

The Board of Deputies of British Jews
1 Torriano Mews
Kentish Town
London NW5 2RZ

18th February 2019

For the attention of Marie van der Zyl, Deputies President

Dear Marie,

In connection with comments made at the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) conference over a week ago, you are reported in the JC as saying its honorary president, John McDonnell MP, has no “honesty and integrity”. You accused him of “double-speak” for “condemning antisemitism in public but defending people like Jackie Walker in private”. It also quoted a ‘spokesman’ who said: “If Jeremy Corbyn does nothing about this then he too is complicit.” Analogous criticisms can be applied to you.

You are fond of being judgemental about others, but what of your own ‘moral’ conduct? The question of complicity is one which is much discussed by Jewish moralists and complicity in any activity that is morally wrong is deplored. Complicity is condemned by Rabbi Mark Goldsmith (of Alyth Synagogue) when he writes “We [Jews] do not admire those who keep silent.” Writing about the Leviticus “holiness code”, he said it is “a mandate to every Jew to be a person who stands up and speaks out when they see injustice, whether it affects them directly, or they become aware that it is happening to another person.”

In that regard, it is inconceivable that neither you, your husband or your father Barry Kaye, did not know anything about the tragic losses sustained by the van der Zyl family during the Shoah. But the facts did not dissuade Mr Kaye from sending his offensive letters to my wife and I. They were sent, with your knowledge, shortly after the end of the Court case where my Holocaust survivor wife had made an application to the Court, with my support, seeking contact with her two grandchildren, your daughters - which was being denied. The most tragic lessons of history did not illuminate your consciences because you and your husband opposed the application, employing all the heavy-handed expertise that your solicitor and barrister could muster. It only contributed further to the discord and division which already existed within the family.

The Board of Deputies Manifesto, which presumably you, as President, are bound to support, includes the statement that it interprets the core Biblical commandment to ‘honour and respect one’s parents’ (Exodus 20:12), and the instruction to “Stand up for an older person and show honour to the elderly” (Leviticus 19:32) as general standards for the treatment of older people. What is the point of promoting these values if they are disregarded? Where was the respect for your mother-in-law?

Rabbi Louis Jacobs in his essay *Truth and Lies in the Jewish Tradition* said the main thrust in the appeals for Jews to be truthful is in the direction of moral truth and integrity. “The

God of truth is found wherever there is truth and His absence is felt wherever there is falsehood.” The rabbi reflects on matters which fall under the heading of falsehood; for example, when a man or woman praises him/herself for having virtues he/she does not really possess. One falsehood you perpetuate publicly is that of having attended a university from which you obtained a degree - four years before the institution existed. Only a time-traveller could do that!

Your husband Darrell, my step-son, withdrew his false claim of university education from the internet (on the LinkedIn website), so why can't you do the same? Why is it necessary to persist with the false claim that you obtained a law degree from a Liverpool university? Could it be that your colleagues in the Employment department at Ince Gordon Dadds all have degrees from pedigree universities, including two from Oxford and one from Cambridge and some also have postgraduate qualifications from top-ranking institutions? Alongside these, perhaps your CNAA degree from a polytechnic didn't quite cut it and that, understandably, might be irksome for you. But it is a stain on your record to continue with the falsehood.

You may feel you are above reproach, but remember what the Jewish proverb (attributed to Yochnan Tversky) says: “A half-truth is a whole lie.”

Yours sincerely,

George Rooker,
Historian