



Inside Labour Together's secret battle against Jeremy Corbyn

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Newly released documents reveal the inner workings of Labour Together and its role in covertly undermining Jeremy Corbyn's leadership of the Labour party.

The documents were disclosed to Corbyn in response to a subject access request. They contain emails from Labour Together's two key figures Morgan McSweeney and Josh Simons.

McSweeney went on to be Keir Starmer's chief of staff while Simons became a cabinet minister until he resigned following revelations that he had hired a reputation management firm to "proactively undermine" journalistic investigations into Labour Together, McSweeney and Sir Keir Starmer.

Simons subsequently vacated his Makerfield constituency seat for Andy Burnham.

Internal documents detail how Labour Together under McSweeney's watch (2017-20) conducted polling of the Labour membership to monitor its views on the incidence of antisemitism in the party.

This polling allowed McSweeney and his allies to track responses to the antisemitism narrative that they were simultaneously helping to sustain by placing arguably alarmist stories in the media.

The documents further detail how The Canary media outlet was highly trusted among Labour members and identified as a political challenge because it defended Corbyn amid antisemitism accusations.

The Canary was subsequently targeted by the McSweeney-linked Stop Funding Fake News campaign with an advertiser boycott, which helped to diminish its revenue.



Morgan McSweeney waits to board a flight at Zurich Airport in Switzerland on 1 June 2026.
(Photo: Declassified UK)

Weaponising antisemitism

McSweeney quietly inflamed the "antisemitism crisis" that would dog Corbyn's leadership from at least 2018.

He did so by seeding and placing stories into the press that helped to build the narrative that Corbyn's Labour had become riddled with antisemitism and that this flowed inexorably from a resurgent left-wing anti-imperialism.

At the same time, the new documents show, Labour Together was paying YouGov to repeatedly poll Labour members on whether they agreed with the framing of the party as a hotbed of antisemitism.

The goal was apparently to gain a detailed guide to the opinions of the party's membership as McSweeney sought to de-legitimise Corbyn's leadership.

Although the precise cost is unknown, polling of this kind was likely to be expensive.

It was also at this time that Labour Together unlawfully failed to disclose the most of its donations, amounting to over £700,000, with key funders of the organisation including hedge fund manager Martin Taylor and pro-Israel lobbyist [Trevor Chinn](#)

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Deliberately exaggerated

One email from October 2018 shows McSweeney sharing a range of polling questions about what members thought of Corbyn's leadership, who they thought the next leader of the Labour Party should be, the traditional media that they consumed, and what social media platforms they used.

Emails show that McSweeney was directing what questions to be put to members by YouGov.

Included in the survey was a question about antisemitism, which asked:

There has been quite a lot of news coverage recently about antisemitism in the Labour Party. Which of the following statements comes closest to your view?

- It is a serious and genuine problem that the party leadership needs to take urgent action to address*
- It is a genuine problem, but its extent is being deliberately exaggerated to damage Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle criticism of Israel*
- It is not a serious problem, it is being hyped to undermine Labour and Jeremy Corbyn, or to stifle legitimate criticism of Israel*
- None of these*
- Don't Know*

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The results of two polls conducted in November 2018 and July 2019 suggest the Labour membership was sceptical of the "antisemitism crisis" narrative.

For instance, 76% of respondents believed in November 2018 that the crisis was either "deliberately exaggerated" or effectively non-existent and being "hyped" to damage Corbyn and protect Israel.

This dropped marginally to 71% seven months later despite a firestorm of media coverage.

Dreadful performance

McSweeney appeared to be displeased with the poll results, writing in one 2018 email that "there is nothing at the moment to suggest that Corbyn is challengeable before 2022 but equally there is every reason to be optimistic about what happens next".

He added that Corbyn's "absolute numbers are still very high (68%) particularly given his dreadful performance on Brexit and antisemitism".

The poll results are additionally striking given Starmer's decision to withdraw the whip from Corbyn in November 2020 after he said "the problem [of antisemitism] was dramatically overstated for political reasons by our opponents inside and outside of the Party", reflecting the majority views of membership.

In the July 2019 poll, Labour members were asked to rank their support for other MPs in head-to-head battles with Corbyn. While Corbyn beat every contender, the closest contender was Starmer, who received 45% to Corbyn's 55%.

According to insider [accounts](#) it was around July 2019 that McSweeney became a member of a loose working group supporting a potential Starmer leadership bid and providing polling data towards that end.

The Canary

The documents also indicate how Labour Together and McSweeney were concerned about The Canary's ability to rally support for Corbyn.

Included in the new disclosure is a two-page briefing note about The Canary which appears to have been written in 2018 and contain Labour Together polling data.

The note complained that The Canary "is one of the most trusted news sources amongst Jeremy Corbyn supporters", and was "on a par with The Times, The Mirror or the BBC".

The data also showed The Canary had a "net positive" trust score among Labour members, equalled only by The Guardian. The New Statesman, by contrast, received a score of minus six.

To that end, the briefing aired serious concerns about The Canary's political influence in Britain.

