Tittle-Tattle

Tom Easton

Balls to the wall

The Daily Mirror neatly summed up the post-election fate of two of New Labour's so-called big beasts when its 15 June headline read: 'Ed Balls has a new job: Ex-shadow chancellor follows David Miliband to America after election defeat'. Milband's job with the International Rescue Committee (see Lobsters passim) earns him a reported annual £300,000 whereas Balls's one year at Harvard's Mossavar-Rahmani Business and Government Center is said to be unpaid. But as the defeated former MP for Morley and Outwood received a reported £88,000 golden goodbye from the British taxpayer and then attended the Bilderberg conference in June, it's safe to assume austerity will not be a worry for the household of he and his MP wife Yvette Cooper, especially after their second-home flipping antics revealed in the expenses scandal.²

Balls and Miliband have returned to their roots in many ways. Both left Oxford to take US scholarships, returning with the neoliberal, neocon attitudes which outfitted them nicely to be spear carriers in the stage army that became New Labour. Miliband went into the think-tank world before No 10 and then the ultra-safe seat of South Shields, deep within New Labour's North-East redoubt. Balls, with no journalistic background, landed a leader-writer job with the *Financial Times* before becoming Treasury adviser to Gordon Brown. Then, like Miliband with no experience of electoral politics, he was parachuted into a former mining seat in Yorkshire in 2005 near to the one his wife had similarly been given in 1997.

A little due diligence would have revealed that the Normanton constituency was about to be broken up by the Boundary Commission. When it duly was, Balls persuaded his local Wakefield council to seek a

^{1 &}lt;http://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/ed-balls-new-job-ex-shadow-5900959>

^{2 &}lt;a href="http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/mps-expenses/5325590/Ed-Balls-and-Yvette-Cooper-flipped-homes-three-times-MPs-expenses.html">http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/newstopics/mps-expenses/5325590/Ed-Balls-and-Yvette-Cooper-flipped-homes-three-times-MPs-expenses.html

costly judicial review of the decision, a case supported unsuccessfully by one of his old Oxford dons.³ What came next – and Balls' subsequent demise – was a classic example of New Labour behaviour and payback, hardly any of it reported in the mainstream media. In a desperate effort to keep Balls in Parliament, the Brown machine forced out Colin Challen, the sitting Labour MP for Morley and Rothwell, to give the favoured son another safe berth, again handily near that of his wife.

Challen had lived in the constituency years before becoming its MP in 2001. His solid constituency record, his parliamentary profile on climate change, his previous experience as local councillor and party official, and his Euroscepticism all helped him maintain a healthy five-figure Labour majority in 2005. Balls took some of his former Normanton constituents into the new Morley and Outwood seat, but saw the 2010 majority fall to 1,101. UKIP built its local support strongly in the following years at Labour's expense and in May 2015 the Conservatives took the seat. It was the first time since before the Second World War that Morley – the core of the constituency – found itself with a Tory MP.

Apparently Balls intends to spend part of his latest US sojourn doing some writing. During his first spell at Harvard he did some for Larry Summers, who became President Clinton's deregulating Treasury Secretary. Will Balls' return visit produce an academic analysis of how to switch three second homes and lose two safe seats while only applying a 'light touch' to City scams?

After Ed: Progress?

Balls' wife Yvette Cooper was quick to launch her leadership campaign following the May Labour defeat, along with Wakefield MP Mary Creagh – two New Labour MPs not forced out of their West Yorkshire seats to provide Brown's pal with a safe haven in 2010. Creagh has since pulled out of the contest as have Chuka Umanna – in rather farcical circumstances – and Tristram Hunt, who was ubiquitous in the media for weeks after May 7 while never actually being a declared contender.

Some good work has been done by Solomon Hughes in the *Morning Star* on Hunt. He says the protégé of Peter (now Lord) Mandelson is also very close to big New Labour funder David (now

^{3 &}lt;http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2006/oct/13/labour.uk>

Lord) Sainsbury.⁴ When Ed Miliband became party leader, Sainsbury stopped funding Labour. But he maintained it for Progress, effectively the party within the party for the remaining New Labour fragment. In so doing the supermarket multimillionaire was repeating his 1988 action when he continued to fund David Owen's SDP remnant, in which *Guardian* columnist Polly Toynbee was prominent, after the rest of the Gang of Four followers merged with the Liberal Party. (See *Lobsters passim.*) Hughes wrote in November 2014:

'When I went to the Progress rally at the last Labour conference, Tristram Hunt was one of the speakers, where he declared he was "delighted to be with Progress" because "you might be an unaccountable faction dominated by a secretive billionaire, but you are OUR unaccountable faction dominated by a secretive billionaire".

