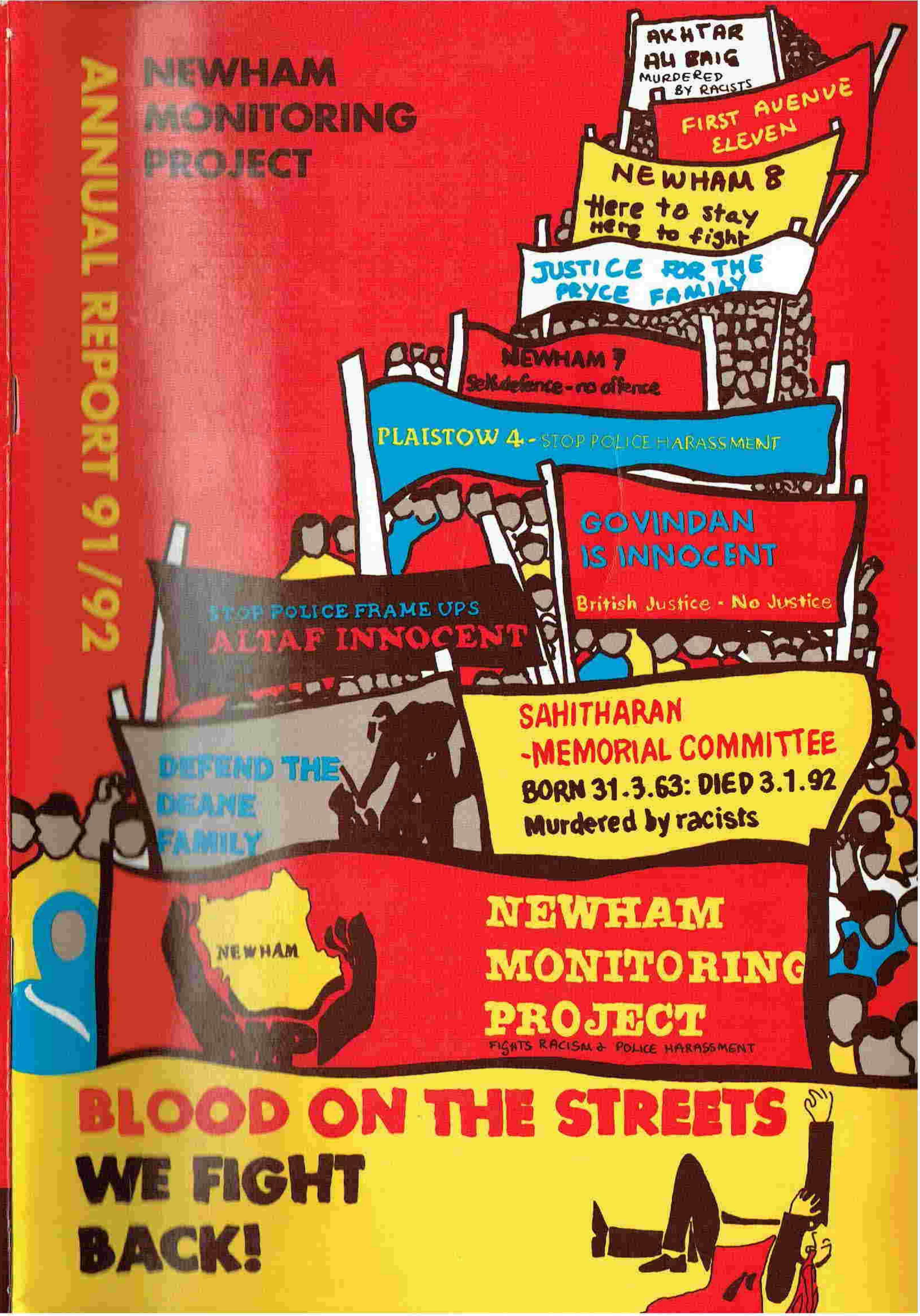




ANNUAL REPORT 91/92

# NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT



**BLOOD ON THE STREETS  
WE FIGHT  
BACK!**

**NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT  
ANNUAL REPORT 91/92**

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## Foreword

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Special thanks go to all members of the Defend the Deane Family Campaign and the Sahitharan Memorial Committee for their invaluable contributions to the local community and the Project's work

**This report is dedicated to Panchadcharam Sahitharan, tragically murdered by racists on the streets of Newham. (Born - 31.5.63; Died - 3.1.92)**

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## 1

### Introduction

**It is with great pleasure that the Management Committee of Newham Monitoring Project presents our twelfth annual report entitled *Blood on the Streets - We Fight Back!***

This title epitomises the struggles of Newham's black\* community, particularly recent campaigns in protest at the police assault and criminalisation of the Deane family and the racist murder of Panchadcharam Sahitharan. It is also apt in light of recent events in the United States which have once again focused world attention on the issues of racism and police brutality. The acquittal of four Los Angeles police officers who savagely beat Rodney King was an outrage and the uprisings that followed in towns and cities across the United States a timely reminder that racist violence and racist policing are unacceptable in any shape or form. There is only so much inequality and injustice that people can take.

'Experts' have been discounting the possibility of similar scenes in Britain - yet another example of the smug, self-congratulatory view of race relations that is current in this country. Whereas the histories of black people in Britain and the US are profoundly different, we share a common experience of racism and police brutality. We share an understanding that what happened to Rodney King is not the exception but the rule. Yet the politicians and the media blindly tell us that Britain is a far better place for black people than the US or the rest of Europe. They ignore that racism remains rooted in the very fabric of British society and is likely to become further entrenched, now that the despicable Asylum Bill is soon to be re-introduced. Indeed, across Europe, racism is rampaging ahead unfettered, as fascist parties grow in strength, asylum-seekers are brutalised and deported, and governments do not hesitate to play the race card whenever useful, blaming blacks, immigrants and refugees for their failures and society's ills.

But Newham Monitoring Project has continued to combat racist violence and police brutality as we always have. And as the catalogue of disturbing cases in this report makes perfectly clear, there is no room for complacency. Campaigns such as those in support of the Deane family and in memory of Sahitharan are essential. So is consistent and principled community self-organisation.

Unfortunately, Newham Council has a different perspective on the reality of racism today, as demonstrated by its decision to cut £10,000 from NMP's grant. This cut, which could not have come at a worse time, will severely affect our ability to provide the unique service that we do. We are determined, however, to minimise as much as possible the harm done by this cut to NMP and the local black community. We will continue to pressure public authorities like the council and the police and criticise them whenever necessary.

On a sad note, we commemorate Elton Lewis, a former NMP worker who tragically died on 18 September 1991. Elton's brief spell at the Project in 1987-88 raised the awareness of those around him about the necessity for campaigning groups to be deeply rooted and accountable to the local community.

A genuine, sincere and to some extent reluctant community activist, Elton believed in encouraging the community to speak out for itself. As an NMP worker, he wasted no time in rallying to support individuals and families under attack in what were understandably difficult circumstances; he did so effortlessly.

Elton was dedicated to truth, rights and justice. He never flinched from directly challenging institutions that oppressed black people, which is why he was an asset to NMP, a fact that he did not readily accept. At a time when the Project was undergoing change, Elton made valuable and distinct contributions before he returned to his beloved Leeds. We are all, sadly, far poorer without him.

Finally, we would like to thank all those who have given so much of their time and energy and support to NMP, particularly the workers, our many volunteers and members of the Defend the Deane Family Campaign and the Sahitharan Memorial Committee. Their contributions have been indispensable. This report, which was written by NMP's workers, is a tribute to the fight-back of Newham's black community, a fight-back that will not rest until racist violence and police brutality are eradicated once and for all.

**Newham Monitoring Project  
Management Committee**

\*For NMP, the term 'black' is a colour of resistance. It includes African, Caribbean, Asian and all other 'peoples of colour', in a political sense. Our enemy is a common enemy; it oppresses the whole of the black community and as such we have to fight it together. Whilst we do not ignore cultural differences, we reject the way ethnicity is used to divide and marginalise our communities which ultimately only serves our enemies.

## Casework

The central tenet of NMP's work over the past 12 years has been to offer practical support and advice to black people suffering racial harassment and police harassment in Newham.

This approach means that casework takes a central and distinctive role in the day-to-day work of NMP. Our method of working has led us to reject the paternalistic and often patronising approach of social advice and 'welfare' agencies based on an adviser-client relationship, adopting instead a community-based approach. This means for example, that our casework is determined by the 'needs' and 'wishes' of individuals and families themselves. We seek to give those at the centre of a 'case' real control over their lives and the direction that their case takes. This is achieved by providing structures and mechanisms whereby individuals are involved at every stage in the dialogue and feed-back from statutory agencies. This same principle applies to both police harassment and racial harassment.

Casework does not, however, exist in isolation. It is not carried out simply for the individual or family concerned, but we are always asking what are the wider ramifications of individual cases for the whole community. It is for this reason that NMP adopts a strategy of building on our casework in order facilitate community self-organisation and action. The ever-increasing number of cases reported to us clearly indicates that the problem of racial and police harassment cannot be contained by the introduction of specialist 'task forces', with little or no attempt to strengthen the communities on the receiving end of attack. Many cases demand further campaigning work. And the object of our campaigning work is not only to win this or that particular case (although this is important), but to use the campaign to highlight issues thrown up by individual cases.

### Breakdown of Cases

Cases reported to the Project in 1991:

Racial Harassment	207 - 49%
Police Harassment	168 - 40%
Other *	46 - 11%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>421 - 100%</b>

\* While these cases do not fit neatly into the categories of either racial or police harassment, they are related to more general problems which affect the black community of Newham.

## Framework of Cases

In all **racial harassment** cases our role is to:

- 1) Provide adequate support and advice for the victim;
- 2) Put as much pressure as possible on the police to try and ensure that they take action, arrest the perpetrator(s) and bring the correct charges;
- 3) Pressurise the local authority and relevant agencies to meet their responsibilities to local black people whether they are council tenants or not;
- 4) Get councillors and MPs to intervene so as to ensure that cases are handled satisfactorily by the police and by the local authority.

In all **police harassment** cases our role is to:

- 1) Try and secure the release of a detained person as soon as possible, and to make sure they are legally represented;
- 2) Ensure that those involved receive proper legal advice from a sympathetic solicitor;
- 3) Ensure that people who sustain injuries while in custody receive immediate medical attention once released;
- 4) See that any necessary photographs are taken of injuries incurred while in police custody;
- 5) Make formal complaints on behalf of the victim;
- 6) Pressure council officers, councillors, MPs, etc to investigate police malpractice with the view to making sure that officers who perpetrate racial harassment and assault black people are penalised.

In cases of either racial or police harassment, a further casework option could be to launch a campaign, to pressure and expose the relevant agencies, as well as raising questions of principle such as the right to self-defence.

## Referrals

Direct	214 - 51%
Emergency Service (during non-office hours only)	108 - 26%
Others (advice agencies, housing dept. etc.)	99 - 23%

### 382 Centre

The majority of cases dealt with by NMP are taken up as a result of people visiting our office after they have seen NMP publicity or rights cards. However, the use of the Centre greatly exceeds the statistics quoted above. The 382 Centre remains, for many, the first point of contact in terms of help or advice on matters not directly related to racial or police harassment, but to other issues which disproportionately affect the black community of Newham. These include housing, immigration, education and welfare issues. The Centre operates an open door policy. With the help of volunteers, we offer advice on a wide range of issues and act as a referral point to other agencies such as Newham Rights or Asian Ltd.

In 1991 (the first year for which such statistics have been collected), 1258 people used the Centre (many on a number of occasions) for help in filling forms, writing letters and general DSS and immigration advice. Many of these are referred to other agencies for more detailed advice. However, in 1992 we intend to establish advice surgeries, hence maximising the services provided and encouraging the continued use of the building as a community resource centre.

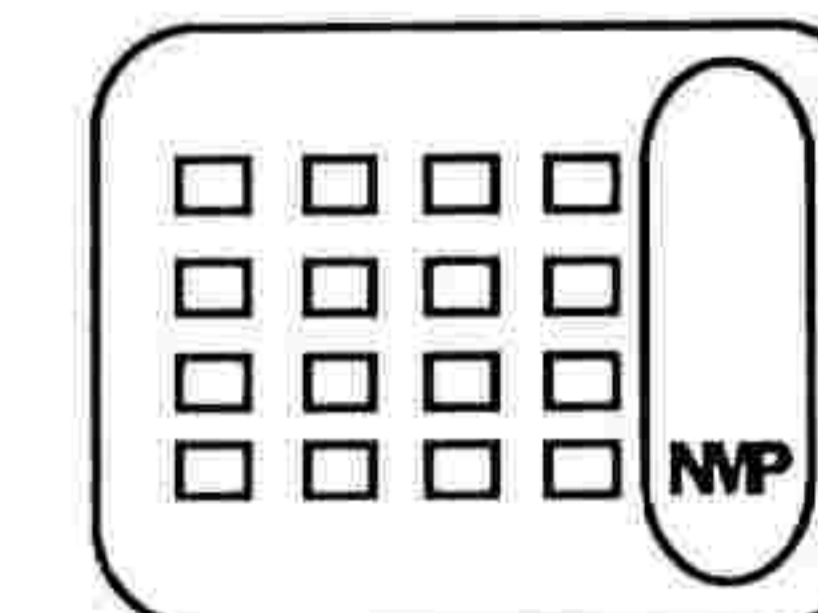
## Emergency Service

As can be seen from the statistics, the emergency service accounted for 26% of cases dealt with in 1991. The 24-hour service remains unique in the borough and is a vital component of NMP's work. A number of cases dealt with from the emergency service have included general advice and are not related to police harassment or racial harassment.

The service is staffed primarily by local volunteers. They are trained in the basic law and given an emergency service hand-book with essential numbers and detailed information on how to deal with cases of policing and racial harassment. These volunteers have the support of a second tier of volunteers including solicitors, photographers and doctors, as well as local volunteers prepared to be called out in an emergency.

