

STATEMENT ISSUED ON SUNDAY, 4th SEPTEMBER to the
PRESS ASSOCIATION at about 19.30 hours.

Mr. David Steel, who now leads the Party once led by Gladstone, denounces me for scrutinising a Court of Enquiry report for saying people have a right not to join a union as well as to join one and for stressing that violence should not be used to further union interests.

Using techniques familiarised by the late Joe McCarthy, the Liberal Party Leader brandishes the terms "lunatic right" and "right wing extremists" against individuals and institutions which stand on the principle of the rule of law.

Worse still, he falls into the language and concepts of the revolutionary left when he blames those who resist left wing demands for "provoking street violence and the disruption of services".

In doing so he is confirming our warning that by his pact with Labour, designed to save his party's parliamentary seats, his party would risk losing its political soul. Let me pose a straightforward

question to Mr. Steel and request a straightforward answer back: Does he recognise the right of workers not to join a union, if that is their wish, just as we all recognise their right to join one? If so, does he not agree that the unions should respect and accept such a decision, and while seeking to persuade, should not badger or intimidate? Will he please tell us what he finds extremist in that?

Mr. Steel implies that whatever the rights and wrongs of the parties the employer should be pressed to "behave reasonably" - which in this context means to give up his and his workers' legal and civil rights in order to appease the union leaders and their militants. But does not Mr. Steele see that this is the spirit of Munich, bullying the victim to give in to the powerful aggressors "to save awkwardness"?

Mr. Steel has implied that not only Mr. Ward but the Conservative leadership should surrender on matters of principle or national interest in order to "get on with the unions". There is a difference between "getting on with the unions" and unconditional surrender. We respect and indeed reaffirm the unions' right to engage in collective bargaining and to represent the best interests of their members. The union, for their part, owe it to their members, themselves and the country to respect the law and the rights of individuals.

The Financial Times, among others, has stated that I aligned the Conservative party behind Mr. Ward. This is quite untrue. Neither opposition nor government should be partisan in an industrial dispute other than by operating due process of law. I am not pro-Ward or pro-Grunwick: I am simply pro-law. I wish the present government would join me in making this bi-partisan.

It is alleged that my criticism of the Scarman report entails rejecting the referee's decision. But that implies that a Court of Enquiry is a Court of law and is subject to an appeal procedure. But it is not and the only appeal if a Court of Enquiry's report is flawed, as I explained that I thought this one was, is to the high court of public opinion.

From THE RT HON SIR KETH JOSEPH BT MP



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WITH COMPLIMENTS