

From "The Late Show With David Letterman", Tuesday, January 19, 2010

Dave: Every day I wake up and I say, "I'm gonna keep my mouth shut about this NBC/Tonight Show thing" because, honestly folks, I don't have a dog in this fight. But here's the deal: I've known Jay Leno for, I don't know, 35 years. A long, long time. And we used to buddy around in the old days, and what we're seeing now is kind of vintage Jay. And it's enjoyable for me to see this. It's like, "Hey, there he is! There's the guy I know!" And I just thought, "I better keep my mouth shut because, Lord knows, I got my own problems. Really. I got my own problems. (smiling) But I just can't help myself. (Laughter & applause) And while it's true that I don't specifically have a dog in this fight, I think that in some way, I and Paul are responsible for the mess that's taking place over there now.

Paul: We're responsible?

Dave: Yes

Paul: What do you mean?

Dave: Because of the big stink we created when we left NBC years and years ago, they said, "Okay, well that'll never happen again."

Paul: Well that's why Jay says he was going to retire five years ago just to avoid that.

Dave: That's right. They wanted to avoid another transitional brouhaha, if I can invoke a little French. So last night Jay gave his state of the network speech. (Laughter & applause) And I saw...and he said we should not blame Conan for what's going on. Don't blame Conan for what's going on. And I said to myself, "No one is blaming Conan." (Laughter & applause) And he further elucidated that who we should actually blame are Conan's agents and managers: we should blame them because this is what they do. And then Jay pointed out that he himself has no agent or manager.

So I'm begging you, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of everyone involved, (deep pause) please don't blame Conan. Please. (Laughter & applause) Okay? I know a lot of you people think Conan pushed himself out of a job. He's not that kind of guy. He would never do that to himself.

Paul: You're saying this is vintage Jay?

Dave: Please don't blame Conan. Okay? That's all I got tonight, alright? (Applause) Jay also let us know last night that Conan is a family guy.

Paul: Apparently. He said he was a good family man.

Dave: (pauses; turns to Paul and points) I hope you're not planning on blaming Conan, are ya?

Paul: I, I wasn't.

Dave: I mean, in the thousands and thousands of words that have been printed about this mess,

who has blamed Conan? NO ONE! NO ONE has blamed Conan! (Applause) (as Jay)
"Eh...whatever you do, don't blame Conan! It's, it's just business, okay? Don't...please...Conan's like a family...he's a decent family guy. Don't..." (Laughter & applause)

When NBC said...they sent a couple guys, they sent a couple guys to my office. One was the redheaded-hair guy with the beard and the other was their attorney, John Agolia...Warren Littlefield

Paul: Oh, I remember this.

Dave: Yeah, they sent these guys to my office to tell me I wasn't gonna get The Tonight Show. And so I thought it over and said, "Okay, fine, well enough, let's settle up." Paul and I, Paul got fired.

Paul: Well, I...yep.

Dave: Stealing office supplies.

Paul: White-out, and things like that. Staplers.

Dave: So I said, "Well, it couldn't be more clear that there's no room for me here at NBC." So the folks at CBS...the good, dear folks at CBS...said, "Dave, come on over. Come on over. Do your little show here." (Applause) So when five years ago, when NBC said to Jay, "You know what? Conan's gonna take over your job in five years," that's when you say, "Okay, fine, no hard feelings." You call ABC, you call Fox, you try to get my job, you leave, you don't (as Jay) "Yeah, okay, but I'll be in the lobby, you know, if you..." You don't hang around! (Laughter & applause) You go across the street, and you punish NBC, and you make them eat your words. And then...(Applause)...then Conan has a job, Jay has a job, I have a job, that...(turns to Paul) what's his name, Lonnie Donnigan? What's his name?

Voice off-stage: Jimmy Fallon!

Dave: Jimmy Fallon! Jimmy Fallon has a job. (Laughter & applause)

Paul: And Lonnie Donnigan: he has a job, too.

Dave: Yeah. And Jimmy Kimmel has a job. See, that's the way these things are supposed to work. It's just part of evolution. Darwin...it's an early Darwinian precept. You get fired, you get another gig! Don't hang around waiting for somebody to drop dead.

Well, I fear I've gone too far yet again tonight.