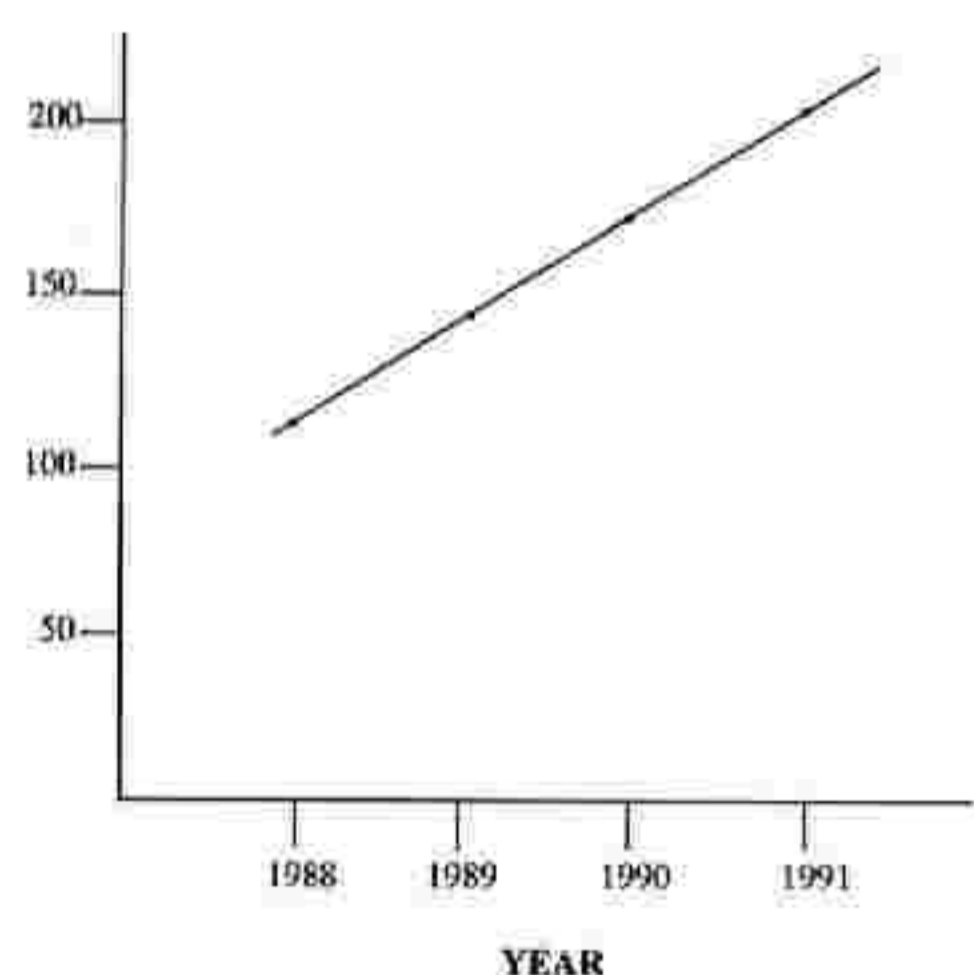
NMP's emergency service volunteers represent one of the pillars of the Project without whom much of our work could not be done. NMP gratefully acknowledges their help and support during 1991.

**24 HOURS  
7 DAYS A WEEK  
RING  
555 8151**



# Racial Harassment

Over the past four years, NMP has documented the ascending spiral of racist violence in Newham and across the country. It therefore came as no surprise when 1991 saw another marked increase in the number of racial harassment cases reported to us.



(1) Our statistics in terms of gender and age represent the victim and/or person within a family with whom we have had the most frequent contact or who notified us.

(2) The majority of those who complained to us of racial harassment experienced more than one kind of harassment. We have therefore classified incidents in terms of what the major component of harassment was.

(3) 'Other' includes attacks on property ranging from windows being smashed to cars being damaged to excrement being shoved through letter-boxes.

(4) These figures refer to where the main incident which was reported to us took place. Most cases, however, occur in a variety of locations.

(5) 'Outside Newham' represents the neighbouring boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest.

A breakdown of the 207 cases reveals the following.

<b>• Breakdown in terms of manner of referral</b>	
Direct	94
Emergency Service (during non-office hours)	48
Via other Agencies	65
<b>• Breakdown in terms of gender and age (1)</b>	
Female	94
Male	85
Children	28
<b>• Breakdown in terms of nature of racial harassment (2)</b>	
Murder	1
Physical	82
Verbal	59
Arson	11
Other (3)	54
<b>• Breakdown in terms of location of attack (4)</b>	
Home	78
Street	50
School	19
Shop	16
Work	21
Pub	16
Places of worship	7
<b>• Breakdown in terms of area</b>	
E6	37
E7	20
E12	22
E13	32
E15	19
E16	46
Outside Newham (5)	31

Whilst these figures illustrate the patterns of racist violence across the borough, they do not reveal the calculated nature of much of this harassment which gradually destroys people's lives through tactics such as smashing windows, shoving excreta through letter boxes and the vandalism of homes with graffiti. Neither do these figures reveal the courage and sheer resilience of

Newham's black community in resisting abuse and intimidation.

Below we document, area by area, some of the most alarming incidents of racial harassment which have occurred in Newham and discuss the issues these cases raise, both through the nature of the harassment itself and through the response of the local agencies, chiefly the police and the local authority.

## West Ham

In our 1989 annual report, we devoted an entire chapter to the analysis of the growing problem of racist violence in the West Ham area of south Newham. We also described how NMP responded by initiating a community campaign involving street patrols, support visits, and a large public meeting all of which helped to ease the problem and in the process boost the morale of the black families in that area. Now, two years on, the problem has resurfaced.

### Racist resentment over housing

During the summer of 1991, NMP received reports of increasing racial harassment in West Ham aimed at those most isolated, particularly Bengali families. This harassment seemed partly borne out of the racist resentment amongst some whites that black families had finally been given equal access to the better quality housing in the area. The reaction of these racists involved spitting, stone throwing, racist abuse, damage to property, threats to kill and physical attacks on children going to school. Whereas all incidents were reported to the police, no action was taken, resulting in the problem escalating.

- In the case of the X family, harassment was being carried out by gangs of youths who congregated outside their home shouting 'if you don't move from here we'll burn you out!'. The children in the X family attend Eastlea school where they suffered constant racist abuse and violent assaults. In July 1991, this unabated harassment culminated in Mr and Mrs X's sons being chased home by a gang of some twenty youths armed with various weapons including an iron bar and hockey sticks, who attacked the boys and then attempted to lay siege to the X home. One local black woman recognised the youths involved and called the police to the scene of what she described as a 'mini riot'. Although the youths were still at the scene when the police arrived the investigating officer took no immediate action

was only after a Newham Council race officer informed them that she had witnessed the incident too, that the police arrested five of the youths involved and charged them with 'affray'.

It was at this stage that NMP intervened. We sought to support the X family who were determined not to be driven out, by arranging for the installation of security measures on the home, including a 'piper alarm' which would instantly alert the police and other emergency services in the event of an attack.

The scale of the problem was now fully apparent and NMP devoted more resources to supporting families in the area. However, two cases in particular confirmed that a more pro-active strategy was required.

- MR and her family had previously suffered racial harassment and, with the help of NMP they were transferred to a very desirable house in West Ham. But with the upsurge in racial violence in this area, the R family began to suffer harassment again. They were determined, though, that they would not be driven out a second time.

In late September 1991, their home was broken into and vandalised. 'Paki shit' and 'bitch' were sprayed across walls, furniture and carpets. When the police were called to the scene their first reaction was 'what makes you think it's racist?'

In a subsequent incident, MR was walking home with her young son when one of three youths threw a brick at her back.

MR immediately telephoned the Council's housing office at West Ham to report the attack, only to be told that there was nobody available to take her call. MR later told the police and the council that concerted action against the racist gangs in the area was the only way to prevent somebody from getting seriously hurt. Her words proved tragically prophetic.

- Mr I and his family suffered similar harassment to that faced by MR over a sustained period. One Sunday afternoon, I's twelve-year-old nephew, visiting for the day, went to the local shop. As he walked down an alley which led to the shop, he was attacked by two white boys who knocked him to the ground and repeatedly jumped up and down on him causing his leg to break so awkwardly that he was hospitalised for over a month and is unlikely to ever walk again. When

MR heard what had happened, she immediately called NMP's emergency service as well as the police. An NMP volunteer arrived at once but the response of the police was not so supportive. When MR contacted the CID at Plaistow to ask what action they proposed to take, she was told that this case would be passed on to the Newham Organised Racial Incidents Squad (NORIS). MR pleaded that immediate police action was required but was told 'there's nothing I can do.... anyway, it's not your child'. MR explained that 'I'm a victim too' to which the officer said 'don't talk to me about victims, it's victims like you that withdraw your statements and let these boys walk free'. MR warned that she would complain if no action was taken and received the curt reply that 'you can do what you bloody well like'.

### West Ham Ethnic Welfare Group

With the complete failure of the police and the council to adequately support them, the consensus amongst local black families was that they had no alternative but to establish their own support group. The local tenants association could not be relied on as its leader belonged to one of the families responsible for much of the harassment. Utilising the loose black tenants network that already existed owing to an NMP campaign in 1989, we called a black tenants meeting in early October 1991. This proved a very well-attended and successful meeting where all families present recounted a catalogue of harassment which included:

- physical attacks
- street robbery
- lighted paper shoved in letter boxes and under doors
- cars vandalised
- threats with knives

One family of African refugees told how they had their windows smashed by a gang of racists who threatened to kill them and dug a mock grave in their



Welcome to West Ham

garden. All the families complained of the lack of support from the council or the police, and told how officers were slow to arrive when called, took no action once on the scene, and even 'told off' people for daring to call them in the first place.

This exchange of information and experiences meant that the black families could begin to identify the perpetrators as being older teenage gangs that ventured into the area whilst younger teenage groups constantly loitered outside the homes of black families. The consensus of the meeting was that a black tenants support group was required and the West Ham Ethnic Welfare Group was officially formed.

The meeting further resolved to write to the housing department demanding that eviction warnings be issued to household of known culprits, that the existing tenants association be dissolved, and that security measures be installed in victims homes. A complaint was also written to the police demanding an increased police presence in the neighbourhood and action against racist responsible for 'minor' harassment as well as the most violent attacks.

Further meetings of the West Ham Ethnic Welfare Group were to follow and families noted that Newham Council's housing department, had been very responsive to their demands. With the activity of the West Ham Ethnic Welfare Group - complemented by the regular presence of NMP volunteers conducting support visits - the level of harassment began to decline. And the work of the group was consolidated by a public meeting of over fifty people where it emerged that during 1991 a third of the racial harassment in Newham had occurred in the West Ham area.



West Ham Ethnic Welfare Group Public Meeting

However, the success of the group coupled with the resulting higher police profile and action by the housing department, caused the local racists to become even more resentful. When the council called a meeting of all the tenants - the idea of which was to set up a representative tenants association - some white tenants, referring to security measures being installed in houses that are regularly attacked, complained that the blacks were receiving 'special treatment'. At the meeting, also attended by NMP and the police, the white tenants argued that they had not previously involved black families in the tenants association because they 'can never get any sense out of them' (presumably referring to the fact that many of the families speak English only as a second language).

Thus, while the level of harassment decreased, the climate of racism persisted resulting in isolated attacks such as that inflicted on the H family who had their windows broken and their car petrol-bombed.



The result of the petrol bomb attack

### The current situation

This report would not be complete without providing an update as to how the situation in West Ham stood in early 1992. Blatant harassment and violent attacks are on the decline but some families have been singled out for systematic harassment.

- Mrs S and her family, having suffered racial harassment in her previous home in West Ham, moved into a new home in the summer of 1991. In fact this new property, also in West Ham, only became vacant when the occupants were themselves driven out by racists. Mrs S, a white woman with black children, also began to be victimised by local youths. The response of the police was 'it's just

kids.....there's nothing we can do'.

Mrs S' grandchildren began standing up for themselves in the face of this harassment. On one occasion, Mrs S was racially abused and assaulted on her own door-step by the father of one of the perpetrators. Mrs S responded by physically ejecting the man from her premises and was initially relieved to learn that police officers from NORIS were to investigate the incident. However, to her shock and dismay NORIS later informed Mrs S that she was under arrest for assault. Two days later, the police wasted no time in arresting Mrs S's son-in-law, who is a Rasta, after he complained to the same white family about their harassment of his sons.

An emergency meeting of the West Ham Ethnic Welfare group was immediately called and was attended by approximately thirty people including senior council officers and councillors. Ironically, this was on the same day as the *Newham Recorder* carried the following story:

## Newham Recorder

**Priority action called for across the borough as violence shows marked increase and cases of harassment continue to grow**

# HATE FIGURES DOUBLE

By COLIN GRAINGER

RECORDED figures of racial harassment in Newham have doubled, police disclosed this week.

And Newham Council want a summit of agencies and groups involved in race work to be urgently arranged.

Newham's Chief Executive Drew Stevenson said a plan must be prepared for "priority action" across the borough.

The harassment toll doubled from 249 incidents in 1990 to 498 incidents last year.

The number of assaults carried out on racial grounds has more than doubled.

Incidents of robbery and arson have also seen a significant increase.

Mr Stevenson said the area with the highest incidence of recorded racial harassment was West Ham, with 86 incidents in 1991 - 17 per cent of the total and an increase of 72 incidents over the previous year. Canning Town has the lowest with 20 incidents.

The figures also revealed that the police clear-up rate increased slightly from 30 per cent to 34 per cent in 1991.

Mr Stevenson told Newham's Police Community Consultative Group on Tuesday that increased reporting of incidents was not an explanation for the sustained levels of attack.

"Every indicator points towards increased harassment and an increase in personal violence," he said.

"Actions to date, while being advances, have not been sufficient to stem the growth of racist crime.

"There is a need for co-ordinated action to ensure that all parties are prioritising work on racial harassment, affording it resources, and working on a shared plan to cut violence."

The meeting resolved to make a formal complaint to the police, highlighting the discrimination between the police's treatment of black and white families in this case. The role of NORIS was also raised in the complaint. In particular the tenants criticised NORIS's role in prosecuting the victims of racist attack and wanted to know what future action the police would take to combat racial harassment in the area. As we go to press, we are still awaiting a reply.

Clearly a great deal of work still needs to be done in the area, particularly since the police have resorted to their old tactic of criminalising the victims of racial violence. But the West Ham Ethnic Welfare Group, who are determined to assert their right to live in the area of their choice free from harassment, has shown that long term networking and organised resistance amongst the black community can be effective.

### Beckton

Beckton has some of the best housing stock in the borough making it imperative that black people are given equal access to housing there. But in recent years, particularly since 1989, we have identified Beckton as an area where racial harassment has reached such epidemic proportions that it effectively act as a deterrent to black people taking up housing there.

### Cyprus Estate

In our 1989 Annual Report we outlined the terrifying harassment that had occurred systematically on the Cyprus Estate, Beckton and condemned the authorities for failing to take swift and appropriate action. We also reported how this complacency led to the formation of the Cyprus Ethnic Welfare Association, representing 47 local black families. The reaction of the housing department, in particular, to our criticisms was to complain that we had not 'given credit where credit was due' and had failed to acknowledge the work council officers had done in tackling the racists

in the area. It is true to say that since the 1989 report was written, the members of one household responsible for persistent and extremely violent harassment have been evicted by the housing department. However, the following sequence of events that occurred in 1991 illustrates that we do not in any way exaggerate the scale of the problems on the estate, or the shortcomings of the relevant agencies response.

- Mrs K's two young daughters were harassed by the eldest son of a near neighbour. When Mrs K complained to their mother, Ms L responded by directing a torrent of racial abuse at her.

On 15 July 1991, Mrs K was dropping her daughters off at the local nursery when she was pushed by Ms L, whose youngest child also attended the nursery. Mrs K, who thought the push was probably an accident, walked away only to be hit from behind by Ms L and kicked repeatedly as she lay on the ground. The attack only stopped because of the intervention of three nursery teachers. Mrs K was then taken to Newham General Hospital where she spent nine hours receiving treatment for her injuries before being interviewed by the police who subsequently arrested and charged Ms L.

The following night Ms L's partner, Mr R, came to Mrs K's window and said 'the fight's not finished, it's only just begun'. Mr R waited outside in his car. When Mrs K's brother and a friend went to investigate, Mr R, drove at them, knocking the friend into the air and across the bonnet before driving off without stopping. Mr R was arrested but - in what was essentially a case of attempted murder - he was charged with the obscure offence of 'furious driving'.

