

The real gold medals we should be aiming for

In a recent Guardian interview which went on line ([link below](#)) the prospect of protest during the Olympic Games was raised. This caused a media firestorm with the BBC running hourly updates as prominent individuals were wheeled out to denounce such a thought.

The usual suspects were there of course, with the Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg declaring himself to be “gobsmacked” and appalled, while the Prime Minister declared I was unpatriotic and even raised the matter in the House of Commons at Prime Minister’s Question Time.

I would dismiss Nick Clegg’s protestations as being irrelevant from a man who has “appalled” many people, including his own Liberal Democrats members by betraying the essence of what the Liberal Democrats have historically stood for and joined in the attacks on the very fabric of our society, leaving those great liberals Keynes and Beveridge turning in their graves!

I am also not moved by the use of “patriotism” by the Prime Minister. Was it not Samuel Johnson who reminded us that “*patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel*”? But, I can understand that there may be decent people who are unsure or confused by the hype around my remarks.

The question raised in the Guardian interview about the Olympics was, perhaps, deliberately to provoke a controversial response, but I was happy to oblige. It gave me the opportunity to juxtapose the image of the Olympics with Government Officials and the Corporate Elite welcoming the world to this wonderful nation capable of staging a magnificent event, against the real Britain of the Coalition which is intent on attacking working people at every level, not just Public Sector workers but all workers.

Attacking our communities, withdrawing services for young, old, vulnerable – all on the pretext of sorting out a deficit in the nation’s budget that ordinary workers did not cause; whilst the real culprits – the bankers, the corporate giants, the spivs and speculators – are allowed to continue with their obscene bonus culture.

The truth about Len’s interview

“It gave me the opportunity to remind people that we are fighting for our heritage... remember, it was our parents and grandparents who, having defeated the evils of fascism in Europe, came home determined to build a land fit for heroes... they built the Welfare State; they created the NHS and gave us universal education.”

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It gave me the opportunity to remind people that we are fighting for our heritage. Remember, it was our parents and grandparents who, having defeated the evils of fascism in Europe, came home determined to build a land fit for heroes. They built the Welfare State; they created the NHS and gave us universal education. All of that is now being attacked by this government with its millionaire cabinet. And **we have to stand up and fight them.** I don't want my children and grandchildren asking "why didn't you do anything when they took away our birth right?"

The most precious and valued part of all our lives, the National Health Service, is about to be privatised before our very eyes. American healthcare and insurance companies are rubbing their hands already counting the dollars and like vultures ready to pounce. If we allow it, it won't be long before stories of tens of thousands, even millions of people, not being covered by any health insurance just like the 50 million people in the USA.

- **I want people to get angry and I want people to feel confident that by working together we can change this government's mind.**
- **YES, of course I want a successful Olympics, but much more than a feel good fortnight. I want a feel good Britain all the year round.**
- **I want our Health Service to be protected.**
- **I want our kids to have a good education.**
- **I want investment in our communities.**
- **I want dignity for our senior citizens.**
- **I want the one million young people who are currently out of work with no prospect of a future, given hope.**
- **I want the super-rich and corporate companies to pay their taxes like the rest of us instead of robbing £40 billion each year through tax avoidance.**
- **I want that money to be used to put people back to work in manufacturing and the construction of much needed affordable homes.**

These are the gold medals I want us to aim for. And like all true Olympians it means standing up, standing firm, working hard, being strong and not being cowed or afraid.

Our nations can be great and there is a better world to strive for.

In solidarity



Len McCluskey
General Secretary

Read Len's interview in full here: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2012/feb/28/len-mccluskey-unions-london-olympics/print>