

Conservative Central Office

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Extract from a speech by the Rt. Hon. Sir Keith Joseph M.P. (Leeds NE), at a lunch at Doncaster Racecourse Restaurant on Friday 24th June 1977

I make no apology for returning again to the issues raised by the Grunwick siege; they represent a make-or-break point for British democracy, the freedoms of ordinary men and women. The siege has suddenly shown us how far we have drifted, how far power in the Labour Party and Unions has slipped into the hands of the authoritarians, the totalitarians, the men of violence for whom law and order are dispensable.

The Grunwick siege shows us how far self-styled democratic socialists, self-styled union moderates have allowed themselves to be hijacked by the men of violence and coercion. The belief that trade-union activity must be above the law, and even above moral sanction, is no longer confined to the marxist militants. It now seems to be accepted, expressly or tacitly, by a large number of Labour MPs, Government front-benchers, Union leaders, the Haldane Society of Socialist lawyers.

This may well shock us; but it should not surprise us. For this is the way Labour has been drifting for some time now. It may be inherent in socialist thinking; I for one have yet to be convinced that democratic socialism is anything but a contradiction in terms. If I am wrong, pessimistic, I shall be only too happy to be persuaded otherwise - by deeds, by facts, not by sophistry. The drift is symbolised by Labour's increasingly close 'fraternal relations between socialist parties' - their words, not mine - with the communist parties which rule by terror in the Soviet bloc. I am not speaking of government-to-government level, but of party-to-party. We all have to deal on government-to-government basis with tyrannies of all kinds. /But the moment

But the moment that the Labour Party seeks or accepts relations with the Soviet Communist Party and other East European Communist Parties as fellow-socialist parties, they display both their deteriorating values and their cloven hoof.

Of course, the Labour Party has always had apologists for Soviet despotism, mass murder, denial of freedom. But they were in the minority on the fringes. Now they seem to be far nearer ruling the roost, setting the tone.

At first glance, all this may seem a long way from the Grunwick siege. But freedom is indivisible. Philosophies which accept or condone violence and terror tend to lead to violence and terror. We have not forgotten the brutalities committed by the flying pickets honoured by the TUC - and by many Labour MPs - in the persons of the Shrewbury Two. We have not forgotten how Labour has sometimes tacitly, sometimes explicitly condoned the use of violence in strikes.

And the so-called moderates play the Trojan-horse role, leading it in through our gates. Shirley Williams, Fred Mulley, Dennis Howell make the Labour Party and the TUC appear respectable - even while the Labour Party is rapidly shifting ground from banning links with Communist Parties abroad to active hob-nobbing and links with them. These front-benchers are the frontpersons, the facade behind which the assaults on our liberties continue, behind which red fascism spreads.

And let us not be put off by apologetics. The strong-arm bully boys are not just misguided idealists. Those faces contorted with hatred, those foul mouths, those ever-ready fists and discordant voices baying for blood like hounds make mockery of the Socialists' claim to be working for human brotherhood. They are the agents of hate and destruction.

/I should like

I should like to pose these questions to Mrs. Williams:

First, when you agreed to join the Grunwick picket, had you made a prior effort to hear the Grunwick side of the story, the firm's, and that of the many workers who are obviously loyal? Or did you take it for granted that the Union is always right?

Second, when you agreed to picket, did you foresee that you would be used as the frontperson for mass picketing involving the use of violence and threats to prevent workers from working? Had you known, would you have picketed? Will you draw any conclusions from the experience? Do you not owe it to yourself and to the public to speak up now and condemn what is being done? Is not silence cowardice?

Let me ask the co-called moderates how they can coexist with the Marxists and thugs.

Quo vadis Shirley? Watch it, Fred!

I address my questions to Mrs. Williams in the first place, though they apply equally to her fellow self-styled moderates, partly because of an incident in which she figured a year ago. She won considerable credit by taking a firm and principled position on the issue of her party's responsibilities towards continued membership of the EEC. You may remember her stating without ifs or buts that if her government withdrew Britain from the EEC she would resign from public life.

So far, so good. But are we to understand that this is her only sticking point; that she would resign over membership of Europe but not over what kind of Europe, what kind of Britain? Is membership of Europe more important to her than the rule of law in Britain, than the right of people to go about their lawful business free from intimidation?

I look forward to straight answers. The public deserve them.

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We were always told - the Marxists and the thugs are a minority; there is another Labour movement which should be our natural ally. Let us join them on the middle ground. I wish this were true. But where are they? Will the real democratic socialists please stand up. Will they denounce the rentamob siege of Grunwick? Will they denounce fraternal party links with the concentration-camp regimes of Eastern Europe? Will they speak and act for the rule of law? Will they recognise that no democracy is worthy of the name without the right not to join a union, and indeed that no union can be truly democratic when membership is compulsory?

The Battle of Grunwick sorts out the democrats on the one hand from the red fascists and time-servers on the other. The Labour democrats have yet to stand up and be counted. Do they exist? I still hope so, but seeing is believing.

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