

T of E Ref: 58

Dorothy E. Smith. Statement to the Committee of Inquiry about my activities in relation to the demonstration of May 7 and what I observed.

1. Rick Coates came to see me (I think on Monday May 6th) to tell me that a number of students planned a demonstration to get public notice of the issue of chemical and biological means of warfare on the occasion of Dr. Inch's visit to the University on Tuesday May 7th.
2. My attention had been drawn to the importance and urgency of this issue by an article on the use of chemical agents in warfare published recently in the New York Review of Books. This article alerted me to the dangers that the public may be exposed to through accidental release of toxic agents from research establishments (the Nevada sheep incident); to the fact that the distinction between lethal substances and other toxic but not lethal substances was largely statistical (what proportion of what populations would be killed by what concentrations), so that even the use of certain types of gases defined as non-lethal raised serious ethical problems in situations where their use and distribution could not be properly restricted; and that the practice of government secrecy successfully prevented public recognition of and discussion of hazards and ethical problems in which the public had a rightful and urgent concern.
3. I knew that Dr. Inch was not himself directly concerned with the chemical warfare aspect of Porton Down's activities, or more strictly that his talk to the Chemical Society would not be concerned with chemical agents for use in war. He is however a professional member of that organization and members of the public are I believe entitled to view persons occupying such positions in organizations as representatives of those organizations where matters of public interest are concerned. I was aware certainly that the structure of organizations of this kind is such that Dr. Inch probably played no part in making organizational policy, but I believe that one step in modifying such institutionalized irresponsibility is to treat at least the professional members of organizations as responsible for its policies and activities. (The continued production and distribution of thalidomide by the Chemie Grünenthal after serious questions had been raised about the hazards involved in its use is an example of what can happen when professional members of an organization abnegate their professional responsibility to the public and the values of their profession).



4. These were my principle motives in deciding to take part in a demonstration against the use of chemical and biological means of warfare on the occasion of Dr; Inch's visit.
5. The plan for the demonstration as I understood it from what Rick Coates told me was ~~What~~ a statement on chemical and biological warfare would be read at the beginning of the meeting. The statement was being carefully prepared by consulting whatever <sup>made</sup> sources are available in the library and elsewhere. It would be ~~be~~ available ~~also~~ to the press. The ~~reading~~ of the statement would begin when Dr. Inch stood up to begin his talk. The ~~only~~ action required of other demonstrators would be to stand up in silence while the statement was read. I was assured that the demonstration was intended as strictly peaceful and orderly. In retrospect I realize that I did not know definitely what was planned when the reading of the statement was ended, but I think I assumed that the demonstration would then be at an end (I certainly intended to leave at that point because I had a meeting to go to in the Sociology Department at five o'clock).
6. I was told also that the organizers of the demonstration were trying to keep their plan secret because they feared that the Chemical Society might cancel Dr. Inch's visit if it were known. They were concerned, as I was, that this topic should be given some kind of public hearing.
7. On Tuesday May 7th around four o'clock in the coffee bar I heard (though I do not remember from whom) that the Chemical Society had gotten wind of what was going on and in an attempt to avoid the demonstrators had moved the meeting to another room than the one originally scheduled. I heard that it would now take place in Wivenhoe House.
8. I had earlier in the day told Joan Busfield about the plan for the demonstration and she decided to go along with me. We were joined in the coffee bar by Veronica Beechey who told us that she had only heard about the demonstration fifteen minutes before. Joan, Veronica and I walked up to Wivenhoe House together and arrived about four-thirty or a minute or two after.
9. We located the meeting by following others going in the same direction. When we got there, two men on the other side of the door were attempting to prevent people from going in. There was dispute in the doorway about whether this was a Chemistry Department meeting or a meeting of the Chemical Society (as it had been advertised) to which any member of the union was entitled to admission. The door was closed for a time, but later a few more people managed to get in, claiming against arguments from the other side that there was in fact plenty of room. I believe that Veronica Beechey was one of those who got in at this point. Joan Busfield and I stayed outside.
10. There were a number of other people who waited outside and a good deal of coming and going. There was some talk of trying to get in by another ~~door~~.



d or but nobody seemed to want to force the issue and there was no movement to take this suggestion up.