On release, Mr R and Ms L started a petition against "the Pakistani families" on the estate and attempted to illicit the support of the local tenants association on the grounds that it was they, and not the black family, who were subjected to harassment. One result of this was that Mrs K's

home was surrounded by a gang of well-known racists who made gestures indicating that they would cut her throat and who only went when the police moved them on. The situation was ripe for manipulation by extreme right wing groups in a similar way to the 'Rights for Whites' campaigns organised elsewhere in east London. Thankfully, this did not happen, although the NF did leaflet the area.

After visiting Mrs K, NMP began escorting her children to and from school until social services were in a position to adequately take over this responsibility. Security measures were installed in their home and the valuable assistance of Newham Asian Women's Project was enlisted to help support the family. Literally days before the attack on Mrs K, occurred NMP assisted the Cyprus Ethnic Welfare Association in issuing a statement signed by thirty six local black families which argued that if the council and the police did not tackle racists on Cyprus Estate, then they would all demand immediate priority status for simultaneous transfers out of the area. Now, with the escalation of the violence following the beating of Mrs K, this statement had to be followed up by even more vigorous community action.

Members of the Cyprus Ethnic Welfare Association, accompanied by volunteers from NMP and Newham Asian Women's Project, decided to systematically visit every black family in the area. A frightening picture of the true level of racism was revealed. Virtually every family recounted how they had suffered some form of harassment including:

- racist and fascist graffiti daubed on doors
- stones thrown at children and property
- racist abuse and physical assault
- dogs let loose on children
- theft from, or damage to, property
- lighted material shoved through letter-boxes

In one interview the H family said that their young son had been attacked numerous times. On one occasion, his front teeth were kicked out, another time he came home plastered with eggs, and, most recently, he was punched, abused and his BMX bike stolen. Mrs H told us that the youths responsible are still riding around boasting 'do you want your bike back Pakis?'

An attempt to retrieve the bike had resulted in a gang of youths kicking the front door of the H household and fifteen of them jumping over the wall into their back garden and threatening to 'burn you Pakis out'. The parents of the boys who lived next door even went as far as pushing Mr H's young daughter off an adjoining path saying 'that's your side Paki' and proceeded to draw a chalk line down the path's middle saying 'this is the white side.....that's the Paki side'.



#### Neighbourhood bliss on Cyprus Estate

When NMP began exposing these cases a meeting was hurriedly arranged between the Cyprus Ethnic Welfare Association, Nigel Spearing MP, the police and the council. Unbelievably, this resulted in more questions being asked as to why NMP was involved than actually addressing the issue at hand. Indeed, at a previous meeting of councillors and all council departments about the use of the K's case, the focus was not on how to help the family but how, in the light of the pressure NMP was putting them under, to stop NMP's involvement in the case. Our reaction to this was to organise a joint delegation consisting of NMP, the Cyprus Ethnic Welfare Association, and Mrs K, to lobby the Police and Community Consultative Group (PCCG). The initial purpose of our delegation, to complain about the leniency of the charges against Mr R and Ms L, was to take on an added dimension when the police revealed that the criminal charges against Mr R had been dropped. The families were all the more furious as police officers had been advising them not to go to NMP as it was for the police to take the

necessary action. The PCCG resolved to convene a sub-group including the PCCG Chair and the Police Chief Community Liaison Officer to address the specific demands of the residents and, under pressure, they agreed to look into Mrs K's case afresh.

During this whole sequence of events the chief concern of the statutory agencies and individual representatives involved was how to restrict the involvement of NMP and discourage the Cyprus Ethnic Welfare Association from taking action, openly adopting the view that if left alone the situation would die down. Unfortunately all the evidence of the last few years has shown that when 'left alone', the harassment does not disappear but inevitably escalates as is borne out in the cases detailed above. It was only because of organised community action that the authorities were forced to act and, as a consequence, the level of harassment fell dramatically towards the end of the year. However, as the case of AV (see page 19) confirms, the problems on Cyprus Estate are still far from over.

### Canning Town/ Custom House

Although 'E16' has, predictably, proved to be the worst area in Newham for racial violence, much of the harassment has occurred in the northern 'West Ham' area rather than in Canning Town and Custom House. However, the notorious area surrounding Freemasons Road has not been without its share of racist activity, particularly around the Hooper Road Estate.

### Harassment of black single mothers

- As soon as Mrs I, a Somali refugee, moved onto the Hooper Road Estate with her young children in late 1990, she became subject to verbal threats and intimidation from a local gang. At first the harassment consisted of incidents like eggs thrown at her front door but soon it was to escalate. She was, for instance, threatened with a broken bottle,

told to 'move our or we'll kill you' and stones were thrown at her children on the way to school. The Newham Somali Association referred Mrs I to NMP and, as a first step, we met with housing officers, a local councillor and the police at the Tarling Road police 'shop' to arrange for Mrs I to receive support whilst the perpetrators were identified. Whilst an uneasy peace was maintained during early 1991 the situation exploded again in July. When Mr M, a member of the Somali Association came to visit Mrs I, he was racially abused by a neighbour of Mrs I and threatened as he entered Hooper Road. On walking back through the estate some 45 minutes later he was confronted by the same man, this time accompanied by a large group of teenagers. In a totally unprovoked attack the man struck Mr M across the head with the butt of a snooker cue. As Mr M lay on the ground the teenagers kicked him until he lost consciousness.

The police response to this serious attack was negligent in the extreme. Firstly, when Mrs I called the police, they did not arrive. When Mr M regained consciousness and was fit to travel they both went to Plaistow Police station to report the incident only to be told that they should make their own way to hospital. At Newham General Hospital, Mr M discovered to his amazement that he had been followed by the same white man accompanied by one of the gang who had attacked him earlier. Again, Mr M was attacked but this time the man threatened to kill him. Fortunately hospital staff called the police who this time turned up and arrested the older man but not the youth. When Mr M pointed out that the youth also took part in the attack, he was told by the police 'we can't just arrest people for arresting's sake'. Mr M then asked the officers to accompany Mrs I home as she had left her children alone and was frightened for their safety. To this the officers replied 'we're too busy'. When

Mr M, quite rightly, asked 'what could be more important than giving protection to a woman who has been threatened and concerned for her children who are alone at the scene of a racist attack?' the officer replied: 'So what, I've left my wife alone at home as well!'. The behaviour of these officers who sought to trivialise such a serious case of racial harassment, was reprehensible in itself. But their actions were also to leave other black families on the estate open to the same violence.

- Mrs G, who had lived on the estate for longer than Mrs I, her neighbour and friend, had received similar harassment from the same gang of youths. In one incident, her daughter was assaulted outside her home. When Mrs G came out to investigate she was struck on the head by a rock. The police told her that there was not enough evidence to prosecute.

Following that assault Mrs G, like Mrs I, became a prisoner in her own home. Wherever she ventured out, the gang of youths would shout threatening abuse such as 'get back in doors you Paki cunt' and 'we're gonna shoot you bitch' In an attempt to humiliate her, they even sank to the depths of deliberately masturbating in front of her. None of Mrs G's complaints were ever acted upon by the police or the housing department, so she turned to NMP for help.

In both the case of Mrs I and Mrs G, isolated black women - single parents in a mainly white neighbourhood - appear to have been identified by racist gangs as vulnerable targets for harassment. As well as conducting regular support visits, NMP wrote both to the council demanding action and to the police complaining about their total inaction. We also took Mrs I and Mrs G along to a meeting of the Newham Black Tenants and Residents Support Group where other black families were horrified to hear of their plight. As a result of this the group, assisted by NMP, wrote directly to the district housing manager demanding that the women be transferred to an area where they would be less vulnerable to attack. NMP reiterated this demand at a meeting with the district housing manager and social services and as a consequence both families were transferred off the estate. NORIS then pursued the cases by securing convictions against the racist gang, one of whom was a self-confessed British National Party supporter. Although Mrs G acknowledges the work of NORIS, she believes that regular police officers 'still don't give a shit' about the racial harassment on the estate.

On a final note, the council are currently considering issuing eviction orders against those responsible for driving Mrs I and Mrs G out of their homes. This is exactly the policy that NMP supports. Any racial harassment transfers off the estate must be accompanied by legal action against the perpetrators - only this will ensure that in the future black families will be safe to move into the area unmolested.

## East Ham

- Since January 1991, Mr NY and his wife suffered sustained levels of harassment. By September, attacks on their property has escalated to the point where faeces were pushed through the letter-box, a brick was thrown through the kitchen window and graffiti daubed on a wall, including a swastika, 'NF' and 'Pakis out'. NMP alerted the housing department and the police to the mounting problem and warned of further attacks. Less than three weeks later the family awoke to find their front door alight and smoke pouring into their flat following what seems to have been a petrol-bomb attack.

To add insult to injury, the *Newham Recorder* published the adjacent article which we reproduce here in order to illustrate the paper's flagrant disregard for confidentiality. The Editor's response to NMP's and NY's complaints that this sensationalist reporting was placing the family at further risk was to state that 'we still continue to exercise editorial discretion on what should or should not be published'. Unfortunately, the tendency to report racist attacks in such a sensationalist and irresponsible way is a common trend in the press.

Only after this, the most serious of the attacks, did the various authorities deal with the harassment in a way that was deemed acceptable to NY. Although the council were soon to move the family to another area, we have still to hear from the police what action, if any, has been brought against the people responsible.

## East Ham South

East Ham South is fast developing into a no-go area. The attacks of one particular gang - ranging in age from early teens to late twenties - who hang out in Vicarage Lane E6, have been increasing in seriousness and number. As far as

we are aware, the only arrests that have taken place came as a result of an NMP Emergency Service call when our volunteer informed the police of an attack on RB and his friend who were chased by the gang wielding sticks and a knife. In this particular case, five members of the gang were charged with affray. Nevertheless, harassment of RB's family has led to them having to move out of the area.

In another case, an Irish family recently settled in the area, went to the local social club where unbeknown to them, the gang congregated. As they were drinking, the gang attacked them with a broken glass and chased them out of the club shouting 'top the Irish bastards'. This family have also had to move out of the area.

To understand how the racists develop the confidence to perpetrate attacks one has only to look at cases such as that of AR.

- The harassment AR suffered at the hand of the gang (many of whom associate this AR's neighbours) include dog excreta being smeared on his home and car, and rubbish and lighted matches being pushed through his letter-box. A neighbour living in the flat above AR complained to the Council about the smell of Asian cooking. Unbelievably, the response of the Housing Office was to placate AR's neighbours and without consulting AR they decided to install an electric fan in his house. Although the department later apologised, AR was left completely humiliated, his complaints of racial harassment undermined.

We also fear that the gang may have neo-Nazi connections as one family has received hate mail. One letter read as follows:

*'We do not like pakis here. So if you don't want your window broken again, you better move or we will set fire to your house and car. Better still, go back to your dirty country.'*

NF

The fact that this obnoxious letter was signed NF is particularly worrying, especially when one begins to consider that BNP

NEWHAM DOCKLANDS RECORDER, THUR., OCT 24 1991(N)

**DETECTIVES PROBE FIREBOMBING AT HOME OF ASIAN FAMILY**

POLICE are investigating a firebomb attack on the home of an Asian family in East Ham.

Nadeem Yusuf was in the living room and his wife and children were asleep when the front door of their ground floor flat in Priory Court was set alight shortly after 1am on Thursday.

East Ham firefighters put out the blaze.

Police from Newham's Organised Racial Incidents Squad said the fire was the latest in a series of attacks on the family's home.

During recent weeks bricks have been thrown through the windows.

A spokesman said: "We have no evidence that this was a racial attack, but are not ruling it out. It was a serious incident and it is fortunate no one was injured."

Police are appealing for witnesses and say anyone who can help should contact Insp John Rogerson at East Ham police station on 081-593 8232.





and NF activists live locally and that in late 1991 a nearby Jewish cemetery was desecrated with fascist and anti-Semitic graffiti. Furthermore, other groups of white men who drink at the social club mentioned earlier have been seen carving NF into the tables and ordering black people off the premises. We have already met with the District Race Equality Officer and the Area Youth Service to discuss joint strategies for dealing with this whole problem and it will inevitably be a high priority for the Project in 1992, with every form of action, direct and indirect, taken into consideration.

## Plaistow

For many years, Plaistow has been the scene of violent racist attacks - as highlighted by NMP's campaign for 'Justice for the Pryce Family' after the murder of Eustace Pryce. However, recently violent attacks in the area have increased to the point where it is now one of the worst areas in the borough, as confirmed by the following two cases.

- Mr and Mrs M and their son TM run a grocery shop on Plaistow Road. One early evening in April 1991, three heavily built white teenagers picked up some fruits displayed outside the shop and threw them onto the street. When TM came out to ask them to stop, one of the youths headbutted him to the ground. All three men, shouting racist abuse, kicked and punched him, one with a knuckle-duster.

Mr M, who had been out purchasing stock, now returned to see his son being attacked and attempted to intervene. The subsequent attack on Mr M was so vicious that he was left unconscious, having sustained terrible bruising and a fractured jaw which had to be wired up for six weeks.

The family were fully prepared to make witness statements about the attack. The registration number of the car the attackers had fled in had been noted, but when the police arrived they were completely unsympathetic, im-

plying that as 'Asian gangs' sometimes cause trouble any Asian person can expect trouble in return. Indeed, it was only after a strong complaint from NMP that the police chose to pursue the case at all. Following action by NORIS, the chief instigator of the violence was, but even then the police's attitude was 'is there a need to go after the others?'

Once the main culprit was charged, NMP accompanied Mr M and TM to West Ham police station for an identification parade. Kept waiting in an interview room for over an hour, we were eventually told that as the attacker had no solicitor the parade could not go ahead. Whilst obviously annoyed, Mr M remained polite and understanding, agreeing to come back the following day.

However, on returning at the prescribed time Mr M was again kept waiting for an hour before being told that nobody knew what he was talking about, and that since the officers concerned were not on duty he should go home. Following this shoddy treatment, NMP was forced to write to the police complaining that Mr M, the victim of a serious racial attack who, despite fear of reprisals, was co-operating with the police in every way, was being treated with total contempt and disrespect. As a result of this, the police pursued the case more vigorously. As we go to press Mr M and TM are due to attend court as witnesses against the attacker (the other two youths involved have escaped with impunity).

As a final point of interest, it has emerged that the youth charged with assaulting Mr M is 16-year-old Wayne Hunt who has also been charged for some of the violent attacks which we reported in the 'West Ham' section of this report and whose family provided the alibi for one of the men arrested for the racist murder of Panchadcharam Sahitharan.

- The S family had endured previous racial harassment including bricks thrown through the windows of their home and verbal abuse, allegedly from two white men next door but one. One day Mr S's young children were playing in their garden when the two men, accompanied by two friends, made taunts and threw beer cans at them. Mr S ran into the garden but before he could even speak one of the men sprayed ammonia into his eyes, whilst the others beat him senseless. Mr S spent a week in hospital recovering from the

attack but may never regain sight in one eye.

This was an evil and cowardly attack requiring us to make arrangements for Mr S to be transferred to a new home. NMP informed NORIS of the case and they have since arrested Mr S's two neighbours and charged them with GBH and administering a noxious substance. However, we have had more difficulty in persuading the Council to take eviction proceedings against the two men. When NMP met with the housing department and the legal department we found the council solicitor to be disinterested and it took a great deal of pressure before the legal department finally agreed to issue a notice to repossess the perpetrators' house. With such indifference displayed to such a serious case, it is small wonder that so few racists are evicted.

