

19 September 2021

Ref: A423795

Case No: CN-2514

Dear Complaints Team,

I have received your letter dated 8 September 2021 in which you inform me that following a complaint I'm under investigation for a potential breach of Chapter 2, Clause I.8 of party rules.

You invite me to submit evidence in my defence. In that connection I think the following background information is relevant.

Before my retirement I was employed as a political researcher, and one of the areas I covered was the Jewish community and antisemitism. So I acquired some knowledge in that area. Consequently, when the controversy over antisemitism in the Labour Party kicked off over five years ago I felt I could provide some insights into this issue, and since then I've written numerous articles on the subject, a handful of which feature in your list of evidence against me.

In some circles at least my analysis been recognised as well-researched and persuasively argued. Coincidentally, the day before I received your Notice of Investigation I was contacted by a leading expert on antisemitism who asked for assistance in identifying an article I'd written in which I characterised the controversy over Labour antisemitism as a "moral panic". He wanted to cite this in a book he's writing.

The line I have taken in my articles is that the extent of antisemitism in the Labour Party has been greatly exaggerated for political purposes; innocent party members have been falsely accused of antisemitism, and they should be defended against that; but not all accusations have been false, and where antisemitism exists in the party or indeed anywhere else it should be condemned and opposed. In a number of articles that is what I have done.

For example, [here](#) is a piece I wrote countering a conspiracy theory according to which Tom Watson was paid by wealthy Zionists to "represent a foreign power". [Here](#) is another article defending Keir Starmer against the similar accusation that, because his leadership campaign received a generous donation from a pro-Israel Jew, he "works for a foreign power, not the working class".

[Here](#) is an article in which I backed the suspension of Pam Bromley (who later featured in the EHRC report) over her promotion of Rothschild conspiracy theories. I wrote: “If Labour Party members, and particularly Labour councillors, share that sort of crazed antisemitic crap on social media, then clearly action needs to be taken. (Even more so when, as in Pam Bromley’s case, they blame the allegations against them on the machinations of ‘the Jewish lobby’.)”

It isn’t only leftwingers who have been guilty of promoting antisemitic themes. [Here](#) is an article in which I took issue with Steve Reed over his description of Jewish multimillionaire Richard Desmond as the “puppet master” of the Tory cabinet. I wrote: “Portraying rich and influential Jews as puppet masters who subject politicians to their command and control is an antisemitic trope as old as Rothschild conspiracy theories.”

I could go on. Those are just a few of the many articles I've written opposing antisemitism.

So I wasn’t best pleased to receive your NOI in which it is stated that my conduct “may reasonably be seen to involve antisemitic actions, stereotypes and sentiments” and that I may have been responsible for “making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power of Jews as collective – such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions”.

I find these allegations insulting. Particularly so, when the flimsy complaints on which your draft charges are based obviously date from 2019 and must have been assessed by the party back then, but were not considered substantial enough to merit a formal investigation.

That was hardly surprising, since the main source for your charges was almost certainly [Ben Santhouse](#), whose “poorly evidenced” accusations against party members were treated with appropriate scepticism by the Governance and Legal Unit at that time. What has changed now?

Having outlined that general defence, here are my replies to the charges based on screenshots of posts that I can confirm are indeed from my Facebook account.

Item 1. “On 03 October 2017, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook post and a link to the story on 04 October 2017 in relation the expulsion of Moshe Machover.”

This gibberish is presumably copied-and-pasted from the original complaint. You haven't even bothered to correct the grammar so that the charge makes sense.

More importantly, you haven't explained why this is evidence of a potential breach of party rules. How I am supposed to defend myself against the charge that my conduct “may reasonably be seen to demonstrate hostility or prejudice based on race, religion and belief” etc, unless you tell me what you think is problematic about the material you've flagged up?

The 3 October Facebook post can be found [here](#). The post from 4 October in which I shared an article from the Electronic Intifada titled “Israeli anti-Zionist expelled from Labour amid anti-Semitism smear” is [here](#). The purpose of these posts was to defend Moshé Machover against his unjust treatment by the party.

Moshé had been wrongly accused of writing an “antisemitic article” and then, without being allowed the opportunity to defend himself against that charge, auto-excluded from the party on the grounds of his association with the leftwing group that publishes the *Weekly Worker*.