Here were two dozen true words spoken in jest. Hunt's joke was so close to the bone that the shiny happy people of Progress — this is one of the biggest events on Labour's fringe — seemed embarrassed into silence.

Hunt's insistence that Progress was "the Praetorian Guard, the Parachute Regiment, the Desert Rats of Labour" also raised few laughs, even though the meeting took place in a Comedy Club at the edge of the Labour conference site. Even joking that Progress is new Labour's shock troops was a bit too much.'

The Progress strategy board includes Mandelson and Tony Blair's successor in the Sedgefield constituency, Phil Wilson MP.⁵
Mandelson's long-time associate, vice-chair of his Policy Network and frequent *Guardian* columnist, Patrick Diamond, is a co-opted board member. Former Labour Friends of Israel (LFI) chairman Stephen Twigg MP is president of Progress and the chair, John Woodcock MP, succeeded Blair loyalist John (now Lord) Hutton into the Barrow and Furness seat. Woodcock wrote the foreword to the LFI's *Making the progressive case for Israel*.⁶ Hunt is one of Progress' vice-chairs along with the post-May 8 figure widely touted as possible leader, the

^{4 &}lt;http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/a-3e8c-Blairite-Ghost-in-the-Machine#.VZZGvucyFE4>

^{5 &}lt;http://www.progressonline.org.uk/campaigns/progress-strategy-board-2/>

^{6 &}lt;a href="http://www.lfi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/making-the-progressive-case-for-israel-an-lfi-book.pdf">http://www.lfi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/making-the-progressive-case-for-israel-an-lfi-book.pdf

neophyte MP for Barnsley, Dan Jarvis.⁷

That role as bearer of the New Labour torch for leader has apparently now passed to Liz Kendall MP, the former adviser to Patricia Hewitt and inheritor of her Leicester West seat, the one previously held by Greville (now Lord) Janner (see *Lobsters passim*) who succeeded his father there. The interests of Israel never seem far from Progress' concerns and Kendall duly received positive coverage in the *Jewish Chronicle* the week after Labour's defeat under the headline 'Labour must now pass the "Israel test"'.8

Dolly and Mandy

Two of the founding Progress figures not much mentioned by the organisation these days are Mandelson's former aide Derek Draper (see *Lobsters passim*)⁹ and Liam Byrne. It was Byrne who, as Chief Secretary of the Treasury in 2010, left the 'no money left' note to his successor,¹⁰ words that have helped Chancellor George Osborne and the Conservative party to frame the assault on Labour's economic record ever since.

Draper's alma mater, the University of Manchester, was the setting for another electoral defeat for one of those in the neoliberal/neocon network who has dominated much of the politics of the past quarter century. Many of them – from Rupert Murdoch to Paul Wolfowitz – never stood for election, of course. But of those who did, George W Bush needed the help of brother Jeb and the US Supreme Court to get him over the presidential line. And as Christopher Bollyn¹¹ often reminds his audiences, Bush's Attorney General and author of the Patriot Act, John Ashcroft, actually lost a Senate election to a dead man.¹² In this case the loser – third in a field of three for the honorary post of chancellor of the University of Manchester – was Draper's old friend Mandelson. On 1 April The *Guardian*'s sister paper, the *Manchester Evening News*, announced his candidature in glowing terms:

^{7 &}lt;a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progress">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Progress %28organisation%29>

^{8 &}lt;a href="http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/analysis/136348/labour-party-must-now-pass-israel-test">http://www.thejc.com/comment-and-debate/analysis/136348/labour-party-must-now-pass-israel-test

^{9 &}lt;a href="http://derekdraper.net/">http://derekdraper.net/

^{10 &}lt;http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24173270>

^{11 &}lt;http://www.bollyn.com/>

^{12 &}lt;a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/

United_States_Senate_election_in_Missouri,_2000>

'His appointment would be considered a major coup for the city, with the university at the heart of the strategic vision for Manchester and its position on the science corridor.' This was not a view shared by the electorate who put Halle Orchestra music director Sir Mark Elder ahead of Mandelson with poet Lemn Sissay comfortably topping the poll. 14

It will be remembered that Mandelson's previous attempt to obtain popular support – from Labour party activists to secure election to its national executive committee in 1987 – likewise ended in defeat. ¹5 Little wonder then that now Jeremy Corbyn seems to be gathering members' support for his party leadership bid that the Mandelson/New Labour/Progress rump seem so anxious. Expect more unattributed smear stories in the coming weeks about the non-drinking, non-smoking, allotment-tending, peace campaigning cyclist who is the Labour MP for the non-Granita-dining part of Islington.

