

Corbyn ally Diane Abbott suspended as Labour MP: The collapse of the Corbynite ‘left’

Thomas Scripps
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Diane Abbott, a key ally of former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, has been suspended from the parliamentary Labour Party on charges of antisemitism over a letter she sent to the *Observer* newspaper.

Published Sunday, Abbott’s letter challenged a statement made in an earlier *Guardian* article that, in Abbott’s rendering, “Irish, Jewish and Traveller people all suffer from ‘racism’.” She countered that they instead “experience prejudice.”

The Labour MP continued, “It is true that many types of white people with points of difference, such as redheads, can experience this prejudice. But they are not all their lives subject to racism.” They did not have to “sit at the back of the bus” in pre-civil rights America and “were allowed to vote” in Apartheid South Africa. And “at the height of slavery,” Abbott concludes, “there were no white-seeming people manacled on the slave ships.”

There is nothing remotely defensible in Abbott’s reactionary and deeply ignorant ruminations, which are rooted in the rotten politics of black nationalism. To make reference to slavery in comparing anti-Black and anti-Jewish or Traveller racism but not mention the Holocaust, while equating their persecution with the “prejudice” suffered by “redheads”, is unconscionable. The Socialist Equality Party has nothing in common with Abbott’s views.

These issues, however, in turn have nothing to do with Abbott’s suspension from the Labour Party, which is motivated solely by the right-wing agenda of its leadership under Sir Keir Starmer—to whom Abbott’s letter was a political gift.

The Blairite wing of the Labour Party—together with the Tories, the media and pro-Zionist organisations—have waged a constant campaign against Corbyn and left-wing party members under the cover of “fighting anti-Semitism”. Now that hundreds of thousands have left the Labour Party in disgust, Starmer intends to finish the job and prove his political bona-fides to big business by removing the

Corbynite rump from parliament.

Corbyn had the Labour whip withdrawn in November 2020, on false charges of anti-Semitism, and has been sitting as an Independent MP since. Last month, Labour’s National Executive Committee (NEC) ruled that he would not be allowed to stand as a Labour candidate at the next election.

Abbott faces a similar fate. Senior Labour figures, including frontbenchers, have called for her to step down from her parliamentary seat. If the investigation into her conduct continues for several months, she will in any case be disqualified from party selections over who will contest her Hackney North and Stoke Newington constituency.

Her case shows in its purest form the Corbynites’ total prostration before the Blairites. The travails of the Labour “left” are not proof that the campaign of political persecution was too powerful to resist. Rather, Starmer now leads a party wholly controlled by the Blairite right because the “left” never fought against and expelled them during five years when Corbyn led the party.

Clearly embarrassed, Abbott issued a speedy apology disassociating herself from her letter and offering the transparent excuse that “The errors arose in an initial draft being sent.” She was suspended shortly afterwards and has made no public comment on having the whip withdrawn since.

Nor can any fight be expected given her record of vocal loyalty. Last March, Abbott pulled out of any association with the Stop the War Coalition, telling *Politics Live*, “Nobody wants to attack NATO” and “I am a loyal supporter of Keir Starmer.”

Given Abbott’s refusal to defend herself, it was predictable that not one member of the Socialist Campaign Group (SCG) of Labour MPs has spoken out for her either.

To even speak any longer of the Socialist Campaign Group as an entity, let alone a “Corbynite left”, becomes ever more tenuous. This February, at least eight of the SCG’s nominal 30 members formed a “New Left” group on the explicit

basis that they would no longer oppose Starmer's leadership, only loyally advocate for a more "progressive" policy agenda.

The rest of the SCG toes the line without explicitly pledging to. Following Abbott's lead, all 11 SCG MPs who had backed publicly the Stop the War Coalition withdrew their support once Starmer declared criticism of NATO to be a disciplinary matter.

Corbyn's former shadow chancellor, John McDonnell, and fellow SCG members Nadia Whittome, Clive Lewis, Rachael Maskell, Lloyd Russell-Moyle and Ian Lavery, have all gone further in openly backing NATO's war against Russia.

Nothing is left of the claim that "Corbynism" represented a new horizon in British politics. The entire gamut of pseudo-left groups in the UK and internationally presented Corbyn as either the beginning of a wholesale transformation of the Labour Party into a vehicle for socialism, or as the leader or inspiration for a new socialist party.

According to this perspective, Corbyn and Abbott, his shadow home secretary, would have been two of the three leading figures in a government that was supposed to take on British and world imperialism. As for the third member of the triumvirate, if he ever took office McDonnell would be leading the UK war effort in Ukraine while consulting daily with the City of London on economic policy.

Between them, Corbyn, Abbott and McDonnell have spent very nearly a century on the Labour benches, perfectly at ease in a party careening to the right. Their time in its leadership was spent blocking deselections of Blairite MPs and facilitating the anti-Semitism witch-hunt against their own supporters, with the end result a shadow cabinet of Starmer, Rachel Reeves, Yvette Cooper and Wes Streeting and the most right-wing Labour Party in history.

The SCG today is not a faction fighting for a programme, but a fractured grouping desperately begging and seeking to prove themselves fit to remain within the Labour Party and not for expulsion like Corbyn, Claudia Webbe and now Abbott. Historically, the Labour "left" has played an invaluable role for the Labour and trade union bureaucracy by telling workers that, no matter how right-wing it is, Labour is the only realistic alternative to the Tories, and that they will fight from within against its worst pro-business, anti-democratic policies and for a vaguely "progressive" agenda.

But social and national tensions are now so fierce that even these tame sentiments are unacceptable in one of Britain's two parties of rule, pushing Starmer to drive forward his witch-hunt no matter how low the SCG bows before him.

On the very eve of Corbyn's election as Labour leader, the Socialist Equality Party wrote:

The real measure of his campaign must be judged not on stated intentions, but on the essential criterion of the class interests served by the party and the programme he defends.

Labour is a right-wing bourgeois party. It is complicit in all the crimes of British imperialism and has functioned as the principal political opponent of socialism for more than a century. Yet Corbyn has consistently defended Labour's political authority as an MP for 33 years—the period in which the party resolutely cut any remaining connection to the working class. Nothing—not the repudiation of social ownership, illegal wars, or the party's obsequious kowtowing before the financial oligarchy—has disturbed his position on Labour's backbenches.

This is not a matter of misplaced loyalty. A longstanding political opponent of independent working class struggle, Corbyn insists that the only legitimate form of opposition is one that is subordinate to Labour and the trade unions and directed through Parliament.

Not a word of this appraisal needs changing.

Today the working class and young workers in particular must define themselves in opposition to politically bankrupt figures such as Corbyn and Abbott and adopt the genuinely socialist and internationalist perspective advanced by the SEP.



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