

Telecon RJW Alan Bates 5 December 2014

ALAN BATES: James was speaking on the Today Programme.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: They booked him for that and then I think there's going to be a lot more press interest in (unclear) and they've got someone manning the phones at their office and I'm ready for stuff at our end with others as well.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: And then I think they're looking at --

RON WARMINGTON: You realise we'll be no comment. We have to. We --

ALAN BATES: Yeah, you have to be no comment rather than --

RON WARMINGTON: We just -- all we'll ever say is everything that's needs to be said will be in our reports.

ALAN BATES: No, you can't say anything.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: And then the -- I think the 17 December is the pencilled-in date, the afternoon of that, for the adjournment debate.

RON WARMINGTON: Okay.

ALAN BATES: It's a 90 _ minute adjournment debate but that hasn't been confirmed yet because the application can't go in until the middle of next week, so it's -- but I believe that they've had words and looked at the timings but it's not known.

And then I think letters are being drafted next week as well. So it's all kicking off a bit.

RON WARMINGTON: Well, I do hope that -- I do hope that the reaction is BEIS has to get some -- grow some fucking balls on this and fire either the Chairman or the Chief Exec or both, frankly. Both would be appropriate. Just kick them out.

ALAN BATES: I think what will happen -- I think it's the way that Post Office reacts to the initial press launch. If they do their normal heads down --

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: -- and issue a press release, I think they've got a real problem then. They're going to get dragged in left, right and centre. But I don't think they can even defend (unclear) --

RON WARMINGTON: Well, they simply don't have in their communications guy, they don't have anybody up to dealing with this stuff. He's way, way out of his depth. But then --

ALAN BATES: You can have all the MPs, aren't you --

RON WARMINGTON: You need an absolutely top publicity guy for handling this stuff and they've been consistently under-recognising the seriousness of the problem and they're going to reap the bloody whirlwind on this, I'm sure of it. And they absolutely deserve to because, you know, this -- I mean, you know, I think this stuff that we're writing right now just kind of caps it really. We've let them have enough rope; they've now hung themselves. As soon as this 61-pager came out I thought you are so, so stupid because, you know, to come out with, you know, with a sort of knee jerk reaction with a bloody great document like that, that when I read through it there was only one sentence in it that remotely worried me and I thought we might have got something wrong. And you know what? We hadn't got it wrong.

So, you know, if we refute everything they've said in this and then they provoked us into saying more, like I just did on the ATMs there, they're going to look completely incompetent. An, they've got a choice: they either look completely incompetent and they're going to have to kick out all these people, including bond Dickinson, including probably Angela who's going to be baby thrown out with bathwater. The alternative is to look deceptive and, frankly, they probably look both.

ALAN BATES: I think they do. I think they certainly look incompetent. To be honest, if I get an opportunity, I'm sure I'm going to be asked some quotes next week, and I'm going to start giving them because I'm not playing ball anymore.

RON WARMINGTON: No --

ALAN BATES: (Unclear) .

RON WARMINGTON: -- no. I think, frankly, you've got -- you know whether they would nasty enough to withhold the final few POIRs, I don't know.

ALAN BATES: I think, no -- I mean, we were already looking at this now where we're thinking about -- it's the repercussions from Post Office we're wondering about, what they're going to do, whether they're going to close it down. I mean, basically we're going to hang in with it --

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: -- JFSA and we're going to let them pull it.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah. That's definitely the right thing to do, yeah. You've got to bite your lip basically and just ... yeah.

ALAN BATES: No, I'm going to attack them. Verbally,

I'll attack them.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, but you don't want to --

ALAN BATES: I'm not going to pull out of it.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, you don't want to put your cards down face up on the table and throw your hand in. That would be -- let them --

ALAN BATES: No, no, no. We've come too far for that, Ron.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: This has been a long game and we've known it's a long game.

RON WARMINGTON: I tell you what --

ALAN BATES: It's not over yet, so ...

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, I mean, it's --

ALAN BATES: It's Post Office.

RON WARMINGTON: I mean, I've been working this, what, two years now or something and you've been working on it for 13 or something. Christ.

ALAN BATES: It's been my life, Ron, I think --

RON WARMINGTON: I know, yeah. I tell you what, this is like the giant slayer job, isn't it? I mean, it really is. The giant has --

ALAN BATES: It takes a long time to get everything motivated as well. This is it.

