

15. I have been asked about the party's response to the Private Eye disclosures; if you knew Smith you would understand why no-one would raise the accusations with him. No-one would want to create that kind of enemy (note his response to my GE involvement, referred to above). I have no idea why no action was taken after the Private Eye article but then I was not around and perhaps Steel did discuss it with him, though Steel's natural tendency (in my view) would be to hide his head in the sand rather than get involved in a nasty confrontation.
16. I occasionally met friends in the party and from time to time heard references to 'Spanker Smith' but cannot recall specific instances. I know this nowhere meets the standard of being 'evidence', but frankly I doubt anyone was much surprised by the PE allegations. They just seemed to fit Smith. In answer to a question from you, I was not aware of any allegations about any other MPs, including Clement Freud and see no reason to believe this kind of activity was prevalent within the party. I was not aware of any allegations with respect to Clement Freud.

Other points

17. On another point, I was asked about how PPC's were selected in the 70s and 80s. Most in those days were selected as General Election candidates, not as possible MPs because they were not expected to win but willing to do the work. Then a by-election would arise and the party would find itself fielding someone it would not have chosen if it had known there was a chance of winning the seat - nearly half its MPs in those years became MPs via by-elections. A classic case was a by-election in Croydon soon after the SDP was set up; the party leadership wanted Shirley Williams to fight the seat but were stuck with a candidate who refused to withdraw. In my view, frankly there was a huge gulf between the hard working members of the party and especially its successful councillor movement and the MPs who occupied a separate universe and were concerned mainly with their individual survival. The parliamentary party was in those days a petty, disunited, and often bickering group with no clear strategy and attending it as Party President I was often deeply grateful the party as a whole did not have to witness its proceedings.

The Party Today

18. My references to the party and MPs are historical; I have no reason to believe they apply to today's party or its parliamentarians.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed: _____

DPA

Dated: _____

24/2/2019