

Alec Kitson, Great Britain

Mr. Chairman, First of all, let me correct you, Mr. Chairman, I am not a Member of Parliament and have no desires to be one. I am here at this inquiry representing the Chile Solidarity Committee of Great Britain. I am also an executive officer of the Transport and General Workers' Union in Great Britain who have two million members. And, of course, I am a member of the National Executive Committee of the British Labour Party. And I welcome this opportunity to come to this inquiry to make various points of view as to how we see the situation in Chile with regard to the trade union movement. I was one of the very, very few British trade unionists who had the opportunity to visit Chile during the Allende regime. In fact I was in Chile five months before the coup and I had the opportunity at that time to have discussions with CUT who were being given the opportunity to play an important part in the building up of the economy of the country under the Allende regime. And it is from that point of view that I view the situation in Chile today and it is from that point of view also, I think, I should be allowed to make a few proposals as did Comrade Shalayev before me as to how we can assist the Chilean trade union movement to re-establish its democratic rights on behalf of the workers that it represents. The repression as taking place against the Chilean trade union movement is second to none in the world. And I think it would be true to say that the film that Jonathan Dimbleby showed us yesterday gave us a picture of what is actually happening to the Chilean trade union movement under Pinochet. And there is no doubt that the Chilean trade union movement as a free collective bargaining organization on behalf of the workers has no rights whatsoever. In fact Jonathan Dimbleby told me personally that so far as the CUT movement was concerned that the one thing that they really needed at this time

was financial assistance. They did not have the finances to carry out the tasks that are so obvious on behalf of the workers that they represent. And it is from that point of view that we see the real suppression that is taking place under this fascist regime that has been set up in Chile. And it is from that point of view that we must study what can be done to assist in changing that the suppression is terrible. We have seen in the film what happened to the construction workers, the textile workers and all the other workers in Chile during the course of the last four years. And we also knew that after that film had been made that people who had participated in the film openly were arrested and were banished to the countryside. Certainly since because of trade union world opinion the effort to release them and allow them to come back. But as I understand there are some of the leaders who did come back to the main centres in Chile can^e back of their own volition and suggested that they should be arrested again. Now that to me is real guts, that to me is something that we should welcome and we should appreciate, the fate that has been put up by the Chilean trade unionists that try to re-establish their rights, their democratic rights as trade unionists. And the film again portrayed the poverty that is going on in Chile. And that poverty is more allied to working-class people, to trade unionists than it is to anybody. And if the trade union movement could have its rights re-established I am sure that something could be done to improve that situation. We had one of our unions in Great Britain send a delegation to Chile and Bolivia. One of the participants is here at this inquiry, Ted McCay, and he gave us a report on what was happening within the trade union movement in Chile. And the trade union movement officially is clandestine. They had to meet trade unionists in churches, in chapels, in places

at the end of the day would never be something that we could accept in the Western world. And that is the suppression that is going on. And also of course they met other people as well in the countryside like again the film did portray to us the reason that I am pressing for the importance of the film is because I think that it should be shown widely outside of Chile to ensure that the world at large appreciates and realizes the suppression that is going on against the majority of the people in that country. And I welcomed the report that was made by the National Union of Mine Workers because in my own country, in Great Britain, I travelled widely and discussed this report, I travelled with Corvalan, I travelled with Madam Allende and other Chilean refugees throughout Britain when we were portraying that report and trying to get the message over to the ordinary working people of what actually was happening to trade unionists and workers in that country.

Well Chairman, I agree with everything that Comrade Shalayev has said and I agree with his proposals excepting one and that one is that we should isolate Chile diplomatically. Well, as a member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party we pressurized the Foreign Secretary and the Prime Minister Jim Callagan that something should be done to lower the tone of our representation in Chile after the incidence of Shela Cassidy. And Sheila Cassidy reported widely when she came back from Chile on what actually had happened. And I am pleased to say that the representations that we made at that time resulted in the withdrawal of the British ambassador. So the status of the British government in Chile has been reduced greatly. And the reason, I see, we should not withdraw diplomatic representation completely ^{is} if we had not have had embassies in Chilean Santiago these last four

years there would have been difficulties. What is about the people that the Swedes have taken, what is about the people that the Italians have taken, what's about the people that Cubans have taken. No embassies, no contacts. And I think, it is important, let's reduce them, let's reduce the representations of the status of ambassador but let's make sure at the end of the day that we still have avenues, we still have roads for the people who want assistance and help. And it is only on that point, dear friend, that I would disagree with the whole of your statement as is on the fact of diplomatic representation. Now could I make this other point, and it is this. That the trade union movement, in the world, whether it be divided or wheter it be united, is the strongest element that we have got in the working class' hands. And it's through this movement that we can bring pressure to bear on any government. Whether it be the Chilean government, the Russian government, the British government or any other government. The trade union movement has all the strength that is necessary to bring pressure to bear on change. And we have the two wings, the ICFTU and the WFTU. And the two organizations, I think, have common policy on Chile. They agree, I think, without any differences that we should restore democracy to Chile. And I would appeal to the people here who may not be active trade unionists but they are trade unionists, I hope, that they go back to their respective countries, they go back to the respective trade union centres and they make the appeal that we must have a united front to ensure that we have not got to wait the forty years that the Spanish workers had to wait to gain their freedom. We have got the way of communication, we have got the way to deal with this economically. And that the sooner that we put that into operation, the sooner the Chileans will get their freedom, the Chileans that are in exile will be able to return and have demo-

cratic rights in their country. And I would appeal in particular, you don't want to pick and choose who should do what. But if I talked about the Western world I would appeal to my American trade union friends, and I have many in America, that they can bring pressure to bear. If Carter is a man that is true to his words in human rights than he will assist them. But they can bring pressure to bear through the trade union movement in America along with the trade union movement in Western Europe to ensure that when we call for boycotts, when we call for pressures to be brought to bear that they will assist us. With that help, I am sure, we will be able to give, as I said already, that return to the freedom that we are fighting for.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would say to the Commission that this has been an experience for me, as a trade unionist, listening to evidence that has been submitted by ordinary people in a world that is supposed to be human. It has been touching to me, and I am sure to many people in this hall, and so far as we are concerned, in the British trade union movement and in the British labour movement, we will continue to fight and assist this commission and all its work and its exposures which are necessary, highly necessary, if we are going to win this battle. The Commission is important, but I think that it's good to extend itself to make sure that people outside of the Commission itself understand the work. And you can take this from me, so far as I am personally concerned, that when I go back to Great Britain that I will take the opportunity of everything that I have learned at this inquiry to spread that news, to spread that message and to try and gain more support and further support for the Commission on the Inquiry that is going on here. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.