



**with
compliments**

Mr. Vaughan,

Mr. TURNBULL

You should see this

John 25/4

P5/Colette Bowe.

**Information Division
Department of Trade and Industry**

**1 Victoria Street, London, SW1H 0ET
Telephone 01-215**

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TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW GIVEN BY MR NORMAN TEBBIT FOR
PETER SMITH OF BBC RADIO NEWS

(T) Mr Tebbit
(s) Mr Smith

(S) Mr Tebbit can I ask you first of all why you decided to intervene publicly in the miners dispute at this moment?

(T) Well I was speaking earlier this evening to a dinner which was predominantly for executives and customers of the Dupont and Conoco consortium. Now they are major investors in Great Britain and I wanted to make the point that the coal dispute is something which is completely untypical of what is happening in Britain today and just in case they were not aware of it to make sure that they knew that it was really, at least in part, a dispute within the union, that very many miners are working, and very many more would be working but for the violence of what one might call the Scargillite wing of the union.

(S) Nevertheless the strike has been going on now for more than six months. Surely the Government never envisaged a situation where a strike would last this long?

(T) I recollect that when I was asked about this at the beginning of the strike way back now, as you say, six or seven months ago and was asked when I thought it would be over I wouldn't give an estimate and the interviewer from the BBC, I think, if I remember rightly, said but aren't you worried and I said well we would have to be worried if it went on beyond Christmas. I've never seen this as a strike which was going to be quickly resolved because unless the mineworkers themselves are allowed to speak out it is difficult to see how it can be resolved.

(S) Why do you think it is going to be like this then. Is it just the one man who is causing this problem in your view, Mr Scargill?

(T) Well I do not think one should put these things on one mans shoulders. But let me put it this way the obvious way to try and settle the dispute would of been to ask the miners themselves whether they wished the dispute to continue or whether more of them wanted to follow the increasing numbers who are

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returning to work. Now in view of the intransigence of some of those concerned and their reluctance to follow the normal course of action of the NUM of consulting its members I felt for a long time that this would be a long and difficult dispute.

- (S) You talk about the need for a national ballot, well we are actually going to have one shortly, admittedly not of the miners but of the supervisors in the union, now supposing they do vote for a strike, will this not be a big blow to the Government?
- (T) Well it won't improve matters. But I think first of all we should wait to see which way the ballot goes. Then we should wait to see how that is handled by the leadership of the union. I do not think that the members of the union want to go out on strike. Now they have got a difficulty, a particular difficulty, with the Coal Board and I hope that that difficulty would be resolved without a strike even if there were the authority for the union to call such a strike in the event that they couldn't negotiate a satisfactory settlement.
- (S) But are you entirely happy with the way negotiations have proceeded. We had the almost farcical situation of both parties chasing up and down the country looking for somewhere to meet recently. Do you think that is right or do you, like Mr Scargill, blame the media for that kind of situation?
- (T) Well it's very tempting to blame the media isn't it? It's a fairly safe occupation really isn't it? It's better than blaming the church or the TUC or the Government perhaps. No I don't, I am certainly not satisfied with the way negotiations have gone because the only satisfaction that I will get is when the dispute is over.
- (S) So you would resist completely the calls which have been coming thick and fast for Mr MacGregor to leave the Coal Board?
- (T) I can't understand them. Mr MacGregor was put there to do a job, bringing the coal mines back into a decent state, and that he has been doing very successfully. And I think its worth remembering that it was Mr MacGregor personally that went to the United States and secured a massive order for coal which would keep a 1000 men at work in Durham, yes Durham of all places, and for an elderly American I think that's pretty good.

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- (S) So you want him to stay there for some time then?
- (T) I don't think we should get into the personalities over this. It's the issue that matters not the personalities. If Mr MacGregor were to disappear tomorrow the issue would still be there and the issue is whether or not the Coal Board is going to be allowed to close down pits which are producing coal at £80 and more a ton in order to be able to concentrate production on those which are producing coal at prices in the £20 odd a ton. Now that's common sense and particularly its common sense when no miner need lose his job involuntarily as a result. There's a job for every miner that wants a job.
- (S) But couldn't the Coal Board have done perhaps a little more to ease the threat of unemployment in those areas where pits have closed down. I'm thinking of the things that the Steel Corporation did in years gone by?
- (T) I'm sure that in any situation there is something more one can do. But I don't think that the comparison between the steel industry and the coal industry is a proper one. You see most of the pits that are closing down are not huge employers such as the big steel works. Remember at Corby something like 10,000 jobs were lost in a big town, relatively big town, but a single industry town. Now under those circumstances one must bring in new industries. Of course there are problems where the coal mines close down but those problems are not nearly so acute and as I have emphasised the miners that wish to carry on in the mining industry are being offered other jobs. Now that wasn't the case, sadly, in the steel industry.
- (S) Are you not a little concerned at the support that the TUC have sort of promised to the miners union?
- (T) I am very concerned at the extent of the support that they have promised. I think I am a little less concerned about the support which they will be able to deliver.
- (S) So you don't think they will be able to deliver the extra support?

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- (T) Well its early to say yet. But some of the unions have been promising support for a very long time. After all the docks strike was called specifically in order to support the coal miners and as you know the docks strike has been over for some time now and its over because the members would not be led by the nose by their leaders.
- (S) It is your view then that the miners strike is splitting the TUC apart?
- (T) Oh, I don't know, I don't know enough about the TUC these days to know that. I think what is more important is that the action of the TUC in supporting one wing of a union which is not only defying its own rulebook, but is also defying the TUC's own standards of conduct in industrial disputes. I think that is liable to split the TUC from its own supporters in the countryside. You go and ask the man in the pub, the ordinary trades-unionist whether he thinks the TUC should support the miners union under circumstances where the miners union defies the TUC's own code on picketing.
- (S) But aren't an increasing number of people becoming worried at the Government's attitude to this dispute even Bishops, as you have mentioned, have started to worry about it?
- (T) Well I'm sorry that the Bishop is worried and I hope that he will get over his worries.
- (S) But you don't think that the Government is being perhaps a little hard-faced on this issue?
- (T) How much extra would you like to tell a steel-worker or a railway worker or a lorrydriver that he should donate in order to keep open pits which produce coal which can't be afforded and which isn't wanted?
- (S) You said earlier that you would be worried if this strike was still continuing at Christmas. Are you still worried that that might happen?
- (T) Of course.
- (S) And what will happen if the strike is still going on in January/February?

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- (T) Well I'm worried because of the damage it will do to the miners who are on strike. You see my sympathies are with striking miners. The striking miners that want to go to work and whose families are suffering, not because the miner wants to be on strike, but because he has been intimidated into staying away from work. So I would be worried if at Christmas time men and women who could be work, kids who could be having a decent Christmas are stopped from having a decent Christmas because their fathers are afraid to go to work.
- (S) And there could be power cuts do you think?
- (T) Oh I think you had better speculate on at some other time about that. Its not something on which I am going to speculate.

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