

Laura Kuenssberg

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I want to add my voice to those suffering disquiet at the treatment of Laura Kuenssberg that has required her to have bodyguards at the Labour Party conference.

Ignore for a minute that this is a party preparing for government and what this says about some of its supporters.

Ignore too the supposed right wing bias of the BBC, simply because the right think the exact reverse which suggests that overall it might be doing its job of alienating everyone (and I know the climate change argument that makes a mockery of the requirement for BBC balance, and the academic studies that suggest the bias is really to the right).

Look instead at the difference between Kuenssberg and Nick Robinson. Robinson is pretty disliked in Scotland. It is widely thought there that his coverage of the 2014 referendum was biased. Many are not inclined to forgive him. But as far as I know on an issue where passions are high he does not require a bodyguard.

I have to conclude that Laura Kuenssberg is being targeted because she is a woman. And that is unacceptable anywhere on the political spectrum.

But so too is any comment that moves beyond disagreement to abuse. I know a bit about this. I get it, often. And I have developed a sense for it: I can almost always anticipate the comment that will quickly turn into abuse. An example came from someone calling himself William of Ockham on this site yesterday: the innocuous turned into a personal diatribe very quickly, and that was a pretty innocuous one.

Much abuse here comes from the right. But let's be clear: it also comes from the left. Two years ago I was Jeremy Corbyn's guest at the Labour Party conference and now I am not. I have not changed one iota of my opinion on the way. But the abuse certainly happened: even John McDonnell issued an attack on my credibility as an economist in parliament when my main disagreement with him was over his initial, disastrous, backing for George Osborne's 2015 fiscal charter that led to such an embarrassing

U-turn.

It's easy to attack the person and not the idea. I see the right doing it all the time, but I am certain the left is not exempt. And Laura Kuenssberg has suffered. You may not like her. You may not like her opinion. You may not like the BBC. And you can say all three. That's fair. But as for personal attacks, they're way out of bounds.

I am not saying I always get everything right: far from it. But when people accuse me (usually but not always from the right) of censoring this blog what they're actually saying is I keep those who abuse off it. Damned right I do. And I have every intention of continuing to do so.