Twitter Thread by Adam Wagner



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A short personal reflection on what happened yesterday.

I wanted to wait a bit before saying this as I think yesterday was for those who experienced the sharpest end of the disastrous breakdown between the Labour Party and Jewish people during the past 5 years.

I started talking about Labour antisemitism here in 2017 I think. My key aim was to try and act as a bridge between the left of the Jewish community and the left of the Labour Party. I used my platform on social media to do it and quite quickly I developed some back channels...

... to who I thought were sensible people in Jeremy Corbyn's office and Momentum. I kept those channels going for quite a long time. I found this paragraph from emails I exchanged in Spring 2018 with Laura Murray in Corbyn's office. It now seems quite prescient.

> Unless you can build trust, you will be left where you are at present which is effectively in litigation (which I do know about). In litigation there often is only one winner, so it is zero sum. A lot of the interactions between the community and your office (and Jeremy Corbyn) remind me of a fiercely fought legal battle. But in a legal battle, there is a court which makes the ultimate decision or pushes the parties in a compromise direction. At present, you have all of the downsides of litigation with none of the upsides, i.e. the skirmishing and point scoring without an independent body arbitrating between you and the Jewish community.

As I delved more into the issues and heard, privately, what was going on in the movement itself, I slowly and regrettably came to the conclusion that the issue was so serious it needed an "independent body" to come in. It was in Autumn 2018 that @antisemitism approached me...

... to assist in making a submission to the @EHRC to try and persuade them to enter the fray. I was skeptical, given the the UK's human rights organisations had stayed almost entirely silent (to this day, to their shame) on the issue, though I knew it was utterly necessary...

I assumed, as we put the submission together, that the @EHRC would be reluctant to enter such a fraught issue, but I also felt strongly, as did CAA and @jewishlabour, that if the equality and human rights regulator did not intervene on an upsurge in Jew-hate in a key British...

... political institution, who would? What is an equalities and human rights regulator for if it refused? It was a huge relief when they announced in Feb 2019 that they would intervene. It felt, to me, as a human rights lawyer, that the grown ups were coming in to help...

... or the cavalry. And we worked for next 18 moths, alongside others such as @JewishLabour to try and make sure we put our position as best we could. Contrary to what you might read in conspiratorial blogs (!), I had no sense at all at what the outcome would be, until yesterday.

The Commission kept their cards incredibly close to their chest - as was absolutely right. All I knew was that they appeared to have done a thorough job. So my first indication of what was in the report was when I sat down yesterday morning to read it.

I knew when I read the summary that our key arguments had been accepted, and that the truth was being told. It was an emotional experience, as you might expect, but it certainly wasn't a happy or triumphal moment. I think, if anything, I felt that justice had been served.

What do I mean by justice? I mean that an independent judge entered the fray, listened carefully to all perspectives, and decided the right answer based on its application of legal principles. As with any long inquiry, the outcome wasn't exactly what we said it should be...

... nor were all the issues covered that might have been etc. But it felt like a real piece of work had been done, a lasting contribution made to equality and human rights, and - perhaps most importantly - a tiny minority community, which happens to be my own, had been protected.

When I decided I wanted to be a human rights lawyer I didn't want , nor was I expecting, to advocate for my own community. I did so I think with reluctance - because I felt there wasn't anyone else saying the things I wanted to say. I can now say, unequivocally, that I am...

... proud both of my own Jewish community, for how it came together, spoke with more or less one voice, and faced down a real surge in antisemitism. I am also proud of my other community, the human rights community, which found its voice on this difficult issue too.

As I suggested at the outset, there are many whose lives have been permanently altered, and not for the better, by what has happened. I salute all of them, and hope that yesterday's events, as well as what Keir - a former human rights lawyer, noch - is doing to begin the healing.

For me, I have the privilege of moving on to other things, other work that needs doing in other areas which (thankfully, to be honest) don't involve standing up for my own but for others.

David Maxwell Fyfe, a Tory father of the human rights movement, said human rights were about "tolerance, decency, kindliness". I believe that. I don't think people are evil, and I believe that in our great liberal country, where Jews like my family have been mostly welcomed...

> *... it might be presumptuous of lawyers who did not claim to be more than the cement of society to speculate or even dream of what we wish to see in place of the Nazi spirit, but I give you the faith of a lawyer some things are surely universal: tolerance, decency, kindliness.... When such qualities have been given the chance to flourish in the ground that you have cleared, a great step will have been taken.*

... if you fight for something by embodying those values of tolerance, decency and kindliness, you will eventually win out. And I hope that the work I and others have done for our own community can now be used to help others who suffer similar problems.

And to the @EHRC, from the bottom of my heart, I say thank you. You did what was right, you came through.

Oh, and one other thing. If you have any questions or criticisms of what I have said about antisemitism and Labour may I refer you to this detailed and thorough 130-page report from the UK's equalities and human rights regulator? ■■ https://t.co/ogmGWPVHHL