The accusation that a veteran Israeli socialist like Moshé Machover was guilty of antisemitism was frankly surreal. And no evidence was produced that he was a member of the *Weekly Worker* group or supported its political programme. Like others on the left, he had been attracted by that group's culture of open debate and accepted their offer of a platform.

Numerous supporters of Moshé protested against his expulsion, but I'm not aware that anyone was ever disciplined for doing so. As a result of these protests the decision to exclude Moshé was reversed, he was reinstated as a party member and the charge of antisemitism against him was dropped, with no further action taken.

Given that the party reached the same conclusion as I did, namely that there was no legitimate basis either for charging Moshé with antisemitism or for excluding him from membership, I'm struggling to see how my Facebook posts are in breach of Clause 2.I.8.

Item 2. “On 27 December 2017, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a post picture with a picture saying 'A Jew is a crook’”.

Again, this charge is barely literate. [Here](#) is the Facebook post. As can be seen, I didn't post a picture but shared an [article](#) I'd written titled "Antisemitism in the Labour Party – the case of Adam Langleben and Laura Stuart". The "post picture" was the thumbnail generated by Facebook to accompany the link.

What is being suggested here – that I was endorsing the view that "A Jew is a crook"? Seriously? If you had taken the trouble to check, you would have found that my article in fact gave this as an example of antisemitism and condemned it.

The article was a long one, so let me summarise it for you. Adam Langleben, who was at that time a Labour councillor in Barnet, had submitted a complaint to the party about a local member named Laura Stuart, who he claimed was responsible for a series of antisemitic tweets. No disciplinary action was immediately taken against Stuart, so Langleben went to the press and denounced the party for refusing to take a stand against antisemitism.

The antisemitic tweets were from the Gaza Boat Convoy account, which stated that it was a collective effort by "a group of driven individuals". In my article I pointed out that Langleben had provided no proof it was Stuart who was responsible for those particular tweets. So it was understandable that the party had been reluctant to take action against her based on his complaint.

Langleben's attack on the party was therefore unjustified, I argued. I then went on to establish that there was in fact solid evidence of Stuart's antisemitism that could serve as the basis for disciplinary action against her.

I referred to an article she had published on Gilad Atzmon's site admitting to being the author of a tweet that read: "Hear it from a Jewish Grandmother how much Jews love money & are a bunch of crooks." Stuart defended this on the basis that her tweet referred to the documentary *Defamation* by Israeli filmmaker Yoav Shamir, whose grandmother made the comment expressing her contempt for diaspora Jews.

But I showed how the YouTube extract from the film that Stuart had shared was accompanied by an antisemitic written commentary which included a passage from Samuel Roth's anti-Jewish text *Jews Must Live*. I noted that the film extract itself was an edited version of the original, with "antisemitic additions", and I used the screenshot with the "A Jew is a crook" caption to illustrate that point. ([Here](#) is a link to the relevant section of my article.)

I presented further evidence of Stuart's antisemitism, dating from 2011-12 when

she was part of a small Atzmon-inspired faction in the Palestine Solidarity Campaign. She had condemned PSC for expelling a Holocaust denier, on the grounds that it had no right to “censor its own members on such issues as holocaust revisionism and anti-Semitism”, and accused PSC of bowing to “Jewish power tactics”.

I commented: “Is this the sort of person who should be a member of the Labour Party? I don’t think so.”

My purpose in writing this article was (a) to defend the Labour Party and its staff against Langleben’s false and damaging accusation that they had refused to take action against antisemitism; and (b) to provide some actual evidence that would enable action to be taken against an antisemitic party member.

Item 3. “On 25 January 2018, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a link for a campaign demanding Labour must drop charges against anti-racist campaigner.”

[Here](#) is the Facebook post. I linked to [this appeal](#) by Marc Wadsworth. My purpose was to assist him in raising funds to support his defence against the disciplinary charges he faced from the Labour Party. (I contributed £25 myself as I recall.)

These charges arose from Wadsworth’s ill-judged intervention at the launch of the Chakrabarti report in 2016 when he rudely accused Ruth Smeeth of working “hand in hand” with the *Daily Telegraph*. Smeeth stormed out of the meeting and later issued a statement accusing Wadsworth of promoting “vile conspiracy theories about Jewish people”. It wasn’t true. He did nothing of the sort.

Many of us defended Wadsworth against Smeeth’s smear. The NUJ Black Members’ Council, for example, stated that it “gave its total support to Marc Wadsworth after he was victimised as part of a manufactured story, that made print and broadcast headlines, which slanderously accused him of anti-semitism”.

