

GS/JF

28 September 2017

Clive Lewis MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

GMB

SCOTLAND

Dear Mr Lewis

Energy & Defence Sector Employment

I am writing to you on behalf of GMB in Scotland, responding to your recent reported comments at the Labour Party conference about our union, and the industries where we represent members and fight for the interests of working people.

I believe that where such erroneous and anti-trade union and anti-working class statements are made they cannot be left unchallenged as they can act as a corrosive influence on wider attitudes to the collective organisation of workers.

As a Labour MP and someone who is meant to understand the value of working people voluntarily coming together to advance their interests, I am staggered that you chose to attack our members and the work we do before availing yourself of the relevant facts.

For information, in the nuclear industry it was, sadly, a Labour Government that privatised the decommissioning element. A direct consequence of this has been a bill to tax payer that has gone through the roof and it has invariably fallen to GMB to expose the colossal mismanagement and financial scandals that have blighted this industry ever since.

At Dounreay in Scotland it is our union that has challenged the private contractor who currently manages the site on below inflation pay offers, safety and job cuts, which threaten to have a huge impact in what is an isolated rural community. The local economy in Caithness, and the community and people that it supports, are very different from bustling metropolis where our political elite congregate.

Some basic research on our work would have shown you that GMB has publicly stated our support for renewables as part of a wider balanced energy policy. However, we have been rightly critical of an industry that sucks up billions in taxpayer funded subsidies but has, in return, produced little in the way of jobs for the people in Britain.

GMB SCOTLAND – PROTECTING YOU AT WORK

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Scotland is no different from the rest of the UK in seeing the high value manufacturing work around renewables being undertaken abroad; turbines produced in Denmark or Germany, shipped on Dutch barges and connected with Chinese cables.

This is an industry that needs to get its act together and start delivering for the working people of our country. Instead of a 'jobs bonanza' from renewables, working class communities and our people in Scotland have been stuck with paying billions of pounds in public subsidies through a flat tax on their energy bills, with the poorest being hit hardest. A subsidy that effectively ends up in the pockets of hedge funds, big landowners and big energy companies.

Furthermore, I wish you had assembled the full facts before making your comments on the defence sector. Let me share with you what the real world looks like here in Scotland. We have members undertaking vital national work at Faslane, Rosyth and at the Upper Clyde, all working in jobs that are skilled and unionised.

All of these yards depend on defence related work and each contribute millions in wages to the local economy, enabling families and communities to prosper. The enclosed report, 'The Defence Sector in Scotland', Commissioned by GMB Scotland and produced by the University of Strathclyde's Fraser of Allandar Institute, shows the massive economic and employment contribution of the defence sector to the Scottish economy and wider society.

Our union is vocal in support of defence manufacturing in Scotland, and we make no apology for this. We fight to defend our members jobs and interests. That's why people voluntarily join our union and we look forward to doing this on behalf of those in other workplaces, businesses and sectors who do not currently belong to a union.

Defence manufacturing is also one of the last bastions of quality manufacturing left in the country and we must not let them disappear, as has happened to so many others before them, because the effect on Scottish working people, their families and communities would be disastrous.

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In your position as a Labour Member of Parliament I would have hoped that at the very least you would have got your facts straight before making your comments. You should know that we consider your attacks on our union to be offensive to our members and our union here in Scotland.

You are of course welcome to come visit us in Scotland. You can meet our activists from the energy and defence sectors. You can hear about the importance of their employment and you can see the consequences of generations of political failure on working class communities in Scotland, where the scars of Thatcherism still run deep.

As you well know, the Labour movement has never had the luxury of being able to pick and choose it's battles and if the Labour Party it is to return to government both at Westminster and Holyrood, it cannot possibly hope to do by playing fast and loose with the livelihoods of jobs and skills that our economies cannot do without.

Yours sincerely



GARY SMITH
GMB SCOTLAND SECRETARY