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THE RT. HON. SIR KEITH JOSEPH, Bt, MP.



23rd June, 1977

The Rt. Hon. Albert Booth, MP  
House of Commons  
LONDON SW1

*Dear Secretary of State,*

Thank you for your letter of June 22nd. The relevant passage in my speech referred to in your letter is in fact as follows :

" ... It is Mr. Booth and his mentors who have encouraged the unions to use all means, legal and illegal, fair and foul, very foul, to coerce workers, citizens of this country, into joining organisations they do not wish to join..."

I also enclose the full text for your interest.

You will observe that the omission from your letter of the words "... and his mentors who have encouraged the unions to use ..." has significantly distorted the meaning of that part of my speech.

*without*  
I am very surprised that you should have written and published your letter, informing yourself of what I actually said. The quotation used in your letter omits from the middle of a sentence several crucial words.

I fully stand by the remarks that I actually made and welcome the opportunity of explaining to you why.

The passage of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Act and of the Trade Union and Labour Relations Amendment Act has inevitably been regarded as legitimising the closed shop. These legislations, as you of course well know, provides that if an employee is dismissed for refusing to join a union in a closed shop situation he can no longer obtain compensation for wrongful dismissal. Such a dismissal is no longer "unfair" in law as a result of this legislation.

This has inevitably led to increasingly strident demands for the introduction of the closed shop, irrespective of the wishes of those at work and irrespective of their willingness to join the union.

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When the legislation was going through Parliament you strenuously resisted all attempt to provide an effective conscientious clause, which would at least have ensured that those who lost their jobs because of a closed shop would get compensation if their opposition to it was because of a genuine deeply held personal conviction.

The Government's attitude towards the conduct of industrial disputes is well illustrated by the history of the Grunwick dispute. The presence of three Ministers on the picket line was bound to lead to greater publicity for the dispute, and greater publicity, as the Prime Minister has himself conceded, was likely to aggravate matters, leading ultimately to violence being used by the pickets on an extensive scale.

Without commenting on individual incidences, which are now before the Courts, such violence was plainly illegal. As far as I am aware, you did not disapprove of the presence of your colleagues on the picket line nor have you since then deplored their presence. As the responsible Minister you have also not, as far as I am aware, denounced the abuse of picketing which has undoubtedly taken place, nor have you done anything to seek to stop this.

The silence and inaction of the responsible Minister is capable of amounting to tacit encouragement and was bound to be ~~interpreted~~ in that sense.

*interpreted*

If this correspondence leads you to break your silence it will have performed a most useful function.

Because you published your letter to me  
I am publishing this reply.

*Sincerely -*

*Ken Joseph*