

GMB Hearing 19th Dec Millenium Hotel, Glasgow 11am-12.30pm [a note by PG]

Those present: from the GMB Scotland Committee: Jim Lennox (president). Franny McNeil, Duncan Walker, Brenda Carson, Mary Finn, Anette Drylaw, Mary Mulligan, Thomas Carr-Pollock.

Also defendant - Pete Gregson, GMB workplace rep, NHS Lothian.

At 11am, JL began proceedings by making clear there would be no debate on GMB policy. He outlined the sequence of events for the hearing and explained how much time would be allotted to each item. There would be a max of 30 minutes each, for each of the two parties to make their case. Witnesses would get up to 15 minutes. Questions to witnesses would be a max of 10 minutes. . There would then be a limit of 10 minutes for each party to make their closing statements. PG sought to explain that the timings might mean that his witness might not have arrived before the witness stage was got to, but the president was not interested.

JL explained that GMB Senior Officer Louise Gilmore would present the case against PG.

LG entered the room at this point and read out the charge sheet as it was laid out in the letter to PG that Gary Smith had sent on 13.12.18 (and which can be read at <http://www.kidsnotsuits.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/GMB13.12.18.pdf>). It seemed that she had not read the charges before, she stumbled as she read; she had to be helped over the pronunciation of words such as “anti-Semitism” by JL.

PG was then given the opportunity to ask questions of LG. PG asked how did it come about that he was being charged? LG said the GMB HQ had received a complaint from a member outlining PG’s activities on the 28th Sept [presumably this one about the JLM and the LFol that PG had sent to NEC members, including Rhea Wolfson, on that day: <http://www.kidsnotsuits.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Complaint-Against-JLM-and-LFol.pdf>]. The complaint was around PG having lodged an open letter to the Labour Party stating that he thought Israel to be a racist endeavour.

PG asked LG when had the GMB adopted the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism? He pointed out that he was unaware of the GMB policy when he had launched his petition. He explained he had been through the GMB website and could see no mention of it. He also asked how the decision had been publicised. Had there been a letter to members? LG was unable to answer.. PG asked how could union members be bound by, and penalised for, a policy that none had seen? JL explained that the info would be obtained and sent onto PG. [it never has been].

PG asked about the email mentioned in the allegations: “In an email of 7 November 2018 from PG the headline reads “Help me publicise what is happening at GMB””

He asked how the union had found this email. He said the only people who had been sent this by him were a couple of close colleagues – to their private email accounts - and the Branch Secretary’s GMBactivist account. He asked if the Branch Secretary’s GMBactivist

account had been broken into to get this email? LG would not answer this. PG said was it due and proper for union officers to be looking at emails in their volunteer activist accounts? This email was not intended for their eyes? What about privacy and GDPR? JL pointed out that if the Branch Secretary was unhappy about it then he could write in with a letter of complaint.

JL then asked PG to present his defence. PG established that the Committee had received all the papers relating to the case, including the ones he had sent that morning. PG asked if those present had read his written response to the allegations, a 21- page document (available at <http://www.kidsnotsuits.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/GMB13.12.18responses-1.pdf>)? The Exec said they had read it.

Since the Exec had received all the written responses, PG chose to concentrate on supplementary details in his presentation: why he was in the GMB; his history in this and previous unions as a campaigner; his work on the NHS whistleblower hotline which the local branch had supported; why he was interested in Palestine; why he was here today. He indicated that the thought the case was politically motivated and that it was coming from someone in Labour – Rhea Wolfson, probably prompted by Jon Lansman... He explained that he was surprised that the GMB had chosen to get involved with something he did outside of his job and his trade union. He said he was angry because the union's interference represented an attack on his freedom of expression and rights to campaign on injustice.

At several points in PG's presentation, JL interrupted stating that there was to be no discussion about GMB policy; the meeting "would not get caught up in politics"; the only matter in hand was - had PG or hadn't PG - breached the rulebook? PG was placed under repeated pressure by JL to drop points he was trying to make about Israel.

PG tried to explain that the Committee was in a hard place; their decision would be landmark and set the scene for others to come. At this point MF said to JL she was beginning to feel threatened and uncomfortable. PG explained he had no intention of doing that and that he would move on.

PG therefore moved to his written submission and picked through his points. However, he had only gotten to the Rhea Wolfson item on page 7 (about a third of the way through his 21 pages) when JL told him his time was up.