Wadsworth was subsequently expelled on the charge of bringing the party into disrepute. I thought the decision was unreasonable. Again, I wasn’t alone in taking that view.

Simon Woolley of Operation Black Vote criticised Wadsworth over his clash with Smeeth but asked “does it really warrant the ultimate party sanction of expelling him from the party, and being labelled an anti-Semite because the person he was accusing is Jewish, which he strongly argues he hadn’t known?”

I should add that I'm no admirer of Wadsworth. In my opinion, it was his arrogant and sectarian behaviour that was responsible for destroying the Anti-Racist Alliance in the early 1990s. Wadsworth never forgave Ken Livingstone and his allies for opposing him over that. Seeking revenge, in 2008 he participated in a *Dispatches* hatchet job on Ken which helped to secure Boris Johnson's victory in that year's London mayoral election.

Some of Wadsworth's leftwing opponents experienced a certain schadenfreude at seeing the witch-hunter being witch-hunted, and refused to defend him. My position, however, is that even Marc Wadsworth should be entitled to fair treatment by the party, and I supported him on that basis.

Item 4. "On 17 May 2018, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a post and link to an article he had written, the post talks about labours defeat and how it was attributed to the Jewish voters protesting against the party's supposed toleration of anti-Semitism."

[Here](#) is the Facebook post. [Here](#) is the article I linked to, which is titled "Labour and the 'Jewish vote' in Barnet".

Yet again I'm at a loss over how to defend myself. If you're arguing that this article provides prima facie evidence of antisemitism and a breach of Clause 2.I.8, don't you think you're obliged to tell me *why* you think that's the case? Is it antisemitic merely to have published an analysis of the role played by Jewish voters in the 2018 local elections in Barnet, or are there some specific aspects of the article that you think are antisemitic? You don't say.

My article was written in response to claims that Labour failed to gain control of Barnet council in 2018 because Jewish Labour voters had deserted us over our failure to tackle antisemitism in the party. It was our friend Adam Langleben who played a leading role in hyping up this story, touring the TV and radio studios to denounce the Labour leadership's supposed toleration of antisemitism and blaming them for the Tory victory in Barnet.

I had some knowledge of the evolution of Labour's relationship with Jewish voters from the days when I worked as a researcher, and therefore reacted with scepticism towards Langleben's accusation. I suspected that he was looking for another excuse to attack and undermine the party leadership. So I decided to investigate further. I concluded, on the basis of a detailed analysis, that Langleben's claim was baseless.

The article was acknowledged at the time to be an informed contribution to political

debate, and was circulated by [CLPD](#) among others. It is *very* long with a lot of statistics and is difficult to summarise, but here are a few of the main points.

Relying on authorities like Geoffrey Alderman and the Institute for Jewish Policy Research, I showed how support for Labour among Jewish voters had declined over the post-war period, due mainly to the Jewish community's rising socio-economic status and increased affluence. Support had recovered somewhat under Tony Blair's leadership, but then fell sharply in 2014 as a result of Ed Miliband's condemnation of Israel over the Gaza war and his support for the recognition of Palestine as a state.

I cited a Survation poll which found that only 16.2% of London's Jewish voters had backed Labour in the 2015 general election. The Jewish community made up 15.2% of the population in Barnet, so those who voted Labour in 2015 would have amounted to around 2.5% of the electorate. Even if *all* of them had abandoned Labour between then and the 2018 local elections over the issue of antisemitism – and there is no evidence they did – the impact on the result in Barnet would have been negligible.

I also challenged a claim by Daniel Allington, endorsed by Langleben and others, that the more Jewish voters there were in a ward the greater the decline in Labour's vote share. I pointed out that in Garden Suburb ward the Labour vote had indeed slumped in both percentage and numerical terms. However, just across the border in Golders Green our vote increased by six hundred and fell only slightly as a percentage share. Yet these two wards have almost identically large Jewish populations.

My cautious assessment was that the 2018 local elections in Barnet took place in a highly polarised political situation where the prospect of a Labour-controlled council motivated both Labour and Tory voters to turn out in larger numbers than previously. Regrettably, the Tories proved more successful in mobilising their supporters than we did, which was why we lost.

My purpose in publishing this article was (a) to defend the Labour Party and its leadership against attacks by Langleben, Allington and others; and (b) to provide some statistical information about Jewish voters' support for Labour and related matters that I thought would be helpful in future discussions of this issue.

