

GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE

LMc/jlf

2 May 2013

To: ALL UNITE MPs

PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL

Dear Colleague,

You will be aware of the recent media coverage regarding my interview with the New Statesman and I am conscious that many of you will be concerned.

It is important, therefore, for me to clarify (in your mind) the content and context of the interview and to go beyond the Editor's lurid headlines.

My interview lasted 1¼ hours and covered a range of subjects, but the journalist in question has chosen to portray one part of it in a way that distorts the intent. The wider media, especially the right wing press, have seized upon this distortion to make a number of accusations.

For the record, I did not call for the "sacking of Blairites" from the Shadow Cabinet, either explicitly or implied. (Please see attached copy of letter to the Editor of the New Statesman). **In fact, I emphasised that it is up to Ed to choose his cabinet, no one else.**

The reference to Jim Murphy, Douglas Alexander and Liam Byrne was from the standpoint of 'critical friends'.

Those individuals are extremely competent and articulate politicians who happen to believe and promote an ideological position, within the Party, which I disagree with. They have every legitimate right to argue for their views, just as I have every right to disagree and present an alternative Unite view. They are not enemies and it is regrettable that the **over reaction** has given substance to our real enemies. I don't recall such a rebuke for those grandees in the Party who have sought to put the left "back in their box".

If I was seeking to expel or exclude individuals from the Party, then my actions would indeed have been "reprehensible", but I was not. I come from the pluralist traditions of the Party, respecting the right of everyone to express their opinions. Remember, I was the left union general secretary that was opposed to "expelling" Progress from the Party.

My intention was to seek to balance the arguments that have been emanating from the right of the Party in recent weeks with powerful figures, including Tony Blair, seeking to persuade Ed Miliband to reject overtures from the Left looking to adopt a more radical approach.

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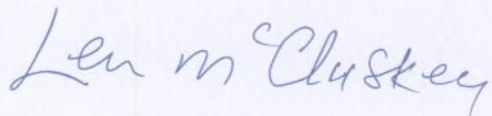
Again, I have no problem with them trying to exert influence, but again, I have an obligation to counterbalance on behalf of Unite members.

My support for Ed Miliband is well documented. I believe Ed has done an excellent job in, what is, the most difficult task in politics, i.e., leading the Labour Party. Like you, I will be working to get him into Number 10 in 2015, but all of us will, no doubt, in our own way, seek to influence the programme we will fight on as it takes shape over the next 12-18 months.

The Unite Executive expects nothing less of me as part of Unite's political strategy. A strategy that should be welcomed, given that it is rooted in "Refounding Labour", seeking to energise more of our activists to join the party at grassroots level.

I accept that all of us, including me, need to be careful over the next two years that we don't play into the hands of our enemies, but this cannot preclude genuine debate over the best direction for a Labour victory. Disagreement does not mean disloyalty, and I would urge everyone in the Party to check facts first, before dancing to the tune of the media.

Yours in unity,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Len McCluskey". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

LEN McCLUSKEY
General Secretary

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GENERAL SECRETARY'S OFFICE

LMc/PD/jlf

2 May 2013

Jason Cowley
Editor, New Statesman

via email: jason.cowley@newstatesman.com

Dear Jason,

It is with deep disappointment that I write to you as editor of the *New Statesman*. I certainly am not in the habit of writing to the media but in this instance I cannot let matters pass without correction.

You will be very aware of the controversy that followed publication of my interview with your magazine last week. While I have no doubt that the ensuing storm helped to reclaim the *New Statesman's* role as one of our premier political publications, I do have serious concerns that your reputation is being established on the back of confected controversy.

You see, neither the headline for the interview - "**Len McCluskey: the Unite leader declares war on the Blairites**" - nor the write up bear true testimony to the conversation the journalist, George Eaton, and I actually had. The subsequent write up was a distortion and with distortion comes dangers - for the truth, for Unite and its members, and for Ed Miliband and his job as leader.

The interview went on for 75 minutes ranging over a variety of issues. However, it was only towards the end that George himself turned the conversation to certain members of the shadow cabinet. Looking back, I can see that George was intent on a particular story and was not leaving until he had this story; that of an 'attack' by me on the so-called Blairites in Ed Miliband's cabinet.

But let me make clear: at no point in the interview did I make the call for Ed Miliband to 'sack all Blairites'. At no time did I call for anybody to be sacked. To do so would have been arrogant in the extreme and an insult to Ed's leadership - I simply would not have made these calls.

The article also said, again wrongly, that my contempt for Tony Blair was obvious, and that I used the term 'Blairites' as a pejorative. For the record, both are untrue. When I use the term 'Blairite' it is as an identification; **I hold no contempt for Tony Blair**. He was, and is, a consummate politician who led the Labour party to an historic, three consecutive victories. However, despite those landslide victories he failed to shift the balance of political and economic power in favour of working people (the very purpose of the Labour party), and, as such, must live with the criticism that is borne out of disillusionment.

I fully understand that journalists have their job to do, but distorting the intent of the interview and misrepresenting me in order to create a more lurid story should play no part in this.

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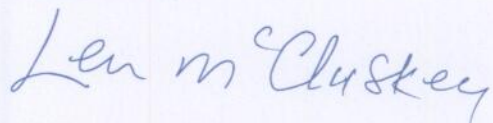
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Sadly, this is the second time that the *New Statesman* has sensationalised articles by or with me to generate controversy. In February this year, you headlined an article by me "***The Blairite zombies need to face up to Labour's failure***". The clear inference of that headline is that I used the derogatory term 'zombies' to describe former Labour Cabinet members within the piece that followed. Again, at no point in this lengthy piece - which restated the comradely values of our movement - did I use this term, or any other personal assault, so its inclusion in your headline can only have been with the express intention of distorting my comments.

We have now arrived at a situation where Unite will regard all approaches from the *New Statesman* with deep suspicion. While I do not expect nor ask for any special treatment from any journalist, nor do I expect to encounter the over-blown excitability, usually associated with the right wing press, from journals with whom we share common values either.

Our media needs the *New Statesman*. I sincerely hope that we can find a sensible way of working together in the future, one that supports you in the intelligent critique of our politics and provides a true reflection of the work of Unite and my views as its leader.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Len McCluskey". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

LEN McCLUSKEY
General Secretary