Sharing a similarly disappointing fate in the general election were two of Mandelson's younger New Labour Cabinet colleagues of the previous decade. Douglas Alexander was Labour's 2015 'chair of election strategy' who couldn't manage in May to defend his 16,000 majority in Paisley and Renfrewshire South. The long-standing member of the British American Project (see *Lobsters passim*) who was Shadow Foreign Secretary lost to 20-year-old politics student Mhairi Black representing the Scottish National Party (SNP). Alexander, a staunch supporter of Israel, ¹⁶ shared his fate with former LFI chairman Jim Murphy who had been made leader of Scottish Labour months before in an unsuccessful effort to stem the SNP tide. ¹⁷

Murphy, a former Defence Secretary, had received £2,000 from an earlier one, Lord Robertson of Port Ellen and himself a BAP founding

^{13 &}lt;a href="http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/peter-mandelson-confirms-bid-become-8961726">http://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/peter-mandelson-confirms-bid-become-8961726>

^{14 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jun/22/poet-beats-peter-mandelson-in-race-to-be-manchester-university-chancellor">http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jun/22/poet-beats-peter-mandelson-in-race-to-be-manchester-university-chancellor

^{15 &}lt;a href="http://www.independent.co.uk/news/labour-conference-left-jubilant-as-mandelson-fails-in-nec-election-1242024.html">http://www.independent.co.uk/news/labour-conference-left-jubilant-as-mandelson-fails-in-nec-election-1242024.html

^{16 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jan/21/uk-politicians-beware-familiar-antisemitic-attacks-labour">http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jan/21/uk-politicians-beware-familiar-antisemitic-attacks-labour

¹⁷ The declining fortunes of Labour north of the border were a cause of great concern to Israel supporters, according to Robert Philpot writing in the *Jewish Chronicle* the week before the May election. Philpot is a former director of Progress and commissioning editor of Mandelson's Policy Network. http://www.thejc.com/node/135597>

member (see Lobsters passim), for his leadership campaign. 18

SNP MP Black graduated from Glasgow University in June with a first-class degree in politics. Unemployed Alexander already has a graduate qualification, earning part of it in the United States where he worked for American politicians. But Murphy, who spent nine years at Strathclyde University laying the foundations of his career through student politics, is yet to graduate. Back to life-long learning perhaps?

The boys in blue

1: Cleveland

One police force that could do to learn from its past, perhaps, is Cleveland. Its history of corruption has been well documented by many, including former Hartlepool Mail editor Harry Blackwood (Lobsters passim). Since losing his job and journalistic career in 2003 after upsetting his readers' two local MPs, Tony Blair and Peter Mandelson, fitness enthusiast Blackwood has spent more time with his bicycle, regularly making 50-mile excursions from his Co. Durham home. It was on one of these trips last year that he became involved in an incident with a motorist that bizarrely resulted in Blackwood's prosecution eight months later. His testimony, including that of being assaulted by four Cleveland police officers in Middlesbrough as they forcibly sought to take his DNA sample, proved more convincing to Teesside magistrates court than that of the police. Blackwood was acquitted of assault and threatening behaviour in June, the bench chairman praising Blackwood for his 'forceful, clear and consistent' account. He is now considering what steps to take against the Cleveland Police.

The case was not widely reported outside the North-East except by Simon Walters, the political editor of *The Mail on Sunday*. ¹⁹ Walters had suffered employment difficulties at the hands of New Labour in a previous job and had been supportive of Blackwood when he was getting similar treatment in 2003. Walters jointly authored with Peter Oborne a fine critical biography of Alastair Campbell, an important text for those seeking to rebuild Labour. ²⁰ His evidence to the Leveson

^{18 &}lt; http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/13196692.

Revealed__Murphy_s_cash_backers/>

^{19 &}lt;http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3113867/I-assaulted-cellsfourpolice-road-rage-row-says-cyclist-exposed-UK-s-worst-force.html> 20 <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Alastair-Campbell-Peter-Oborne/dp/ 1845130014>

2: South Yorkshire

Another force deserving scrutiny is the South Yorkshire Police (SYP) and Home Secretary Theresa May seems to be on their case. Child abuse in Rotherham has marked them out for her special attention as have the revelations from the ongoing Hillsborough inquests at Warrington. Before the summer Parliamentary recess she met members of the Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign²² after the Independent Police Complaints Commission had a month earlier rejected its call for a public inquiry.²³ As David Conn reported in *The Guardian*,²⁴ May clearly does not see the IPCC decision as closing the door on allegations of police misconduct at the highest level which the commission itself identified as 'extremely serious'.

