

Transcript of interview of Colum Maloney by Chris Thomas, 2007 (803/23A part 2)

Summary

Relates to the attempt to persuade Tom Jackson to support the blacking of Grunwick's mail and to the low and the high points of the dispute from Maloney's point of view.

Transcript

1. **CT:** OK, the position of the TUC when the UPW¹ was under threat.
2. **CM:** Well, I remember when we had [an] interview with Tom Jackson², and I said to Tom "you've got nothing to fear, we've got millions of people behind us. The TUC leadership should be standing up here in solidarity with you, and I've no doubt that when you go back and tell them, Tom," I said, "they will support you, because at the end of the day this is [a] just cause. We're not on strike, Tom, we're locked out. We're not breaking the law, Tom, they are. And the TUC [has] got to get that over to the parliament, to let them understand that they are going to take further action in support of us, and they want people like George Ward to recognise that the law is there for people to be part of the trade union. And the TUC, if they do this, then Tom, you and I, we will be on the same train together, travelling down the same road, but more importantly, it will show the whole movement out there that we got leadership."
3. **CT:** Terrific! Absolutely terrific! OK, I ask everybody this: the low point of the struggle and then the high point. The low point.
4. **CM:** The low point was when I came back and I met the famous Tom Durkin³, and he put his arm round me, and you could hear Tom miles away, and he spoke very slowly and very lowly, and he said "you've done a good job, you've done your best, your members have done their best." For someone like Tom Durkin to say that to me, I did feel better, I felt a lot better. I thought that making speeches wasn't a good thing when you're having a vote like that⁴. Really what you needed was the conscience of people to come out and vote the way that I hoped they would have voted, but nonetheless that was my lowest point when we actually lost the vote. But we went back as a trade union and we blossomed from there. We went on from there and the union became not the Cinderella union anymore but a union of guts and commitment. And if the TUC leadership had the same, I think you would never have another George Ward⁵ in a million years.
5. **CT:** High point.

¹ Union of Post Office Workers.

² General secretary of the Union of Post Office Workers.

³ Chairman of Brent Trades Council.

⁴ On whether to continue the blacking of Grunwick's mail.

⁵ Owner of Grunwick.

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6. **CM:** I think I've got in most people. We had some great people down there around that picket line that done a lot of good work for us, done a lot of work for Mrs Desai⁶ and Vipin⁷, people who were on the front line. It was good to recognise that the trades council came out in force on a regular basis to make sure that there was always a hot cup of tea, there was a bowl of soup. And Jack Dromey⁸ came down quite regularly as well, so the Transport and General Workers' Union was always well represented. We had quite a number of union leaders from around the area come down; to mention them all would be a little difficult now, the old mind, memory begins to fade a bit after thirty years.
7. **CT:** Turning the corner into Dartmouth Park Road on July the eleventh.
8. **CM:** That was unbelievable. To see that whole sea of people behind you. It's just overpowering; it's just unbelievable that a small little post office like ours in Cricklewood, a small little group of Asian women and men in a small dingy little factory in Chapter Road could raise that sort of solidarity and support shows what the trade union [movement] is about, shows you why everyone should be a member of a trade union. I thank them all for that.
9. **CT:** Let me just –
10. **CM:** He didn't win; he [indistinct] lost. Evil never wins over good. We were the good guys and they were the bad guys. Sadly, the people that could've put a quicker end to it, like the TUC executive, couldn't see further than the legal complications, of which there were none, but there were a lot of conscious, a lot of communities looking on there, and if anyone was on trial it was the trade union movement, sadly. They should have reacted and they didn't.
11. **CT:** Brilliant.

⁶ Jayaben Desai, treasurer of the strike committee.

⁷ Vipin Magdani, member of the strike committee.

⁸ Secretary of Brent Trades Council.