

The Tory abuse of freedom

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As the [Guardian notes](#) this morning:

The director of public prosecutions is appealing to the supreme court in an ongoing and expensive battle to overturn the acquittal of two protesters found to have acted reasonably in calling Iain Duncan Smith "Tory scum".

The background to the case is that:

Ruth Wood, 52, and Radical Haslam, 30, were found not guilty in November 2022 of using threatening, abusive or insulting words or behaviour with intent after a two-day trial in Manchester magistrates court.

They had been outside the Midland hotel in Manchester, where the Conservative party annual conference was taking place in October 2021 [and....] separately called him "Tory scum". Wood added: "Fuck off out of Manchester."

As was noted in court:

Wood had successfully defended her comments on the grounds that her job working with homeless people in her local community meant she felt very strongly about the impact Conservative party policies were having on people's lives. Duncan Smith was the work and pensions secretary from 2010 to 2016.

Haslam's comments were made in a speech in which he cited child poverty, homelessness and a lack of action over the climate emergency as reasons "why people hate you, why people call you scum". He added: "It doesn't come out of nowhere. It comes from what you have done to ordinary people's lives ... shame on you, Tory scum."

As the Guardian then notes:

In clearing the two protesters, Judge Goldspring, who is also described as the chief magistrate, had noted that "the use of Tory scum was to highlight the policies" of

Duncan Smith and that this was relevant to the “reasonableness of the conduct” in relation to the rights of freedom of expression and assembly.

Goldspring added: “The use of those words did not amount to an offence, as in the circumstances it was reasonable.”

The government sought a judicial review of the decision. It was found that the decision involved no fault in law.

So they are now going to the Supreme Court to try to overturn these decisions and make it a crime to call a Tory minister 'scum'.

They justify this by saying:

We have a duty to ensure that that we understand the reasoning of a court so that we can correctly apply any considerations to future cases and charging decisions. This appeal was pursued because what is required, for all concerned, is clarity and certainty.

There is a technical description for that, which is it is drivel (other words could be used).

The reality is that the Tories want to limit free speech.

The courts would not do it.

Making a justified claim that the Tories are scum is clearly a legal thing to do.

Unless you are a Tory minister, of course, whose aim here is to politicise the Supreme Court, whatever the outcome. Which looks like the actions of Tory enemies of free speech to me.