



Rt Hon David Cameron MP
Leader of the Conservative Party

Swinton
Mexborough

Tuesday, 29th September 2009

Dear [redacted]

I am writing on behalf of David Cameron to thank you very much for your recent letter, regarding comments made by Roger Helmer MEP about homophobia.

First of all, I would like to make it absolutely clear that David Cameron is deeply opposed to homophobia in all its forms. Bigotry and prejudice are completely unacceptable and wrong. There is no place for intolerance in our society, and I am enclosing a copy of the speech David Cameron gave at an event celebrating gay pride earlier this summer which explains why we think this is so.

The remarks you refer to in your letter were made by Mr. Helmer in an entirely personal capacity, on his personal website, and they are in no way the official position of the Conservative Party. Over the past four years we have worked hard to change the way the Conservative Party thinks about and represents our diverse society. At the next election we shall be fielding many excellent candidates from all backgrounds and from all walks of life. Our focus today is on working to build a stronger, fairer and more responsible society, and making sure that people are treated equally, as part of one nation, is at the heart of that.

I do hope you find this reply reassuring – and thank you, again, for getting in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Edward Young". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'E'.

Edward Young
Office of the Leader of the Opposition

STOURBRIDGE GAY PRIDE EVENT

30 June 2009

INTRODUCTION

It's really great to be here with you all this evening, and with our candidate, Margot James.

I hope you all get a chance to speak to Margot tonight.

I think you'll all become believers in a big way.

The thing about Margot is that the longer you spend with her, the more convinced you are that she's exactly what our country needs.

I think she'll make a brilliant MP.

GAY PRIDE

I also want to thank Gay Pride for their support this evening.

Your movement has come a long way over the past forty years.

It started with a small group of people in New York City, standing up to injustice and inequality.

Now thousands of people come together every year to celebrate the gay community and equal rights.

Part of that is about our society changing - about more and more people saying that bigotry is wrong.

But a big part of it is about you – the gay and lesbian community.

Your courage in combating prejudice...

...your determination to be treated equally...

...and your pride in who you are.

You've changed the way this country thinks.

And you should be proud of what you have achieved.

CONSERVATIVES

Just think if ten years ago a Conservative Candidate had suggested holding a fundraiser as part of Gay Pride week...

...I'm not sure they'd have got many Conservatives to attend...

...and I'm not sure there would have been many gay people there either.

But here we are this evening, standing side by side.

It's a sign of how our society is changing.

It's a sign of how much the Conservative Party has changed.

We are now closer to where we should be – a Party which says, yes, we are all part of one nation, and we want to bring people together, not drive them apart.

So we've opened up our selection process, we've brought in new people, and we're going to keep knocking down those barriers which stop people from being treated equally.

I was the first Party Leader to appoint a Muslim woman to a Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet.

Two of my closest colleagues in the Shadow Cabinet are openly gay.

And at the next election our candidates will be more diverse and representative than ever – if we win that election, instead of 17 Conservative women MPs there will be closer to 60.

So whether you're black or white, rich or poor, gay or straight, you can feel at home in the Conservative Party today.

I'm proud of that moment, in my first Party Conference as Leader, when I said that commitment isn't just something for a man and a woman – but for a woman and a woman, or a man and a man.

I'm proud that I said it – and I'm proud of my Party for applauding me.

But I completely accept that this has not been a straight line or a quick journey.

And I know that I have not myself been the first to reach some of the right conclusions.

But the most important lessons I've learned...

...and they are lessons I've learned from trying to achieve greater equality, rather than just talk about it...

...are that words are not enough, positive action is required.

Getting more women candidates so that the conversation within our Party is more like the conversation we need to have with the country as a whole...

...getting more black and Asian candidates so that you can reach into and represent every part of the country...

...and yes, getting more gay and lesbian MPs...

...requires positive action – not discrimination – but positive action.

Saying we need equality of opportunity, opening the door, and inviting people to join only takes us so far.

Because, for example, an open door is not exactly inviting to a young black candidate if all they see is a group of white, middle-aged Conservative men inside.

So what we need is positive action to change selection processes, to go out and find talented people, to use the appointments we can make to make a positive point.

This really matters, because it's a simple truth that if you can't see people like you in the Party, it's hard to see yourself truly being a part of it.

The second thing I have learned is that in reforming the Party the strongest arguments aren't just those about equality, they also more conservative ones – like the fact that there should be no limit to your ability to succeed according to your talents.

There's no point in talking about merit and opportunity if they are only going to apply to certain parts of our society. We need to make sure they hold true everywhere.

And the final and most important argument is the oldest one of all: we are a One Nation Party, and we believe in building a better society for everyone.

But we can't claim to be a One Nation Party if we exclude people. We can't claim to be a One Nation Party unless we make sure our candidates, our Shadow Cabinet, the whole of our Party is representative of the country as a whole.

PROTECTING RIGHTS, REWARDING RESPONSIBILITY

So we've come along way.

But we would be kidding ourselves if we thought there wasn't still a long way to go.

And that's not just for the Conservative Party, but for the whole country.

Because the fight for the proper respect which comes from genuine equality has to continue.

In a society which is always changing, the struggle for respect and fairness never ends.

It's important that we are honest about this.

It's important that we understand what it means.

Looking back, there's no doubt that Tony Blair's Government made major advances in terms of legislating for gay equality...

...lifting the ban on gays in the military...

...equalizing the age of consent...

...and of course the Civil Partnerships Act.

These were big changes – and they were the right thing for our society.

But it's not just legislation we need. The gay community also want to see cultural change.

They want to stop the snide comments they get in the pub...

...the slurs that follow them around at the workplace...

... the sniping in the press.

Legislation won't stop this.

We need to change people's attitudes.

Changing our culture, changing people's attitudes; these are some of the great challenges for public policy today.

There is no easy way of doing it – but it's those who shape our culture who have got to take responsibility...

...convey the right message and set the right signals.

That starts with government.

But we also need other leaders in our society to give out the right message as well.

We need business leaders to stamp out all bigotry in the workplace...

... most of all, we need those who shape our culture – music producers, magazine editors – to take more responsibility over the material they release.

CONCLUSION

That's what I mean by social responsibility.

That's the kind of change we need today.

That's the kind of change the new, compassionate Conservative Party understands.

And together, as politicians and individuals, we can bring about that change.

No to bigotry and prejudice.

Yes to responsibility and equal rights.

It's a change worth fighting for.