At this point JL invited the Scotland Committee members to ask PG questions. TCP asked PG about when PG had started identifying Rhea Wolfson. Where had that come from, he asked? PG explained that he had learnt through an intermediary of a senior GMB officer who had been asked by that intermediary why PG was under attack from the union for breaching the IHRA; that GMB officer had responded with the words "Oh, is this Rhea Wolfson's thing?"

On this basis, PG was convinced that it was Ms Wolfson's doing. Up until that point PG had not even been aware that Wolfson worked for the GMB or was involved in it; all he knew of her was that she had been on Labour's National Executive Committee (NEC), she was on the

Momentum slate and was presumably therefore close to Lansman; that she had recently moved to the National Policy Forum. He said that he had written to all 39 members of the NEC about the IHRA and thus Wolfson would have received three emails dating from the time she was on the NEC through her Facebook account [plus the complaint about JLM cited above]. She would have been aware of his campaign [not least because she was also senior in the JLM].

TCP followed this with the question asking who this senior GMB officer was? PG explained that of course he could not give out any names, for to do so would put that officer in jeopardy.

AD then put a question. She began by saying that everyone was entitled to their views. But had I sent emails expounding my views on Israel at the same time as stating I was a GMB steward? PG explained that he had sent so many emails he could not recall. He thought he may have mentioned in passing when he was writing to the NEC that he was active in the GMB; he may have done that when reflecting upon why the IHRA had so much union support.. PG said he could not exactly recall. PG asked if there was a specific email that AD was referring to? AD said she did not have one to hand. PG went on to say that he could never have expressed a view on Israel as a GMB steward – because he did not have the authority to do so. Whilst he may have mentioned his union activism in a fundraiser somewhere, he certainly had never expounded upon Israel in his official capacity as a GMB steward.

At this point JL said he would be asking both parties to do their summing up. PG pointed out that his witness had not yet spoken. It was 12.15, PG explained that his train was close to Glasgow. Could the Committee take a break or attend to other duties for 30 minutes, to give the Rabbi time to arrive?

JL said they would not. JL said the Rabbi should have taken an earlier train. PG explained it was a problem of timing; Rabbi Cohen had religious duties which meant he had to get the 9.26 train, which didn't get into Glasgow until 12.42.

PG begged and begged for them to do some other Exec business for 30 mins (they had other items to attend to, which would have allowed the Rabbi time to arrive), but the answer was no. He pointed out that the Rabbi was an elderly man and that travelling from Manchester for the hearing was a big journey to undertake.

[On reflection, it was only at the beginning of the meeting that PG had been informed of the timings; (which were, he felt, too brief); he had immediately tried to explain that his witness would not be there until near 1pm, but that was ignored. PG was annoyed and embarrassed that the Rabbi did not get to speak. PG thought that in this important case, to ignore the view of a Rabbi was a mistake.]

When JL refused to budge on this, PG pointed out that he had submitted the text of the Rabbi's speech at 8am that morning, along with the view from the Scottish Government. Had the Committee members got that? JL said they had.

JL then invited LG to give her final statement for the union. She said she had listened to what PG had to say, but that she stood by her allegation that he had breached rules 5.4, rule 35.13 and rule 43.3. Nothing she had heard led her to change her views.

JL then asked PG to give his final statement. PG said that if he was expelled, it will probably be claimed that he had been trying to draw the Union into disrepute, but his public exposure of proceedings was, he felt, necessary, to avoid the far greater damage that would result to the union were he to be expelled. For it would become known as the union that had trampled of the freedom of expression on racism of one of its 631,000 members, sending a message that the union condoned apartheid Israel. He pointed out that there were many other GMB members who felt Israel to be racist, some of whom had signed this petition. Would they be expelled too? Furthermore, a year ago, on the 4th Nov 2017, the GMB had sponsored a big march and rally called "Justice for Palestine"; he pointed out that now, every GMB marcher on such a protest would need to be suspended if they declared, like him, Israel to be a racist endeavour. He said justice had to be the same for all.

At 12.35pm the hearing was declared over by JL. PG asked when would he receive a decision? JL indicated that he would receive a letter.

PG took 10 minutes to collect his papers and at 12.45 he left the hotel boardroom. He met the Rabbi just after he exited the hotel at 12.50. He asked the Rabbi to read his speech out on the hotel steps; one of the protestors filmed it; the text can be [downloaded here](#); the video can be [viewed here](#).