

Summary and transcript of interview of Paul Stern by Chris Thomas, 2007 (803/03A part 1)

Summary

Relates to Stern's role in the publication of a statement by a local magistrate that there should be more convictions of, and harsher penalties on, arrested pickets.

Transcript

1. **CT:** OK, yeah, just from the beginning: the story of how you became aware of the particular magistrate, yeah.
2. **PS:** I was returning to my surgery one day, and a person I know was talking to this woman on the corner just outside the surgery and called me over and said "Paul, you must come and listen to this. This is Mrs Oakley, who's a magistrate. She's going to be hearing the cases for the strike that's going on at Grunwick's." And Mrs Oakley then started to talk about her view of the strike, which she said was that the pickets were doing the most terrible things, that the cases that had been heard against them so far, a lot of them had been acquitted, some forty per cent had been acquitted, and of those who'd not been acquitted they'd been having trivial fines to pay, they'd all been dealt with very leniently and that she was going to put an end to that, and that they would find out that the Willesden bench would treat them very differently. I was just flabbergasted, firstly that this is what her views were, and secondly this is what she'd said. I mean, she hardly knew me at all, really, although she had previously been a patient of the practice but I'd not seen her before. So I made a note of this in my pocket Dictaphone, which I then had transcribed, and passed it on to the editor of *Socialist Challenge*, [who] published it, and this caused a major furore in the court when it came out, and she was in fact removed from the bench, although it was officially denied and [it was stated that] that she'd been moved for other reasons: health, I presume, or something.
3. **CT:** Terrific! Absolutely first rate!
4. **PS:** GPs tend to be rather isolated and don't normally mix a great deal with other doctors, but in my practice there were just two of us. My partner knew what was going on, and indeed many of our patients were people who worked at Grunwick's or indeed were amongst the picket supporting the strikers, so [I] was sympathetic in a purely human way. But of course the establishment – I didn't actually hear from them, I was quite surprised, in a way I was quite surprised not to have anything official done, because she had after all been a patient of the practice, although there's nothing that was clinical involved in what she'd been saying or what I said, but I was surprised and not a little relieved that the General Medical Council of the time didn't take any interest in this against me. But my argument would have been that, clearly, what she was saying was so outrageous and against the interests of natural justice that there was no way one could conceal something like that.
5. **CT:** Yes, I mean, it's bit like, say, someone overheard you saying "well, I'm not going to –". Well, interestingly, I'm just going to say I'm, you know, if a doctor say "well, I'm not going to treat someone beaten up the police because they all deserve it." I mean, that would be considered an outrage against your Hippocratic Oath. But strangely, I interviewed one of the strikers who was injured, you know, one of strikers who was on the strike committee, a guy called Vipin Magdani, who was the secretary, and he was, I think, run over by George Ward and ended up in one of the hospitals and the – I don't know – registrar came over and said "oh, you're one of the strikers, I'm going to leave you until last."

Summary and transcript of interview of Paul Stern by Chris Thomas, 2007 (803/03A part 1)

6. **PS:** Yeah, well, I wouldn't be surprised at that. That's the –