## Forest Gate

- Late one night, Mr X was walking home through Forest Gate. As he was in the heart of Newham's black community, he felt no need to worry and therefore took no notice when he walked past a transit van full of white men parked by the roadside. Later, though, he noticed that the van was following him. Suddenly Mr X found himself surrounded by eight white men who asked 'do you want some you black bastard?' He was then hit across the head with a baseball bat. Mr X has no recollection of what occurred subsequently but judging from his injuries, he suffered a vicious beating.

Police arrived at the scene to find Mr X unconscious. All but one of the attackers had fled. The first Mr X knew of any of this was when he woke in hospital.

After visiting Mr X in hospital, we established that the man who remained at the scene of the attack had been arrested and charged. However, so outraged was the community that NMP and the Malayalee Association organised a joint delegation to the Police and Community Consultative Group. Despite promises that this vicious attack would be vigorously pursued, this did not prove to be the case. The attacker was subsequently 'let off' with a conditional discharge and a £400 fine, leaving members of the Malayalee Association to reflect 'this case should have sent out a message to the community that you can't get away with attacks like this .... instead it has shown that anyone with £400 in their pocket can attack whom they like'.



Mr X the day after the attack

## Manor Park

Whilst the horrific murder of Panchadcharam Sahitharan, quite rightly, focussed attention on the problem of racial harassment in Manor Park, there has also been ongoing community action over other incidents that have taken place here.

- Over a two year period, the S family endured racial harassment. When the nine year old daughter of an Asian neighbour told Mr S that she had been attacked by an older white girl, Mr S decided to speak to the white girl's father. On doing so he was racially abused and threatened with a screwdriver. The police took no action.

One afternoon in July, Mrs S and her sister-in-law collected their children from school. As they made their way home, members of the same white family involved in the previous attack, but this time accompanied by other teenage girls, approached and started to abuse them. Mrs S was then set upon by the six girls who dragged her to the ground and kicked her in the face a number of times. Only the intervention of a passing driver brought a halt to the attack. When the police arrived they had the gall to suggest that Mrs S should take a different route home in future and chose to take no action against the perpetrators. On further investigation, NMP discovered that police officers dealing with previous complaints by the S family had told them 'you'll have to ig-

nore them', 'what do you want me to do about it' and even 'if you keep quiet maybe they'll go and trouble someone else instead'.



NMP wrote a formal complaint about the officers concerned. And the S family collected a petition, signed by some thirty black families, 'expressing anger and frustration at the behaviour of officers from Forest Gate Police Station in dealing with our problems of racial harassment'. The petition was presented to the Chief Superintendent along with a written demand for police action against the racists.

- There are three separate residential complexes for Asian elders in Manor Park and all three have been attacked by racists. In November 1991, NMP organised a joint residents meeting to discuss the problem. During the course of this large and angry meeting we found that every single resident had suffered some form of harassment, mostly from local youths, such as abuse and intimidation, rubbish bins set alight, property damaged. A frail elderly woman said that one day, as she stood by her window, something like a 'firebomb' (at the very least a powerful firework) was thrown at her by a group of youths. Immediately she ran to a neighbour's home for safety and from there the police were called. Four hours and three further phone calls later the police arrived, only to go away having taken no action against the gang.

The following day, the elderly

lady was sitting by her open window when one of the youths attempted to grab hold of her through it, injuring her in the process. Still no action was taken. The home beat officer, fully aware of the situation, remarked that it was 'a bit insensitive' to build three Asian accommodation units in one locality and this was 'bound to get people's backs up'. The police were essentially taking the view that it was the residents who were to blame for the harassment, simply by being there. The consensus of the meeting was that greater police vigilance, support and sympathy was needed and a joint complaint to that effect has been sent to senior police officers who are following it up.

### Stratford

- NS, who lives in Stratford, was walking home from Forest Gate when he was deliberately shoved by two white men who asked 'do want some nigger?'. NS ran off, but the white men caught up with him and one of them stabbed NS in the back and in the leg before running off. Subsequently, NS provided the police with accurate descriptions of the men. Three independent witnesses also made statements and the attackers were apprehended and committed for trial.

During the trial it emerged that on arrest the men had asked 'is it to do with that black git?' and as NS stood outside the courtroom he was threatened by the attackers and their friends and warned that he could expect reprisals for bringing the case to court. To the disbelief of NS, the court dismissed the case on technical grounds and what is more, NS's address was revealed in open court, the result of which was that the same men began to loiter outside his home. It was only at this late stage that NS approached NMP. All we were able to do was liaise with the district housing manager arranging for NS to be transferred to a new address elsewhere in the area, and apply to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board for financial compensation.

It is in cases such as this that NMP's criticisms of the CPS for preparing prosecution cases so badly that even 'open and shut' cases are thrown out of court are borne out. This is obviously an area for future campaigning within the black community.

### Upton Park

- AM suffered racial harassment at his school in Upton Park for some time but always stood up for himself. One Sunday afternoon in April AM was walking home through the local park when he was confronted by some fifteen youths, one of whom was the main instigator of the violence at school. This boy racially abused AM and repeatedly hit him across the head with a football boot. When AM held up his hand to defend himself the boy stabbed him through the palm and ran off. AM went home and had the wound dressed but at this stage did no more than this.

However, the following Monday morning in school the boy threatened him again with the knife. At this point NMP, who had been contacted by the boy's father, wrote to the head teacher urging firm action. We are pleased to report that the pupil concerned has been excluded from the school, sending out a clear message to the pupils that such violence will not be tolerated. Furthermore, AM, accompanied by NMP, made a statement to the police resulting in the arrest of the youth.

The attack on AM escalated to such a point that serious injury could have resulted. It is vitally important that racial harassment at schools always be tackled immediately rather than, as too often the case, dismissed as school bullying. The firm action eventually taken in this case was in line with suggestions made in our education document, 'Racism and Racist Violence in Schools' (1990).

### Update from 1990

The racial harassment section of our 1990 Annual Report opened with the harrowing case of Mr and Mrs Y, savagely beaten and hospitalised by three men connected to the family living in the flat below them, who were having a party.

In this case both the police and the council responded well. The attackers were arrested and charged and Mr and Mrs Y were moved to a new home. But to our surprise, the Crown Prosecution Service had dropped the case. After a complaint from NMP, the CPS re-charged the attackers, claiming that the original decision not to prosecute was a bureaucratic error. We now began to experience serious doubts about the manner in which the CPS were pursuing as to the case. Indeed, we concluded our 1990 Annual Report by stating that 'One can but hope that justice will now be done and that Mr and Mrs Y's

### MEN ON HARM CHARGES ARE BAILED

THREE men, arrested after alleged incidents on Sunday in the Manor Park street where they live, were bailed until September 3 by Newham West Court. Ice cream salesman John William Harvey, 34, and Damian Cowley, 21, a

labourer, are both accused of causing grievous bodily harm to 34-year-old father-of-three Mohammed Younis.

The offence allegedly took place in Jack Cornwell Street.

Harvey is also charged with the intent to kill Mr Younis.

Along with Declan Hudson, 30, a fork lift driver, Harvey is also accused of assaulting the alleged victim's wife Patricia, 27.

The three, who had spent the night in custody, were released on conditional bail.

They must not contact either of the alleged victims, who have three children aged six, three, and 15 months.



Mr. Younis

attackers receive lengthy custodial sentences. Only then will a clear message be sent out that racist thuggery will not be tolerated in any shape or form'.

Our doubts were well-founded. The trial of Y's attackers in 1991, as the following description proves, was an absolute farce. Mr and Mrs Y gave evidence, explained how they were beaten up, how they could not be mistaken as to the identity of the attacker since he was a neighbour for years. For their part the attackers produced a parade of witnesses present at the party that evening. All these witnesses claimed that the main defendant was asleep (in the middle of his own party!) and that a skinhead appeared from nowhere to attack Mr and Mrs Y before disappearing as mysteriously and suddenly as he had appeared. However, each witness had a completely different version of this incredible story - times, events, description of the skinhead, all these facts differed one from the other. The lies of one witness were so completely exposed that he collapsed in the witness box, unable to answer any more questions from the barristers or the Judge. Nor could the witnesses, so outspoken in court, explain why they never uttered a word of protest when the police originally arrested the defendant.

Despite the fact that the defence case was such a shambles, NMP observers were by no means confident as the prosecution case presented by the CPS was not much better. Indeed, a badly prepared prosecution led directly to the acquittal of the attackers, leaving an exasperated Mr Y to declare: 'There's no justice: the CPS, the courts, white juries - none of them care'. There is not much that one can add to this other than to reiterate that until the CPS starts to take racial harassment cases seriously, until a multi-racial jury system is introduced, injustices like this will continue.

## Police Response To Racial Harassment

The Newham police's racial harassment statistics for 1991 indicated a record 100% rise in reported racist incidents to the police. The figure rose from 249 incidents to 498 (previously, the police recorded 'cases' of racial harassment which could refer to a number of separate incidents). Despite this record rise, the police clear-up rate had increased only by a paltry 4%. And it should also be noted that despite this apparent improvement in the reporting of incidents to the police, the overall trend of large-scale under-reporting, as noted in the Harris Report of 1986, still persists in Newham.

### A Flawed Police Strategy

The police's weak response to this rise in reported incidents demonstrates, we believe, its failure to adopt a comprehensive strategy to challenge racist crimes. At present the police's strategy consists of the same old publicity campaigns against racial harassment coupled with the use of the specialised racial incidents squad, the 'Newham Organised Racial Incidents Squad' (NORIS) - neither of which serves to alter the attitudes of police officers on the ground dealing with racial harassment.

At present, according to the police's own guidelines, an attack must be recorded as racist if the investigating officer feels that there is a racist motive, or more significantly, if the victim believes that the attack was racially motivated. But in our experience the victim's perceptions are seldom taken on board, let alone acted upon.

As in previous years, NMP would classify the most common police responses to racist attacks under three categories. Firstly, they may seek to deracialise an incident, characterising it, for instance as a neighbour or traffic dispute, thereby completely overriding the victim's view that the attack was racially motivated. Secondly, they may claim that there are faults on both sides, in which case both victim and perpetrator are threatened or arrested, thus undermining the victim and letting the perpetrator off the hook. Finally, and this is certainly the most destructive response, the police may arrest the victim, either for defending him/herself or for 'inciting' the incident, presumably by daring to stand up to racist violence.

And to all this must be added some worrying trends within NORIS itself. There is first the whole question of procedure. If an officer accepts that a case is racial, then it must, as a matter of course, be referred to NORIS. This referral can itself cause problems, as due to delay and lack of action by the officer on the scene, vital evidence may be lost and the perpetrators can escape. And when a case does reach NORIS, a swift and just response is by no means guaranteed (see page 9) NORIS officers, though more sympathetic in their general approach to racist attacks, are, as the case of Mr K shows (see page 21) often guilty of deracialising racist attacks.

It is our view that, with such an unprecedented rise in reported racist attacks, the time has come for the police to adopt a new strategy for countering racial harassment. This would mean taking on board criticisms of their publicity campaigns as mere public relations exercises which avoid the fundamental problem of police

officers' behaviour on the ground. It would mean the police accepting that when black people are attacked they have the right to defend themselves. By stripping our community of that right, and criminalising those who fight back, the police are effectively legitimising the racist actions of the perpetrators of racial violence. We are under no illusions, however, that the police and the government not only lack the political will, but also the desire to effect such changes. Any radical transformation of policing will only come about through the struggles of ordinary working people.

### Failure of Police Response

#### Treating racist incidents as neighbour disputes

- Mr S had suffered a catalogue of harassment, mainly verbal abuse and threats from his neighbours (particularly from GA), ever since he moved to E13. However, one evening in October 1990, a serious assault occurred after GA spat in S's face and called him a 'black bastard'. When the police arrived S made it clear to them that he had been the victim of a racist attack. Even though GA could give no satisfactory explanation for his actions, the police decided to log the incident as a domestic dispute, taking no further action. (Ironically, S subsequently received a standard letter from Victim Support sympathising with him as being the victim of a crime). As a result of the police's failure to deal with this as a racist incident, NMP wrote to the police on several occasions warning them that failure to treat this as a racist incident increased the likelihood of another more serious assault. Our letters, as well as S's requests went ignored.

Then, in April 1991, the harassment escalated further, culminating in a violent assault on S and his partner. GA threatened S, and proceeded to kick down the front door of his house before

assaulting both S and his partner, leaving injuries which, in our view warranted, at the very least, an ABH charge. GA then attached a rope to S's car, in an attempt to tow it away. NMP took photographic evidence of S's injuries, and the damage to his property (as well as supporting S in his attempt to get the council to transfer him from the area). Following our intervention, the police were finally forced to arrest and charge GA. They acknowledged, by classifying it as such, that this was a racial incident. Yet, at a later date, the police's refusal to acknowledge the racial nature of this case, was to resurface again.

In late April 1991, when S's sister went to West Ham police station to give a statement, the investigating officer seemed uninterested in the case, even going as far as telling her that he doesn't 'give a damn about the likes of your brother and his trouble with neighbours'. Then, referring to previous convictions of members of S's family, the officer insinuated that S was not deserving of police protection.

Later in May, when S's partner was reluctant, for fear of reprisals, to give a statement concerning the attacks, the investigating officer declared that he would record that his appointment with S's partner was not honoured by her and went on to say 'I don't want any more incidents between you and him', once again intimating that in his view this was simply a domestic issue.

This case clearly illustrates that the police, far from taking racial harassment seriously, redefine the harassment as a domestic dispute (a tactic frequently used to justify inactivity in cases of domestic violence as well). It is certainly unremarkable, then, that many victims do not report attacks to the police, for they know that the reception they receive will not only be unsympathetic but, as the following cases demonstrate, may even result in action against them.

