

Transcription of General Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> March at the MAG Offices.

Recorded by Den Powell.

#### Attendees

Neil Liversidge	Board of Directors
Pete Walker	Board of Directors
Ian Mutch	President
Den Powell	National Chair
Nich Brown	General Secretary
Paddy Tyson	Campaigns Manager
Louise Smith	Deputy General Secretary
Julie Sperling	
Carol Ferrari	

IP - Interrupts during a pause in speech.

IS - Interrupts while the previous person is still speaking.

Time	Speaker	Transcription
General 1 00:00:00	LS	Can everybody sit down please.
	NB	Yes I think that would be more sensible <i>(Various discussions about there already being enough chairs and arranging them)</i>
	NL	Right ok, can we just do some intros cos I've not met everybody. Starting on my left.
	JS	Julie.
	LS	Louisa.
	CF	Carol.
	NL	Den, I know, Nich, I know. Right ok. As you all know this is Ian Mutch. Ian Mutch founded MAG 40 yrs ago, he worked for it as an unpaid volunteer for the first 25 years.
	LS	<i>(IS)</i> Could I possibly ask that you take a seat please Neil because ...
	NL	<i>(IS)</i> Now, no I'm standing up.
	LS	Mmm ok. <i>(unsure)</i>
	NL	Right, just so we're clear, this is not a firing squad. The meetings today are going to be individual staff meetings which we've asked you to attend as your employer.
	NB	And which we have objected to ...
	NL	<i>(IP)</i> Right, I'm going to conduct this without interruptions. Which we've asked you to attend, which we're entitled to do as your employers. There is at this time absolutely no intention that at the end of these meetings, anybody finishes the meeting with a reprimand or a warning or a dismissal. So we're all clear about that.
00:01:53		As I was saying, this is Ian Mutch who founded MAG 40 yrs ago. He worked for it as an unpaid volunteer for the first 25 of those years at least to my recollection. This is Pete Walker. Pete Walker's been a member for 25 yrs. My names Neil Liversidge, I've been a member for 30 yrs. Ian and Pete, along with Bruiser, who's not here, are the people I trust most in my entire life. We're all

completely committed to MAG. I don't know what you've heard about us and I don't really care but the fact is we are your best hope of having a job in MAG in 10 yrs time if you still want one. Because when all prima donnas have flounced off and all the mercenaries have gone somewhere else for a more profitable income source and some people are just plain worn out and tired out and go someplace else or retire, we are the people who are still going to be working to keep the wheels on the MAG bus. In case anybody doesn't realise it MAG is going to be under growing pressure in the coming years. This is not a political event and I'm not recruiting so I'm not going to bore you with all the reasons why, suffice it to say that for MAG to survive a number of factors have to be got right. One of these factors is MAG central. In any operation, the administrative machinery should whirl away quietly and reliably in the background. It's role is to efficiently facilitate what we as the political people, the campaigners, the fighters need to do our jobs.

00:03:16 NL

We have to be able to rely on it like the good crew of a ship relies on the engine room for power or like a pilot relies on his ground crew. Unfortunately in recent times this has not worked as it should. Instead of facilitation we get aggravation, instead of help we get hindrance and when we try to get fast action we get stonewalled. Instead of MAG central being an aid it's become a blockaid. That stops now, today. Anybody with that attitude needs to lose it or we will lose them.

NL

Just so you're clear who you're dealing with, I'm the person who picked MAG out of the dustbin in 1989 when it was fragmented, I made it into an effective and successful organisation out of something that had previously been a joke. In 1992 some thugs ere hitting us for protection money, or thought they would. I told them to take a hike, I've lived with 10 yrs of death threats for me trouble at the end of it our events were trouble free and we paid nobody off. In 2002 I got control of the Farmyard party back from MAG from the people who were stealing the profits, I chaired MAG for 13 yrs, I served on the Board for 15 yrs. I run my own financial advice business in which I employ people, I've been managing large and small work forces for 10 yrs since I was 19.

00:04:22 NL

I've started new MAG groups, I've been extensively published. Apart from my normal job, I broadcast weekly on the BBC and I write a regular column in the trade press. Politically I'm in constant touch with a number of MPs and Peers. If anybody, anybody has lead ya to think that they know about PR or recruitment or politics or media or marketing, they mislead you, pure and simple. Pete Walker here has run the Farmyard party for the last 10 yrs. He took it from zero profit to making a fortune. It's thanks to him and people like him, especially Veece in North East MAG that you get a pay cheque. Pete's a superb man manager and again, regardless of what anyone else might have told ya, Pete's workers on the Farmyard party are all volunteers, he inspires them, pure and simple, because they know he's 1000% MAG and he's doing it for the cause. He inspires me as well incidentally and other people that stand in a muddy field for him.

00:05:15 NL

MAGs Board has appointed us to deal with all matters relating to the management of MAG central. In that we'll interface with Nich. We will routinely interface with the rest of you through Nich but not exclusively. We are your employers and we reserve the right to talk to who we like when we like. Apart from Nich, I don't think I've ever conversed with any of you for a total time of more than 10 minutes. That was the original reason for convening these meetings today. We need to know you, you need to know us.

We need to understand thoroughly the issue that you face and you need to know what we require.