(You have added two further screenshots, of some of the comments that followed

my Facebook post. None of the comments included are by myself, so I don't see their relevance.)

Item 5. "On 31 May 2018, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a link to an article he had written. In the post he stated the article was on the witch hunt over anti-Semitism in the labour party."

It's unclear whether the objection is to the article itself or to my statement that the article was about the witch-hunt over antisemitism.

[Here](#) is the Facebook post. [Here](#) is the article I shared, which is titled "Antisemitism, the Brick Lane mural and the stitch-up of Jeremy Corbyn". I assume you've made no attempt to check out the article and see if it does in fact contain evidence of antisemitism on my part.

This article concerned the now famous mural painted in Tower Hamlets back in 2012, the initial defence of which by Jeremy was presented by his political enemies as evidence that he was an antisemite, or at least happy to endorse what was held by his critics to be a self-evident example of antisemitism.

My article was written in response to the argument, used by some of Jeremy's defenders, that the mural couldn't be antisemitic because only two of the six individuals depicted in it were Jewish. I demonstrated that it *was* antisemitic, because the artist was inspired by the crackpot conspiracy theories of David Icke and his paranoid fantasy that the world is controlled by "Rothschild Zionists".

However, I went on to argue that you couldn't tell the mural was antisemitic just by looking at it. You needed an understanding of the Ickean ideology behind it to make that judgement. So it was hardly cause for condemnation that many people – not only Jeremy himself but also for example a writer from the anti-Corbyn blog Harry's Place – initially failed to grasp the essentially antisemitic character of the artwork and had opposed its removal.

My purpose in writing this article was (a) to defend Jeremy against the charge of antisemitism in connection with his first reaction to the mural in 2012; but also (b) to counter mistaken claims by some on the left that the mural was just a generalised attack on capitalism, with no antisemitic content.

I concluded: "If the Left is going have any credibility in countering the many false accusations of antisemitism that our political enemies are currently throwing

around, we have to show that we're capable of recognising and calling out antisemitism where it really exists."

Regarding my Facebook post stating that the piece was the "latest in a series of long rambling articles on the witch-hunt over antisemitism in the Labour Party", I would argue that the term "witch-hunt" is very much applicable to what has happened in the party over the past five years.

The point about a witch-hunt is not that there are no witches. There were, after all, some people in the late medieval and early modern period who did practise what was then categorised as witchcraft. The point about a witch-hunt is that the prevalence of the phenomenon is wildly exaggerated, hysteria takes over and rational thought goes out the window, with the result that entirely innocent people are accused and found guilty of being witches.

That is, I think, a fair summary of the situation in the Labour Party. The fact that yours truly is currently being investigated over charges of antisemitism, even though I'm obviously not an antisemite and have an established record of opposing those who are, provides an illustration of this.

Item 6. "On 22 August 2018, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a post and link to an article he had written with the Headline 'Israel as a racist endeavour – how the IHRA is used to suppress free speech'".

[Here](#) is the post and [here](#) is the article. It's another of those long articles that you obviously haven't made the effort to read, and are therefore in no position to judge whether or not it provides evidence of antisemitism. So how can it form the basis of a draft charge against me?

The article was written as a contribution to the debate in the party over whether we should adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism along with its accompanying illustrative examples.

That is a subject I know something about, having closely followed the debates over what was then the EUMC "working definition" of antisemitism back in the noughties when I worked as a researcher. I remember writing a briefing at the time warning that the ambiguous formulations in that text could be used to suppress legitimate criticisms of the Israeli state and its barbaric treatment of the Palestinian people.

Again, it's difficult to summarise a very detailed argument. My article noted that the

EUMC never formally adopted the “working definition” due to controversy over its conflation of antisemitism and anti-Zionism. I quoted David Feldman of the Birkbeck Institute for the Study of Antisemitism as stating in 2015 that “criticisms have been damaging and the EUMC working definition largely has fallen out of favour. The EUMC’s successor organisation, the Fundamental Rights Agency, no longer carries the working definition on its website”.

I showed how the defunct EUMC “working definition” was then resurrected by the IHRA at the instigation of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, an organisation that treats antisemitism and anti-Zionism as indistinguishable.

The specific IHRA example of antisemitism that I addressed in the article was the one that reads: “Denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor.”

