

## **Ed Miliband speech at the Third Sector Review launch event - 15<sup>th</sup> May**

I want to start by saying how delighted I am to be here today as the minister for the third sector.

And I want to use the opportunity of my remarks to say how I see my role, talk about the new Office of the Third Sector which will be based in the Cabinet Office, where I shall be working to Hilary Armstrong, the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and touch on what I see as some of the key challenges facing us together including in this cross-cutting review.

But I also want to emphasise that I come here – as befits someone in office for a week---mainly to listen and learn from all of you gathered here. Indeed that is the whole spirit of today's event with the workshops across so many varied aspects of the third sector's work.

After such a short time in post, I am not coming along today to tell you what it is that needs to be done. Instead I want to reflect on why I am so pleased to have been given such an important job and what some of the challenges might be that we can address together.

As some of you may have gathered, I was brought up in quite a political household. Not simply political in the sense that politics was seen as important, but in the sense that I was taught that the injustices, the unfairness of society were not inevitable – and could be addressed by politics. Moreover, the atmosphere of our household was such that there was a sense of responsibility to tackle these injustices. Not necessarily by going into politics directly ---although that is what I have done---but in some form or other.

I am thrilled to be doing this job because it seems to me that what unites the third sector, the hundreds of thousands of diverse organisations, is precisely that their guiding ethos is about making society fairer, more just and more cohesive. In my first week in the job, two different events have brought this home to me.

Last Monday, I attended the launch of V, which, following the Russell Commission, will seek to build further the culture of youth volunteering. Along with the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I took part in a dazzling opening event. Dazzling because it was run and presented by the brilliant youngsters of V20, the youth advisory board, who brought home their excitement and passion about V and the way it could transform the lives of young volunteers and their communities.

Then on Wednesday evening, I was fortunate to be presenting the Edge/New Statesman Social Enterprise awards. The remarkable social entrepreneurs gathered at that event were an inspiration. We honoured organisations as diverse as Hoxton Apprenctice, transforming the lives of the young unemployed in Britain and Amy Carter whose eco-tourism social enterprise is transforming the living standards of villagers in Mozambique and safeguarding the environment.

So from volunteering to public service delivery, from advocacy through to social enterprise, from the largest charities to the smallest community groups, I believe the third sector represents a set of deeply held and important values. Values which say we are part of a wider community and that we have a responsibility to leave the world a better place than we found it.

But there is something else as we meet here today compared to twenty or even ten years ago. While there is a new individualism that is here to stay from the 1980s, there is also a new sense of altruism which co-exists alongside it. The individuals I met last week may be exceptional but there are millions of individuals up and down the country like them who are part of third sector organisations.

From the 20 million volunteers who do something for their community every year to the remarkable Make Poverty History and emerging mass environmental movement, to the social entrepreneurs and charities and heroic voluntary organisations, my observation would be that the values of great third sector organisations are becoming again the mainstream values of our society. The sense that we owe obligations to each other, that we must put something back into society, that we are not isolated individuals.

Here though is the paradox. At the same time as this sense of optimism and altruism that permeates many communities and people in our country, there is also among others a sense of alienation, hopelessness and atomisation. A view not only that politics is without relevance but also that life can be without purpose or meaning.

Every day in every way, third sector organisations are fighting the sense of alienation and hopelessness with the spirit of hope and justice. But we should acknowledge the battle and part of my job is to ask what government can do to support you, the forces of hope?

Partnership is an over-used word, but in this area, it happens to be true. The third sector can make a difference in ways government cannot: in the ways it reaches out to excluded communities, builds the confidence and abilities of those who volunteer, strengthens trust and provides innovative solutions to the new problems that society faces. And in that process, the third sector can build social capital and provide voice for its communities in ways government often cannot.

Government for its part has a responsibility to build equitable, excellent and accountable services and a fairer, more just society. It cannot do it on its own and must work closely in partnership with the third sector, including by ensuring you have the conditions and support to make a difference in the many diverse ways that you can. What that does not mean in my view is government abdicating its own responsibilities to properly fund services and trying to make the third sector pick up the pieces. True partnership means both government and third sector accepting respective responsibilities.

What I hope is that both the changes announced just over a week ago and the cross-cutting review we are launching today offer an opportunity for government and third sector to work together more effectively and tackle the shared challenges our society faces.

So let me say something about the changes announced in responsibilities within government.

The new Office of the Third Sector will bring together the current work from across Government, including from within the Active Communities Directorate of the Home Office and the Social Enterprise Unit of the DTI.

The opportunity this represents is that for the first time, there will be a dedicated office co-ordinating the work done on the third sector and a minister for the third sector, whose primary responsibilities lie in working with the sector. Furthermore,

with the work on the third sector now being done at the centre of government, it puts your work at the heart of the Government, reflecting the way in which the sector has such a great impact on so many parts of our national life.

The establishment of an Office of the Third Sector goes along with a recognition of how diverse the sector is in its needs and interests. We know that the issues and priorities facing a large social enterprise are dramatically different from those facing a small community organisation. We want to ensure that this will be reflected fully in the approach of the new office and we will be involving those with expertise and experience in the diverse parts of the sector in all aspects of our work.

I want also to emphasise that the establishment of the new office does not somehow imply that only the Cabinet Office is now responsible for working with you. Quite the opposite. Every department is and must be a 'third sector' department. We in the Cabinet Office will be co-ordinators, and deliverers in certain areas, but with the increased role the third sector plays in so many areas, every department is directly concerned with the third sector.

