

Sacking of youngest MP as Lib Dem youth spokesperson criticised

Friday 21st December – for immediate release

Nick Clegg's dramatic sacking of Parliament's youngest MP, 27 year old Jo Swinson, as Lib Dem youth spokesperson has been fiercely criticised.

Swinson was sacked having only had the youth spokesperson role for five months. 56 year old Lynne Featherstone was announced as her replacement in the same week that Clegg appointed 59 year old musician Brian Eno to advise him on youth issues.

Liberal Democrat Youth and Students (LDYS) have failed to stand up to Nick Clegg over the sacking - despite Swinson having worked closely with LDYS and been a previous chair of the organisation.

Omar Salem, chair of London Young Labour, said:

"Despite being a member of a different political party, I actually feel pretty sorry for Jo Swinson. Being an MP and party spokesperson at only 27 doubtless holds particular challenges. Young people taking on such positions deserve and need the support of their party. It's a pity for all young people - regardless of political affiliation - that Nick Clegg chose to sack Swinson rather than give her a proper run at the job. Jo Swinson and all young people deserve better from Nick Clegg."

"Liberal Democrat Youth and Students don't have anything to say about Swinson's sacking and are refusing to stand up to Nick Clegg on the issue. In fact, they have put out a press release welcoming the new Lib Dem front bench team without even thanking Jo Swinson for her work over the last 5 months!"

"Clegg's appointment of Brian Eno simply perpetuates the stereotype that the only way to engage young people in politics is to celebritise it."

The decision has also been criticised by well-known Lib Dem blogger James Graham who said the sacking "seems like a particularly harsh, and illogical, demotion". He also described the appointment of Lynne Featherstone as "a bit tokenistic".

Further information:

Omar Salem on 0774 761 0243 or chair@londonyounglabour.org.uk

Notes:

1. London Young Labour is the youth wing of the Labour party in London and has over 2,500 members aged 15-26. More information on London Young Labour is available at www.londonyounglabour.org.uk
2. Jo Swinson was appointed as Lib Dem youth spokesperson on 3 July 2007 by Ming Campbell. She was sacked by Nick Clegg and replaced by Lynne Featherstone on 20 December 2007.
3. Jo Swinson supported Nick Clegg in the Lib Dem leadership contest.
4. Up until at least 6.30pm on Friday 21 December 2007, The Lib Dem Youth and Student (LDYS) website included a press release on the new Lib Dem front bench team that did not mention or even thank Jo Swinson:
<http://www.ldys.org.uk/news/welcome-nick-clegg/>
5. Lib Dem blogger James Graham criticises sacking of Swinson:
<http://www.theliberati.net/quaequamblog/2007/12/20/shadow-cabinet-whos-up-whos-down-and-who-should-be/>