They Knew – A Few Human Faces

Despite the catalogue of evil portrayed in these pages there are also some human faces. These are the people that accepted the truth of what had happened with NCR and Mike Buchanan and, in their own way, stood up to be counted.

Alun Long – Financial Controller of NCR. - Alun knew that I had become a victim of NCR's incompetence. Alun was the understanding human face of NCR when the facts of the case became known. Alun was the only face of NCR that I met and he was undoubtedly sympathetic to my situation. After the early meetings when I voluntarily paid to NCR over £300,000 and wrote my voluntary statement in to order to help NCR (and the police) to understand what had happened, Alun was sidelined. Since then, for fourteen years all my dealings with NCR have been through their solicitors.

During the criminal trial of Mike Buchanan in 2004, Alun Long presented to the court a damning picture of the lax financial controls in NCR Brussels. He also provided documents that demonstrated that NCR had known of the problems in Brussels for many years after a number of studies undertaken by both internal and external auditors, but NCR had done nothing about it.

It was Friday 25th June 2004; it was sentencing day. Mike Buchanan led the way to the dock and I followed. We had to walk past D/C Steve Ball and Alun Long sitting together in the front row of the visitors seating area. As I walked past Alun Long he leaned forward and patted me on the back in a gesture of support. He knew.

D/C Steve Ball – Lead Investigating Officer of the Fraud Squad – D/C Ball also knew that I had been unwillingly sucked into this 'crime'. I first met D/C Ball when he knocked on my front door at 6.00am on Tuesday 27th July 1999. Between that first meeting and sentencing on 25th June 2004, we effectively worked together for almost five years. I provided D/C Ball with my voluntary statement, two recorded interviews and many casual discussions, helping him wherever I could.

During the second recorded interview he asked why I had not taken more money after all I had every opportunity to take almost whatever I wanted. I remember responding to this question rather meekly by saying, "It wasn't my money". D/C Ball and his co-

interrogator looked at each incredulously as if they had never before come across such honesty and integrity.

D/C Ball asked me whether I would be willing to be a witness in the trial against Mike Buchanan. He told me that it would look good for me when it came to sentencing. I told him that if they put me in the witness box and asked me questions then I would tell the truth.

Following Mike Buchanan's trial by jury in February 2004, D/C Ball told me that he expected that I would get a suspended sentence.

Following the shocking sentence dealt out by Judge (bang-up) King, I was handcuffed and taken to the cells beneath the court. After a while my solicitor, Rachel Hubbard and my barrister, Dean Armstrong came down to see me. They were deeply shocked by the sentence and told me that they would immediately submit an appeal against sentence. Rachel told me, "D/C Ball sends his regards".

Why would D/C Ball send his regards to someone that he had been instrumental in sending to prison? Clearly he couldn't send a message to say he was sorry about the sentence, but there is no doubt that sending 'his regards' was Steve Ball's way of saying that he was sorry. He knew.

Rachel Hubbard - My Solicitor in the Criminal Case – Like D/C Ball, Rachel had predicted that I would get a suspended sentence. I had worked with Rachel for two years in the build up to the criminal proceedings and she understood the background very clearly; she understood why I felt that I had no option but to break the law. Of course the challenge in court was to get the judge to understand; and to, if necessary, persuade him to factor my situation into his sentencing. As we know this was unsuccessful.

After sentencing, Rachel was raving about the judge calling him 'the idiot judge'. Rachel was determined that an appeal would gain what was the correct sentence. As I was on legal aid and this was not forthcoming for the appeal, both Rachel and my barrister, Dean Armstrong, acted for me free of charge (known as pro bono).

Rachel said that she would never, ever, encourage anybody to help the police again. She was angry that D/C Ball had told me that by becoming a witness for the prosecution of Mike Buchanan, that it would look good for me when it came to sentencing.

For somebody so experienced in criminal law as Rachel, it demonstrates just how strongly she felt that I did not deserve this punishment. She knew.

Dean Armstrong - My Barrister in the Criminal Case – I'd probably known Dean for less than a year before the trial of Mike Buchanan started. Whilst he was not quite so emotional as Rachel regarding the outcome of the sentencing, he was similarly scathing about the judge and the injustice on my situation. He also worked pro bono in order to carry through my farcical appeal. He knew.

There are many others that 'know' the truth of this story but for reasons of loyalty or because of the nature of their role in the story, are unable to come out and admit the truth.