

# U.K. Lecturer Fired For Making Admiring Comments About Jews

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Professor Stephen Lamonby

**In the U.K., a university lecturer** has been fired from his job for expressing, in a private conversation with a colleague, admiration of Jews for what he saw as their unusual talent in physics and mathematics.

The story is [here](#).

*A British university professor has been fired for, in part, saying that “Jewish people are the cleverest in the world.”*

*Stephen Lamonby, 73, a lecturer at Solent University in*

*Southampton, made the remarks in question during a meeting with another academic, the Daily Mail reported.*

These were comments made in a private conversation, not in a classroom. It was Lamonby's personal observation that Jews displayed special abilities in math and science. Why should anyone take offense?

*The other academic, Dr. Janet Bonar, said she had a degree in physics, and Lamonby asserted Jews had "a particular gift" in that field.*

*Bonar objected to this, to which Lamonby replied, "I believe that Jewish people are the cleverest in the world. They are much maligned because of it."*

Why did Dr. Bonar object? Was it because she disagreed that Jews had "a particular gift" in physics? Or was it because she did not think that any comments about "Jews" – or, presumably, any other ethnic or national group – was permissible in our hyper-vigilant woke societies?

Dr. Lamonby thinks, based on his lifetime of experience, that "Jewish people are the cleverest in the world." Is he not entitled to express this opinion, which is the very opposite of antisemitism? And when he adds "they are much maligned because of it," isn't it true that part of the "maligning" of Jews by some antisemites reflects their resentment that Jews are indeed perceived as "clever"?

Is there any evidence to support Lamonby's remark? How about the Nobel Prizes? Up until 2019, Jews – who constitute only 0.2 percent of the global population – should have won two Nobel Prizes. They have won 206.

That's 40 percent of the economics prizes, 30 percent of the prizes in medicine, 25 percent of those in physics, 20 percent of those in chemistry, 15 percent of those literature, and 10

percent of the peace prizes. There is no Nobel in mathematics, but three separate prizes for achievements in mathematics – the Fields Medal, the Abel Prize, and the Wolf Prize – are given. Of these, Jews have won 27% of the Fields Medals, 30% for the Abel Prize, and 40% for the Wolf Prize, again out of all proportion to their numbers.

Isn't Lamonby entitled to have taken note of that amazing over-representation of Jews as Nobel prizewinners in the sciences (medicine, physics, chemistry) and in mathematics (the Fields, Abel, and Wolf Prizes)? And isn't he further allowed to take note of his own experiences, over a lifetime of teaching, in coming across an unusual number of talented students, colleagues, and teachers in science and math who turned out to be Jews? Why is making this sympathetic observation unacceptable – so unacceptable, that he lost his job over it?

*“I asked if you were Jewish because of your ability with maths/physics etc., which is a specialty of theirs,” added Lamonby.*

His inquiry was meant innocently, and admiringly, but apparently taking note of ethnic and national differences in the fields people excel in is no longer to be allowed.

*Speaking at a disciplinary hearing, Lamonby said he was “excited to think she might be one of them – excited to meet a Jewish physicist, who had been my heroes since boyhood.”*

*He continued, “My comments were simply stating that, arising from my lifetime of experience, I have come to believe that certain nationalities have developed a higher level of skill in some areas.” Does anyone disagree with this observation?*

*“This is directly related to the level of exposure to criteria such as industry and education,” he stated. “This is not radical thinking; it is simply a view that reflects*

*environmental privilege in general terms."*

*Lamonby said he was using "positive stereotypes" and made similar observations about other groups, such as "Germans are good at engineering" and "the Japanese and the Americans are all good engineers in my opinion too."*

Is it terrible for Lamonby to harbor these thoughts? Are they beyond the pale? Should he lose his job for holding them?

*He also noted, "I have a soft spot for young black males. I do think that they are underprivileged and many without fathers etc. need all the help they can get."*

*Lamonby was dismissed for "gross misconduct."*

*At an employment tribunal following Lamonby's dismissal, Judge C.H. O'Rourke found, "While Mr. Lamonby sought to argue that his stereotyping (which it was) was positive, such 'positivity' is nonetheless potentially offensive to the recipient. A Jew told they are good at physics – because they are a Jew – may well consider that as demeaning their personal intellectual ability/hard work."*

Judge O'Rourke fails to see that there is a difference between Lamonby's expressing what he has noticed in his career – an unusual facility of Jews (students, colleagues, teachers) in science and mathematics – and what Lamonby most certainly did not do: ascribing any particular Jew's success in those fields, not to individual merit and hard work, but only to the fact of that person being a Jew. He is not "demeaning their [a Jewish scientist's or mathematician's] personal intellectual ability/hard work" in any way, but merely expressing his belief, based on observation, that Jews have shown an unusual talent for mathematics and physics. That does not take away from an individual's achievement. As Lamonby said at his hearing: "My comments were simply stating that, arising from

my lifetime of experience, I have come to believe that certain nationalities have developed a higher level of skill in some areas.”