### Arresting the victim

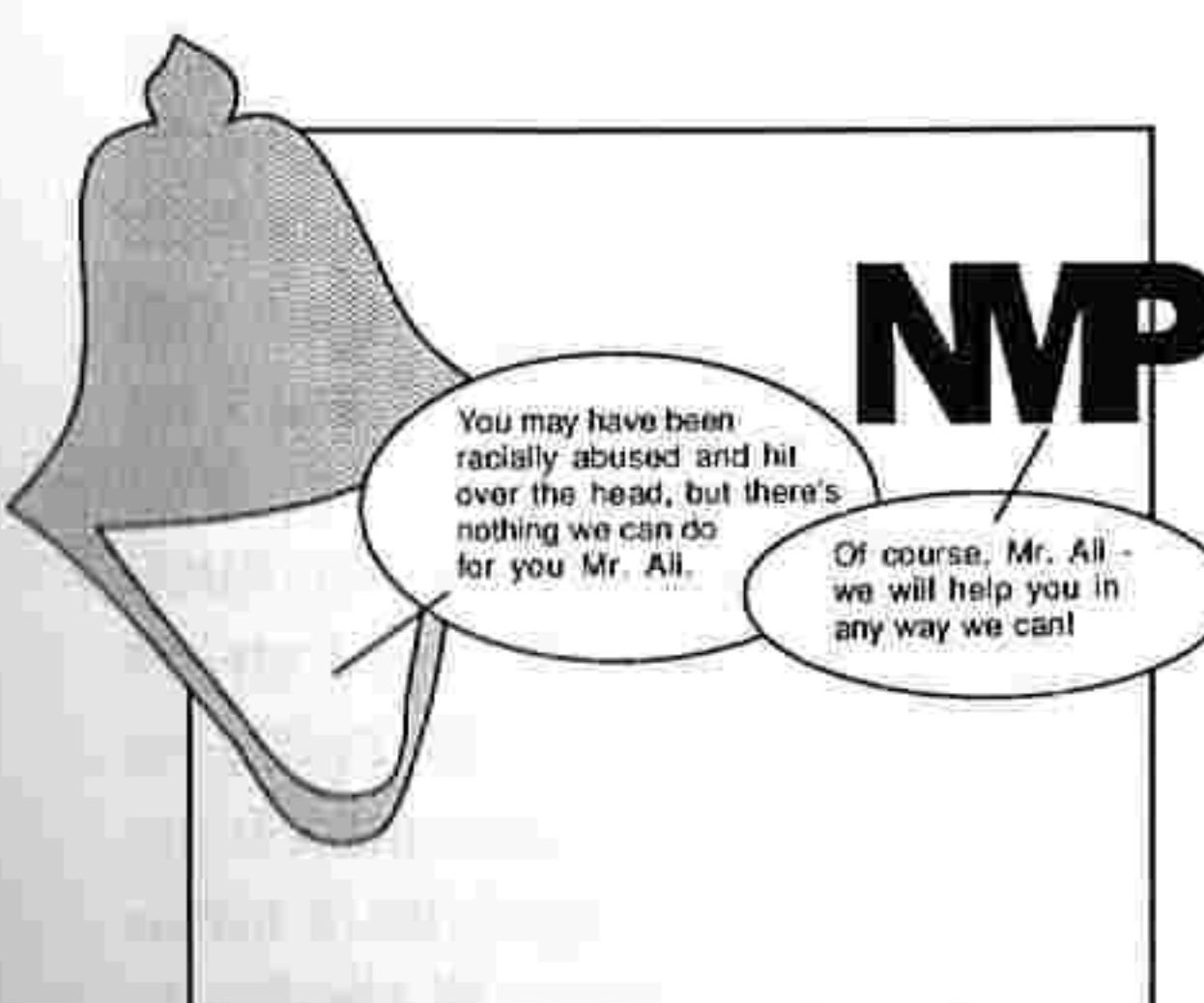
- In December 1991, during the early hours of the morning AV was walking through the Cyprus Estate, Beckton, to his friend's house where he was due to pick up his wife. AV had previously been assaulted by a gang armed with a knife whilst walking in the Cyprus Estate (the attack had resulted in a leg-wound and a face wound that required stitches). So he began carrying his electrician's pen-knife with him for protection.

As he drew close to his friend's house, 4-5 white youths approached him and blocked his way. When one youth used racist taunts, AV argued back. One of the youths attempted to throw a punch at AV and the others formed a circle around him. Faced with this threatening situation, AV pulled out his pen-knife, hoping that this would keep the men at bay. But it didn't. The youths all rounded on him, punching and kicking him. And during the fight one of the youths received a cut from AV's pen-knife; in the subsequent confusion, AV managed to escape. He continued to his friend's house to pick up his wife, but finding that she had already left, he headed back home, taking a different route this time.

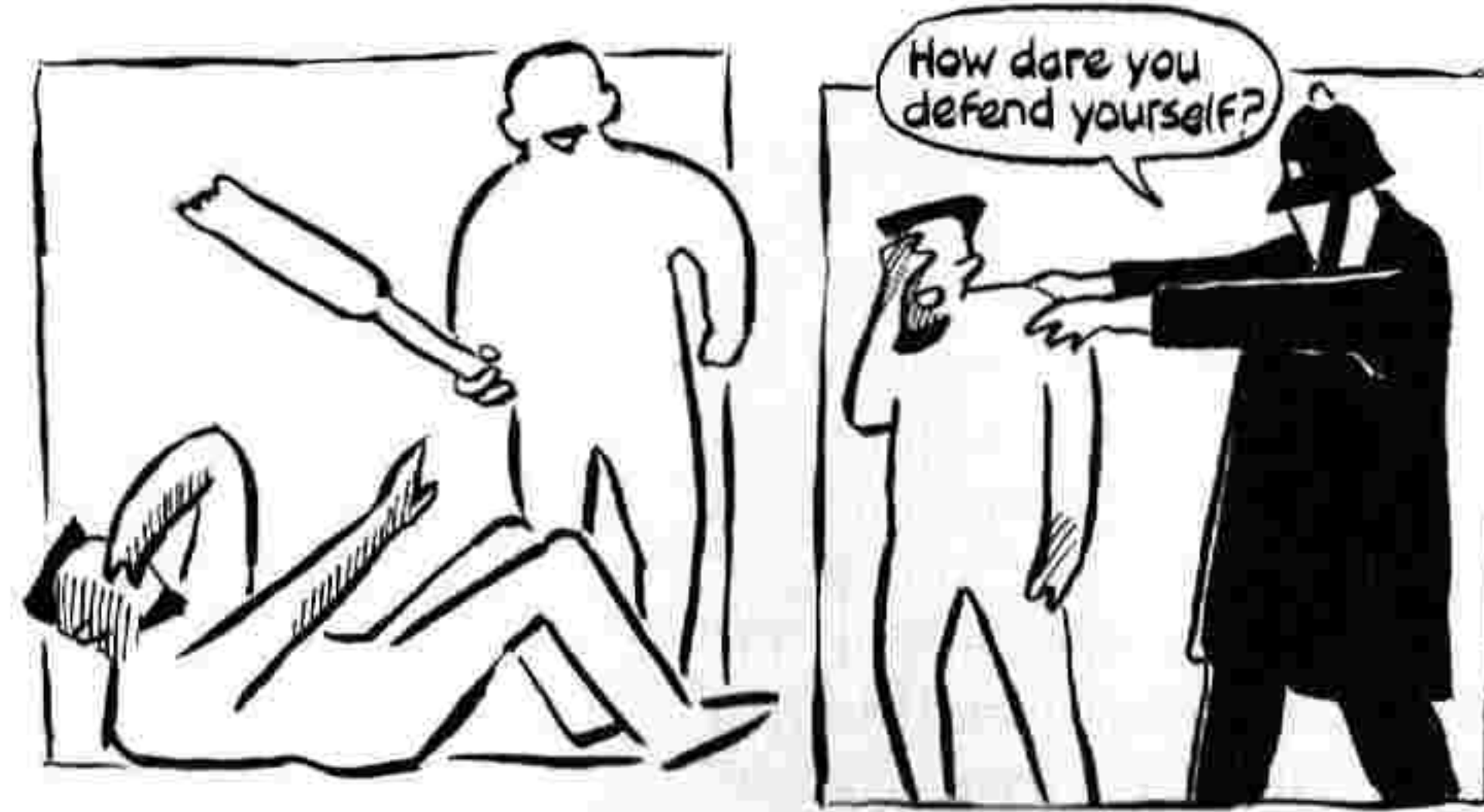
On his way back, AV was attacked again. A man with a baseball bat (AV later discovered that the man was the brother of the injured youth) charged at him and beat AV about the head with such force that the bat actually broke in half, causing AV to suffer a serious head wound. Although bleeding profusely, AV managed to get back to his friend's house where he called the police. But when the police arrived, they arrested AV, who was so seriously injured that it was necessary to take him to hospital immediately for emergency treatment.

After hospital treatment, and still in great discomfort, AV was taken to the police station and held for 30 hours before being charged with malicious wounding on the man carrying the baseball bat as well as the youths who had originally waylaid him. No action was taken against the youths involved in the initial attack and they were in fact used as prosecution witnesses against AV.

In May 1992 at Snaresbrook Crown



Court, AV was acquitted on grounds of self-defence.



This case clearly illustrates the gap between police rhetoric on racial harassment and police action. It is ironic that whilst the police have acknowledged there to be a serious problem of racial harassment on estates like Cyprus (see page 9), in practice they are quick to arrest those black people who fight back. AV readily admits being in possession of a knife. If he had not had the knife, he may well have suffered even worse serious injuries. The use of his attackers as the chief prosecution witnesses now renders him even more vulnerable to attack.

- Mr A and his son G, suffered continuous harassment from the moment they took up residence in a flat in Forest Gate. On several occasions, Mr A and his son were attacked both on their way home and at their flat. Mr A's difficulties were compounded by the fact that his wife had recently died, and he also suffers from a disease affecting the spine called Spinal-Spondrosis. Following an attack in August 1991, when G was held down and a lit firework was placed in his mouth, Mr A approached NMP for help.

Following pressure from NMP, the housing department installed security film on the windows to prevent them from shattering. But despite repeated requests to the police to install an alarm in Mr A's flat (Mr A is not on the phone), nothing was done. The police, in theory at least, accepted that there was a problem of racial harassment, but claimed that lack of evidence prevented them from taking action against the perpetrators. They would simply make a visit to Mr A's house every time there was an incident. Whilst reassuring Mr A that they were concerned, they would do absolutely nothing.

Meanwhile, the attacks increased. Racist graffiti was sprayed on the walls of their home, excrement was pushed through the letter box and the abuse was continuous. G was attacked on the way

home from school on 2 separate occasions.

In September 1991, following yet another attack on G, Mr A came out of his flat and shouted at the youths responsible to stop or he would call the police. Believing that the situation had calmed down, he returned to his flat and went to bed. Minutes later, however, the police arrived. G opened the door only to be confronted by a dozen officers who burst into the flat and carried out a search, at no time showing a search warrant. According to Mr A, when they entered the kitchen, they picked up a knife and one officer said: 'This will do'. As the police escorted Mr A out of his flat, a crowd gathered on the balcony, including the youths who had originally attacked G, and shouted threatening abuse. The officers, it later transpired, had been called out by the perpetrators who claimed that Mr A had attacked them with a knife. NMP managed to visit Mr A at West Ham police station where we arranged legal representation. Mr A was charged with being in 'possession of an offensive weapon' and with 'threatening behaviour'. His son was immediately placed in care overnight. When Mr A was finally taken to court, the charges against him were withdrawn. No action has ever been taken against the perpetrators by the police. This whole catalogue of incidents has done inestimable damage to Mr A and his son G. Their only consolation is that, owing to the pressure on the housing department by NMP, they have been transferred, on the grounds of racial harassment, to another property.

Once again this case demonstrates that the police's response to racist violence is too often to believe the version of events presented by the racists. In this case, the police were well aware of the long history of harassment suffered by Mr A and yet they consistently failed to do anything about it. In contrast, when they received a solitary phone call from the perpetrators, they responded by

charging into Mr A's flat and, on the basis of no evidence whatsoever, arrested, a 50-year-old man with a disabling spine disease.

### NORIS - deracialising racial harassment

- The K family from North Woolwich were harassed by their neighbours over a 6 month period from late 1990 to the summer of 1991. In August 1991, they decided that the best way to deal with this harassment was to have a barbecue, inviting all their neighbours to their home in order to introduce themselves. Many of their neighbours attended. That evening, the K family had excrement pushed through their letter-box. And the following day, the abuse and harassment from all the neighbours bar one continued.

K's children were pupils at a local primary school. Returning to school after the summer holidays, they found themselves subject to abuse and harassment from their fellow pupils. With the help of the family, NMP identified the perpetrators and approached the head teacher at the school, who acknowledged that there was a problem and assured the K family that the children would be escorted home from school by a teacher.

Nevertheless, the harassment, both inside and outside the school, continued. On one occasion B (aged 9) was assaulted by a youth from outside the school, who hit her about the head and face, as she played with a friend on the doorstep of her home. The police were informed and the case was referred to the NORIS squad. NORIS then went to the school and talked to the children carrying out the harassment. One officer spoke to the head teacher who voiced concern about B's 7-year-

old brother Z who, because of the harassment, was becoming aggressive. The police officer took this to mean that Z, who was fighting back against the children, was aggravating the situation. The officer then engaged an interpreter and approached the K family, telling them, in front of Z, that much of the harassment the family was receiving was due to Z's 'bullying' at school. A NMP worker then contacted the police officer who again repeated the accusation against Z. It is not hard to imagine the effects of the police officer's words on a 7-year-old child. Z became withdrawn, refused to attend school, and had to be coaxed back by his parents. Now due to pressure by NMP the housing department is in the process of moving the family out of the area.

In the case of the K family, NORIS, acting on the superficial observations of the head teacher, ignored all the salient facts in the case. The harassment was on-going, much of it taking place in the summer holidays when the children were not at school. Some of the harassment was perpetrated by youths older than primary school age. Incidents of harassment included abuse and threats, stones being thrown at the windows of K's home, and assaults. On one occasion, sand was thrown into the eyes of K's 2-year-old child. None of this was properly investigated and despite repeated requests for some action against the perpetrators, no-one has ever been arrested. The final insult came when Z was blamed for the victimisation his family were suffering - a clear attempt to deracialise the case.

The question of racist attacks being deracialised, of individual actions being shorn of racial motives, is central to all the above cases. Even in those cases where the police accept, in principle, that the family is suffering racial harassment (as in the case of Mr A and his son), their reaction when called to specific incidents is to disbelieve the victims and, as in Mr A's case, show incredible haste in arresting him. As mentioned earlier the deracialising of cases and lack of any meaningful support for the victims, serves to undermine their rights and emboldens the perpetrators. It is particularly worrying to see such a trend gradually developing within NORIS, for they are frequently cited by senior police officers as an illustration of the Met's commitment to tackling racial harassment.

# Police Harassment

1991 was the tenth anniversary of the 1981 uprisings in Brixton, Southall, Manchester, Liverpool - indeed, in over 30 towns and cities all over the country. The impact of these uprising was unprecedented. The use of specialist squads like the Special Patrol Group and of tactics such as stop and search and the 'sus' laws were placed under the microscope. Many politicians tried to locate the cause of the uprisings in black culture, but somewhere along the line, there was also the recognition, no matter how tacit, that provocative policing played its part in some of the worst 'rioting' mainland Britain had ever seen.

Today, whilst many of the provocative police tactics that led to the 1981 uprisings remain, relations between the police and the black community are once again on the agenda. Following a number of notorious miscarriages of justice and the announcement of a Royal Commission on Criminal Justice (one of only a handful of Royal Commissions established under successive Conservative administrations), 1991 saw questions of abuse of police power receiving a great deal of media and political attention. But the debate tends to focus more on how to reform, tinker around with, the criminal justice system rather than do away with the culture of police racism that makes police/black relations so fraught, leads to the criminalisation of black youth and their total alienation from the police.

Every week, black people, both Asian and African-Caribbean, come to NMP after contact with the police. By listening to their experiences, NMP is in a unique position to understand both local and national trends in policing. From our vantage point, it is clear that the police far from questioning its role in society is gearing up towards an even more oppressive stance.

1991 has seen changes in the structure of Newham's police. The old East Ham district has been disbanded and all Newham police centralised under one command. Their newly-built headquarters, on the junction of Romford Road and Green Street, has not opened due to much rumoured disputes amongst senior officers over, for instance, allocation of offices, the possibility that the top floor is a fire risk, and the fact that there is inadequate space for police dogs!

