

OPINION

Anti-Semitism claims are attack on Corbyn

WE, the undersigned Labour Party members in Barnet, are firm opponents of all forms of racism, fascism, anti-Semitism, Islamophobia and all other kinds of oppression. Many of us have been actively campaigning against them for many years, often alongside Jeremy Corbyn.

We know anti-Semitism exists in society and needs to be combated, including in political parties. But we are seriously worried about the current climate in the Labour Party, where criticism of the actions of the state of Israel is too often conflated with anti-Semitism. But anti-Zionism does not equal anti-Semitism.

What we are now seeing is an attempt to deflect criticism of Israel and Zionism, thereby weakening genuine anti-racism and opposition to anti-Semitism. The real target of these critics is Jeremy Corbyn, because they oppose both his record of internationalism, in particular his lifelong support for the rights of the Palestinians, and his commitment to socialism.

In the past two years, more than 300,000 people have joined the Labour Party to support its progressive politics. Not all of them will have much experience of, for example, recognising anti-Semitic tropes. We believe the best way to combat any such naivety, lack of knowledge or problematic choices of words among Labour's membership is through open debate and discussion.

We therefore welcome the direction by Jeremy Corbyn to the new Labour General Secretary, Jennie Formby, to at last implement the recommendations of the 2016 Shami Chakrabarti report about the party's disciplinary procedures, based on natural justice and due process.

We pledge to mobilise with members of all faiths and none to end the attacks against the Labour Party, which damages the party's effectiveness in helping those people most harmed by the austerity and cuts-obsessed Conservative government and Barnet Council.

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I saw no anti-Semitism in Labour Party

I read with great interest and historical associations about a sudden wave of anti-Semitism in the Labour Party with accusations against Mr Corbyn.

I am a past great friend of Israel and supplied oil to Haifa when you had to supply it clandestinely! However with the emergence of Netanyahu I feel Israel is damaging itself.

I was in the Labour Party from 1973 to the Blair invasion of Iraq and met many pleasant Jewish members and witnessed NO anti Jewish sentiment or anti Islam sentiment! Some, including the so called 'dream team' of Kinnock and Hattersley, who ran in 1992 were atheist but they were rejected by the wisdom of the voters who go to funerals, etc and keep personal religion private.

Mr Corbyn says he was raised on the Bible!
Gary J Smith
 Seymour Road, Barnet

Paul Welsh MBE is a Borehamwood writer and historian of Elstree Studios

Sinners and The Saint

I am struggling to write this column as for some reason my left shoulder is playing up and as I am left handed, as the best people are, it hurts to type.

However, we old veterans know how to struggle on - in my case with the help of a bottle of grape juice called Merlot. My doctor says I must consume more fruit, so surely red wine counts?

I must start by thanking organisations that ask me to give talks but that is something I no longer do. I have no wish to bore people for longer than the couple of minutes it takes you to read this column and at least you can recycle this, unlike an hour listening to me. Mind you, a crate of vodka could change my mind but I do thank you for such invites.

This week, while at least my legs are still working, I am going to lead you down Memory Lane to 1962 and what was in production at Elstree Studios.

There was the start of an iconic television series called The Saint starring Roger Moore that would stay in production for several more years. Roger was a lovely man and I had the honour to organise and host a plaque unveiling in his honour at Elstree back in 2006. It proved to be the first and last reunion of The Saint crew and guest artists. Roger told me: "Budgets were small in the 1960s so we often used a standing street set on the backlot. If I was supposed to be in South America they would dress it with signs and some potted palm trees. If I was supposed to be in France they would alter the signs over the buildings and have somebody cycle past wearing a beret and a string on onions around their

neck."

