

## Helen Marks to Ben Westerman after her interview, and his response

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**Subject:**RE: Investigation into Riverside CLP

**Date:**Thu, 8 Dec 2016 14:47:12 +0000

**From:**Ben Westerman [redacted] >

**To:**Helen Marks [redacted]

**From:** Helen Marks [mailto:[redacted]]

**Sent:** 01 December 2016 19:24

**To:** Ben Westerman

**Subject:** Investigation into Riverside CLP

Dear Ben,

I decided to take you up on your invitation to add any further comments which I wasn't able to include in your interview of me.

I appreciated the fact that the interview was conducted in a calm manner that allowed me to gather my thoughts.

However on reflection there were several things that I felt that I didn't have a chance to say because of lack of time.

i would have liked to have told you about my Jewish background which might explain why I have been particularly upset by being accused of anti-semitism, a very serious accusation indeed. My mother was brought up in what was mandate Palestine . She had a large extended family there.I have some knowledge therefore of the history leading up to the establishment of the state of Israel.Her grandparents came to Palestine in response to the pogroms in Russia.

My father was brought up in Poland and his parents , brother, uncles, aunts were killed in the holocaust.So I have from his side a personal knowledge of the effects of anti-semitism on our own family and community.

People seem unaware of the fact that there are many Jews in the UK and the diaspora who share a similar history and who, because of it, are concerned that there should not be a similar holocaust or mass killing in the future--**for anyone**--not just Jews. When Primo Levi wrote his masterpiece "If this is a man" a book about his experience in a labour camp/concentration camp he wanted to educate people about the horrors of such prejudice.

Hajo Mayer, now deceased, who was in a concentration camp gave talks about the holocaust and the process of objectification of the other that is necessary for such calculated murder to take place. Silence such discussion and analysis and people will fail to hear the message. He was disrespected by Zionists for pointing out that such objectification was increasingly part of the Israeli government's narrative about the Palestinians.

I feel silencing is what has been happening to people, like myself, critical of Israel's actions towards the Palestinians and this has sadly been done by members of the Labour Party who have equated such criticism with anti-semitism and used it as a stick to beat Jeremy Corbyn with. What a sad day it is that the suspensions have targeted the very people the Labour party in the past would have been only too proud to have had in its fold, people who have devoted many years to fighting fascism and discrimination.

When the ex chief rabbi Jonathan Sacks was asked if he had experienced any incidents of anti-semitism he said no.

My parents loved Britain because they felt safe here and experienced very little anti-semitism. And I had to wait until my 70th year and joining the Labour Party to have my first experience of being accused of anti-semitism .. I felt the least an investigation could have established and shared with those accused before being interviewed were the grounds on which he made such an accusation.

I hope you don't take this too personally but when you asked me if I regretted making the remark you quoted from my phone call to Any Answers you asked if I didn't think it might offend Jews listening and did I want to retract my remark. I felt once again the fact that I am from a Jewish family seemed not to matter. You were lumping all Jews together in the same way that Mr Small said Jews in the April meeting were offended . What did he think I was? I know from the phone calls that I got afterwards that many Jews appreciated what I said. Chakrabarti urged people to choose their words carefully and think about their language. I feel I did that and was in no way abusive to anyone in what I said. Once again I would like to remind the investigation that as with any other faith groups there are a variety of opinions and Jews are not all Zionist and do not all feel that Judaism and support of Israel are inextricably linked.

Mrs Ellman frequently criticised Jeremy Corbyn for failing to act swiftly in dealing with anti-semitism in the party. Strange then that in her own constituency 1 and 2 others have been left dangling from April until November without having ever been sent any notice that we had been complained against. Even when the executive meeting voted on Mr Small's complaint as well as our counter complaint this was without us having been informed that this was taking place. There have been no minutes produced and the CLP members have never been given a chance to vote on the complaint. Originally the region insisted that the complaint be dealt with at a local level. Now for some reason it is being dealt with higher up the tree. In the meantime Nick Small and our MP have been giving interviews to the press as though the anti-semitism accusations had been investigated and proved correct. Is that not a travesty of natural justice? Would it be in order for our original complaint against Nick Small to be dealt with now by the Governance and Legal dept ?

Which leads me on to the really inadequate and unfair disciplinary processes that have been employed by the NEC and NCC of the Labour party. If there is anything which has instilled fear and anger amongst members it has been the secretive unjust way people have had their Facebook entries, tweets and emails trawled through. This has affected named people in Riverside CLP but we don't know who is responsible. The split and squabbles within the Labour Party have made it a laughing stock in the eyes of the public. It was with a wry smile that I responded to your question about whether people had wasted time questioning the accuracy of the minutes of the most recent CLP. Not only was it not a waste of time to have an accurate version of the meeting in July but compared to the time, money and manpower that has been wasted on these internal rifts and suspensions 10 minutes is nothing . I hope that the party is taking seriously Chakrabarti's recommendation that the disciplinary procedures are overhauled.

Finally I want to comment on the accusation that some of us have been waging a personal war against Mrs Ellman because she is Jewish. On what do they base this statement? This is the last thing I would want to do. I am sure Mrs Ellman is very sincere in her beliefs about Israel but I just don't agree with her and want the right to speak out about my views as much as she does regarding hers. I am worried that Israel has become an intolerant racist state with the Prime Minister and American Jews in Israel being ecstatic about Donald Trump's election and the appointment of Stephen Bannon, an avowed white supremacist and anti-semitic as one of his advisors. Herzog, the leader of the Israeli Labour Party has been quoted as saying that his nightmare is waking up to find that Israel had a Palestinian prime minister and 61 Palestinian members of the Knesset. He also said he wanted to dispel the false impression he was an Arab lover. He has welcomed Trump with open arms. The new deputy defense minister called Palestinians "animals"

In a column for Israel's Ynet ,Yaron London, a prime time host on Israel's channel 10 wrote "a worldview

which supports white supremacy matches our government's interests" " all forms of Zionism hold the perception that a certain extent of anti-semitism benefits the Zionist enterprise" He observed " Israel would not be viable without hatred of Jews"

This is not the kind of Israel I think any of us should be supporting.

I hope the UK Labour Party becomes known once again as a party of tolerance.

In the spirit of wishing to move on I hope there will be a balanced report expressing the views of a wide range of members in the Riverside CLP. I hope there are no scapegoats and that emphasis is on making changes so that an atmosphere of unity in the CLP can be fostered. We have to prepare for the next election and work together as an effective opposition to the Tories.

Thanks,

Helen

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Dear Helen,

Many thanks for below and indeed for taking the time to meet with me last week.

I have included the below [the email from Helen, now moved above in this Appendix – web ed] in the documentation and will be in touch if there are further questions arising from it. I appreciate that there are always things that we tend to miss out when we are under a time limit, so appreciate you committing to email. As before, you are welcome to email with anything further should it arise. To address your questions in turn:

When we discussed your contribution on Any Answers, as I made clear where I asked questions such as those you refer to they were done with the intention of "playing devil's advocate", as it were, so that I could anticipate arguments from all sides of the coin. I hope that this gave you sufficient room to air your opinion. I hope now that you are satisfied in that you have presented your version of events, so to speak.

I never received the complaint against Nick Small submitted to the CLP executive, so if you wish to pursue it with me now, that's absolutely fine – please send your thoughts in response to this email.

Best wishes,

Ben

Sent by email from the Labour Party, promoted by Iain McNicol on behalf of The Labour Party, both at Southside, 105 Victoria Street, London, SW1E 6QT Website: [www.labour.org.uk](http://www.labour.org.uk) to join or renew call 0345 092 2299.