RON WARMINGTON: But when the giant comes down, it's going to come down with one hell of a crash. You know, I mean, you know, when I'm talking to this franchise lawyer, you know, among others things what you would do is set up a completely new

franchise-based arrangement, a true partnership, a John Lewis-type structure so that the subpostmasters are shareholders in the total organisation. You could do so much with it and --

ALAN BATES: It has to sort out this bloody system --

RON WARMINGTON: Well, they've got to sort out the system and, frankly, you know, I think --

ALAN BATES: You can't ask people to sign up to a duff system --

RON WARMINGTON: I think they've got to deal with the sort of Beeching-type situation. You know, are they going to run a railway system or a Post Office system for the country which is -- you know, same as the Royal Mail situation. You know, if we're going to run on a purely commercial market-based approach, then none of these bloody little offices are viable. If, on the other hand, as I think we should, we accept that, you know, it's part of the service to the community, then, you know, Government's got to stump up and pay the necessary subsidiaries. Keep chasing profitability by adding more and more complexity without having an adequate systems platform is completely ludicrous, and that's where they've gone wrong.

ALAN BATES: (Unclear). The stupid thing is that they started wrong because they pushed this system out --

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: -- in 2000 to nearly 20,000 offices --

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: -- and then they went ahead in the next few years reducing the amount of offices they had to 14,000. I mean, who does that?

RON WARMINGTON: Yes, it's sort of cart before horse, isn't it, really?

ALAN BATES: Of course you've got all this equipment out there and all the rest of it and you're going to get rid of a third of it or a quarter of it, God, in the first few years. I mean, it's mad -- absolutely mad.

RON WARMINGTON: Well, at least they had plenty of spares to roll out in their triage process, didn't they? They just --

ALAN BATES: They're still using them, I think.

RON WARMINGTON: I know. Just hose them down with a Karcher pressure washer and issue them again. Dry them off under the Dyson and send them out again. It's terrible really. It really is. Okay, well -- by the way --

ALAN BATES: (Unclear). Go on then.

RON WARMINGTON: We've finalised the Stanley Fell case but he did come back with some stuff. We've done our best to keep him in. Although we recommend against, we actually put it on hold waiting for part 2 because we've kind of kept poor little Stanley in the game. He's another one of these that sort of said he stole money to keep -- pay for the various things he had to pay for and then he's kind of retracting that, so it's -- those are very difficult cases for us to wholeheartedly endorse.

ALAN BATES: Those are ones where the whole point of sitting down at a table with everyone and going through it --

RON WARMINGTON: Yes.

ALAN BATES: -- you know, that's the sort of thing you do.

RON WARMINGTON: Yes.

ALAN BATES: Oh, can I ask you about one case, M075?

Have you had that in yet?

RON WARMINGTON: Hang on.

ALAN BATES: You should have had it in on 4 November.

RON WARMINGTON: 75. Hang on a sec. That's Glynis Jeffries. Oh, yes, yes, she rings a bell. Yeah, we've got that. Hang on a sec.

ALAN BATES: You've got that. She hasn't had her copy yet --

RON WARMINGTON: Wait a minute, wait a minute. Let's have a look. 75, 75. Hang on let me just pull the schedule up.

ALAN BATES: Some time in January it's due I know.

RON WARMINGTON: Wait a minute, hang on. Open -- I've got so many bloody spreadsheets open at the moment.

ALAN BATES: No, no, it's all right. I just wanted to make sure you had had --

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, it rings a bell. It's probably on my desk right now, actually. I tell you what --

ALAN BATES: That's all right. It's no problem. It's not due until mid/end January.

RON WARMINGTON: I'll just pull up the tracker. M075, here we go. Hang on. M075. Oh, bullshit. M075. Right, yeah, it's due 16 January. We haven't assigned it to anybody to write yet.

ALAN BATES: That's all right. I mean, she's moaning that she hasn't received a POIR yet.

RON WARMINGTON: Oh. Well. We've got the POIR for sure.

ALAN BATES: She hasn't -- no, she hasn't had it and she's been chasing me --

RON WARMINGTON: Let me see when we got it. Just a second. Dadadada. I'll pull up we got it. Read messages inbox M075. It may have been quite recent. M075. Oh, we've only just -- oh, hang on 4 November. Whoa, hang on a minute. Delivery date ... it went up to huddle on 4 November.

ALAN BATES: She hasn't had her copy.

RON WARMINGTON: Okay. Well then --

ALAN BATES: I'll chase them then, let them know you have it.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, we --

ALAN BATES: I don't suppose you've had 137 yet, have you?

RON WARMINGTON: Hang on. Is that yours?

ALAN BATES: Yes.

RON WARMINGTON: No, we haven't had yours yet. Hang on a sec. Let's check.

ALAN BATES: I'm going to bring them with them on Monday.