I quoted *Guardian* journalist Jonathan Freedland as arguing that this poses no threat to free speech: “You can, if you want, say everything *the* state of Israel has done since its birth has been racist. All it prohibits is branding as a racist endeavour ‘*a* state of Israel’ – the principle that Jews, like every other people on Earth, should have a home and refuge of their own.”

I added that the IHRA text doesn’t even impose a blanket ban on describing *a* state of Israel as a racist endeavour. It says only that this “could, taking into account the overall context” amount to antisemitism. So, depending on the context, it might be antisemitic to describe a state of Israel as a racist endeavour, or it might not.

However, I went on to show that, in practice, “the IHRA’s vague and generalised formulation is interpreted by militant Zionists to mean (a) that it is necessarily antisemitic to describe the actually existing state of Israel as racist, and (b) that there is no context in which it is *not* antisemitic to say that.”

I pointed to the repeated attempts by Zionist organisations to get the annual Israeli Apartheid Week banned from college campuses on the basis that it contravenes the IHRA’s “racist endeavour” clause.

My purpose in writing this article was to warn Labour Party members about the likely consequences of the party adopting the full IHRA text. Unfortunately the NEC ignored my words of wisdom and did just that.

(This item includes four additional screenshots of the discussion that followed my

22 August 2018 Facebook post. There are a couple of comments by myself, but I fail to see how these can be construed as a breach of Clause 2.I.8, and your charge makes no reference to them.)

Item 7. “On 19 February 2019, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a post and link about ‘Zionist malcontents like Adam Langleben’”.

[Here](#) is the post. The link was to my article “Labour and the ‘Jewish vote’ in Barnet” (see Item 4 above) and I was quoting from the final paragraph of that article.

By “Zionist” I was referring to the fact that Langleben is a leading figure in the Jewish Labour Movement, whose members are required to “promote Labour or Socialist Zionism” along with “the centrality of Israel in Jewish life”.

The 2015 Yachad survey *The Attitudes of British Jews Towards Israel* found that 59% of British Jews self-identified as Zionists, but 31% said they were not Zionists, and only 32% said Israel was “central” to their Jewish identity. So JLM’s conditions of membership don’t just exclude the substantial minority of Jews who say they are not Zionists, they also exclude those Jews who *do* self-define as Zionists but don’t regard support for Israel as a central part of being Jewish.

In light of this, I don’t think anyone would dispute that Langleben is a committed Zionist. He is in fact among that minority of the Jewish community (roughly equivalent numerically to non-Zionists) who believe that Zionism is central to their identity.

As for the term “malcontent”, the dictionary definition is “a chronically dissatisfied person”. In applying that term to Langleben I think I was being too charitable. His interventions against Jeremy Corbyn were not just malcontented but malicious, dishonest and slanderous. Here for example is a quote from Langleben’s 2019 [open letter](#) to Jeremy:

“You, Seumas Milne, Karie Murphy, Len McClusky, the bullies at the top have all allowed this culture of institutionalised antisemitism to develop and grow. You have fed a culture of denial that has allow this sickness to spread. You brief Alt-Left media such as Skwawkbox, which disseminates your message to distrust Jews en masse.”

The accusation that Corbyn, with the assistance of Unite’s then general secretary Len McCluskey among others, sought to persuade party members that they should “distrust Jews en masse” is pernicious nonsense.

As for “fuck off”, that’s a phrase I would certainly avoid using in the normal course of political debate. In this instance it was intended ironically. I linked to [this tweet](#) by Langleben and specified that I was turning his “own preferred polemical terminology” against him.

Item 8. “On 19 March 2019, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook about the JLM AGM and that Adam Langleben was standing for re-election as JLM campaign manager. You state that he has said he would do his best to ‘stop a party led by anti-Semitism from every gaining power in this country’. You claim that JLM are appointing someone who will campaign against the labour party.”

[Here](#) is the Facebook post. I was quoting from Langleben’s [open letter](#) to Jeremy Corbyn in which he had announced his resignation from the Labour Party.

In this letter Langleben claimed that antisemites had “completed a hostile takeover” of Labour under Jeremy’s leadership, and stated that he would do his best to “stop a party led by antisemites from ever gaining power in this country”. As for Jeremy himself, Langleben wrote: “One day my son may ask me what I did to stop you from ever becoming Prime Minister.”

