

7 June 2011

Dear

**Letter from the Board of Deputies of British Jews**

A number of UCU branches have copied to me a letter from the President of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, dated 1 June 2011, which seems to have been sent to all vice-chancellors.

The Board of Deputies and Jewish Leadership Council wrote to me in similar terms on 25 May. The letter was prompted by an upcoming debate at our annual Congress on the subject of a 'working definition' of anti-Semitism that was produced by the European Union Monitoring Commission in 2005.

I replied to the letter on 27 May. I said that whatever the outcome of the debate, it would not affect the union's complete and implacable opposition to anti-Semitism itself. The UCU has consistently expressed its abhorrence of anti-Semitism and all forms of racism and will continue to do so.

Speakers in the debate, including National Executive Committee members, made that position absolutely clear.

I ended my letter by expressing my wish to meet with the Board and Council to hear their views and advice. I am in the process of setting up such a meeting.

On 27 May 2011 the Board and Council wrote to the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission. I have not seen that letter, but I am enclosing a copy of the response from Trevor Phillips.

You will note his statement that:

*'...neither we nor the EUMC has ever considered the EUMC's working definition to be wholly definitive; therefore its retention or abandonment should not be seen as an indication of what should be regarded as anti-racist or anti-Semitic conduct.'*

He goes on to emphasise the importance of the principles established in the Macpherson Report into the death of Stephen Lawrence.

In my letter to the Board and Council I pointed out that the UCU's predecessor unions, AUT and NATFHE, were among the first to endorse the recommendations of the Macpherson Report, particularly its definition of racist incidents and of institutional racism. UCU has carried forward that commitment and I am very happy to take the opportunity to reiterate it now.

In his letter, Trevor Phillips suggests that we discuss with him the outcome of our debate at Congress. I hope to set up a meeting with him shortly.

If you have any concerns or questions about any of the matters raised by the President of the Board of Deputies, please let me know. I am copying this letter to the chair/president of your local UCU branch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sally Hunt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Sally Hunt  
General Secretary