

Interview with a Stormtrooper



by David Scott
Sunday, 7th March 2021

This is the transcript of an exchange with a pair of Police Scotland liaison officers recorded on 6 March 2021.

I was sitting in the park outside Holyrood in Edinburgh. Many police officers were in the park and its surroundings. Two police officers came up to me; they knew my name.

PS1 (man): I'm going to introduce myself as a police liaison officer. The purpose ...

DS: Excuse me, sir. I'm hearing-impaired and I find the masks very difficult.

PS: I'm not going to remove my mask.

DS: Well, I'm sorry ...

PS: I can raise my voice and I believe that you can hear me from there.

DS: I can hear you, but I do lip-read a bit as well. But I'm hearing-impaired, so it does make it more difficult for me to understand what you're saying.

PS: I'm going to withdraw a little bit and change my mask, because I've got a different type of mask. This mask has a higher protection rate and will allow me to get within two metres of you safely, and then I can raise my voice. I have been in this situation before. I'm prepared to raise my voice. It's not in an aggressive manner, but in a way so that I can communicate more effectively. And by doing that, my experience in the past has shown that just by raising my voice, that simple act means I can be clear. I think this is going to be effective. So let me just do that now. I'm just following the regulations. I assume you're happy with that. I can raise my voice. Can you hear me now?

DS: Yes, I can hear you now okay.

PS: So the purpose of me being here today is as a police liaison officer, and I'm here to inform you that any gathering today, any assembly of people — and I assume, I may be wrong here, but I'm going to ask you — what's your intention? Why are you here today?

DS: I'm sorry, sir, I don't want to have a conversation with you.

PS: WHY — ARE — YOU — HERE?

DS: I don't wish to have a conversation with you.

PS: You don't wish to have a conversation? Well, I will inform you — just to give you information that may be necessary or useful for you to make a decision as to your intention from this point onwards — [that] any gathering of any kind, any assembly of people in terms of, er, protests or whatever: it's not allowed at the moment, because we are currently (and I'm sure you're aware) in Tier Four, a lockdown situation that means that people are not allowed to assemble. The reason being that that's being seen by experts to be dangerous to public health. Anybody that is in contravention of that ...

DS: I'm sorry, sir. I'm here to be a human being. You've come across and you're starting to threaten me with action. This is not right, sir.

PS: I haven't finished my sentence. I've not threatened you with anything.

DS: Well, I think that's the way it's going, and we are all human beings, sir. We're all equal in a common-law jurisdiction. It's a beautiful day; we're outside; you must realise that the threat that you're claiming to change all of our rights is tiny. Do you know, sir — no, just bear with me one moment ...

PS: I haven't said that at all, because you haven't let me finish. I have not finished.

DS: You finish.

PS: So my advice was that anybody assembling in order to protest today in a group is in contravention of the current restrictions linked to the coronavirus, okay, under the Health Protection (Coronavirus) (Scotland) Act of 2020. And therefore ...

DS: But these are unlawful.

PS: I am giving you advice that if you **were** here — and I'm just saying if you **were** here in that intention — you are liable. You will be given a Fixed Penalty Notice ...

DS: You're now threatening me, sir. This is threatening.

PS: I'm not threatening you, sir. I'm giving you advice.

DS: No, look: it's a beautiful day, it's sunny.

PS: I don't dispute that. I don't dispute you being a human being. I am giving you advice so that you can decide ...

DS: Now I'm going to give **you** some advice, sir, because we're all equal in a common-law jurisdiction. Do you believe that?

PS: Carry on.

DS: Do you believe that we are all equal in a common-law jurisdiction?

PS: I don't know what your point is, sir. I'm allowing you to finish your point.

DS: I'm trying to establish a point where we can have ...

PS: Because you already asked me whether I believe you to be a human being. There's no doubt at all about that. How are you going to finish [your point]?

DS: It's a very simple question, sir. Do you believe we are all equal in a common-law jurisdiction?

PS: I'm not going to get into debate at all, whatsoever. I have told you: in relation to Coronavirus Health [Protection] ...

DS: Well, okay, if you're not going to debate, I will tell you something.

PS: No, I am now going to withdraw, because I find it intimidating that you're actually trying to negotiate with me about something ...