"The Canary's dominance of left wing online media will make [sic] a key influencer in deciding the next Mayor of London, the next leader of the Labour Party and the future direction of the country", the note observed.

It further claimed The Canary was "sympathetic to anti-Semitic viewpoints and publishes articles in defence of politicians who have got into trouble for anti-Semitism", an allegation which was [debunked](#) by the independent media regulator Impress in 2021.

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Stop Funding Fake News

When read against other emails and Labour Together's polling, the briefing note points to concerns about how The Canary was undermining the antisemitism narrative that McSweeney and his allies were covertly helping to inflame in this period.

In March 2019, McSweeney and his ally Imran Ahmed would launch the Stop Funding Fake News (SFFN) campaign, which sought to demonetise The Canary by pressuring companies to withdraw advertising from its website.

While being led by factional Labour insiders, the SFFN campaign presented itself as a project run by committed grassroots activists who were concerned with the proliferation of "fake news".

Interestingly, the internal briefing note, which appears to have been a precursor to the SFFN campaign, made no mention of the accuracy of The Canary's reporting.

The emphasis was on its **default watermark** influence, strongly suggesting the subsequent campaign was initiated in response to The Canary's **default watermark** to the political ambitions of Labour Together, onto which claims of "disinformation" were grafted.

Indeed, McSweeney reportedly told Labour Together colleagues "Destroy the Canary or the Canary destroys us".

That campaign, alongside changes to social media algorithms, played a powerful role in circumscribing the impact and reach of The Canary by late 2019.

By then, Labour Together's plan to install Sir Keir Starmer as the leader of the Labour Party was well-advanced.

McSweeney and Labour Together's fixation on polling would carry over the organisation while led by Josh Simons (2022 - 2024).

These intense polling efforts apparently also helped the organisation to create caricatures of target voters for the Labour party which were at once crude, bizarre, and insulting.

A version of the "Workington Man" curated by Labour Together was 62 years old, white, "absolutely despised Jeremy Corbyn", "hates Europe and European culture", drives an "Audi A4", and "thinks South Asians who live nearby are terrible drivers".

Meanwhile, "Stevenage Woman" was 42, non-white, "hates Boris for breaking the rules on Lockdown", "thinks we should have fewer migrants", "doesn't think migrants improve British culture," and "has a Ford Focus and is a very cautious driver".

Target Voters

Workington Man

- 62. Male. White.
- Politically a Red Waller
 - Voted Brexit. Left Labour for Tories in 2019 and some of his friends did in 2017 too.
 - Absolutely despised Jeremy Corbyn.
 - Had a soft spot for Boris Johnson and thought the party-gate backlash went a bit too far.
- Socially to the right
 - Thinks we should definitely have fewer migrants.
 - Hates Europe and European culture. Has a soft spot for America. Voted Leave.
 - Gets irritated at political correctness and clashes with his kids.
 - Feels uncomfortable talking about race but actually works with quite a diverse workforce.
- Economically to the left
 - Has a surprisingly nice car, an Audi A4. (Thinks South Asians who live nearby are terrible drivers).
 - Shops at Morrisons. Owns a 2 bed worth £300k.
 - Pro intervention in the economy. Fine with more public spending.
 - Fed up with low growth in wages and declining living standards.
 - Completely distrusts Tories on economy after his mortgage went up under Truss

Stevenage Woman

- 42. Woman. Non-white.
- Politically very disengaged
 - Often says they don't have a middle option.
 - 40% did not vote in 2019.
 - A huge number of children.
 - Would prefer not to move for stability.
 - Hates Boris for Brexit.
- Socially conservative but not racist
 - Thinks we should have more migrants to improve British culture and economy.
 - To the right of Labour Workington Man.
 - Values politeness and respect.
- Open to but distrustful of Labour
 - Has a Ford Focus and a dog.
 - Turned on the Tories in 2019.
 - Trusts that Labour will improve their capacity to manage the economy.

In April 2023, Labour Together under Simons published a report called [Red Shift](#) which argued that the Labour Party should target "Workington Man" in order to win an anticipated General Election.

It contended that the party could do so by holding its line on "social and cultural issues" by being "tough on crime", "exerting a firm grip over migration" while embracing the Union Jack and singing the national anthem at conference.

Red Shift described Workington Man as representative of a "patriotic left", but did not repeat the crude caricatures reflected in internal documents.

Together, the documents add to a growing body of evidence about serious misconduct at Labour Together under McSweeney's leadership.

"What is revealed makes the call for an independent inquiry into Labour Together overwhelming," John McDonnell, the Labour MP and former Shadow Chancellor, told *Declassified*.

Corbyn also reacted to the revelations, saying: "Here it is in black and white: a grand anti-democratic heist against a political party, from the many to the few. They don't need to answer to me. They should answer to the hundreds of thousands of ordinary members who wanted to build a real alternative to poverty, homelessness and war".

Labour Together is now called ThinkLabour. Think Labour, Josh Simons, Imran Ahmed and Morgan McSweeney were asked to comment.

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