I can’t see any possible interpretation of these words other than that Langleben’s aim was to actively prevent the election of a Labour government. As I commented: “So we face the prospect of a Labour Party affiliate electing as its Campaigns Officer an individual who is committed to campaigning against the Labour Party! You couldn’t make this stuff up.”

My reason for posting this was to draw attention to a situation that was potentially highly damaging to the party. I was hoping that even JLM might see sense and recognise that it was entirely inappropriate for Langleben to serve as their campaigns officer. They didn’t, and his re-election to that post went ahead unopposed at the JLM AGM the following month.

Item 9. “On 21 March 2019, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a link to an article you have written with the headline. Has the Labour left subjected Luciana Berger to death threats?”

[Here](#) is the Facebook post, and [here](#) is the article I linked to.

Yet again you fail to clarify how this “may reasonably be seen to demonstrate hostility or prejudice based on race, religion and belief” etc. Do you think it was

antisemitic to ask whether Luciana Berger was subjected to death threats by the Labour left? Or is it my answer to the question that was antisemitic? Presumably not the latter, because you obviously haven't read my article.

I was responding to an article by Matt Carr, who had made some good points about the existence of antisemitism on the left, but added: "At its most extreme, leftwing antisemitism may take the form of the vicious hatespeak and death threats directed at Jewish MPs such as Luciana Berger." When I asked Matt what evidence there was for this, he replied: "According to Berger two of the six people convicted of sending death threats were leftwing."

So the initial purpose of the article was to refute that claim, which I knew was inaccurate. I pointed out that four fascists had been convicted and jailed in connection with vile antisemitic hate speech and death threats against Berger. Of the two leftists who had been convicted, however, neither had made threats against her, neither case was serious enough to merit a custodial sentence and only one case, which dated from 2012, involved antisemitism.

I wrote: "Clearly there is a distinction to be made between the leftwing cases of abuse against Berger, reprehensible though they are, and the much more serious far-right ones. Her wilful failure to make such a distinction explains why Matt Carr could cite Berger as the source for his mistaken claim that 'two of the six people convicted of sending death threats were leftwing'."

I went on to challenge the claim that Berger had faced a general campaign of antisemitism from the Labour left. I quoted an August 2016 *Observer* profile of Berger which reported that she believed "antisemitism exists more out of the Labour party than in it". I showed that Berger had no subsequent record of denouncing antisemitism in the Labour Party until 23 March 2018 when she decided to attack Jeremy Corbyn over his response more than five years earlier to a long since obliterated mural in East London.

The rest of the article is a detailed rebuttal of claims that Berger needed a police escort at the 2018 Labour Party conference to protect her against party members; that Labour Party officials put her physical safety in jeopardy by failing to report a threat of violence against her; that she was driven out of the party by "racist thugs" in Wavertree CLP; and that Berger's case was representative of widespread antisemitism in the party.

Item 10. “On 22 March 2019, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook about JLM AGM and the rules they would like to see about complaints about anti-Semitism.”

[Here](#) is the post. It was in fact a response to the personal opinion expressed by Ivor Caplin, the then chair of JLM, who had stated: “I would like to see everyone who has a complaint of antisemitism against them immediately expelled.”

I argued that if this proposal were adopted by the party it would be a travesty of natural justice. I made the obvious points that it is first necessary to establish that a complaint has a basis in fact before imposing any sanctions, and that various possible penalties should be available to the party depending on the seriousness of the offence.

The purpose of this Facebook was to alert party members to a potential threat to their democratic rights.

(Incidentally, there are two screenshots included under Item 12, the second of which is from the discussion that followed this 22 March 2019 Facebook post about Ivor Caplin. None of the comments are by myself, so once again I can't see their relevance.)

Item 11. “On 31 March 2019, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook about the Jewish Chronicle is biased about its reporting on anti-Semitism and that it had outdone itself in regard to an article about Ken Livingstone.”

You can read my Facebook post [here](#). I was commenting on a *JC* report titled “Ken Livingstone says ‘it's not antisemitic to hate the Jews of Israel’”. As I pointed out in my post, this was a complete distortion of Ken's words. The quote was from a section of a speech in which he attacked media lies. What Ken in fact said was:

“Soon on the internet you could see things saying I said Jews were like Nazis, that it's not antisemitic to hate the Jews of Israel. And you can't have a proper functioning democracy in a world in which the media, whether it's the press or the internet, can just spread lie after lie after lie.”