DS: I don't wish to negotiate with you about anything, sir. I don't wish to enter into any contract with you. I don't wish to negotiate.

PS: Can I ask you another question?

DS: I don't want to answer your question.

PS: I'm asking you a reasonable question: where did you travel from?

DS: I'm not going to answer your question.

PS: I'm going to withdraw now. I have talked to you, I've given you information about Coronavirus ...

DS: And now you're refusing to listen to my points. You say that you're not going to debate.

PS: I think, sir, that you're trying to provoke a reaction.

DS: I'm not going to provoke a reaction. The last thing I want is to provoke a reaction. Look, you've got weapons and lots of people; why would I want to provoke a reaction? I'm a peaceful man. I'm here peacefully, law-abiding.

PS2 (woman): I think my colleague has already advised you ...

DS: I understand your position, but here's the problem: there is a thing called the law. You're meant to be part of an organisation to uphold the law, and yet [here] people are wanting to behave lawfully and then you're coming and threatening them. This is not right. You shouldn't be asked to do this. Let me finish, sir. No, you keep interrupting me; please let me finish.

We're equal in a common-law jurisdiction. I listened to you; you should listen to me. That's how we get along. Right, we're in a situation where the state is telling us our rights no longer exist, and they're saying "Coronavirus"; but if you've looked at the figures, sir, you'll know that the all-cause mortality in 2020 was normal.

PS2: And that's not for us to discuss with you.

DS: But that's for the **people** to decide. That's for the people to be able to have an opinion [on].

PS1: There's not. The right to assemble is a **qualified** right, and that has been suspended because of health concerns which medical science and medical — er — experts ...

DS: **Some** medical science. **Some** medical experts.

PS1: You can dispute that. You can dispute that as much as you like. Freedom of expression has **not** been suspended, so you could express yourself online.

DS: [laughs]

PS1: What **has** been decided is that to actually gather in numbers, to assemble, and in terms of a protest, a demonstration, is dangerous to public health. Now, somebody else has decided that, and I'm the agent of ...

DS: No, it's not.

PS1: Well, you can dispute that, and you can do that online. But in a group, to do that has been deemed ...

DS: Well, this is the thing, because this is an important point.

PS1: So my purpose today is to inform you that the police policy on that would be to give you a Fixed Penalty Notice if you disregard that.

DS: But no, this is threatening.

PS1: And whether you decide that that information is threatening ...

DS: You are now threatening me!

PS1: It's not my purpose to do that. I am here to inform you.

DS: No, you're not.

PS1: Okay, so I've given you the information, and whether you decide that that information is threatening or not is up to you.

DS: Well, you see, this is what brings the police into disrepute; this destroys your relationship with the public.

PS1: That's your opinion, but I can't alter that. I cannot alter that.

DS: No, but you police by consent. Do you believe that?

PS2: Yes.

DS: Do you believe that you're a citizen in uniform?

PS1: It would be naïve to ...

DS: Do you believe that we're all equal in a common-law jurisdiction, that you're only engaged ...

PS2: What you need to understand sir, is that there's other people that have a completely polar opinion to yourself, and you need to respect that; we need to respect that.

DS: But I do! I'm not trying to fine anybody!

PS2: In the parameters of the law ...

DS: No, of statute. You're working **against** the law. The law says ...

PS1: [inaudible comment about statute and law] ... I know that the majority of people believe that.

PS2: The instruction from our Chief Constable ...

DS: I'm sorry, I can't hear what you're saying.

PS2: Well, I'll speak up for you. We're working within the current parameters of [makes air-quotes with fingers] "the law" ...

DS: Statute. Regulations.

PS2: ... from the Chief Constable and from the government. That's all we can work with.

DS: Yes.

PS2: My colleague has explained very clearly what the steps are, and if you are here to gather, to assemble, that is a **qualified** right that's covered by legislation.

DS: A **qualified** right?

PS2: Where there is a public health issue ...

DS: There **is** no public health issue.

PS1: In your opinion.

DS: No, in the statistics given by **your** government ...

PS2: Right, so we're going to withdraw. You obviously don't want to talk to us. You just want to get ...

DS: I was sitting there, minding my own business ...

PS2: We're well aware that there's currently this anti-lockdown gathering, meant to have been organised and meant to have been taking place. And that's why we came across to engage with you, okay? That's the end of it. You've been informed ...

