

T of E Ref 43

R. Coates
c/o student prgrammers

Tribunal of Inquiry.

May 24th

Beneath is a brief account of events as I saw them before & during the Inch meeting on May 7th. I should like to make two points first, however:

- (i) the separation of "fact" & "value" implied by your letter and by the division of labour between Tribunal and full Committee is (to say the least) contentious, and (to say more) liable to lead to bourgeois apologetics. Moreover we have it on the authority of MacIntyre & others that a human action cannot be understood without reference to its purpose, and a consideration of motives must surely in this case involve the views of the participants on free speech and other moral principles. If these wider values are not taken into account, then your description of events cannot help being, in every sense, partial.
- (ii) any judgement of guilt by the Committee which leads to further punishment, and which is based on a doctrine of free speech enunciated after May 7th & not previously accepted, will as I understand it constitute a further breach of natural justice. I would ask all members of the Committee to consider very carefully the demonstrated pernicious nature of authority in our community, and how political victimisation and breaches of natural justice can be prevented in the future.

In giving the account below I am assuming that you will "in good faith" take these matters into account. If this is not so then I shall no longer be prepared to cooperate with the Committee.

I first heard of the Inch meeting several days before Tues. 7th. It seemed to me that it was the obligation of any morally literate person to protest against the research into and use of CBW, the concealment of its links with imperialist oppression behind a cloak of scientific "objectivity", etc. etc. and to use any possible opportunity to raise the whole carefully hidden matter before the public. I therefore decided to attend the meeting, assured incidentally by the Dean of Students much quoted letter that the University news had and news would infringe the traditional right of heckling at political meetings.

About 4pm on the 7th I heard that the place of the meeting had suddenly been changed to a room only announced to members of the Chemistry Dept. Suspecting that it would be in Warehouse House, I went there with others shortly before 4.30. Arriving outside the Committee Room I was prevented from entering by a short, almost hairless man whom I later learnt was called "Bowden". Bowden first asked if I was a member of the Chemistry Soc; when I replied "no" he told me I could not enter the meeting. I pointed out that the Chem. Soc. was a society of the Union, that I was perfectly willing to join, and that therefore he had no right to keep me out. He then said that the meeting in the room was in fact a meeting of Chem. Dept. staff, and that I could not go in unless I was a member of the Dept. While I was pondering whether a man who appeared so obviously to be blatantly lying could in fact be telling the truth, someone in the Bar area told me that Inch was in fact speaking and that there was another door to the room. I went round and entered through it, eventually sitting down in the centre gangway 3 or 4 yards from Inch. By this time about 100 people (including several members of staff) must have entered the

17 of E Ref 43 p2

2.

meeting, and there were obviously still some outside.

Dr. Inch was re-introduced by the Chairman and was about to speak when he was heckled by a person ~~seated~~ who began reading an indictment of LBW at Porton Down. I myself had a copy of this indictment and would have continued reading it had no-one else been able to. Inch, the chairman and the rest of the meeting were silent, except for a few ^{major} ~~minor~~ remarks to the reader from the floor. After about 5 minutes the chairman began to take Inch from the room; at this point there was a sudden cry of "mustard gas" and a moment later I saw that Inch's suit was covered by patches of yellow powder. Inch finally left the room, followed by most of the meeting, and some chanting broke out. Not being sure where Inch was going I went to the Porters' desk (with others), and then back up the corridor to where Inch had in fact stopped. The chanting ended and various people continued reading the indictment. When it was finished Inch said something like "right! You've had your turn, now let me have mine" and proceeded to attempt to answer some of what had been said, as the last reader had requested. He was listened to in relative silence, though a few of his answers had to be transmitted down the corridor to those who could not hear. Further questions were then put to him, and a valuable dialogue was established.

At about this point the police arrived at the end of the corridor. In order that they could see that there was no violence and that a discussion was taking place, I and the others in the corridor sat down, (though some were still standing near Inch where there was no room to sit). The 6 or 7 policemen remained at the end of the corridor for about 5 minutes, talking to a few members of the staff & administration. I think it was at about this point that the suggestion was made that we return to the original room to continue the discussion, but before this could happen the fuzz began trampling over the seated students (incidentally raising a large bruise on my hand), manhandling others, and trying to shove Inch towards the other door. There was some scuffling and shoving, of which I was on the edge, and the numbers of a few particularly vicious police were called out. By contrast, an elderly police-sergeant who was standing next to me ^{made a} remarked something like "Fire mate, what's all this about? I can't see why we were called in in the first place."

After a few minutes Inch was pushed outside followed by the rest of the meeting and was driven away by a police car. There were still some scuffles as the fuzz attempted to arrest several students — I heard one policeman snook "this one will do" — but they were firmly but gently restrained by other right-minded students. They eventually left to some applause, after which I returned to the valley with most of the other demonstrators.

Having read some of the other evidence I should like to make the following points:

- (i) the suggestion has been made that Raphael Hubbertst was suspended from the University for smoking in the lecture-room. I myself was also smoking, and I saw several others doing likewise.
- (ii) Hilkey's "evidence" states that Andrew Ping played a prominent part in the demonstration. At no time did I see Ping at the meeting, and I believe he wasn't even at the University on that day.
- (iii) I find it hard to conceive that the other 149 or so people present were organised by any kind of international conspiracy.

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