



KEY HNH PEOPLE

RUTH SMEETH: FAILED LABOUR CANDIDATE (1)

1995 joins Labour Party (aged 16)

1998-2001 Birmingham University (Politics & International Relations)

2001-? Trade union officer at UNITE specialising in NHS/Local government ?? seconded to 'New Health Network' pro-NHS lobby group favouring alliances with private sector

2004 January: becomes head of PR for Sodexho, catering company criticised (among others) by celebrity chef Jamie Oliver in TV show 'School Dinners'

2005 November: joins British Israel Communications and Research Centre (BICOM) a pro-Israel group

2007 November: chosen as Prospective Labour Candidate for Burton, by which time she was UK Head of PR for Nestle, the controversial food firm

2008 April: working for the Board of Deputies of British Jews/Community Security Trust--leaves just before 2010 General Election

2009 April 24th: described by US Embassy (in cable published by Wikileaks) as a source to "strictly protect".

2010 May: fails to win Burton seat, getting 15,884 votes (31.9%) compared to Tory 22,188 (44.5%), a swing of 10.2% away from Labour, and a Tory increase of 7.2%

2010 September: supports David Miliband in Labour leadership contest

2010 September: joins *Searchlight* Educational Trust as employee (see also dispute timeline).

2011 November: stands for Labour National Executive Committee on right-wing Progress/Labour First slate.

ENTER THE DRAGON? RUTH SMEETH ARRIVES

Reportedly a long-term magazine subscriber and HNH activist, in September 2010, Ruth Smeeth joined SET as manager/administrator. Like her predecessor, Sonia Gable, an enigmatic figure. Recommended by Lowles, she was available having failed to retain (as a new candidate) the Labour seat of Burton at the May 2010 General Election [SEE BIOGRAPHY ON LEFT].

Smeeth's personal trajectory is the Labour Party right-ward drift in microcosm. Starting off, one presumes, as an idealist, she pursued the 'ethical' course initially, working for a union. Then, succumbing like Tony Blair and Gordon Brown to the blandishments of capital, she signed up for a lobby group seeking NHS links to the private sector, ultimately going the whole way to Sodexho, involved in the privatising of school catering services so roundly criticised by Jamie Oliver. Working for Zionist pressure group BICOM anti-Zionists might take exception to, but this, and working for the CST, are understandable for somebody Jewish.

At this point, Smeeth's career progresses from politically questionable to reactionary: PR for Nestle. It beggars belief that any radical could work at a senior level for such a company, boycotted since 1988 for obscene practices, including discouraging breast-feeding among women in Africa and elsewhere in order to sell milk-powder²⁵. In 2008 it was revealed Nestle paid a Swiss private intelligence firm, Securitas, to infiltrate Attac Switzerland in 2003-4. Sarah Meylan's reports went to Nestle's head of Security John Hedley, allegedly ex-MI6²⁶.

While there is no hint Smeeth was involved with spying on Attac (as opposed to perhaps dealing with the PR aftermath) mention of MI6, along with previous BICOM work, raises the spectre that

Smeegate effectively ended what may have been Brown's plan to call a general election this spring, based on the rise in the polls he received following his solid performance at the G-20. Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Burton Ruth Smeeth (strictly protect) told us April 20 that Brown had intended to announce the elections on May 12, and hold them after a very short (matter of weeks) campaign season. Labour had been just 7 points behind the Conservatives in some polls taken right after the G-20 Summit, which other Labour contacts had told us was close to an acceptable standing from which to launch a campaign, but the drop in Labour's poll numbers following Smeegate forced Brown to abandon his plan, a despondent Smeeth said. (Note: This information has not been reported in the press. End note.)

Smeeth is a true Atlanticist, favouring continued subordination of the UK economy and polity to the interests of US capitalism. An impression not dispelled by the 24/4/09 US Embassy Cable 09LONDON956 published by Wikileaks. [SEE BOTTOM OF PAGE]. The relevant extract deals with Gordon Brown's decision not to hold an early General Election: "Labour Prospective Parliamentary Candidate for Burton Ruth Smeeth (strictly protect) told us April 20 that Brown had intended to announce the elections on May 12, and hold them after a very short (matter of weeks) campaign season...the drop in Labour's numbers following Smeegate forced Brown to abandon his plan, a despondent Smeeth said. (Note: This information has not been reported in the press. End note)". However you spin it, this does not look good: giving a Foreign Embassy inside information. Reference to protecting the source strongly points to Smeeth herself knowing this.

Two other things underline how questionable Smeeth's action was.

First, her defence in the *Telegraph* was pathetic: "she thought the comments could have been made at a breakfast meeting she attended with a friend who worked at the US Embassy. She said 'I was hugely surprised to see my name in that [the cable]. I have no recollection of saying what has been attributed to me. I would not consider myself to be a source for the US government"²⁷. She quite patently was (is?) such a source.

Second, and surely relevant, the politics of husband Michael Smeeth. His LinkedIn profile shows a career trajectory similar to Ruth's: starting out in the union movement (MSF/Amicus), joining Brent Primary Care Trust (2002-4), setting up a PR company (communicate in 2006, and since May 2010 the grandly titled 'Director-Healthcare Infrastructure' for General Electric Corporate, yet another private provider devouring the NHS carcass for profit,

dressed up as 'responsible' and 'efficient' health-care innovation. GE are the sort of company we need like a hole in the head: in the USA they paid no tax at all in 2010-11, instead got a \$3.2 billion rebate²⁸.

