

Bogus “Labour anti-Semitism” campaign secures expulsion of leading activist Marc Wadsworth

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The expulsion of Marc Wadsworth confirms that the campaign portraying the Labour Party and wider sections of the “left” as anti-Semitic is based overwhelmingly on slander and lies. It also shows that Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn is prepared to see his supporters pilloried and victimised rather than take a stand against his right-wing opponents.

Wadsworth is a lifelong supporter of the Labour Party. He was a key figure within the Labour Party Black Sections in the 1980s, a founder of the Anti-Racist Alliance, played a leading role in seeking justice for black teenager Stephen Lawrence, murdered by racists, and has a long record of working with Jewish groups.

He has never made an anti-Semitic comment. Yet the two charges of actions “grossly detrimental to the party” by Wadsworth are both understood to reference anti-Semitism.

Wadsworth has been subjected to a two-year campaign of denigration by the Labour Party’s right-wing and the media on the most transparent pretext imaginable. He was found guilty of subjecting Blairite MP Ruth Smeeth to verbal abuse during the launch, in June 2016, of Shami Chakrabarti’s report into allegations of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

Labour’s National Executive Committee ruling is a travesty. Wadsworth had been handing out copies of a press release at the Chakrabarti launch, calling for the de-selection of right-wing MPs. He saw reporter Kate McCann from the pro-Conservative *Daily Telegraph* hand a copy of his press release to Smeeth. In a filmed exchange, Wadsworth told the meeting’s chair, “I saw that the Telegraph handed a copy of the press release to Ruth Smeeth MP—we can see who’s working hand in hand.”

Smeeth and her supporters in the audience responded with cries of “shame” and confected moral outrage.

Smeeth staged a walkout, followed by her backers and a small scrum of reporters, including McCann—for whom she duly summoned up a few tears. She immediately issued a press release claiming that Wadsworth had used “vile

conspiracy theories” and “traditional anti-Semitic slurs” suggesting Jewish control of the media. She demanded Corbyn’s resignation and announced she had issued a formal complaint to Labour’s General Secretary and to the Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party.

Smeeth, who served as director of public affairs and campaigns for the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM), a pro-Israel lobby group, was exposed by WikiLeaks in July 2016 as a “strictly protect” US asset in leaked diplomatic cables. Her groundless accusations on June 30 became the basis for Wadsworth’s immediate suspension from the party. Wadsworth says that at the time he did not even know that Smeeth was Jewish.

The campaign to portray the witch-hunter Smeeth as victim, culminated in a stunt at Wadsworth’s hearing on April 25. Around 30-40 Blairite MPs and Lords marched in phalanx around her, supposedly to protect her from a peaceful protest mounted by 15 of Wadsworth’s supporters. Smeeth cynically hailed the verdict against Wadsworth as proof that “abuse, bullying and intimidation have no place in our movement.”

Wadsworth’s treatment has elicited outrage among Labour Party members and supporters, including from Jewish Voice for Labour (JVL). A crowd-funding campaign has raised over £20,000 for his legal defence.

The pro-Corbyn JVL warned that, “Representing this veteran Black activist as guilty of abusing a Jewish politician is not only unjust, it also risks damaging the essential cause of combating rising racist bigotry in society by pitting Blacks against Jews.”

In contrast, Wadsworth has been given a cold shoulder by Corbyn.

On Friday, Wadsworth told the press that Corbyn had “told mutual friends” that “he doesn’t see that I did anything wrong.”

When Corbyn’s office “called me on the first day of the hearing, they said to me that they had been working behind

the scenes, that what I said wasn't anti-Semitic," though Corbyn had said, "perhaps I could have used kinder language."

Wadsworth's statements are a devastating exposure of Corbyn. They confirm, whatever he says publicly, that he knows the allegations of anti-Semitism against his supporters are false and politically motivated. He will not challenge such slanders because this would unleash popular opposition against the Labour and trade union bureaucracy to which he owes ultimate loyalty.

His office therefore told the *Guardian* it had not supported Wadsworth and that their call was meant to "contain any possible disruption of the hearing". During the call, the source claimed Wadsworth had expressed unhappiness at a lack of support from Corbyn.

Corbyn took the same stand against Unite trade union leader Len McCluskey, who wrote an article for the pro-Labour *New Statesman* on April 25 decrying "a few dozen MPs" who "wake up each morning thinking only: 'How can I undermine Jeremy Corbyn today?'"

They had joined forces "with the most reactionary elements of the media establishment... To see Tory MPs cheer and applaud them was shameful."

Naming Chris Leslie, John Woodcock, Ian Austin, Neil Coyle and Wes Streeting, he warned, "Promiscuous critics must expect to be criticised, and those who wish to hold Corbyn to account can expect to be held to account themselves."

Asked if he agreed with McCluskey's identifying a smear campaign, Corbyn replied bluntly, "No, because we have to deal with the issue of anti-Semitism... I am determined to drive it out of our society, including wherever it raises its head in my own party and that's exactly what we are doing."

Shadow Brexit Secretary Sir Keir Starmer said he too disagreed with the Unite leader and stressed that Labour's disciplinary procedure, "needs to be much quicker and much more effective, but there is also a cultural question. Part of that cultural question is to stop those denying that there is even a problem. That is part of the problem."

Labour has responded to its critics by emphasising that over the past three years, a total of 300 complaints have been made over anti-Semitism, of which around half led to people being expelled from or their leaving the party. Around 90 cases are presently under investigation, with 18 waiting to go through the National Constitutional Committee. Twenty people had been suspended in the last fortnight.

From his position as declared "leader of the left", Corbyn is again facilitating an attack by the right-wing. And their appetite for political bloodletting is only whetted by his prostration.

Last week, Corbyn met with leaders of the Board of Deputies of British Jews and Jewish Leadership Council (JLC), which have mounted the systematic campaign against Labour in alliance with the Blairites and the Conservative Party.

Corbyn issued a statement on how the meeting had been "fruitful", while

Jewish leaders dubbed it a "disappointing missed opportunity." The Board of Deputies and Jewish Leadership Council are now demanding:

- Labour expels Ken Livingstone, the former London mayor, and Jackie Walker, the black and Jewish former vice-chair of Momentum, by July.

- Accepts an "independent, mutually agreed ombudsman" to oversee Labour's tackling antisemitism.

- Prohibits MPs and party members from sharing platforms with those suspended, rather than found guilty of anti-Semitism.

- Confirms that Corbyn will only seek dialogue with the Jewish community through its "main representative groups and not through fringe organisations"—a reference to Jewish Voice for Labour, Jewdas and other groups critical of Zionism.

- Adopt in full the definition of anti-Semitism used by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)—including the example given referring to "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g. by claiming that the existence of a state of Israel is a racist endeavour."

These anti-democratic measures will press forward the witch-hunt, prohibiting expressions of opposition to Zionism and opening broad layers within and outside the Labour Party to victimisation.



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