

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

27th May 2019

Open letter to Marie van der Zyl, Deputies President

Dear Marie,

It is reported in the Jewish Chronicle (24 May 2019) that at a recent Board plenary meeting you said “At the Board of Deputies we oppose all forms of racism.” Well it has been a long time coming, but nevertheless it is welcome to hear. Does this mean you will finally condemn the racism of your father Barry Kaye, which was evidenced by the several repulsive letters he sent to me and my wife?

He claimed he had been given “complete permission by both [Marie and Darrell] to write to you on my own behalf ...”, so they were sent with your knowledge, and additionally you were furnished with copies. You knew of their content but did nothing to stop him, although the Jewish sages tell us ‘Silence is complicity’. His hateful words showed no sensitivity to the legacy of the Shoah which is part of your husband’s van der Zyl family history.

Mr Kaye openly expressed his aversion to me as a gentile with the words: “... your husband being non-Jewish” and “As you are a non-Jew of no standing in the Jewish community, you are not welcome”. These statements clearly defined him as gentile-phobic.

Historian Albert S. Lindemann, professor emeritus at the University of California, observed in his *Esau’s Tears* that “... hatred by both Gentiles and Jews of one another was nearly always present in past centuries ...” and “... Jews also harbored prejudices and hostility towards Gentiles.” So gentile-phobia is not uncommon, but nothing prepared me for my exposure to it from the family that my step-son married into - and from an individual who espoused violence toward me. Your father’s threat of physical violence was explicit when he described how there would be “blood on the floor etc.”

His allegation that I was “... entirely deficient in knowledge of the learning and tradition of the Jewish way of life ...” was grossly offensive. Having been married to a Holocaust survivor who was the daughter of a rabbi, I was closely involved in the raising of her two children in the Jewish faith - including the boy who would become your second husband.

Rabbi Mark Goldsmith says that every Jew has a mandate 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. My expectation is that you will now fully condemn your father’s racism and admit your failure to speak up about it when you should have done, without reservations. Lacking that, your words are hollow and hypocritical.

Yours sincerely,

George Rooker
Historian