of overwhelming opposition from Labour Party members, the Blairites have only been able to proceed with a campaign based on such a pack of lies because of constant capitulations from Corbyn and his

inner circle, who have opposed all moves to drive them out in pursuit of "party unity."

On Tuesday evening, one day after the PLP meeting, Shadow Chancellor John McDonnell fielded calls from listeners at the LBC radio station. One caller, Oliver, asked McDonnell, "When is the Jeremy Corbyn team, including yourself, going to confront this smear campaign on anti-Semitism?"

In reply McDonnell said, "I've seen the threats made against some of our Jewish members and MPs so it isn't a smear campaign and we have to face up to it."

Three days later, McDonnell was challenged on whether he agreed with members of Luciana Berger's Wavertree constituency putting forward two motions calling for votes of no-confidence in her. McDonnell opposed the moves to remove Berger, saying, "My advice to Luciana is just tell people you're not supporting a breakaway party, you're sticking with the Labour Party, you're not jumping ship. And for local party members to sit down with Luciana and actually say 'how can we support you? How can we work together in the future?' And then overcome the present difficulties."

Labour's deputy leader Tom Watson backed Berger "as she battles the bullying hatred from members of her own local party," and called for the suspension of the Wavertree constituency party. Under this pressure, the two resolutions have been withdrawn and the meeting at which they were to be discussed cancelled.

As the Socialist Equality Party (UK) warned in its 2018 congress resolution, "Corbyn and his coterie would rather see their own supporters expelled, than break with the Blairites."

The author recommends:

Retreat by Corbynites on anti-Semitism definition emboldens UK right-wing
[6 September 2018]

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