Of course not all of those should be laid at the door of the SYP as forces from around the country were deployed by the Thatcher government during the 1984-85 miners' strike. May does not seem unhappy at taking them all on. She has long targeted the Police Federation for criticism²⁵ and her actions in setting up the Pitchford Inquiry²⁶ on police spying and choosing a judge from New Zealand to head the one on child abuse,²⁷ prompt the question 'why'? Is it that the woman who, as Conservative Chair in 2002, branded hers as being seen as the 'nasty party', is on a mission to lead it into purer waters as the next prime minister? Could leadership ambition be one of the reasons for banning the use of water cannons, advocated by potential

^{21 &}lt;http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20140122145147/http:/
www.levesoninquiry.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/ Witness-Statement-ofSimon-Walters.pdf>

^{22 &}lt;http://otjc.org.uk/>

^{23 &}lt;a href="https://www.ipcc.gov.uk/news/ipcc-announces-decision-following-orgreavescoping-exercise">https://www.ipcc.gov.uk/news/ipcc-announces-decision-following-orgreavescoping-exercise

http://www.southyorkshiretimes.co.uk/news/local/orgreave-campaigners-toapply-to-government-for-hillsborough-style-hearing-1-7376155>

^{24 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/22/orgreave-truth-police-miners-strike">http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jul/22/orgreave-truth-police-miners-strike

^{25 &}lt;a href="http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/05/20/theresa-may-policefederation">http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2015/05/20/theresa-may-policefederation n 7341130.html>

^{26 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/12/senior-judge-to-lead-inquiry-into-police-spying-on-political-campaigns">http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/mar/12/senior-judge-to-lead-inquiry-into-police-spying-on-political-campaigns>

^{27 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/feb/04/new-zealand-high-court-judge-lowell-goddard-appointed-chair-child-abuse-inquiry">http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/feb/04/new-zealand-high-court-judge-lowell-goddard-appointed-chair-child-abuse-inquiry>

rival Boris Johnson? Or, having reconciled herself to George Osborne winning that contest before 2020, does she now want to go down in history as a reforming Conservative Home Secretary?

Grauniadia

David Conn is one of *The Guardian's* staff who seems to prefer actual reporting on matters outside London to expressing opinions from inside the M25. As well as his excellent work for the paper on Orgreave and Hillsborough, he has a good track record on the sports front, his enthusiasm as a football fan not stopping his regular inspection of the game's dirty linen.²⁸ In that he differs from many of his London-based colleagues whose efforts to rubbish Jeremy Corbyn's Labour leadership bid seem to know no bounds. Leading the pack after a YouGov poll put Corbyn ahead of his rivals, was Jonathan Freedland.²⁹ The paper describes him as 'its executive editor, Opinion, overseeing Comment is Free, editorials and long reads'³⁰ and he is a regular contributor to BBC Radio 4, the *Jewish Chronicle* and *The New York Review of Books*.

At the height of the Charlie Hebdo events in January Freedland wrote in his *Guardian* column: 'There were two groups especially shaken by last week's attacks – journalists and Jews – and I inhabit that small shaded area of the Venn diagram in which the two overlap.' 31

Can he really believe that? On his own paper 'that small shaded area' includes Hadley Freeman, who had already written on Charlie Hebdo, as had Nick Cohen in its sister publication, *The Observer*. Freedland's long-time friend and colleague is former deputy editor Ian Katz. Now editing BBC2's Newsnight, Katz was interviewed for the *Guardian* editorship earlier this year. Ian Black is the paper's Middle East editor, having previously been its foreign affairs leader writer and European editor. George Monbiot is one of the paper's longest-serving columnists following in the earlier footsteps of Melanie Phillips, Alex Brummer and David Aaronovitch. As Professor C E M Joad might have said: 'It all depends on what you mean by "small shaded area".'