So Ken was clearly *not* saying that “it's not antisemitic to hate the Jews of Israel”. He was saying this was a view that had been falsely attributed to him by a hostile media.

The *JC* had uncritically repeated this fake news story from the *Mail on Sunday*. The

MoS changed its report following complaints, adding the correction: “An earlier version of this article incorrectly reported that Mr Livingstone had said it was not anti-Semitic to hate the Jews of Israel. In fact he told the meeting the claim he had said such a thing was one of the lies being spread about him. We apologise for this error.”

If you click on the link to the *JC* report that I included in my Facebook post you’ll find that they too backtracked on this false report, changed the title to “Ken Livingstone calls Labour antisemitism allegations ‘lies and smears’ by ‘ghastly old Blairites’”, and deleted the claim that Ken had said it wasn’t antisemitic to hate Israeli Jews. Unlike the *MoS*, however, they failed to acknowledge their mistake or offer an apology.

But this was par for the course with the *JC*. It is, as I observed in my post, a publication notorious for its biased reporting, particularly of anything to do with the Labour Party and antisemitism. During the past few years the *JC* has been forced to make three libel payouts to Labour members or former members it had smeared and a fourth to a Palestinian charity. Over the same period IPSO has found the paper to have breached its code of practice on at least 28 occasions.

The purpose of my post was to correct yet another case of blatantly inaccurate reporting by the *Jewish Chronicle*.

Item 12. “On 29 May 2019, Mr Pitt posted on Facebook a link to an article that you have written about what happened to Adam Langleben. You have also stated the JLM have riding a publicity wave over their role into an EHCR investigation into the Labour Party.”

[Here](#) is the Facebook post and [here](#) is the article, titled “What happened to Adam Langleben?” The article addresses the issue I first raised in the Facebook post that features in Item 8, namely the re-election of Langleben as JLM campaigns officer in circumstances where he had made clear his intention to campaign against the Labour Party.

I took this up a second time in one of my polemics against Skwawkbox, where I [drew attention](#) to the fact that since Langleben’s re-election to this leading post in JLM, which gave him a seat on the organisation’s executive committee, he had publicly supported The Independent Group/Change UK. I pointed out:

“This is a clear breach of JLM’s rules, which state that its members must be ‘eligible for membership of the UK Labour Party’. An individual who has proclaimed his

intention of blocking the election of a Labour government, in addition to unashamedly advertising his sympathy for a hostile political party, would obviously *not* be eligible for membership of the Labour Party.”

(You can see examples of Langleben promoting Change UK [here](#) and [here](#). [Here](#) he is boasting about having voted for Change UK in the European parliamentary election, and [here](#) he is calling on voters to support a council candidate standing against Labour.)

It could of course be the purest coincidence, but shortly after I published that article Langleben’s name disappeared from the JLM website. The organisation apparently no longer had a campaigns officer, because no replacement was listed.

Given the wave of publicity JLM had received over triggering the EHRC inquiry into the Labour Party, which would have provided it with an expanded audience for its politics, it struck me as highly unlikely that it had failed to fill the post of campaigns officer. So I asked JLM vice-chair Stephane Savary where they stood with regard to Langleben. Was he still a JLM member? Had he resigned, or been expelled? But Savary declined to answer.

After receiving no clarification from Savary, I wrote the article “What happened to Adam Langleben?” I noted that Langleben had [issued an appeal](#) for Labour whistleblowers to contact him with evidence for inclusion in JLM’s submission to the EHRC. I pointed out: “This strongly suggests that, although Langleben’s name may have been deleted from its website, he is still working on behalf of the Jewish Labour Movement.”

My suspicions were confirmed after the publication of the EHRC report, when Langleben [proudly admitted](#) that he and JLM national secretary Peter Mason had been jointly responsible for coordinating JLM’s submission to the EHRC.

My reason for publishing the “What happened to Adam Langleben?” piece was that I thought it was a matter of concern that a Labour affiliate had failed to exclude from membership one of its national officers who had publicly supported our political enemies and encouraged people to vote against Labour candidates. JLM knew very well it was in the wrong over this, because it tried to cover up the fact that Langleben was still centrally involved in the organisation.

I can certainly agree that there are grounds for an investigation here, but it’s JLM who should be investigated, not me.

Item 13. “On 26 September 2019, Mr Pitt published an article on medium.com. The article is titled more anti-Semitism hysteria at the Labour conference. It contains a picture of a poster of a fighter plane with the Star of David on it firing missiles at Jeremy Corbyn.”