11. It was not possible to hear what was going on inside very distinctly. The door was closed at this point (although it was opened a little later). I could identify David Triesman's voice reading the statement though I could hear only snatches of what he said. I also heard the reading being taken up by a woman's voice, but it was not one I could identify. When the door was opened, I could not see much of what was going on in the room, partly because the entrance got pretty crowded and partly also because I was standing slightly to one side of the doorway.
12. While the statement was being read, two men left the meeting, one of them I think being one of those who kept the door closed earlier on. I don't know where they were going but they returned shortly afterwards. When they came back they pushed past us roughly and without the usual courtesies so that I inferred then that they were pretty angry.
13. Soon after this the reading of the statement was interrupted by confused noises. I heard cries of "don't let him leave" (or words to that effect) "sit down". I couldn't see much of what was going on in the room because I was behind a crowd. I could not see anyone sitting down, though there was some tentative and ineffectual move by ~~the~~ some of those directly in the doorway to stand so as to ~~infr~~ obstruct the exit. The fact that there ~~were~~ was quite a crowd standing in front of the door inside the room meant ~~in fact~~ that anyone trying to get out would have to push their way through. I myself was still outside the room.
14. Then a porter pushed his way out of the door with some difficulty, apparently escorting Dr. Inch. I saw Dr. Inch walk away, with the back of his coat on the left sprinkled with yellow powder (I did not ~~know~~ hear until later that this was mustard). There was some scuffling and jostling in the entrance and a man appeared strongarming another out of the room. ~~Then~~ Neither of these were personally known to me. Then a number of people erupted out of the room and ran down the room after Dr. Inch shouting "Porton Down, Porton Down." I went down to the corridor out of the bar to see what was happening and I could see a number of people in the ~~hall~~ corridor. I then went back and went into the meeting room where I found a number of people standing around talking, among them Joan Busfield and Vernonica Beechey. Vernonica Beechey was talking to a man who I later inferred to be a ~~member~~ member of the Chemistry Department because he told us that he was professionally interested in Dr. Inch's work.



15. This man was very angry. He accused the sociologists of attempting to evangelize the chemists and compared us to communists and catholics. I was taken aback by his identification of the demonstration with sociology since I knew that many of those involved in the demonstration were not sociologists. He drew attention to the fact (known to me but perhaps not known to Veronica) that Dr. Inch's talk had nothing to do with chemical warfare and that he had been deprived by our activities of hearing something of professional value to him. Veronica argued with him at some length. I was at this point disturbed both about the course taken by the demonstration, by the degree of his anger, and by the fact that it appeared to be directed towards the department of which I am a member. So I did not take much part in the argument other than to point out briefly what I saw as a justification for the demonstration (along the lines outlined in paragraphs 2 and 3 above).
16. This encounter could not have taken more than two or three minutes. Indicating that he had won that round he left the room followed by two small young men who had been listening to the argument and whom I took to be students in the chemistry department. Veronica and I and I think Joan followed them out of the room. The two young men made some remark about "only women" which I did not catch fully.
17. I spoke to these two men outside the room briefly again explaining my grounds for participating in the demonstration. ~~and why I believed demonstration~~
18. Joan and I left Wivenhoe House then by a side door since the corridor out from the bar was blocked with people. I don't know where Veronica went. It was then about quarter to five, perhaps a few minutes after.
19. Joan and I waited outside in the car park near the main entrance to Wivenhoe House. A police car drove up from the Valley road, followed almost immediately by a second which came in from the Wivenhoe House exit. I heard the police calling for more help and shortly after sirens could be heard coming up Clinghoe Hill. I'm not sure what the total number of police cars was. I later also saw a small blue van with two police dogs inside barking like mad to get out.
20. Joan and I were almost the only spectators at this point though various others joined us from time to time. Shortly after five ~~the parking lot began to~~ a few people drifted up from the Valley apparently to see what was going on. Though some I suppose might have come from inside the House. The police by this time were inside, leaving a couple of men by the first car. Then Dr. Inch came out of the side door (near the kitchen) escorted by police who put him in the police car (the first to arrive which was parked immediately in front of the entrance.) This began to move away when a crowd of people came running out of the side door, over took it near the exit and stood in front of it so that it couldn't leave. (It was my impression that it was the car with Dr. Inch in that was prevented from leaving.)
21. By this time the parking lot was fairly crowded and it was no longer



possible to tell who were part of the demonstration, who were ex-demonstrators (like Joan and myself) and who were simply spectators. Except of course for those blocking the car's exit, but I was too far to see clearly what was going on there.

22. I left there at about quarter past five.
23. I am not sure in retrospect whether I would have participated in the demonstration if what happened had been part of what was planned to happen, though I think I would not. At the time I was angry and upset & find myself (as it seemed to me) committed to a mode of demonstration to which I was not (particularly as a member of staff) prepared to be committed. It did not occur to me and I do not think now that the course the demonstration took had been planned. It appeared to me that it developed spontaneously after the reading of the statement, partly because individuals had intentions to act which they did not communicate to the organizers of the demonstration, partly as a response to the actions of the organizers of the meeting and partly because in addition people on both sides were pushing and being pushed, jostling and being jostled in a confined situation.

Dorothy E. Smith