On a more serious note, however, this centralisation of Newham's police symbolised by the opening of this new administrative centre - with its 28 cells and at a cost to the public of millions of pounds - illustrates, quite clearly, that community policing is a thing of the past (if indeed, it ever existed in the first place. Instead, an authoritarian and out of touch police force, with little or no connection to the community it supposedly serves, is being imposed on Newham from above. The cases we document below show the effects of such policing: the everyday acts of harassment, the irritating police interference in the lives of ordinary people as they go about their daily business, the fact that people cannot even meet culturally, without heavy-handed police tactics, as was the case at the 1991 Newham Mela.

## Casework

The total number of police harassment cases reported to NMP in 1991, increased from 132 to 168. Although not responsible for all this

increase, the publicity generated by the Deane campaign (see chapter 7) certainly played a major part in widening community awareness of NMP's role.

## Harassment on the streets

In September, JB, who lives in E12 was walking home down High Street North. Ahead of him, he saw a crowd of over twenty people gathered around an ambulance and a police car. As he approached, his way was blocked by a white man and a white woman who appeared to be ordering the crowd to move on. Before he could fully move out of their way, they pushed him forcefully in the chest knocking him backwards. When he chastised the white couple saying 'don't push me, don't you have any manners', the woman told JB to 'fuck off'. The man and the woman, it later transpired, were plainclothes police officers.

To avoid further aggravation from the white couple, JB withdrew from the scene and stood in the entrance of a shop, chatting to a friend. Again the unidentified plain-clothes WPC approached him and told him to be careful or he would be 'done'. JB looked away, but she grabbed him by the arm. When he struggled, he was seized by the WPC's male colleague, who twisted JB's arm, grabbed him by the neck before dragging him into an unmarked police car. It was only at this stage that the couple identified themselves as police officers. On the way to the police station, JB says that the officers casually discussed what charges they could bring against him and the PC laughed at him, saying that he would be charged with beating up a woman.

At the police station, JB was charged with being 'drunk and disorderly' - all the more bizarre as at no point was he breathalysed or asked to give blood or

### • Breakdown in terms of manner of referral

Direct	90
Emergency Service (during non-office hours)	32
Via other Agencies	42

### • Breakdown in terms of gender and age (1)

Male	87
Female	51
Juvenile	30

### • Breakdown in terms of nature of police harassment (2)

Physical assault	31
Verbal abuse	30
Stop & search/traffic	35
Raids	13
Immigration	16
Other (3)	43

### • Breakdown in terms of police station

West Ham	46
Plaistow	27
Forest Gate	22
Esat Ham	12
Outside Newham (4)	38
Unidentified (5)	23

### • Breakdown in terms of area (6)

E6	14
E7	43
E12	20
E13	16
E15	22
E16	18
Outside Newham (7)	35

(1) Based on the person arrested or member of family with whom there is the most contact.

(2) The majority of complaints are a combination of the following, but are categorised according to the major component.

(3) Applies to forms of harassment such as indifference towards racial harassment, and the arrest of victims of racial harassment.

(4) Represents the neighbouring boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, or police stations where Newham residents were held.

(5) Represents incidents of police harassment where we have been unable to identify police officers and their stations.

(6) E6 - East Ham, Beckton  
E7 - Forest Gate  
E12 - Manor Park  
E13 - Plaistow  
E15 - Stratford  
E16 - Canning Town, North Woolwich

(7) Represents the neighbouring boroughs of Barking and Dagenham, Hackney, Redbridge, Tower Hamlets and Waltham Forest, or areas outside Newham where Newham residents have faced police harassment.

urine samples. Despite the presence in court of a number of witnesses, who testified to the restraint JB showed in the face of provocation from these unidentified officers, and the fact that there was no concrete evidence to show he was drunk, JB was convicted, solely on the word of the police. He is at present appealing and has a good chance of acquittal.

PD from Plaistow was constantly stopped and searched for no apparent reason. In September, after yet another 'routine' stop and search, a frustrated PD demanded to know exactly why he was stopped in this manner and continually harassed. The officers response was that this was quite simple - 'it's because you're black and have got locks', they said.

These cases illustrate not only the racist stereotyping of the police, but the whole way in which they overreact and attempt to intimidate those they perceive as challenging their authority. There was absolutely no basis whatsoever for the arrest of JB, but once arrested the police had to find the charges to justify their actions. Another example of bringing false charges is provided by the case of JR.

In September, JR who is white and a teacher from East Ham, was driving down the Romford Road in the early hours of the morning when he was stopped by a police officer. JR's was the only car on the road at that time, he had not been drinking or speeding, and fully aware of his rights, he asked politely why he had been stopped. The officer did not reply but instead interrogated JR as to where he was going and where he had been. JR insisted that he was not being obstructive but would not answer questions until he was told why he had been stopped. When the officer became rude and abusive, JB repeated that he was not obliged to answer any questions unless an explanation was given for the stop, and then turned away moving towards his car. The officer caught JR around the neck, threw him against a wall and twisted his arm while putting him in a head-lock. JR was handcuffed whilst police reinforcements were called.

At Ilford police station, JR was breathalysed. When this proved negative, he was then placed in a cell and told to await the arrival of a doctor for a drugs test. This test also proved negative but subsequently, the doctor discovered that JR had a number of injuries, including swelling on the inside of the throat, serious



bruising to the body and grazes and cuts to the arms and head. At this point, the arresting officer charged JR with a number of minor motoring offences. On his release, JR immediately contacted NMP. The police behaviour in this incident was so unjust that we put out a press release and submitted a complaint to the police. When the case came to court, all charges were dropped against JR. With NMP's help, JR is now pursuing a civil action against the police.

The police, aware that there was no justification for JR's arrest, considered bringing a number of charges so as to justify their actions. The charges against JR were eventually dropped. As a white teacher, conversant with his rights, JR had many obvious advantages over black defendants who, in a similar position, find themselves railroaded through the courts simply because a situation is allowed to escalate after a police stop and search. We extend all credit to JR for standing up to the police and insisting his rights be respected.

- In May 1991, AM was walking down Green Street, when he was approached by police officers from West Ham police station who accused him of having committed grievous bodily harm in an incident earlier that day. AM protested his innocence. The officers then grabbed him and, in front of a large number of witnesses, assaulted AM before violently bundling him into a police van where he was further assaulted and abused.

It was only at West Ham police station that the officers realised that they had arrested the wrong person and had no choice but to release him without charge.

When AM made it clear that he intended to complain, he was told 'there's a lot of consequences from that' and was duly charged with assaulting a police officer. AM was acquitted and is now pursuing a civil action against the police.

Once again the police were intent on covering their tracks. An innocent individual had been mistakenly arrested and beaten, but their response was to attempt to criminalise him by bringing a false charge against him. The charges brought against AM also reflect the confidence of the police that magistrates will accept their word in the light of no other evidence.

### *Arresting the victim*

- One early afternoon in May 1991, HL

was leaving the Denmark Arms pub in High Street North when he was racially abused by three men. HL ignored them, but was set upon. The police were called but by the time they arrived the attackers had fled. The police officers did not want to hear HL's side of the story. They simply grabbed hold of him, handcuffed him and proceeded to bundle him into a police van. All the time, HL was desperately trying to explain that he had been a victim of an assault.

In the van, HL told the officers again that he had been attacked and also expressed outrage at the way the police were treating him. On hearing this, one of the six officers in the van pulled HL onto the floor, kicked him in the face and stamped on his body.

On arrival at Plaistow police station, HL was so dazed by the assault that he had to be held up by the police officers at the charge desk. When placing him in a cell, an officer banged HL's head against the wall, causing him to pass out.

Meanwhile, HL's anxious wife and family, who knew nothing of his arrest telephoned local hospitals and then East Ham and North Woolwich police stations. Having drawn a blank there, they then called Plaistow police station, who also denied any knowledge of HL's whereabouts although he was in their police cell at the time. By midnight the family were frantic and when they called East Ham police station to register HL as missing, they were told that a police officer would visit them soon.

At 1 am, HL, dazed, his clothes covered with blood, was released. The charge against him - causing grievous bodily harm to a police officer! The final twist in his frantic day came in the early hours of the morning when officers from East Ham police station arrived at his home to follow up HL's wife's report of a missing person. Later, HL went to hospital where doctors catalogued a long list of injuries.

When HL made his first court appearance, the charge against

him was reduced to assault on a police officer. In September 1991, he was acquitted and is currently pursuing a civil action against the police.

- In October, AH and his cousin JA, were driving through Forest Gate when the route of their car was blocked by a red pick-up van. 3 white men jumped out shouting racist abuse, before dragging AH and JA out of their vehicle and beating them up.

The white men, it seems, believed that AH was responsible for a burglary at their garage. JA managed to escape from the men and phoned the police from a nursery across the road. But AH was forced to go with the men to a near-by lock-up where he was further assaulted before being thrown on to the back of the van which then sped off.

When the police arrived, they asked JA to direct them as to the route the van had taken only to discover, within minutes, his cousin lying in a pool of blood on the road side. AH had jumped from the van, and, as well as hitting the pavement, suffered internal injuries as well as facial and head injuries. Remarkably, the perpetrators were still on the scene.

To JA's amazement, the police's response was to ask the three white men for a statement whereupon the men claimed that they had carried out a citizen's arrest and they were taking AH to the police station. Accepting their version of events, the police threw AH in his semi-conscious state into the back of the police van. JA and AH were then taken to the police station and placed in a cell, apparently under arrest for burglary. JA was drifting in and out of consciousness, awakening only to vomit blood, and bleeding from the ears. Two hours later, a doctor was called who advised that AH needed urgent treatment. Only then was AH taken to hospital. In hospital, where AH remained for one week, the police questioned him about the

kidnapping but still he and JA remained on the burglary charges. Later, the charges against AH and HA were dropped. NMP had previously forwarded the names of witnesses who could describe the assault and kidnapping, as well as a description of the van, to the police, but no action against the kidnappers was ever taken.

For some time after his ordeal, AH vomited blood. AH is virtually deaf in one ear and suffers from blurred vision.

What is so remarkable about these cases is the whole way in which the police unequivocally accept the perpetrators' version of events, denying a possible racial motive and criminalise the victim. In HL's case, the attackers were allowed to run away. It was AH's cousin, JA, who rang the police, AH also sustained serious injuries, yet the police accepted, without hesitation, the ridiculous story provided by the racists. Both of these cases also highlight the lack of care black people receive at the police station. Both HL and AH were left unconscious in their cells whilst officers ignored the serious nature of their injuries.

### *At the police station*

- In December 1991, RG and his friend were shopping in Stratford when they were stopped and searched by the police, apparently for 'behaving suspiciously'. RG's friend was arrested and taken to the police station. Initially when RG went to the police station to enquire about his friend he was told to wait.

But when a police officer eventually found time to talk to him, he took exception to RG's questions and told him to 'push off'. When RG said that he would not leave until he was told what his friend had been arrested for and, moreover, he wanted to complain about the officer's behaviour and language, he was called a 'black idiot'. At this point, RG appealed to other officers behind the counter to help him, but they denied that the officer was abusive or obstructive and RG was once again told to 'push off'.

RG turned away from the desk and, frustrated by the treatment he had received, swore under his breath. At this the officer leapt over the counter and grabbed RG, forcing him up against a wall. RG found himself under arrest for being drunk and disorderly and for using threatening behaviour. The case is still pending at court. RG's friend was never charged.

With NMP's help, RG intends to pursue a formal complaint against the police.

What is so instructive about RG's case is the way in which the other officers at the police station closed ranks to support the officer behind the desk who had become rude and abusive. So often we are told that racism in the police is merely a question of a few rotten apples in the barrel, thus sidestepping the wider question of police tactics in black areas and the police culture that allows officers close to ranks behind each other.

- MC was on bail for offences to which he was pleading not guilty. Part of MC's bail conditions was that he had to 'sign on' regularly at Forest Gate police station.

In August 1991, MC, accompanied by a friend, attended the police station as usual. The officer on duty was deliberately obstructive to MC who complained to a passing inspector. This inspector, rolled up his newspaper and slapped MC across the face with it. MC was not provoked and tried again to 'sign on' at the desk. At this point, the two officers shoved MC and his friend out of the front door of the police station.

If MC did not comply with the conditions of his bail, he would have immediately been placed on remand. So MC went back inside to make another attempt to 'sign on', but was told by the inspector to 'get out, this is my station'. Ten minutes later MC returned. There was another officer behind the desk and MS was successful in signing on. On the way out, though, this officer told him 'get out or I'll nick you'.

MC, already in touch with NMP, came to us for advice about this incident. Subsequently, MC was acquitted of the charges he was facing and a formal complaint has now been submitted to the police as regards MC's treatment at the police station that day.

The whole way the police treated MC was not only designed to humiliate but could have had the even more serious consequence of sending him to prison for failing to fulfill his bail requirements. This, and the previous case, show how vulnerable black people are to police racism and arrogance when they go to make inquiries, or report to a police station. Far from officers pulling each other up for this sort of authoritarian behaviour, they close ranks, looking to each other for support.

Ten years after the 1981 uprisings there is still a long way to go before institutional police racism is eradicated. At this stage, it is unclear what the recommendations of the Royal Commission on the Criminal Justice will be. What is clear, however, is that the harassment, brutality and racism suffered by the black community at the hands of the police continues. More frame-ups and miscarriages of justice are happening all the time. Unless the Royal Commission broadens its remit and recommends the introduction of a complaints procedure which is genuinely independent of the police, accountable to the community and with sufficient powers to challenge the police at the highest levels, it will be seen, like so many inquiries before, as simply a public relations exercise. The present complaints procedure is woefully inadequate. It cannot be acceptable for the police to investigate themselves and have their conclusions rubber-stamped by the Police Complaints Authority who have neither the political will nor the power to truly challenge the police. Even as we remember this the tenth anniversary of the 1981 uprisings, we note with dismay the escalation of military style and confrontational policing as encapsulated by the re-establishment of the notorious SPG, now renamed the Territorial Support Group, the call for more police powers and the re-introduction of stop and search. It is precisely these tactics that led to the uprisings of 1981, and now lead black communities to distrust the police and turn to community organisations, like the Newham Monitoring Project, for help.

## 6

## Self-Defence is No Offence

*'Martin was the victim of a brutal racist attack but he was the one arrested and imprisoned. We, Martin's friends and family, have learnt the hard way that the only way to get justice is to campaign for it.'*

Pam Cain, Martin Calvert's partner, speaking at the NMP Justice Meeting.

*'I am in full support of any action to drop these trumped up obscene charges. It seems that in the western world it is the custom to charge the 'victim' while the victimisers run free. I denounce this despicable display of police misjudgement and misconduct and call on all anti-racists to support the campaign.'*

Reverend Al Sharpton lending support to the Sultan Mohammed Defence Campaign.



Martin Calvert

In 1991 NMP was involved in two self defence campaigns, the 'Free Martin Calvert Campaign' in conjunction with the Hackney Community Defence Association, and the Sultan Mohammed Defence Campaign organised with the support of Newham NALGO. Both campaigns were based on the issue that has been at the forefront of anti-racist struggle over the last fifteen years - most notably in the Bradford 12, the Newham 8 and Newham 7 campaigns - that black people under attack from racists and fascists have a fundamental right to defend themselves.