Is it now impermissible to make such observations? Would it be offensive to state, for example, that French cuisine is unusually refined, that the French produce an unusual number of master chefs, and that this can be explained by how much attention is given in French culture to the art of cooking and to the celebration, with Michelin stars awarded to their restaurants, of chefs who occupy a prominent place in French culture, much different from the lesser position of cooks in, for example, the U.K. or in Germany or Russia? Or we might note that Italy has produced a great number of first-class opera singers, and that can be attributed not just to native talent, but to the role of music in Italian culture, including the early cultivation of talent (with instrumental music taught in Italian elementary schools). Is one not allowed to notice any of these national or ethnic differences, these differences in cultural emphases? Why? Are we to maintain the fiction that all ethnic and national groups are equally adept in all possible endeavors? Must we not notice, must we never comment on, the unusual number of Russians who can be found among the world’s best ballet dancers and chess grandmasters? And can’t we take note of the unusual number of Jews who have been outstanding scientists and mathematicians, without losing our jobs?

*“Secondly, it could also be simply grossly offensive, as the person may not actually be Jewish, but feel some characteristic is being ascribed to them,” O’Rourke added.*

Why would it be “grossly offensive” to ask someone with unusual abilities in science or mathematics whether that person might be Jewish, all the while explaining why the question was being asked? It was a friendly, even admiring, inquiry, not offensive in any way. No “characteristic” was

being ascribed to Jews save that of unusual talent in mathematics and physics. Lamonby was inquiring of Dr. Bonar (who is that uncommon thing, a female physicist), whether she was Jewish out of pure curiosity; he had noticed in his long career that many Jews were exceptionally talented in those fields and wondered whether she too might be Jewish, as further evidence for his hypothesis. It's hard to understand why she took such offense – she could simply have answered “No” – or why the university, prompted by her quite unnecessary complaint, made such a fuss and discharged Dr. Lamonby for his “gross misconduct.”

*The judge concluded, “Thirdly, even if they are Jewish, they may quite properly consider it none of Mr. Lamonby’s business.”*

If Dr. Bonar thought “it is none of Dr. Lamonby’s business” whether she was Jewish or not – he was merely wondering if she might offer one more example of what he had previously observed (that is, Jewish students and colleagues who displayed special talents in science and mathematics) – she need only have said so. For Dr. Bonar not to let the matter drop, but to make a formal complaint against Dr. Lamonby, which in the end led to his losing his livelihood, was a grotesque reaction, as was the opinion of Judge O’Rourke at the employment tribunal hearing. Dr. Lamonby was fired for “gross misconduct” – all because he dared to express his admiration for Jews, as being exceptionally “clever” and displaying unusual talent in math and science. Should we all be ordered never to generalize about any ethnic or national group? Here’s what we will not be allowed to say: “Russia produces the best ballerinas. France produces the best chefs. Kenya produces the best marathon runners. Norway produces the best skiers.” All strictly *verboten*. What about such statements, that one hears quite often nowadays, as “all whites are racists”? Curiously, that seems to be okay. No one making it would lose his job. But someone who objected to it

just might.

*Lamonby has claimed he was a victim of political correctness, saying, "You can't make any comments [in universities] now because they are totally obsessed with racism and to talk about Jews in the context of racism is crazy because they are not even a race, they are an ethnicity."*

*"Free speech is totally dead in universities," he declared.*

Certain kinds of speech are, however, still allowed. Speech that praises Jews may be "totally dead in universities," as Dr. Lamonby to his sorrow found out, but speech that denounces Jews in Israel as "colonial-settlers," "racists," and even "Nazis" (as in the claim that "Jews are doing to the Palestinians just what Nazis did to the Jews") is to be found on BDS-welcoming campuses all over the place.

That's where we stand today. Praise the Jews for intellectual achievements, in a private conversation, and you must now be prepared to lose your job for "gross misconduct." Denounce them for every sort of evil, and you will be invited to address the U.N. General Assembly, or to run for Congress, or to be quoted on social media by dozens of admirers, each with millions of followers. Moral topsy-turvydom. Get used to it.

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