

*Letter sent to the Times on 18 June 2015, at the request of their letters editor, Andrew Riley. It wasn't published, but you can find the relevant documents at <http://www.dcscience.net/2015/06/15/are-women-still-at-a-disadvantage-in-science/#190615>*

One of the few good outcomes of the sad affair of Tim Hunt is that it has brought to light the backwoodsmen who are eager to defend his actions, and to condemn UCL. The anonymous Times leader of 16 June was as good an example as any.

Here are seven relevant considerations.

- (1) Honorary jobs have no employment contract, so holders of them are not employees in the normal sense of the term. Rather, they are eminent people who agree to act as ambassadors for the university,
- (2) Hunt's remarks were not a joke –they were his genuine views. He has stated them before and he confirmed them on the Today programme,
- (3) He's entitled to hold these views but he's quite sensible enough to see that UCL would be criticised harshly if he were to remain in his ambassadorial role so he relinquished it before UCL was able to talk to him.
- (4) All you have to do to see the problems is to imagine yourself as a young women, applying for a grant or fellowship, in competition with men, knowing that Hunt was one of her judges. Would your leader have been so eager to defend a young Muslim who advocated men only labs? Or someone who advocated Jew-free labs. The principle is the same.
- (5) Advocacy of all male labs is not only plain silly. It's also illegal under the Equalities Act (2010).
- (6) UCL's decision to accept Hunt's offer to relinquish his role were not the result of a twitter lynch mob. The comments there rapidly became good humoured. If there is a witch hunt, it is by your leader writer and the Daily Mail, eager to defend the indefensible and to condemn UCL and the Royal Society
- (7) It has been suggested to me that it would have been better if Hunt had been brought before a disciplinary committee, so due process would have been observed. I can imagine nothing that would have been more cruel to a distinguished colleague than to put him through such a miserable ordeal.

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