



Polanski brands Burnham a "Blair tribute act"

Description

default watermark

Andy Burnham and Tony Blair - Zack Polanski called it a "Blair tribute act"

Andy Burnham appears set to take over from the outgoing Keir Starmer but Zack Polanski has some questions. Of course, Starmer stepping aside means Burnham is set to become the country's leader without proper scrutiny of what he has planned or how he intends to deliver it.

While Burnham's own words on this remain contradictory, we are starting to get an idea of what his government will look like. And Zack Polanski has responded as follows:

NEW: Zack Polanski has accused Andy Burnham of being a "Blair tribute act" over his move to hire top lobbyist and New Labour minister James Purnell

Purnell is boss of Flint Global, an elite advisory and lobbying firm set up by a former cabinet secretary

The Green Party leader?

by Ethan Shone (@EJShone93) [June 24, 2026](#)

Polanski is quite right

As *openDemocracy*'s Ethan Shone highlighted, [Burnham wants James Purnell to be his chief of staff](#). This is a problem for Burnham's reputation as "the man to end the privatisation nightmare", because Purnell is the CEO of a lobbying company that represents nightmarish private companies. This includes water conglomerates, by the way, which isn't a massive surprise, because

Burnham has been vague on whether he'll actually renationalise these failed companies

Some like *Novara's* Aaron Bastani are wondering if Burnham hired Purnell *despite* his corporate interests:

A chief of staff doesn't need to be totally ideologically aligned with a leader. Many good ones haven't been.

But they are gatekeepers to the person at the top, and this looks extremely bad.
pic.twitter.com/PVP5Pwl5YK

Aaron Bastani (@AaronBastani) [June 24, 2026](#)

We're leaning more towards the idea that Burnham exaggerated and/or lied about his interest in public ownership; all so he could sneak himself and his mates into 10 Downing Street [much like Keir Starmer did with his abandoned 10 Pledges](#)

Speaking of Starmer, Polanski [said this to openDemocracy](#)

It seems it's out with the old and in with the old. What is it about this Labour government that is so keen on bringing in corporate lobbyists into the heart of Downing Street?

This is starting to feel like a bit of a Blair and Starmer tribute act

He added:

So there can be no suspicion that James Purnell, a tireless campaigner for welfare cuts, is putting the interests of his clients above those of the people he's supposed to serve, a full list of Flint Global's clients must be published.

Links within links

The tributes to what came before don't end with Purnell. Much like the Starmer operation, Burnham is enmeshed with [Labour Friends of Israel](#) a foreign influence operation that exists to pursue Israel's interests via Labour Party politics:

The Labour Friends of Israel lobby group was one of the first to congratulate Andy Burnham after his by-election victory.

Within hours, LFI told Burnham: "We look forward to working with you."

David Sainsbury was seated at a "top table" during a key LFI fundraising dinner.

pic.twitter.com/O2qbtv8cdz

Jody McIntyre (@jodymcintyre_) [June 23, 2026](#)

Oh, and Purnell is linked to this group too. [As Skwawkbox reported for the Canary on 24 June](#)

Purnell was the [chairperson of parliamentary lobby group, Labour Friends of Israel \(LFI\)](#), for two years.

The former MP was also [DWP](#) secretary under Tony Blair and has been [described](#) as the architect of Labour's discriminatory "contributory principle" on benefits. He has argued against vital benefits such as the Winter Fuel Allowance and free bus passes, [dismissing](#) them as "freebies", and is linked to right-wing [Blue Labour](#).

His appointment is [widely criticised](#) for opponents of genocide and for anyone who is less well off and/or vulnerable.

default watermark

Copypcat

This isn't the first time Polanski has thrown around the "tribute act" accusation:

Thatcher said her greatest legacy was Tony Blair.

And now we've got Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves doing an even worse tribute act. [@TheGreenParty](#) say tax the super rich, nationalise our public services and strengthen workers rights.

Zack Polanski (@ZackPolanski) [March 19, 2024](#)

He's right to make the same accusation twice, because every PM since Thatcher has built their house on her wonky neoliberal foundations.

It isn't just Thatcher these politicians are paying tribute to either:

Was shocking to see Keir Starmer's Nigel Farage Tribute act this week.

Accusing Rishi Sunak of "losing control of the borders."

We'll always make the positive case for migration and why an inclusive society benefits everyone. <https://t.co/2y2jFH1G81>

â?? Zack Polanski (@ZackPolanski) [January 11, 2024](#)

After appointing Shabana Mahmood, Starmerâ??s Labour government doubled down on the Reform-lite politics. Itâ??s currently unclear if Burnham will continue down this path. As we reported, [Burnham went from criticising Mahmoodâ??s immigration policies to backing them](#) Now, heâ??s supposedly going to water them down:

 **NEW:** Andy Burnham is considering watering down Shabana Mahmood's immigration reforms

This includes ditching the retrospective reform for "Boriswave" migrants to wait 10 not 5 years for permanent residence

[@theipaper](#)

â?? Politics UK (@PoliticsUK) [June 23, 2026](#)

This sort of flip flopping shows why Burnham is going to [be anything other than a tribute to past administrations. He talks about doing things differently, but he crumbles when he faces opposition](#)

Thereâ??s an outside chance this could all be a good thing â?? say if Burnham pays tribute to the 1945 government that founded the NHS. We donâ??t have high hopes, though, going off the politicians heâ??s surrounded himself with.

The man is heaping handfuls of mud into a pot and telling us heâ??s cooking stew.

Featured image via the Canary

By [Willem Moore](#)

[Source link](#)

CATEGORY

- News

POST TAG

- act
- blair
- brands
- burnham

- 5. news
- 6. polanski
- 7. tribute

Category

- 1. News

default watermark