### The Free the Martin Calvert Campaign

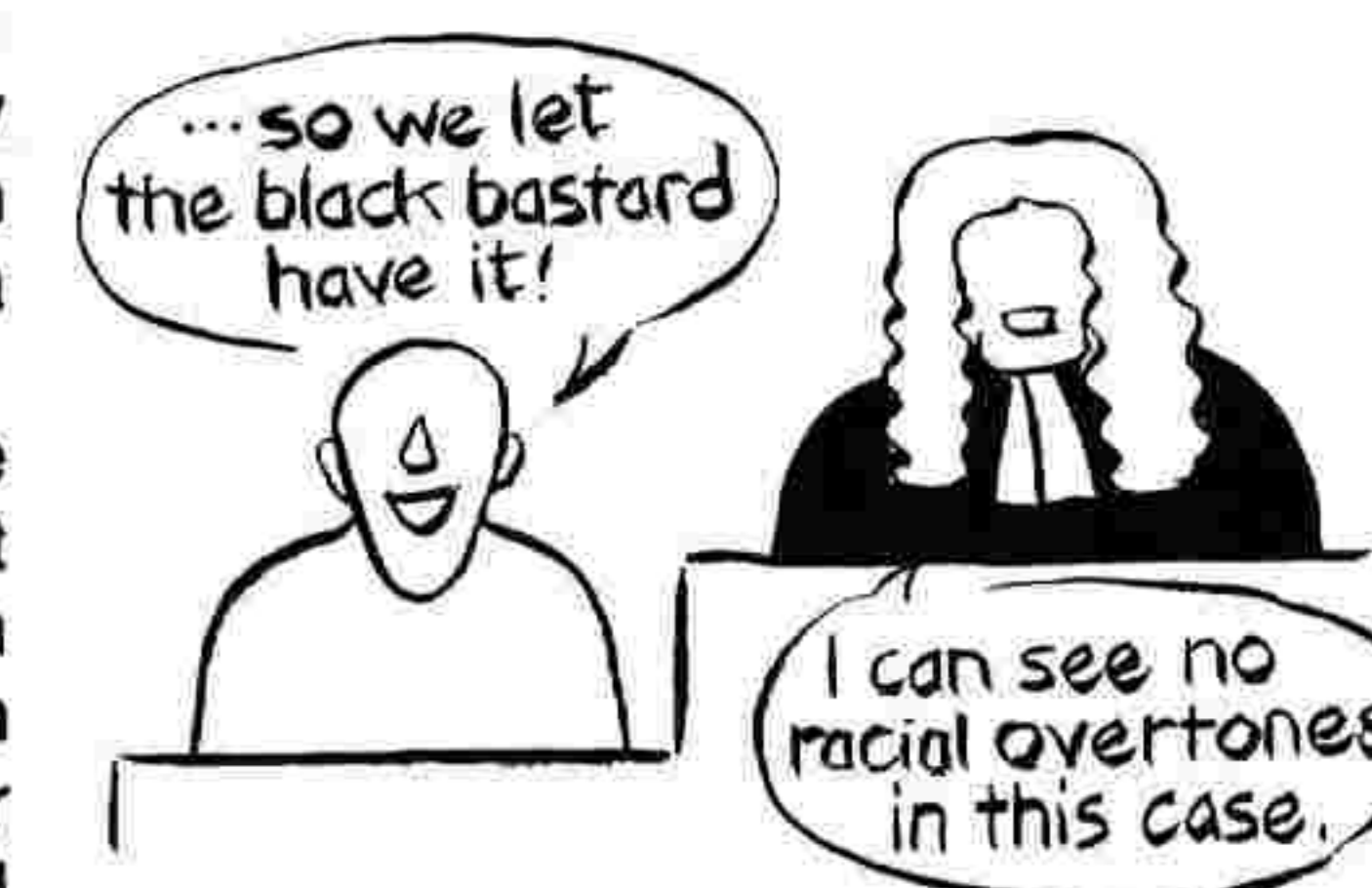
In the summer of 1991 NMP was approached by the family of Martin Calvert, who had just been sentenced to prison after being convicted of a serious assault.

Martin Calvert is a black man in his late twenties who works as a recreation attendant for Hackney Council and is also a sculptor. On 25 October 1990 he was driving along Downham Road, Hackney, taking his car to a garage for repair. As he stopped at a junction, he heard some people shouting. He then saw a motor-bike pull alongside him. The two riders were white. The pillion rider punched Martin's window. Martin wound the window down to ask what was wrong. 'I didn't have a chance to say anything. I received a punch in the right eye.' The biker grabbed him, so Martin drove off as the pillion rider unwound a heavy chain from his waist. The bikers shouted racist abuse and then chased him. Martin had to do a U-turn and take several side roads to escape them. He eventually pulled in at the garage he had been going to on Mare Street. He thought he had lost his pursuers. As he got out, the bikers pulled alongside him. The pillion rider jumped off, swinging his chain threateningly.

Martin was afraid for his life. He took out a small clay modelling knife. The biker went for Martin first. Martin used the knife in self-defence. The pillion rider assaulted Martin with his chain and fists before running off. Martin was injured. He remembers being in a state of shock until long after the incident. The police charged Martin with wounding with intent to cause grievous bodily harm, with intent.

### Is this justice?

In court, the bikers admitted to racially abusing and assaulting Martin. When asked why, one answered 'It's obvious, isn't it?'. There were many witnesses to the fight at the garage who contradicted each other, unable to remember clearly what happened. That Martin told the truth became clear to everyone in court. He had very good character witnesses. The judge said that there was no doubt about Martin's good character. Martin has no previous convictions. Despite this the jury found Martin guilty of actual bodily harm. The judge chose to give Martin a custodial sentence of 18 months in prison.



### Sacked by Hackney Council

After his arrest, Martin was remanded in custody for one week. Within a few days of his return to work, while on bail, Hackney Council alleged that Martin's arrest reflected on his suitability for work with the Council's Leisure Services.

On 4 September 1991, after Martin's conviction, a disciplinary hearing was held in his absence. Despite being a member of NUPE Martin had no union representation. He was then officially sacked on Friday, 13 September. In total, Martin was attacked on the street, attacked in court, and finally attacked by Hackney Council, a council that claims to be anti-racist!

## The Campaign

As the attack took place in Hackney, NMP decided to approach Hackney Community Defence Association (HCDA) who have a long history of challenging such cases of injustice in the borough. It was decided that HCDA and NMP would jointly support Martin's friends and family in launching a campaign to free him. The principles of the campaign was to uphold the right of black people to defend themselves against racist attacks and to condemn the empty words of Hackney Council's anti-racist policies. The Campaign's two demands were Martin's immediate release from prison pending appeal and Martin's reinstatement at his workplace.

The campaign received a wide range of support in Newham, Hackney and nationally. Amongst the events organised by the campaign was a successful public meeting in Hackney and a 'Free Martin Calvert Benefit' hosted by black 'edutainer' Leo Chester.

A series of very effective pickets of Hackney Town Hall were organised in order to expose the disgraceful decision to sack Martin without even giving him the chance to defend himself. This effort eventually led to Martin being reinstated in his job.

Martin, who has since been released on parole remains very grateful for all the support he received. However, he is extremely bitter at being imprisoned for an incident where it was he who was the victim. We remain convinced that if Martin's family had only approached a campaigning organisation before the conviction, the appropriate legal representation for a more effective defence could have been arranged. Allied with a community campaign, this surely would have resulted in his acquittal, as borne out in the following case.

## Sultan Mohammed Defence Campaign

On 1 May 1991 over 500 black people packed into Friends Meeting House, Euston, to attend a meeting which was to be addressed by the Reverend Al Sharpton. As people were taking their seats a hoax bomb alert, which we now know to have been the work of the British National Party (BNP), resulted in the building being evacuated for almost half an hour. Soon after the meeting finally began, a group of eight BNP fascists attacked members of the 'security' team and hurled a smoke bomb into the audience.

As an angry black crowd chased the fascist attackers, the driver of the BNP transit van drove off in a hurry leaving two of his colleagues behind. The group of black people, in defence of the meeting, apprehended and restrained one of the attackers as the other managed to flee. When the police arrived, one member of the audience, Sultan Mohammed pointed out the attacker and demanded that they arrest him. To Sultan's surprise, the officer nearest to him reacted by arresting him for threatening behaviour and ignored the attacker who was eventually arrested by other police officers. Both Sultan and the attacker, who turned out to be the BNP activist Ian Dell, were taken to Holborn police station.

The discipline of the crowd was such that the meeting was able to continue where Reverend Al Sharpton gave a speech condemning the racist actions of the police.

As the meeting came to a close the NMP workers who were in the audience called for a march to Holborn police station to secure Sultan's release. A loud and angry group of 200 black people then marched to the police station and Sultan was indeed released, but not before the police had hurriedly charged him, not only with threatening behaviour but also an additional charge of actual bodily harm on a police officer. To add insult to injury the BNP's Ian Dell was released without charge.

This 'bystander' is BNP attacker, Ian Dell

## Rev Al smoke bomb gang hunted

by Nigel Rosser

POLICE were today hunting a group of skinhead British National Party supporters who smoke-bombed a meeting to be addressed by American black activist, the Rev Al Sharpton.



Police help away a bystander injured after the smoke bomb attack at the Friends' Meeting House Pictures: NICK COHRISH

## The Campaign

Two days following his arrest NMP workers took Sultan to Heathrow Airport for a hastily convened press conference with Al Sharpton who was flying back to New York that morning. The whole incident received huge publicity from the Caribbean Times to the front page of the Sun. NMP reacted immediately by launching a defence campaign.

Sultan works as a race equality officer for Newham Council and as such sought the support of the local union NALGO. Newham NALGO lent its full support to the campaign which also received the official support of the Reverend Al Sharpton, Bernie Grant MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP, Campaign Against Racism and Fascism, Refugee Forum, National Union of Students, the Society of Black Lawyers, Greenwich Action Committee Against Racist Attacks, Rotherham NALGO, Birmingham NALGO, NALGO National Black Members Co-ordinating Committee, the Socialist Workers Party, Liverpool 8 Law Centre and the National Black Caucus.

The thrust of the campaign was that an innocent black person, at the scene of a vicious and organised racist attack, had been arrested by the police on trumped up charges, whilst the fascists went scott free. The demands of the campaign were for the charges against Sultan to be dropped and for Ian Dell to be charged with the serious offences he and the BNP thugs had committed. To support the latter demand we highlighted an article in the BNP's newspaper 'British Nationalist' claiming responsibility for the attack, calling the attackers 'Bloody Heroes' and describing the incident as 'one of the most heroic acts in the history of British nationalism'. The publicity gained from this, particularly through the Guardian, The Voice and Choice FM, led to Ian Dell being rearrested for his role in the attack. However, the issue of Sultan's court case still remained.

At Sultan's first court appearance the charge of ABH was dismissed. However, Sultan was later informed that a charge of common law assault on a police officer had been substituted. Campaign supporters, who included community groups, anti-racist activists and trade unionists from across London, responded by mobilising a picket of the trial at Clerkenwell Magistrates Court on 29 July. The Magistrates reaction was to decide that they 'may not have time' to hear the case and adjourned the trial.

## Victory

When Sultan returned to court on 3 October 1991 over fifty people came out to demonstrate their support for him. As a result Sultan was cleared of all charges on a dramatic police back down. Emerging triumphant from Clerkenwell Magistrates court the jubilant Sultan said he was 'happy and relieved that the court has made the right decision'. However, joy was tinged with bitterness after five-months of worry over a case that should never have been brought to court in the first place. The court had finally taken the decision that it was not in the public interest to pursue this case and Sultan's legal representative, Dexter Dias, endorsed the view of the campaign when he stated that 'it is outrageous that a group of racists can disrupt a lawful meeting and that the people responsible are not brought to justice while an innocent man is falsely accused'.

The last word must lie with Sultan himself who sees his case as an example of the injustice faced by the whole black community:

***'It is just another indictment of British justice and British police in their attitude towards black people'.***

Sultan Mohammed



## Defend the Deane Family Campaign

Arnold Deane, a local community leader and businessman, arrived in Britain over 30 years ago from the Caribbean island of St Vincent and established the first black-owned shop on Green Street, now the heart of Newham's black community. However, on Monday 4 November 1991, at approximately 1 pm, Arnold Deane (53) and his son Tony Deane (23) were subjected to a violent attack by Newham police officers.



Tony Deane after the attack

Arnold Deane is lucky to be alive after the violence he was subjected to. He has a medical history as a severe asthmatic, for which he was admitted to the intensive care ward of Newham General Hospital in 1988. He stayed in hospital for six weeks, only to be readmitted a few days later with a serious lung infection. Mr Deane has to carry with him at all times a nebuliser and is receiving specialist care from the London Chest Hospital.

### The Attack

On 4 November 1991, Mr Arnold Deane was over-seeing the loading of a van at the back of the Deane's business premises on the junction of Green Street and Sherrard Road, when he was approached by two PCs. The officers, who we shall call PC X and PC Y (for legal reasons they cannot be named), were investigating an earlier fight that occurred between men nearby.

One of the men involved in that incident, who was accompanying the police officers, thought he recognised Tony Deane and that Tony may have witnessed the fight. So the police officers approached Tony Deane and asked him if this were so. Tony answered in the negative - he had not witnessed the fight - and proceeded to load up the van. But the police officers were not satisfied with this answer.

From this point onwards, the officers grew more aggressive and rude, and proceeded to treat Tony as though he was a suspect rather than a potential witness in the case. PC Y demanded that Tony answer further questions and both officers took hold of him, forcing him around to face them. Arnold Deane came out of his office to remonstrate with the officers, pointing out that neither he nor his son had witnessed the incident. Again, the police refused to listen. They continued to abuse Tony and now also his father, telling them to shut up. When Tony tried to turn away from the police officers, he was grabbed by them and thrown to the ground (this has subsequently been confirmed in court by a prosecution witness) and hit with a walkie-talkie battery pack.

As Tony lay on the ground, the police officers kicked him in the ribs and repeatedly punched him about the head and lower abdomen. Arnold Deane begged the officers to stop. At one point, Tony appeared to go completely limp and Mr Deane, fearing the worst, shouted at the officers that they were killing his son.

PC X responded to Arnold Deane's pleas, (and this is admitted by X in a statement to the Court) by punching Arnold Deane in the face. So severe was the blow that Arnold Deane crashed to the ground and was later found to have

suffered concussion, cuts and bruising and a split lip requiring stitches. Most seriously though, the blow triggered off a potentially fatal asthma attack. Arnold Deane passed out. Meanwhile, the police continued to punch and kick Tony who was by this time flat on the ground and in no position to resist. Police reinforcements now arrived on the scene and a number of other officers joined in the assault. Even when Tony was handcuffed, the assault continued. But the worst thing Tony had to bear was being powerless to help his father who lay unconscious against the wall, his face covered in blood and mucus. The police officers made mock of Arnold Deane's predicament before placing Tony on the floor of a police van where he was taken to the police station with the feet of several police officers on top of him.

Meanwhile, witnesses called an ambulance for Arnold Deane who was taken to the casualty ward of Newham General where he was given oxygen and treatment for facial injuries which required stitches. But after just a few hours, the police officers enforced his removal to West Ham police station.

At the police station, Arnold and Tony Deane were charged with 'assaulting the police'

### Further harassment as the campaign begins

The day after the assault Tony Deane, Arnold Deane and Mrs Deane came to NMP for help. The police attack on the Deanes, was of such a serious nature that we felt we should immediately inform the community and discuss the possibility of launching a campaign. So we set about organising a public meeting. In the meantime, Gareth Peirce - the defence solicitor in many famous trials such as the Tottenham 3 and Birmingham 6 - from Birnberg & Co was contacted, and she agreed to represent the Deanes.

