

An Coiste um Chuntais Phoiblí
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Committee of Public Accounts
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Dublin 2

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8th March, 2012

Mr Joe O' Flynn
General Secretary
SIPTU
Liberty Hall
Dublin 1

Dear General Secretary.

I refer to your letter of 8th February, 2012.

I note that you take issue with comments attributed to me which you take as being critical of SIPTU in advance of further hearings on the operation of this SIPTU National Health and Local Government Levy Account.

I want to make it clear that, as Chairman of a Committee that is charged with ensuring public accountability for the use of taxpayers moneys, I will do all that is possible to bring full accountability to this issue. The Committee in the last Dáil did not sign-off on the use to which taxpayers' money, routed through this levy fund account, was put and the current Committee has not been able to deal fully with this issue as there are still too many gaps in the information provided.

Any comments I made, or that were attributed to me, were made because of frustration that this issue is being dragged out; that there appears to be an unwillingness to share information on the way taxpayers money was used; and that it will now take a further investigation by the Comptroller and Auditor General before the Committee of Public Accounts can get a clear line of sight on how all funds that went through this account, including the €1,154,165.25 that represents payments from the account for which information is not available, were spent.

On the issue of access by the staff of the C&AG to full information, I would point out first of all that it was the Comptroller and Auditor General who raised this issue at our meeting of 2nd February, 2012 and I make no apology for saying that I want the Committee to be informed if any obstacles are put in the way of the staff of the C&AG. As was outlined previously, the staff who controlled this account, the public officials who made payments to or benefited in any way from the funds placed in this account and the findings contained in the Grant Thornton Report should be all be accessible or available to the staff of the C&AG.

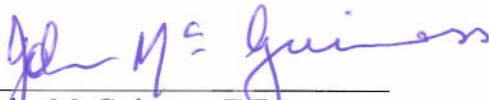
Let me also give you this assurance: I will do my duty as Chairman of the Committee of Public Accounts to ensure that witnesses get a fair hearing and SIPTU will get that and you will get an opportunity to rise in public the matters covered in your letter.

I am not biased against either SIPTU or the public officials who should have ensured a level of control over the expenditure of taxpayers money that was routed through this account but I am impatient because of the way the investigation into the matter by the Internal Auditor of the HSE came off track and I now expect the investigation of the C&AG will yield results.

This exchange of correspondence will be published next week as I believe that the Committee should do its business in public. Your concerns and my reply will now form part of the public record.

Finally, it is my understanding that a copy of your letter to me was circulated widely within SIPTU and I would ask, in the interest of balance, that you will do the same with this reply. I would welcome your confirmation that this has been done as I want to be sure that your members understand that the work of the Committee is transparent and impartial.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John McGuinness', written over a horizontal line.

John McGuinness T.D.
Chairman