The Treasury because of its role in tax and public spending, working through its new Unit on Charity and Third Sector Finance. The new Communities and Local Government department, working with local government to embed the role of third sector organisations in communities and decision-making at local and regional level. The Department of Trade and Industry with its business and consumer functions, serving social enterprises and working with other third sector organisations. And so on through every government department.

Therefore in the Cabinet Office one of our responsibilities will be to work with colleagues across every government department on third sector issues. Every government department must weigh up a whole series of issues in making decisions. I see part of my job as trying to make sure the interests and needs of the third sector--as part of the government's overall approach—are central in those decisions. My aim: to be a voice across government for the third sector.

To be that voice, I need to properly understand the interests and requirements of the very diverse sector that you represent. That is why over the coming weeks and months I want to meet and listen to as many and as diverse as possible a range of representatives from the sector not just to discuss the key issues that face you but also how the Office can best operate to meet your needs.

As I go about the process of engaging with you, I also want to emphasise that the important work of government on the issues that matter to you will be a priority. We aim to bring the Charities Bill back to the House of Commons as soon as possible so that it can subsequently become law, after its long process of scrutiny and examination. We will continue our drive to invest in the development of the sector, including through Futurebuilders and Capacity Builders. Public service delivery and social enterprise action plans will be published.

The cross-cutting review also offers the chance not just to address immediate concerns, but to work together on setting out and then implementing a long-term vision for the role the sector can play in our society.

This afternoon, Treasury colleagues will be saying a little more about how the cross-cutting review will fit into the overall spending review process. But I want to pick out some of the key issues that I think we need to address. Many of the diverse

challenges are reflected in the workshops that we are holding today. Let me pick out five that seem to loom large.

First, empowering citizens. This speaks precisely to the issue I have raised about alienation and atomisation. When I look at my own constituency of Doncaster North, I know that part of the problem is that on issues large and small people feel a sense of powerlessness and futility. Sometimes this requires more responsive public agencies, but often a lot can be achieved by third sector organisations reaching out and working with individuals who feel vulnerable and disempowered. But how can we facilitate the spread of good practice more widely? Whether it is the young people who want a better youth space and find they cannot access the funds or the older people who want better community transport to take them where they want to go, how can they be empowered? Much of this will depend on getting the relationship right at the local level, where our work with the new Department of Communities and Local Government will be important.

Secondly, public service delivery. I think we should be clear about the reasons for the use of the third sector in aspects of delivery: it is about helping improve the service and also spread good and innovative practice. There are many examples where the third sector's innovation, user engagement and ability to reach out has proved its worth, for example through the New Deal and in work with young offenders. The government has already taken some important steps towards tackling barriers to the work of third sector organisations but I know that there is more to do.

Thirdly, volunteering. Volunteering creates a relationship between individuals and communities who would often never meet each other. Millions of people volunteer in our country but how can we expand the reach of volunteering to reach across communities, sectors, age groups and background? How can we build social cohesion and community among young and old, different faiths, different classes with volunteering and mentoring? How can we foster a sense of responsibility among all who have succeeded in life that they should give something back?

Fourthly, enterprise and innovation. Britain has fantastic social entrepreneurs---at the cutting edge of doing businesses, involving a more diverse workforce, bringing into business those who may never have thought of themselves as entrepreneurs, thousands of businesses, hundreds of thousands of workers, contributing billions to GDP. But how can we move to the next level, from work on social enterprise education in schools to issues of finance and the opening of new markets for social enterprises? How can we help those social enterprises who have been very successful in the start up phase widen their scope and grow their businesses to reach to a wider range of people and places? And across the third sector, what can we do to help foster the innovation and dynamism that exists in so many charities, voluntary and community organisations?

These first four challenges cover some of the important outcomes we seek to achieve together. But I also know that achieving these outcomes partly rests on making progress on a fifth challenge---improving the resource base of the sector.

I think it is widely acknowledged that the Compact was an important step forward in improving the certainty and clarity of what the third sector could expect in terms of funding. But I know that there remain issues to be addressed around full cost recovery and the many sources from which funding arrives. Today we are taking a step forward by publishing revised guidance to statutory funders. I am not promising magic solutions but I know this needs to continue to be looked at, building on the Compact.

These are some first impressions which will evolve over the coming weeks and months. What I do know is that the answers to the challenges must come from you in this room and the hundreds of thousands of third sector people around the country. That is why we are starting this review with the largest ever consultation with the Sector: regional events, informal discussions, detailed working with sector organisations. This will include engaging at grassroots level, to get the voice of the smaller organisations – both to hear their thoughts, and also to get them more involved in the process of looking to the future.

### **Conclusion**

Let me end with this final thought. We may not always agree as we work together. I may not be able to deliver everything you want. What I promise is to try my utmost to listen and learn from you, the experts. Despite this, you will sometimes feel the need to point out where we are going wrong. That is natural, healthy and part of the independence you rightly cherish. I will try my best to cherish it too.

I do genuinely believe that we have a joint endeavour and mission. By government playing its part, the third sector doing what it does best, we can genuinely transform the lives of millions of people over the coming years and contribute towards the vision of a different, more caring, more just society. That is a huge mission, of which I am honoured to be part. I look forward to working with you to achieve it.