The studio played host to several films that year. For instance it was used for the interiors of a crime drama starring Jack Warner. Hands up who remembers the television series Dixon Of Dock Green? I am told it ran for 432 episodes from 1955 until 1976. Jack told me that he was already retirement age for the police when he began the series and was about 80 when it finished. However, for a generation he represented what we then liked to think of as a copper in London, the days when the local bobby on the beat knew the local villains, could clip a silly child around the ear and was respected. In those days each beat was within whistle hearing distance of another officer and long before mobile phones they and the public had to use Dr Who's Tardis to contact base. Sadly Jack died in 1981 having lost a leg while undergoing treatment in hospital. Although he was a fictional copper, the real police attended his funeral out of respect.

Sparrows Can't Sing starred Barbara Windsor and I feel proud to know her as she is so genuine and cares about her fans. Some modern stars could take a lesson. Among the supporting cast was the great Roy Kinnear, a great actor who sadly died as a result of a heart attack falling from a horse whilst filming The Return Of The Three Musketeers 30 years ago.

We joined The Navy starred the great Kenneth More, who starred in a number of good 1950s films. He had begun his screen career at Elstree but was



made a star by the Rank Organisation, which owned Pinewood. I am told that Kenny, perhaps under the influence of alcohol, attended an industry event and heckled the then boss of the studio. In retrospect this was an error of judgement as I am told in revenge his boss refused to loan him out to star in Guns Of Navarone and his career hit the skids. His comeback came on television with The Forsyte Saga in 1967 but he remembered the many fair weather friends who abandoned him.

The thing about showbiz is that it's really full of a world I cannot use. When you add fame and fortune then you must expect a rough ride. It will never be any different.

Thankfully, we can all enjoy nostalgia for the 'old days', whether that is the 1950s or the 1970s and enjoy happy memories. So until next time take care and remember to avoid exercise as life is too short to wear yourself out and I need my readers.

Referendum gave no clear message

Martin Maloney's letter in the Times (A voice in Europe, Opinion, April 5) claimed that democracy was a casualty in a power-obsessed EU, but failed to acknowledge that European countries, including Britain, have not wanted the EU to be more democratic as this would undermine the authority of national governments.

Unfortunately there is a democratic deficit in every political system, perhaps especially in Britain. Since the referendum in June 2016, Parliament has tried to persuade us that Brexit is 'the will of the people'. However, a scientific analysis of the EU referendum (available at www.bettergov.gov.uk) reveals that the referendum produced no 'clear message'. When you strip out the protest vote against government within the UK, there was no authoritative mandate for Brexit. This helps explain why the latest polls (from BMG, Survation, ICM and ComRes) indicate that the majority wish to remain in the EU! Moreover as younger generations account for an ever-increasing proportion of

the electorate, the majority in favour of our continued EU membership seems likely to grow.

So Chipping Barnet for EU should be congratulated for standing up for rational debate and representing what seems to be the view of the majority.

The big issue is whether our politicians will own up to their responsibility for launching a flawed referendum, debating the issues so misleadingly, misrepresenting the result, and polarising the country so unnecessarily? If not, there is likely to be a popular demand for political reform with the aim of achieving greater political honesty and a more meaningful democracy.

Denis Robb
 Victoria Road, Barnet

Parking charges damage local businesses

It's no surprise to read about businesses hit by high street parking restrictions (Times Series, April 3). The council's latest survey shows that less than a third of residents are happy with the borough's parking services.

The current Barnet Tory administration's

approach to parking over many years has been damaging local businesses in our high streets and town centres and hitting residents in the pocket. They have hiked up parking charges and done nothing to support local traders struggling with online competition and high rents and rates.

If a Labour council is elected in May, we will introduce 30 minutes free parking in all high streets and council car parks, where there is currently a charge. This will benefit residents and give our high streets a vital boost.

Clr Alan Schneiderman
 Woodhouse ward

Our favourite baddie

I always enjoy reading Paul Welsh's column but I was especially pleased to hear about my brother's and my favourite German baddie. We were young boys in the 1950s when we loved all the WWII films shown on TV. To our great surprise Anton Diffring used to walk past our home. One day he complained about my father's scooter making too much noise. We all found this very amusing at the time.

Jerry Millington
 By email

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