Monbiot was harsh in 2007 to those raising questions about

^{28 &}lt;a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Conn">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Conn

^{29 &}lt;a href="https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Freedland">https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathan_Freedland

^{30 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/profile/jonathanfreedland">http://www.theguardian.com/profile/jonathanfreedland

^{31 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/16/paris-attacks-fear-factor-dare-not-speak-is-name">http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2015/jan/16/paris-attacks-fear-factor-dare-not-speak-is-name

9/11.³² Among those he criticised as 'morons' who believe in 'magic' was 'high priest' David Ray Griffin, the author of many books on 9/11, all well referenced and, as far as I can tell, posing serious questions to which many, including victims' families, are still seeking answers. Professor Griffin's reply³³ did not receive quite the same publicity.

Matt Campbell's brother Geoff was one of the Britons who died in the North Tower of the World Trade Centre. Earlier this year Campbell appeared in a Sussex court after refusing to pay his BBC licence fee on the grounds that the broadcaster covered up evidence about 9/11 and so was in violation of antiterrorism legislation. Before the hearing, Campbell wrote to Monbiot citing the mounting evidence that the truth about 9/11 has yet to be fully told and asking if the columnist still held to the views he had expressed seven years earlier. Monbiot replied: 'Hi Matt. Yes I do. I'm sorry that your brother was among the victims. With best wishes, George.'

The Guardian's long association with Zionism dates back to the early days of both, a story well told in its own 2008 publication of Daphna Baram's Disenchantment: The Guardian and Israel. ³⁵ It will be interesting to see if any changes to the paper's line follow the appointment of new editor-in-chief Katharine Viner. ³⁶ With actor Alan Rickman she co-edited for theatre the diaries and writings of Rachel Corrie, the young American peace activist killed by an Israeli Defence Force bulldozer in Gaza in 2003. Interesting, too, to see how much publicity would-be London mayor Tessa Jowell receives now Viner's predecessor, Alan Rusbridger, has become Principal of Lady Margeret Hall, Oxford. His wife and former Guardian reporter Lindsay Mackie is a great friend of Jowell whose tax lawyer husband and Silvio Berlusconi adviser, David Mills, is reportedly a golfing pal of Rusbridger.

^{32 &}lt;http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/feb/06/comment.film>
and <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/feb/20/
comment.september11>

^{33 &}lt;http://www.informationclearinghouse.info/article17256.htm>

^{34 &}lt;a href="http://www.reinvestigate911.org/content/matt-campbell-vs-bbc">http://www.reinvestigate911.org/content/matt-campbell-vs-bbc

^{35 &}lt;http://www.amazon.co.uk/Disenchantment-%2522Guardian%2522-Israel-Guardian/dp/0852650906/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1437839964&sr=1-1&keywords=Daphna+Baram>

^{36 &}lt;a href="http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/content/new-guardian-editor-katharine-viners-challenge-what-do-964-staff-and-£850m">http://www.pressgazette.co.uk/content/new-guardian-editor-katharine-viners-challenge-what-do-964-staff-and-£850m

Both couples have nearby Cotswold second homes.³⁷ In the small world that is London metro-politics Mills's brother, John, is the Labour funder warning of financial and political horrors if Corbyn is elected party leader.³⁸

Blairusconi

No longer in Parliament but still with an appetite for public life, the former Prime Minister has resigned from his role as Middle East envoy for the Quartet to land what *The Times* front-page headlined on 4 June 2015 as 'Blair lands new role in fight against European extremism'. *The Times* reported:

'The former prime minister is to become chairman of the European Council on Tolerance and Reconciliation (ECTR).....The organisation campaigns for all European countries to adopt laws that criminalise Holocaust denial, to create clearer definitions of constitutes racism and antisemitisim, and to oblige governments to pay for security at synagogues and Jewish schools.

Writing in *The Times* today, Mr Blair and Moshe Kantor, a Russian-born Jewish philanthropist and businessman, say that Europe is at a turning point....According to a recent annual report on global antisemitic incidents by the Kantor Centre at Tel Aviv University, 2014 was one of the worst years in past decade, Mr Blair and Mr Kantor write.'

Mr Kantor, says the report, is chairman of the European Jewish Congress and 'the main funder of Mr Blair's new organisation'.

'Mr Blair replaces a former Polish president, chairing a board that includes José Maria Aznar, the former Spanish prime minister. He will not be paid personally for the role, which involves attending several functions a year, but his faith foundation is to receive an annual donation. His office refused to disclose the amount.'