RON WARMINGTON: Pardon? 137. Hang on, wait a minute. No, we haven't had yours yet. No, they're are saving the best until last. Okay. Sorry about that.

ALAN BATES: Okay, no, no, I've got -- no problem.

RON WARMINGTON: I wouldn't --

ALAN BATES: All right. Well, I'll see you Monday then.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, kind of looking forward to it.

ALAN BATES: Oh, yes. I don't think there's going to be much there --

RON WARMINGTON: No, hang on a minute. Yes, we do. Hang on. Read messages. Whoops, hang on. Bear with. We've got, we've got, we've got, we've got 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13 cases going up for mediation and of those they've objected to ten, okay. So --

ALAN BATES: (Unclear).

RON WARMINGTON: So we weren't that far wrong, you know, on our estimates of --

ALAN BATES: Of the 90 per cent.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: Leave it at 90.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: There certainly has been a meeting where it's been higher than 90.

RON WARMINGTON: Oh yeah, yeah. Well, that's still 77 per cent. So I think I said 80 might have been a better number. I pointed that out to Ian who called Janet about that, so they may have altered that in the report but whatever. Who gives a shit. That's the end.

ALAN BATES: I'm glad it's not (unclear) actually (unclear).

RON WARMINGTON: She responded to me earlier because she said she was --

ALAN BATES: Yes, she's doing emails from home --

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, she responded to my --

ALAN BATES: -- herself into the office, I think.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, she responded to my message about

the contract and so on by saying she appreciated it.
Rudkin.

ALAN BATES: [REDACTED] **GRO**

RON WARMINGTON: Oh, is she?

ALAN BATES: [REDACTED] **GRO**
[REDACTED] **GRO**

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: But she's off next Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday anyway.

RON WARMINGTON: I've got an email from David Cameron.
Mmm.

ALAN BATES: Sorry?

RON WARMINGTON: I said I've got an email from David
Cameron but I don't think it's about the case, as
you do, and probably another six emails from bloody
Rudkin.

ALAN BATES: Oh yeah.

RON WARMINGTON: God, he drives you nuts. I mean --

ALAN BATES: Do you know he's been invited to this thing
on Monday, you know.

RON WARMINGTON: I'm going to get him a copy of Aesop's
Fables. What thing on Monday? Oh, really, the --
what thing?

ALAN BATES: The BBC thing up in Fenny Compton where
everyone's going. So -- did you not know about
that?

RON WARMINGTON: No. What are you talking about? Fenny
-- I don't know what you're talking about.

ALAN BATES: Oh, there's the BBC are filming up at Fenny Compton on Monday and this is Nick and Kim.

RON WARMINGTON: Oh, okay.

ALAN BATES: They've arranged for a number of the original people who were --

RON WARMINGTON: Yes.

ALAN BATES: -- went to the original meeting to go up there --

RON WARMINGTON: He wanted to do that.

ALAN BATES: -- to do a re-enacting as such.

RON WARMINGTON: Oh, right. I hope they're saying nice things about us you and me. I bet --

ALAN BATES: Sorry?

RON WARMINGTON: I say I hope they say nice things about us, you and me.

ALAN BATES: Well, no, it's meant to be the inaugural meeting so, you know, you wouldn't have been around, would you?

RON WARMINGTON: No, no, no --

ALAN BATES: Michael's going because he wasn't that inaugural meeting anyway, so I don't know.

RON WARMINGTON: I don't know. Well, probably Mark Baker will be in on that as well.

ALAN BATES: Well, I'm going to have a word -- I've had serious words in the past with Nick and Tim about him --

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah.

ALAN BATES: -- and I'm going to give him another call over the weekend about it as well, so ...

RON WARMINGTON: You saw his survey, didn't you? He only had 85 responses .I mean, that won't cut the mustard, will it?

ALAN BATES: Well, I had more in my survey.

RON WARMINGTON: 85 responses won't even, you know, cause a lifted eyebrow, so that's not much cop for anything. But, okay. All right. Well, good stuff.

ALAN BATES: All right.

RON WARMINGTON: It's all --

ALAN BATES: An interesting couple of weeks coming up, I think.

RON WARMINGTON: Yes, that's right. It's getting near the Christmas party season. I think I'm going to have lots of, you know, glasses of wine and then the phone going, you know. It's --

ALAN BATES: I think it's going to be busy next week, anyway, the phone. At least you can say "no comment". You can get away with that. Some of us can't.

RON WARMINGTON: Yeah, exactly. No, you're going to have to be on pole position, aren't you? All right. Well, good stuff, anyway. Okay, see you now. Bye.

ALAN BATES: Bye.

RON WARMINGTON: Bye.

(Recording ends)