LinkedIn omits his stint at the now defunct New Health

Network where they met²⁹, but does mention being not just a Fellow but Executive Committee Member of the British American Project (BAP), this last since November 2011. Many see BAP as a US Trojan horse in British politics, set up to consolidate US hegemony in Europe during the Reagan era, and heavily spook-linked³⁰. In this context, without assuming Ruth Smeeth shares all her husband's views (or vice versa) that Michael Smeeth is on the BAP Executive is, we suggest, pertinent in evaluating where Ruth Smeeth is coming from.

A useful way of placing Smeeth in context is looking at a 'protected source' inside the Australian Labor Party, Senator Mark Arbib. US Embassy cables leaked to Wikileaks show how close his relationship with the US was. A July 2009 embassy profile stated "he understands the importance of supporting a vibrant political relationship with the US while not being too deferential. We have found him personable, confident and articulate. He has met with us repeatedly throughout his political rise"³¹. Therein differences with Smeeth: Arbib's career went further than hers to date. He has been a king-maker in Australian Labor circles, implicated in the coups whereby Kevin Rudd took power in 2006, and Julia Gillard deposed Kevin Rudd in 2009. Another difference, we trust, is that Smeeth has no truck with the type of financial chicanery and shady dealing that precipitated Arbib's resignation as Senator in February 2012³². We are not equating the two: merely pointing out that being a US embassy 'protected source' is no sign of political probity. To his credit, unlike Smeeth, Arbib never denied or laughed it off³³.

Over and above spook-friendly connections, Smeeth is patently on the Labour Right, even if occasional rhetoric might superficially indicate otherwise. In 2009 she predicted next "year's elections really will be about choice....between supporting working families, or supporting higher earners...between paid holiday or no legal holiday requirements. It's between the Right to Strike or employers holding all the cards"³⁴. Does she include high earners at the top of HNH? When working for Sodexho and Nestle, did she facilitate worker unionisation? We suspect not. In September 2010 Smeeth argued for a campaign "that demonstrates we don't need

these savage cuts, that there is an alternative strategy...more not less public investment"³⁵. A line of argument dropped even before Ed Balls, judging by her speaking (alongside Anthony Painter of HNH) at the House of Commons 6/2/12 on 'Labour's New Fiscal Realism'. A meeting booked before Balls' damascene conversion to fiscal rectitude, and Smeeth certainly delivered on that score.

Smeeth's 2012 Labour Party National Executive Committee (NEC) election statement is vapidly platitudinous, containing no specific policies just empty verbiage such as 'a national party...a new relationship between the membership and the national party'³⁶ and so on. Smeeth mentions HNH/union activism, but not Sodexho, BICOM, Nestle or being a US Embassy source. Her candidacy has not gone un-noticed, and is hardly good news for Ed Miliband³⁷. In part because she is on the first ever 'Progress' slate. Progress was recently described in a circular sent to Constituency Labour Parties as a "factional organisation inside the Labour party"³⁸, "that self identifies with 'New' Labour and as such has its own ideology, policies, candidates and campaigns"³⁹. This matters because of their immense funds: between 2006-12 Progress income was over £1.54 million, more than the Green Party, Scottish Labour Party or *Plaid Cymru*⁴⁰.

The strongest defence of Progress has come from Smeeth's colleague on the ticket, Luke Akehurst⁴¹. By standing for Progress, Smeeth is at the heart of their factional intrigue. We don't object to factions: but the Labour Right faction Progress exemplify have purged the Left thus their very existence is hypocritical. A Hackney councillor, Akehurst is a deeply divisive figure who exemplifies what is rotten about the New Labour undead still polluting political discourse. His NEC election site (luke4nec.org.uk) mentions a past PR job but not his clients (or company, Weber Shandwick), who have included firms arming various dictators⁴². Equally misleading, he describes himself as a Director of 'We Believe in Israel', a "grassroots campaign supporting Israel" because he "wanted to play a part in advocating a two state solution". This is no grassroots campaign, but a guise of BICOM, the organisation Smeeth worked

for, a powerful lobby group who definitely do not support a two state solution. Let us be clear though: while most involved in *NFB* are anti-Zionist, not all are, and we accept Zionism is a legitimate point of view. We do, however, take exception to Zionists not arguing their case, or revealing their politics, publicly. Ironically, at least Akehurst mentions Israel in his NEC manifesto: not so Smeeth.

No doubt Smeeth is a committed anti-racist, and the NEC statement displays PR skills, even if earlier forays into social media showed her a maladroit campaigner⁴³. However, HNH supporters should ask themselves whether she is a fit and proper person to "run the HNH campaign" (NEC Statement). Once you've read the whole article, you may conclude she is, having said that. Smeeth certainly brought organisation to HNH: setting up files for this, that (and probably the other), creating an inner office for herself and CEO Lowles to ponder the *Daily Mirror* crossword over a steamy coffee. Cathy Pound, ambitious herself, resigned from SET shortly afterwards, but reports have reached *NFB* that the working atmosphere is still poisonous, even when Matthew Collins isn't there. Her HNH role gives Smeeth's NEC candidature a patina of radicalism it would not have otherwise, deployed to good effect⁴⁴.

Nonetheless, never the brightest bulb in the chandelier, Smeeth reportedly judges potential HNH allies by whether they are pro-Zionist (so Ken Livingstone and MPs John McDonnell/Jeremy Corbin are vilified). This, needless to say, hardly makes her the ideal link-person with Muslim groups, who like most non-Atlanticists are generally sceptical about Israel. Our problems with Smeeth are political not personal: we wish her a speedy recovery from the car accident 12/4/12. Like the dotty aunt who gets tipsy, colleagues have to steer conversations away from Israel (if they can), to ensure she doesn't say the wrong thing to the wrong person. Just as well hers is a back-room role: although given her US/BICOM/Progress connections, maybe not. On one thing all at *NFB* agree: Smeeth is a worthy successor indeed to Sonia Gable....