



'Me First'! Beware the Rage of Exceptional People

In September 2017 Amnesty International published a survey of abusive tweets sent to female MPs during the course of the 2017 General Election

Of the more than 28,000 tweets found, nearly half, ten times more than any other Member, were sent to just one MP; Labour's Diane Abbott. Many messages sent to Abbott featured the casual use of words and slurs about her race, gender or appearance. In Abbott's case, mostly they were devoid of any political comment or content

Even with Abbott removed from the reckoning, the study found that Black and Asian women received 35% more abusive tweets than their White counterparts and almost half the angry tweets were sent to women MPs from the SNP

In contrast to the impression moulded by media, in the case of the online abuse of high profile people, victimisation was strongly associated with being non white or politically left leaning

If you are looking for outrage about any of this, examples of Abbott's 'bullied' fellow MPs from the right of the party speaking out in her support or headline calls in the press for 'action' you will need high powered lenses. Far from feeling obliged to 'support' her, mostly Abbott's political enemies in the media criticised her decision to withdraw from the campaign for 'health' reasons

While Luciana Berger, who spoke in Parliament on Tuesday of the 'poisonous' anti-Semitism directed at her, was hailed for her 'courage', Abbott, like Corbyn, came under attack once again for her failure to 'do more' about the racism directed at others

Abbott does not believe laws are needed to give MPs special protection. When she has commented it's clear she defines the racism aimed at her more narrowly than the pro Israel right does anti-Semitism. In the latter case the excesses of people who are angry about Palestine are not viewed differently to the racial nationalists whose ideology of 'Jewish' control was the currency of the Holocaust

Like Berger, Angela Eagle didn't make it on to the Amnesty 'most abused' list. Yet, homophobic tweets sent to her during the 2016 Labour leadership contest led to another media panic targeting the 'left' followed by a purge of Wallasey Labour Party

In contrast with Abbott, on whose behalf no one appears to get expelled or prosecuted,

Berger and Eagle are treated as exceptional victims. Rather than an 'outrage', when aimed at ordinary people, leftists or countries targeted for attack, comparisons to Nazi Germany are common here rarely attracting comment. The precious standard reserved for prominent people of the political 'mainstream' has nothing to do with personalities; quite simply the attitude of pro establishment politicians, and that of the media that 'listens' to them, mirrors how both view the world politically

Right leaning MPs see 'proof' of 'anti-Semitism' in the standards applied by the left, and the non white world generally, to Israel, or of 'hatred' in their critique of UK or US wars. Yet, most have trotted into the lobbies multiple times to vote for the mass killing of Arabs and Africans for which they do not expect to answer; and when in public they defend the 'right' of western states to carry out acts of murder or fund terrorism against sovereign states, there is no 'shock' or calling to 'account'

Claims that the left is the true home of bigotry, intolerance or racism are common in right wing media. In practice its 'reporting' duplicates the tendentious formula of what sociologists call the 'moral panic'; the 'outrage' of those who believe in the 'problem' is 'adopted' at the expense of the evidence. While the only substantive studies, the Campaign Against Anti-Semitism 'You Gov' survey of attitudes 2015-2017 and the September 2017 Institute of Jewish Policy Review, both found anti-Semitism stronger on the political right than the left, neither made any impact on the media narrative which continues to report the 'problem' of 'left anti-Semitism' from the point of view of the right

If you believe in the subservience of other states to the powerful 'global' interests of the West, conferring on 'us' a right to murder their leaders or citizens or impose by force ulterior political 'arrangements', you are applying to the world order the same ideology with which you view social arrangements at 'home'; your norms reflect the privilege conferred on the needs, feelings and interests of those who benefit from hierarchies of power.

Revising the definition of anti-Semitism is one element only in a broader crusade by corporate politicians and media to place dissent, specifically the prerogative to challenge the exceptionalism of the global elite, beyond the political pale

Ideologically both racism and anti-Semitism are brothers of the European exceptionalism that underwrites the world 'order'. This has never changed. If calling great power to account is not your core value, you are not a person of the left. You are a person of the pro war right who views the actions of the 'great' in the same way as their 'feelings'; through the prism of entitlement

Kim Bryan

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pagi@blueyonder.co.uk