

ANTISEMITISM POLICY TRUST

ANTISEMITISM AND THE SCOTTISH NATIONAL PARTY

HISTORIC AND CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM

Nearly all political parties have at some point in their existence faced, in some form, allegations of racism, and specifically, antisemitism. The Scottish National Party (SNP) is not immune from this. Incidents relating to SNP candidates and officials have been reported in the press.

An SNP candidate for Edinburgh South, Neil Hay, was posted tweets in 2012 “likening anti-independence MPs and journalists to ‘Quislings’ a reference to a Norwegian Nazi collaborator”.¹ The tweets were deleted in 2015 and Hay apologised by stating that “the words in these old tweets were poorly chosen, and I apologise for any offence caused. They are not in keeping with the way I would express myself now... To make it clear that I and the way I express myself have moved on – I hope and believe for the better – I deleted this Twitter account, and only use my own campaign account”.²

In 2012, former SNP MP Paul Monaghan tweeted that he was “sad to see the proud Jewish race, so ashamedly persecuted by the Nazis, now persecuting the people of #Gaza. Are memories so short?”.³ In 2013 Monaghan had claimed on Twitter that Westminster had become “absolutely repugnant – increasingly feels like early days of the Third Reich”.⁴ After the Jewish Chronicle questioned his 2015 remarks, Mr Monaghan apologised and deleted his tweet. In a statement to the Jewish Chronicle, Monaghan said: ‘I am sorry for my comments, they were certainly not intended to cause offence and I have removed them to ensure no further upset is caused’.⁵

In November 2015, Sandra White SNP MSP retweeted a “cartoon of piglets suckling a large pig with the word “Rothschild” written on it and a depiction of a bank with the Jewish symbol, the Star of David. The tweet had also included an image of Rupert Murdoch as a puppet-master, controlling politicians including David Cameron and Ed Miliband”.⁶ When questioned about the tweet, an SNP spokesperson apologised on White’s behalf, claiming that the retweet was an “error” and assured the Jewish Chronicle that the tweet had now been removed from her profile.⁷ Subsequently, Ms White wrote an open letter to the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities stating that she “would like to take this opportunity to apologise unreservedly for the offence that has been caused by my accidental retweeting of this offensive image which I too find repellent and offensive... I had not intended to retweet this

1 <https://www.edinburghnews.scotsman.com/news/snp-candidate-sorry-over-twitter-trolling-1-3751958>

2 Ibid

3 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/scottish-mp-paul-monaghan-apologises-over-antisemitic-tweet-1.57414>

4 Ibid

5 Ibid

6 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/snp-politician-apologises-for-offence-caused-by-antisemitic-tweet-1.62132>

7 Ibid

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picture, and was horrified to learn that I had done so. As soon as this was brought to my attention, I deleted the tweet”.⁸⁹ SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon issued her own letter to the Scottish Council of Jewish Communities in which she strongly condemned antisemitism.¹⁰

In 2018, the SNP suspended party member and blogger, Gareth Wardell for attacking Labour’s Parliamentary Candidate for Livingston, Rhea Wolfson in one of his blogs. Wardell denied that the blog was antisemitic. A section of the blog headed “Hitler’s view”, stated that the Nazi leader had claimed Jews were gradually assuming leadership of the trade union movement “whether or not Wolfson is intellectually aware of Hitler’s outlook is unknown, but she certainly knows how to make the most of it”.^{11 12 13}

In January 2019, SNP MP Dr Lisa Cameron told the House of Commons, that she had been added to a list in 2015 of “Israel’s agents in British politics”.¹⁴ Responding to Dr Cameron’s stated experience, SNP Chief Whip Patrick Grady MP noted that “we have a particular responsibility as parliamentarians to lead by example and promote zero tolerance, even within our own parties, as my hon. Friend Dr. Cameron pointed out”.¹⁵ In February 2019 Dr Cameron stated in a parliamentary debate, that she had personally experienced antisemitism.¹⁶ There has been no update on the case Dr. Cameron detailed from 2015.

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities (ScoJeC) has said it is working with the SNP, following contact initiated by the party, on the process of how it deals with cases of antisemitism given the importance of the disciplinary processes. ScoJeC has reported numerous positive engagements with the SNP over a number of years.¹⁷¹⁸

8 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/scottish-national-politician-sandra-white-apologises-for-posting-repellent-antisemitic-cartoon-1.62432>

9 https://www.scojec.org/news/2015/15xi_antisemitism/msp.html

10 https://www.scojec.org/news/2015/15xi_antisemitism/first_minister.pdf

11 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-46031103>

12 <https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/17188181.blogger-in-snp-anti-semitism-row-defends-himself/>

13 <https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/rhea-wolfson-subjected-to-vile-antisemitic-abuse-by-scottish-nationalist-blog-1.471655>

14 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-01-24/debates/55340293-5D4A-4B46-B8F5-E52ABF06AA3C/HolocaustMemorialDay#contribution-C5873D57-506B-475B-9A88-FB3509491E78>

15 <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-01-24/debates/55340293-5D4A-4B46-B8F5-E52ABF06AA3C/HolocaustMemorialDay#contribution-63FBB997-F95E-4685-BD1A-36D4454532AA>

16 [https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-02-27/debates/545af039-f272-421c-9cc0-47860ca3797f/Holocaust\(ReturnOfCulturalObjects\)\(Amendment\)Bill\(FirstSitting\)#contribution-28AE1762-C05B-44EF-8C33-D39DBD933BB4](https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-02-27/debates/545af039-f272-421c-9cc0-47860ca3797f/Holocaust(ReturnOfCulturalObjects)(Amendment)Bill(FirstSitting)#contribution-28AE1762-C05B-44EF-8C33-D39DBD933BB4)

17 https://www.scojec.org/news/2018/18x_gathering/gathering.html

18 https://www.scojec.org/news/2019/19i_fmqq/fmq.html