00:05:47 NL I will tell all of you now collectively, what we expect in broad terms, though I have to confess to being somewhat mystified as to why I still apparently need to explain this after all this time. Put simply, we require professional standards of conduct at all times in everything you undertake and these are some specific examples.

No 1. We require the office to support, not undermine the efforts of volunteers and contractors. No 2. We require impartiality in place of partisanship. In other words, you stay out of internal politics, you do not try to influence elections and you certainly do not try to blackmail Directors by threatening to resign if things do not go the way you like. 3. We require you not to waste our time, undermine the Board or make the Directors work more difficult via proxy's. For anybody who wants to pretend not to understand, that means that you don't connive with the likes of Rocky or the *(unsure)* or anybody else.

NL No 4. We require candour, frankness and honesty in place of the dissembling and the obfuscation that appears to be the order of the day on most days. 5. We require you to correctly prioritise your loyalties. MAG is an organisation and that should be your first and only commercial loyalty as your employer. 6. We require you to work in such a way as you find ways to get things done quickly and efficiently not ways to stop things being done. When we ask you to do something the only question we want to hear back, if we hear any question at all, is a question that might help you do it faster or more accurately. The days of finding reasons not to do things are over.

00:07:17 NL The Board consists of unpaid volunteers who have a right not to have their time wasted. Last week, from Monday morning up until 4 o'clock yesterday, Sunday, I clocked 93 hours in my office. I estimate that over 70 of those hours were directly wasted due to arguments generated from this office. That stops now and anybody who is deluded enough to think otherwise will find themselves looking for a job with no reference to rely on. In the meetings today, each of you will have the opportunity at the outset to raise any issues you want to raise. Your demeanour in these meetings today will determine whether we need to move to a disciplinary meeting. If we do we will adjourn for an hour and reconvene a disciplinary meeting.

Just so you're all clear, Nich, Paddy, Louisa you have, through your actions this week have forfeited the trust and the confidence of the entire Board. In case you think that the National Committee is coming to you rescue do not kid yourselves. They know that these matters need resolving and that we are the people to do it. Obviously you thought Den was your last hope, that was a mistake cos she's no power in this matter and her only motivation clearly is only one of revenge on us for standing her down as a Director. We did that because she was medically incapable. Today ...

00:08:24 DP *(IS)* Excuse me ...

NL *(IS)* Today ...

DP No excuse me ...

NL *(IS)* You're not participating in this meeting.

DP Excuse me, are you saying I'm medically incapable. Can you explain that please?

NL I said that we stood you down ...

DP *(IS)* You just said that I am medically incapable. Can you clarify that please?

PW He said it in the past tense Den.

DP I don't care, I still want clarification on.

PW He said it in the past tense Den.

DP I want clarification on what you mean by that.

PW Do you understand he said it in the past tense

DP Yes but I want clarification on what you mean by medically incapable.

NL I said, we stood Den down because she was medically incapable.

DP Can I have clarification, may I have clarification on medically incapable.

NL *(IS)* If you continue to interrupt the meeting

DP I'm just asking ...

NL *(IS)* If you refuse to leave the building, we'll call the police.

DP I'm just asking for clarification.

NL We'll if you, if you ...

DP I'm not, I'm only asking for clarification Neil. I don't see why that should be such a problem.

NL Because you could not do your job, you were not responding to emails, not responding to contacts at all. That's your clarification.

00:09:17 LS She was undergoing treatment for cancer ...

DP *(IS)* So that classes me as medically incapable.

NL *(IS)* I'm not having this discussion with you Louisa.

DP That classes me as medically incapable does it?

NL At the time ...

DP *(IS)* Thank you. I just wanted your clarification on that, thank you.

NL Right. Right. Nich, Paddy, Louisa today you get the opportunity to apologise and to get all the clarity you could ever need about what your job is and to convince us that you are fit to be trusted and employed by MAG UK Ltd in the positions you hold. I hope that you all avail yourselves of these opportunities and we can go forward constructively.

NL We are now going to move to one to one meetings with all staff. We will start with Carol, followed by Julie, Louisa, Nich and Paddy in that order. Carol can we use your room please.

DP Can I just ask, cos you were saying about ...

NL *(IS)* Den. You're not a participant in this meeting.

DP No I'm just asking that ...

NB *(IS)* Excuse me may I ...

DP With regards to the courts, did you mean the legal court or the people.

NL Look ...

DP *(IP)* That's all I'm asking

PW It was the people.

DP Thank you Pete. That's all I wanted clarification on.

NL Ok. Carol can we use your room please?

LS Well the only thing is ...  
*(various)*

LS I was gonna say we need to be taking calls cos we still need to be running MAG as a business.

NL Right. Today we set the agenda. Right we're not here for arguments, were not here for debate. We're gonna make clear what your jobs involve. Julie can we use your room please.

JS Yes no problem.

NL Right.

NB Neil, may I make a suggestion? Which is that ...

NL (IS) Nich. Nich. I don't want suggestions and I don't want arguments. We're gonna make clear to you today, if you've got any suggestions we're going to have a one to one session with you.

NB No it's a suggestion about which room to use.

NL No.

NB I was going to offer that room because Julie ...

NL (IS) Thanks for your suggestion but we're going to use Julie's room. Ok, Julie could you. Right sorry. You're Carol, right. Can you come with us with Julie please so that we know where we're going.  
*(staff arranging how they are going to continue to work around the use of rooms)*