DS: That's the **end** of it? That's not the end of it.

PS2: It might not be the end of it, but this is the end of our conversation, because you're not listening to me.

DS: No, **you're** not listening to **me**. I heard what you said, and I'm saying that the basis of our rights has been removed by the state, and the state points to a health risk, but the state's own statistics say there's no health risk. That's therefore a lie.

PS2: And that's not for me to ...

DS: No, you keep interrupting me. I listened to you; just listen. It's polite. It's one human being to another. We're all equal in a common-law jurisdiction.

PS2: Carry on, but you're trying to get me to agree with your opinion, which I cannot do. I cannot commit to that.

DS: Well, it'd be your job. If you agree with me, they'll sack you. That's the position.

PS1: You're debating something that we're not free to debate, and we're not actually ...

DS: You're not free to debate it because of your job.

PS1: You're talking about medical science ...

DS: I'm talking about **government** statistics.

PS1: But we're not qualified ...

DS: But it's **numbers!**

PS1: We'll not ever give an opinion on that. That's not our role today. Our role today is to tell you about the police [inaudible] on assembly ...

DS: But I heard you. You keep repeating yourself.

PS1: You're trying to derail this, and we've been very clear to you ...

DS: No, I'm simply saying that we're equal in a common-law jurisdiction, and that you've spoken to me ...

PS1: I am being very clear to you that you are not to assemble here in terms of a protest or demonstration, and to do so is a breach of the Coronavirus Act ...

DS: You've come over and spoken to me. You've engaged with me. No, you keep repeating yourself, sir. When you come over to me to speak to me, as a human being ...

PS1: There are other officers here who may want to engage with you.

DS: As a human being ...

PS1: Look, I've said all I need to say.

DS: As a human being, you came over and talked to me, and now you're refusing to listen.

PS2: I've explained why we came over to talk to you.

DS: But you're refusing to listen. Act as a human being! As one person to another: you have a view; I'm stating **my** view. This man here won't **allow** me to state my view; he keeps talking over the top of me! Why?

PS2: You can state your opinion. That is your human right, to state your view.

DS: Of course it's my human right to state my view!

PS2: However, you are not allowed to state your view in this forum today.

DS: Why?

PS2: Because freedom of assembly is a **qualified** right.

DS: And what does that mean? Please explain to me what that means.

PS2: It means that legislation can be put in place to **restrict** that right.

DS: Is there any limit on that legislation? Could the government do anything it wants?

PS2: [with tone and gesture indicating 'Yes, obviously'] Within the parameters of what It decides!

DS: So you're telling me today the government's power is absolute?

PS2: No, you keep putting words in my mouth.

DS: No, that's what you said; it can do anything.

PS2: You're trying to put words in my mouth; I'm trying to explain it in simple terms, that [inaudible] legislation in place ...

DS: If you let me speak, I'll explain my point.

PS2: ... going to explain that legislation to you. [inaudible] If you do that, then you may be liable to arrest, okay?

DS: I see you've now escalated it. You're now saying you'll **abduct** me.

PS1: No, we didn't say 'abduct'!

DS: Wrongful arrest is abduction. See how you've escalated it now?

PS2: We're just going round in circles here.

DS: I'm trying to speak to you as a human being, and you **won't listen**.

PS2: My colleagues are going to speak to you now.

DS: No, I don't want to have any more to do with this.

PS2: Okay, thank you, sir.

Third police officer: You're going to stay with us just now, okay?

DS: No, I'm not. I'm going to go away.

And that was the end of the exchange. I was followed for a while by officers on foot, and then by two uniformed officers in an unmarked car. But no more exchanges, apart from a wave from one of the officers in the car, took place.

As I reflect on this exchange, two things occur to me. The police are frightened to speak normally; they clearly believe might, but not reason, is on their side. Secondly, they constantly sought to escalate the situation, whereas their duty is to do the opposite.

The process they use in Covid policing, which is a different thing from normal policing (since those arrested were acting lawfully), is called The Four E's:

Engage
Educate
Encourage
Enforce

Perhaps they should be more honest and add a fifth and sixth E:

Escalate
Entrap

Police Scotland close down free speech in Holyrood Park



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