[Here](#) is the article. It was a response to the controversy generated by the display of a banner/poster outside that year’s party conference featuring a cartoon by pro-Palestinian artist Carlos Latuff.

As you can see, the description of the cartoon as showing a fighter plane “with the Star of David on it” is misleading. The wing of the plane in fact features the roundel of the Israeli Air Force. The purpose is to identify the fighter plane as Israeli, not to associate it with Jewish people in general.

I’m not a fan of Latuff’s work. A few of his cartoons, which equate Israel’s brutal treatment of the Palestinians with the Holocaust, are tasteless, offensive and entirely counterproductive when it comes to defending the Palestinian cause.

This particular cartoon, with its use of Benjamin Netanyahu to personify the pro-Israel lobby that has attacked Corbyn with accusations of antisemitism, could be criticised as a bit crude. The Jewish Labour Movement, for example, are hardly Likudniks. Their traditional links have been with the Israeli Labor Party and in recent years they have established close relations with Meretz.

However, Latuff produced the cartoon in response to a tweet by Netanyahu which falsely accused Corbyn of laying a wreath at the grave of a terrorist and of comparing Israel to the Nazis. Netanyahu stated that this deserved “unequivocal condemnation from everyone – left, right and everything in between”. So portraying Netanyahu as leading the attack on Corbyn was not unreasonable in that context.

I don’t see the cartoon as antisemitic. If someone could provide an argument as to why it is, I’d be prepared to consider that. However, as I pointed out in the article, none of those who denounced the cartoon at the time as “littered with antisemitic tropes” felt obliged to explain what those tropes actually were.

The main point of my article was to condemn the physical attacks made on the banner. I quoted a woman witness as reporting: “I was there when the banner was slashed and torn down ... on three occasions. Those who objected to the banner intimidated and physically harassed those of us who tried to defend it.”

One of the attacks was carried out by Joshua Garfield, who is a Labour councillor in Newham and a leading figure in the Jewish Labour Movement, serving on JLM's national executive committee as its local government officer. He tweeted his intention to commit the attack in advance and boasted about it afterwards.

It's an indication of warped priorities that the party has taken no disciplinary action against Garfield for attacking a peaceful protest outside our conference, yet I'm under investigation for exposing his disgraceful behaviour.

That concludes my replies to the 13 draft charges against me. I think I've made it clear that none of the material I have posted "may reasonably be seen to demonstrate hostility or prejudice based on race, religion and belief" etc, in breach of Chapter 2 Clause 1.8.

This leaves a number of outstanding questions from your letter, so here are my answers.

"The Code of Conduct: Social Media Policy states that members should 'treat all people with dignity and respect' and that 'this applies offline and online.' Do you think your conduct has been consistent with this policy?"

I'll concede that I sometimes employ a rather knockabout polemical style. But I only do so against those who have themselves displayed an inability to treat other people with dignity and respect. Of course, there's always room for improvement. Even at my advanced age I'm still willing to learn, so feel free to offer any advice you think is appropriate.

"Looking back at the evidence supplied with this letter, do you regret posting, sharing or endorsing?"

Nope. I think my posts and particularly my articles have played a useful role in clarifying some of the issues around the question of antisemitism and the Labour Party. I've put a lot of work into researching and writing this stuff over the years and I think it holds up well.

"Do you intend to email, post, share or endorse content of this nature in the future?"

Unless you can persuade me otherwise, yes I do.

“Are there any further matters you wish to raise in your defence?”

Yes. I strongly object to the method used to compile the long list of draft charges against me.

The proper procedure would have been for the Complaints Team to make an assessment of the material contained in the original complaints and decide whether it had any substance. Then you should have formulated draft charges, or not, based on that assessment. Instead you just copied-and-pasted accusations from the complaints complete with grammatical errors, without making the slightest attempt to establish whether these accusations were valid.

So we end up in the ridiculous situation where you insinuate, in connection with Item 2, that I was endorsing the view that “A Jew is a crook”. It would have taken you less than five minutes to look into it and find out that I was in fact condemning this as an example of antisemitism and supporting disciplinary action against the party member responsible. But you saw no need to check.

At best, this is completely unprofessional behaviour and a contemptuous way to treat party members. At worst, and more realistically, it suggests that the aim here isn't to uncover actual cases of antisemitism but to carry out a purge of the left.

Your sincerely,

Bob Pitt