^{37 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/feb/22/profile-tessa-jowell-david-mills">http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/feb/22/profile-tessa-jowell-david-mills and

^{38 &}lt;a href="http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/23/jeremy-corbyn-win-could-cause-sdp-style-labour-split-says-donor">http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jul/23/jeremy-corbyn-win-could-cause-sdp-style-labour-split-says-donor

Israel lobby news

Still in Parliament but no longer in the Cabinet is Tory former chairman Eric Pickles whose last act as Communities Secretary was to appoint additional commissioners to run Tower Hamlets. He has two new jobs: 'anti-corruption tsar' and chairman of the Conservative Friends of Israel (CFI).³⁹ In his previous post Pickles closed down the anti-corruption unit along with the rest of the Audit Commission.

Pickles's former Liberal Democrat Coalition government partner Nick Clegg has lost not only most of his LibDem MPs but also his former head of communications. According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, James Sorene 'will lead BICOM [Britain Israel Communications & Research Centre] after 15 years in senior positions at the Cabinet Office, Home Office and Department of Health....Previously head of public affairs at the Israeli embassy in London, Mr Sorene has experience of working on Middle East issues.'40

Perhaps it's not too surprising that Baroness Tonge resigned the LibDem whip after speaking out on Palestine.⁴¹

Councillors newly elected in May have received invitations to join the Local Government Friends of Israel network from Rachel Kaye who describes herself as 'Campaign Executive, We Believe in Israel'. She tells the invitees:

'Local Government Friends of Israel serves to: Combat attempts to boycott and delegitimise Israel in local authorities; educate and inform councillors about Israel; build links between British and Israeli local authorities, and advocate for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict....We attended the Local Government Association Conference last week where we formally launched the Local Government Friends of Israel network. We had already been recruiting supporters to this network, so it starts with 450 councillors from 200 local authorities. At the Conference, we had a stall in the exhibition area and hosted a reception.

Our reception was attended by 50 delegates who were addressed by Luke Akehurst director of We Believe in Israel,

^{39 &}lt;a href="http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/136184/eric-pickles-new-conservativefriends-israel-chairman">http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/136184/eric-pickles-new-conservativefriends-israel-chairman

^{40 &}lt;a href="http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/139700/bicom-appoints-former-nick-clegg-adviser-chief-executive">http://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/139700/bicom-appoints-former-nick-clegg-adviser-chief-executive>

^{41 &}lt;http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-17218291>

Claudia Mendoza head of policy and research at the Jewish Leadership Council, and Marie Van Der Zyl Vice President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews.'

Akehurst is a former Hackney councillor,⁴² and like many of the New Labour praetorian guard, was a student politician before joining Mandelson's one-time press deputy at the Labour party, Colin Byrne, at Weber Shandwick, the international PR and lobbying firm.⁴³

Spooks and hacks

Will the time ever come when a British editor comes clean and tells us of his paper's association with foreign intelligence services – or even British ones, come to that? Richard Keeble has surveyed some of what is known about such British links⁴⁴ but nothing has emerged as explicit as the revelations of Udo Ulfkotte. The former editor of *Frankfurter* Allgemeine Zeitung, one of Germany's most influential papers, was also once an adviser to the government of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.⁴⁵ Following the publication of his 2014 book *Bought Journalists*⁴⁶ (currently available only in German) he said that he accepted news stories written and given to him by the CIA and published them under his own name. Ulfkotte said he gathered the aim of much of the deception was to drive nations toward war; that corruption of journalists and major news outlets by the CIA is routine, accepted, and widespread in the western media; and that journalists who do not comply either cannot get jobs at any news organization, or find their careers cut short. I saw little in the British press about Ulfkotte's allegations. Is this evidence of similar corruption here or simply the nodding acquiescence of the parochial and none too curious inhabitants of the Westminster Village?

^{42 &}lt;http://lukeakehurst.blogspot.co.uk/>

^{43 &}lt;a href="http://www.webershandwick.com/who-we-are/bio/colin-byrne">http://www.webershandwick.com/who-we-are/bio/colin-byrne

^{44 &}lt;a href="http://z13.invisionfree.com/julyseventh/ar/t119.htm">http://z13.invisionfree.com/julyseventh/ar/t119.htm.

^{45 &}lt;a href="http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/editor-of-major-german-newspapersays-he-planted-stories-for-cia/article/424470">http://www.digitaljournal.com/news/world/editor-of-major-german-newspapersays-he-planted-stories-for-cia/article/424470>

^{46 &}lt;a href="http://www.amazon.com/Gekaufte-Journalisten-Udo-Ulfkotte/dp/3864451434/ref=sr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1422242915&sr=8-3&keywords=udo+ulfkotte">http://www.amazon.com/Gekaufte-Journalisten-Udo-Ulfkotte-Journalisten-Udo-Ulfko