

T of E Ref 37

Testimony to the Tribunal of Enquiry.

May 26th 1968

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On the afternoon of May 7th I became aware that there were rumours of impending demonstrations in connection with Dr. Inch's visit and my secretary informed me of several phone calls to the effect that the venue (and, for a period, the timing) of Dr Inch's lecture had been changed.

I arrived at the new venue (Committee room, Wivenhoe House) just before the time appointed. A porter was on duty outside the main door to the room. I entered and Dr Tillett introduced me to Dr Inch and I talked to him for a minute or so. Dr Tillett then introduced Dr Inch to the meeting. The side door was opened from the bar outside and a body of demonstrators tried to enter. During the parleying that ensued, a member of staff (I believe it was Dr Bowden) stood barring the entrance, with his hand on the handle of the open door. There were shouts of "the room is full" and countercries of "there is plenty of room". Eventually a large number of demonstrators were admitted and a staff-member (I believe Dr Tillett) said: remember you are guests of the chemistry department now.

Dr Tillett called on Dr Inch to start speaking. A demonstrator at the back of the room started to read out a statement to the effect that Dr Inch's lecture would not be heard, that instead a war crimes tribunal would be ~~held~~ held, and among other things, the physiological effects of war gases were detailed. I went to Dr Inch and said: "I apologize to you on behalf of the University. In these circumstances, I am sure we would wish to proceed now exactly in accordance with your own wishes." He said some kind of disturbance might well have been expected, and he would like to wait about five minutes. If he could not be heard then, he would wish to leave.

A few minutes later he did ask to leave, and a porter came up to escort him out. A shout of mustard gas was heard, and I saw some yellow powder falling on my shoulder. I turned round and saw Dr Inch covered in the powder. Someone (I think Dr Tillett) called out: what is your name? One of the demonstrators replied "Peter Archard, Department of Government". Dr. Inch said to me: there you are, write it down. I entered the name in my diary as Peter Archer. The demonstrators had linked arms across the exit to the bar and the porter and Dr Inch got out only with difficulty.

T of E Ref 37 p2²

I left by the main door and met Dr Matheson among a crowd outside the dining room. He asked me: where is he (Dr Inch)? I said I thought he was safe outside the building by now. I heard shouting in the lobby (by the garden entrance) and went in there. I saw Dr Inch standing in a corner of the lobby, still covered in the powder, with a large crowd trying to question ~~xxx~~ him. I went through the crowd in the narrow corridor to the foot of the stairs leading to the Registrar's office, and said to a member of staff: I think the police should be called. He said: the police had been called and were on their way.

I would like to explain my action at this point. A guest of the University was standing in a corner of a small ~~xxxxx~~ room, covered with yellow powder, surrounded by a large crowd. He was clearly not there in accordance with his own wishes, and I felt myself and the ~~xxxxxx~~ porters to be powerless to get him his freedom of movement. In the general excitement, my thoughts ran something like this: only the police can now free him. Throughout the affair, both up to this point and after, I saw neither violence nor incitement to violence. Dr Inch was in the lobby, being questioned under duress.

I went back from the staircase through the narrow corridor to the lobby. I twice said: excuse me, may I get through? and the demonstrators made way for me. In the lobby, Dr Inch started to speak. He referred to John Wesley and quoted him on the power of reason. In the discussion, heckling went on but shouting had abated. Someone referred to the dialogue in progress. I said: Could we not carry the dialogue on in greater comfort, if we all returned to the lecture room where we had started? There were cries of No and 'you stopped the meeting'.

Dr Inch was questioned about the sale of patent rights for some gas to the USA, and he replied that the work at Porton had to be financed. This resulted in some gasps and some shouts, and at this point policemen started to make their way in, climbing over the demonstrators sitting in the corridor. They received no opposition, and proceeded with great care. A demonstrator said: You trod on my hand, which -if true - was most likely to be an accident. The demonstrators surrounding Dr Inch in the lobby linked arms, while the police tried to free him. There were too many people

T of E Ref 37 p3

in the room (which measures about 11x11 feet), and I left it. There was much shouting..

Later outside Wivemhoe House I heard that Dr Inch had been driven away safely. Some demonstrators were close to a police car from which the sound of barking dogs emerged. A ~~xxx~~ policeman came up waving his arms and shouting: you will only upset the animals. The demonstrators then cleared away. The action of the policeman and the ~~xxxx~~ demonstrators was consistent with a predominant concern for the welfare of the dogs.

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