However, the harassment of the Deanes was to continue after the original incident. On 6 November, two PCs entered the Deane's premises and insisted on questioning them about the assault. As the Deanes had already been charged, this was clearly unnecessary,

and amounted to, in the eyes of the Deanes, an attempt to intimidate them. Tony rang NMP. When the officers were informed that NMP workers were on their way, they immediately left, only to return again the next day. This time an NMP volunteer was present and again the officers were asked to leave. Their response to this was to tell Arnold Deane that if he ever had any trouble at his premises 'don't call West Ham police station'. Following this, NMP made an official complaint and wrote to West Ham police outlining the police officers' behaviour and warning the police against further harassment. This led the police community liaison officer, Chief Inspector Bill Ibbotsen, to visit the Deanes to reassure them that there would be no repeat of the harassment from his officers.

Local people were growing more and more incensed by the police's treatment of the Deanes. Subsequently, a public meeting was held in Barclay Hall, which was addressed by the Deanes, NMP, Mr Govindan (another victim of racist policing) and Mr Khan (father of two of the Newham 7). There were speeches from the floor by angry local people demanding action and messages of support were received from local community groups, and Caribbean and Asian associations. During the meeting, many people recounted their experiences at the hands of Newham police. The meeting concluded with the launch of the 'Defend the Deane Family Campaign' and agreed a picket and a further public meeting would be the focus for future action.

Public meeting at Barclay Hall



### Why a campaign?

The Deane case highlights a number of fundamental issues.

- **the increasing trend of police officers to criminalise Newham's black community**

Arnold and Tony Deane were not wanted for any offence, nor was there any suggestion that they were involved in any criminal activity. Yet PC Y claims Tony, without provocation, deliberately punched PC Y in the face. Why would a man with nothing to fear from the police, and under no suspicion for any offence, punch a PC in the face without provocation? The answer is that he would not and in this case did not punch the officer.

Everything that happened that day was the result of police provocation. The only reason that the Deanes have been charged with assaulting the police is because there was no other way that the officers could justify the injuries the Deanes received.

- **the use of charges that can only be heard in a magistrates court where the conviction rate for black people is higher**

The police charged the Deanes with the offence of 'assault on the police'. An imprisonable offence that can only be heard in a magistrates court, this is a lesser charge than actual bodily harm (a more appropriate offence, if the police's version of events were to be believed) that can be tried before a jury in a Crown Court. The police are well aware of the higher conviction rate in magistrates courts (particularly when a lay bench is sitting) and that it is far more difficult to challenge police evidence there. As far as the black community is concerned, magistrates courts are little more than police courts and one of the main thrusts in the Deane campaign has been to highlight its unaccountable nature.

- **how the police can bring patently false charges against an innocent black family**

Experience shows that a high profile campaign forces the police onto the defensive and thus helps to ensure a less biased trial. As local courts, magistrates courts are supposed to be more responsive to local concerns. A campaign, it was felt, would help focus local people's anger about the police - the magistrates court providing the venue where the local people could demand justice for the Deane family.

## Support pledges at the public meeting

The next step for the 'Defend The Deane Family Campaign' was its formal launch at an extremely successful public meeting on Sunday 24 November 1991, at West Ham town hall. Over 600 people attended the meeting which was addressed by Tony and Mr and Mrs Deane, the 'Free Martin Calvert Campaign' and the 'Free the Cardiff 3 Campaign' and NMP. The Rev Al Sharpton, a civil rights leader from the US, who rose to national prominence following the racist murder of Yusuf Hawkins in New York and has since campaigned against both police and racist violence in America, also spoke at the meeting.

The Deanes were the first to speak. They recounted the events of 4 November and asked for support for the campaign and demanded an end to police harassment and violence in Newham.

The Martin Calvert Campaign (see page 28), represented by Martin's partner, Pam Cain, who spoke movingly about Martin's experience at the hands of the police, pledged support for the Deanes. As did the final speaker, Malik Abdullahi from the 'Cardiff 3' campaign spoke about the plight of the three black men, sentenced to life imprisonment for a murder they did not commit. (Since the meeting contact with the Cardiff 3 campaign has been continuous, with Tony speaking at a Cardiff rally in support of the jailed men).

At the meeting, we announced our plans to hold a march in Newham in 1992 to demand justice for the Deanes and an end to police harassment in Newham. The audience were urged to attend a picket of Newham West Magistrates Court at 9.00am the following day, the first court appearance for the Deane family.

Public rally at West Ham Town Hall



## The campaign starts

The picket was attended by over 80 people, who then packed the court. At this, their first court appearance, the Deanes had simply to plead guilty or not guilty, bail conditions were fixed and a date set for the trial. In fact, the Crown Prosecution Service applied to have a number of conditions attached to bail, one of which was that the Deanes be prevented from going near their own shop on Green Street. Thankfully this ridiculous suggestion, which would have led to the Deane's business going bankrupt, was dismissed. The Deanes were given unconditional bail, reflecting the paucity of the evidence against them.

Following the public meeting and picket, letters of support were received from MPs, community groups and trade unions. Organisations such as Liberty and the West Indian Standing Conference also pledged their support and a great deal of practical assistance was received from Jeremy Corbyn MP.

The campaign also contacted Newham council to request speaking rights at a full council meeting - the council, it was felt, should pledge its support for the campaign.

Mainly thanks to the lobbying of Councillor Goodman, the Police Community Consultative Group passed a motion condemning the police's actions on the day. But contrary to every other description of events (including that of their own officers), police officers present at the Consultative Group meeting insinuated that Tony had been involved in the fight that PCs X and Y had been investigating and that Tony was responsible for other offences. But when pushed further, they refused to substantiate this slur, which attempted to discredit the Deanes. The Consultative Group passed a motion in their favour.

When the Deane campaign finally managed to address the full council meeting, the response from councillors was lukewarm. Tony Deane was given just ten minutes to address a council chamber that was half full (the public gallery was packed with Deane family supporters). At the meeting's conclusion, the councillors voted reluctantly in support of the campaign. The council's police unit, which had already raised its concerns with the police, offered their support to the Deanes.

From this point on, the campaign took on two different dimensions. On the one hand, preparations had to be made for the march, now scheduled for 28 March 1992. But alongside this, with the help of Ron Leighton MP, representations were made to the Attorney General and the local Crown Prosecution Service for the charges against the Deanes to be dropped.

## Building for the march

Although the great bulk of the mobilisation work for the march was carried out in Newham, representatives of the campaign also spoke at numerous meetings and rallies in London and throughout the country, including Cardiff, Swansea, Birmingham, Manchester, Blackpool, Edinburgh and Brighton. At this stage, Mr Deane, whose health was suffering due to the stress caused by the police violence and the charges against him, was advised by his doctor to take a holiday abroad to recuperate, and acting on this advice, he decided to go home to St Vincent. From here on, Tony Deane had more responsibilities, touring the country, speaking about his case and keeping the family business together.

On Mr Deane's departure, the campaign once again contacted the authorities and asked them to drop the charges against the Deanes, arguing that it could not possibly be in the public interest to prosecute Mr Deane, who at this time was seriously ill in St. Vincent.

But a week before the trial was due to commence, and despite intense lobbying, the authorities refused this simple request, forcing Mr Deane to return, despite his health.

At the time of writing, the trial of the Deane family is in progress, and for reasons of sub judice we cannot make further detailed comments. But after just one day of the trial, it became apparent, that the police's version of events was totally inconsistent and contradictory. Not only did the evidence of the police officers differ from one to the other in key areas but, more significantly, these officers' testimony differed wildly from that given by both the prosecution's main civilian 'witnesses'.

Since the launch of the 'Defend the Deane Family Campaign' some months ago, the campaign has achieved some important successes. Solidarity and support has come from all over the country. 6,000 people have signed a petition in support of the Deane family and 4000 people demonstrated their support, on 28 March - the biggest march in Newham since 1985 (see page 34). Any campaign, if it is to be successful, entails constant hard work and sacrifice. And in this, no-one has worked more tirelessly than Tony Deane, who has been as an inspiration for the campaign. Countless other individuals have given their time and commitment - without them, the campaign would never have been as effective as it has been.

## March For Justice

The March For Justice was originally called by the Defend the Deane Family Campaign to protest at the assault and subsequent criminalisation of the Deanes. Following the murder of Sahitharan, the Memorial Committee and the Deane Family Campaign met and decided to hold a joint march against police harassment, racist violence, and finally, to put the major political parties on notice that the black community would not tolerate politicians playing the race card in the forthcoming General Election. Indeed Sahitharan's death occurred in the midst of the racist debate surrounding the introduction of the Asylum Bill during which numerous newspapers were openly campaigning against refugees.

### A Community Mobilises

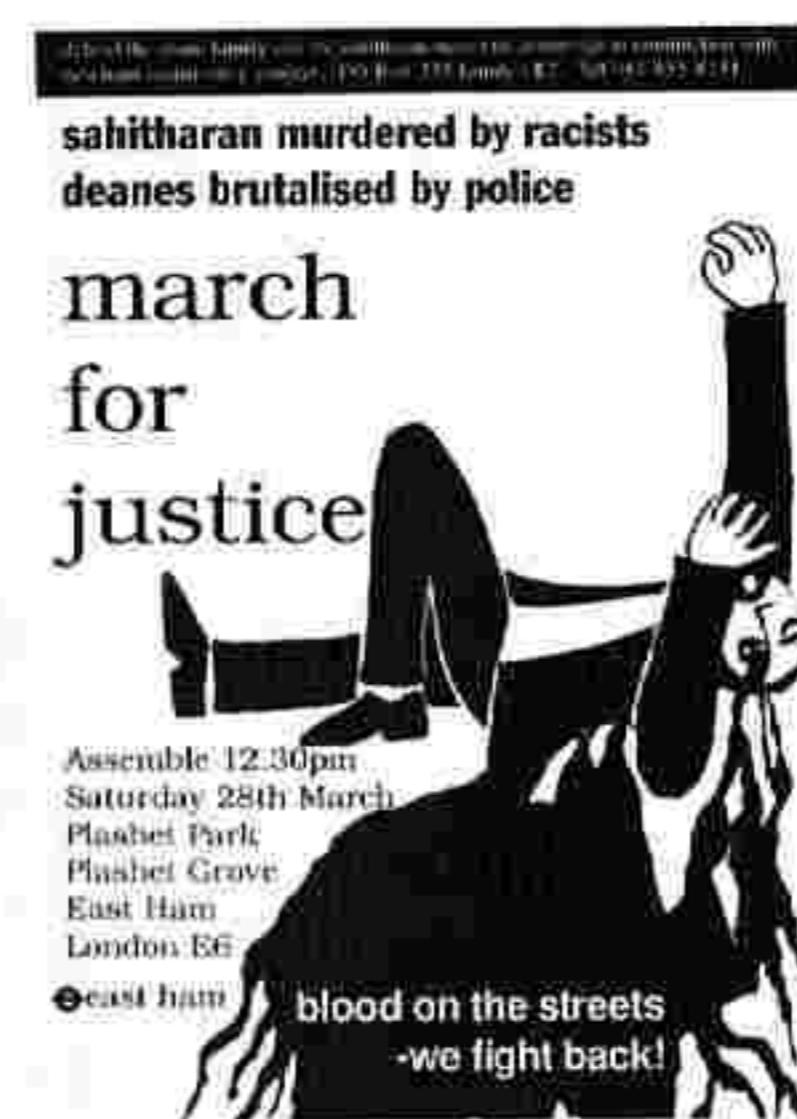
When the two committees first met in February 1992, a mobilisation strategy centred on Newham was drawn up, with solidarity being requested from our supporters elsewhere in the country. Both campaigns toured the country speaking at numerous public meetings, demonstrations and student rallies.

In Newham, during the build up to the march, all the main religious and community centres were leafleted and addressed by representatives of the campaigns (at mosques, such as those on Plashet Grove and Upton Lane, local youths took leaflets off volunteers and insisted on handing them out themselves!). For three weeks there was a permanent stall based in Newham Community College, staffed by students and volunteers. Although new to any form of campaigning, numerous volunteers approached the committees offering their services. Support for the demonstration was gathering such momentum that posters and graffiti expressing support for the Deanes and remembering Sahitharan, were appearing all over the borough. Street leafleting sessions organised by the campaigns were greeted with enthusiasm. A van driving round Newham a few days before, complete with a loudhailer to advertise the march, was also supported and greeted frequently with raised fist salutes.

Due to a shortage of funds, both committees called a 'rave' to raise money and to publicise the event. The benefit was scheduled for eight days before the demonstration, on the 20 March. It was initially booked into a large club in Newham, whose owner is a supporter of the campaigns. But allegedly due to 'official pressure', we were denied the venue and at the last minute forced to contact another club. Unbelievably, this club closed down just two days before the benefit forcing us to hold the function in a bar in the swimming pool complex at the Atherton Suite. Yet, even here we were harassed by the police who at approximately 11pm arrived to 'investigate' the benefit. The 'rave', when it was allowed to go ahead, was a massive success achieving its objectives.

Other methods of publicity included placing adverts in the local papers, the cost of which the Anti-Racist Alliance, a new national organisation had agreed to meet. In this area, however we were obstructed by the *Newham Recorder* who at first accepted our wording for the advert and then contacted us saying they would not carry an advert which highlighted the Deane case for fear of breaching 'sub-judice' laws. When pushed, the *Newham Recorder* finally admitted that despite the fact that the advert would bring them hundreds of pounds in rev-

enue, they were not prepared to even mention the Deanes due to an editorial policy which had nothing to do with sub-judice laws, fuelling rumours that the police have a great sway over Tom Duncan, the editor of the *Newham Recorder*. When compared to the *Yellow Advertiser* (another local paper) who willingly carried the advert for the march at a much reduced rate, the duplicity of the *Newham Recorder* is further highlighted.



### Newham unites

On 28 March 1992, 4,000 people marched through Newham, the largest anti-racist demonstration in east London for seven years. This was the first major march through Newham since 1985 and again, as in the Newham 7/Justice for the Pryce Family campaign, all elements of Newham's black community mobilised in support. Demonstrating against the continuing tide of racist violence, both from the police and thugs in the streets, struck a chord with young and old alike, resulting in at least 70% of the march being local people.

At 1pm, the pre-demonstration rally started with speakers from the Cardiff 3, the Winston Silcott Defence Campaign, West Midlands Anti-Deportation Campaign and the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism. Numerous other messages of support were also read out from the platform. The final speaker was a Tamil representative from the Sahitharan Memorial Committee who spoke movingly about Sahitharan and the campaign to highlight his murder. Before the march set off at 1.30pm, the Wolfe Tone Republican Flute Band from Glasgow played for those assembled.

As the demonstration left Plashet Park, the Deane family and the Sahitharan family took the lead, walking

side by side to chants of 'under attack, we fight back'. The march wound its way down Shrewsbury Road, Plashet Grove, Katherine Road and Barking Road onto High Street North. The ranks of the demonstration grew with people abandoning their Saturday shopping to join the march. The van leading the march announced the reasons for the demonstration to the general public, to the background of chants such as 'self-defence is no offence' and 'no justice, no peace'.

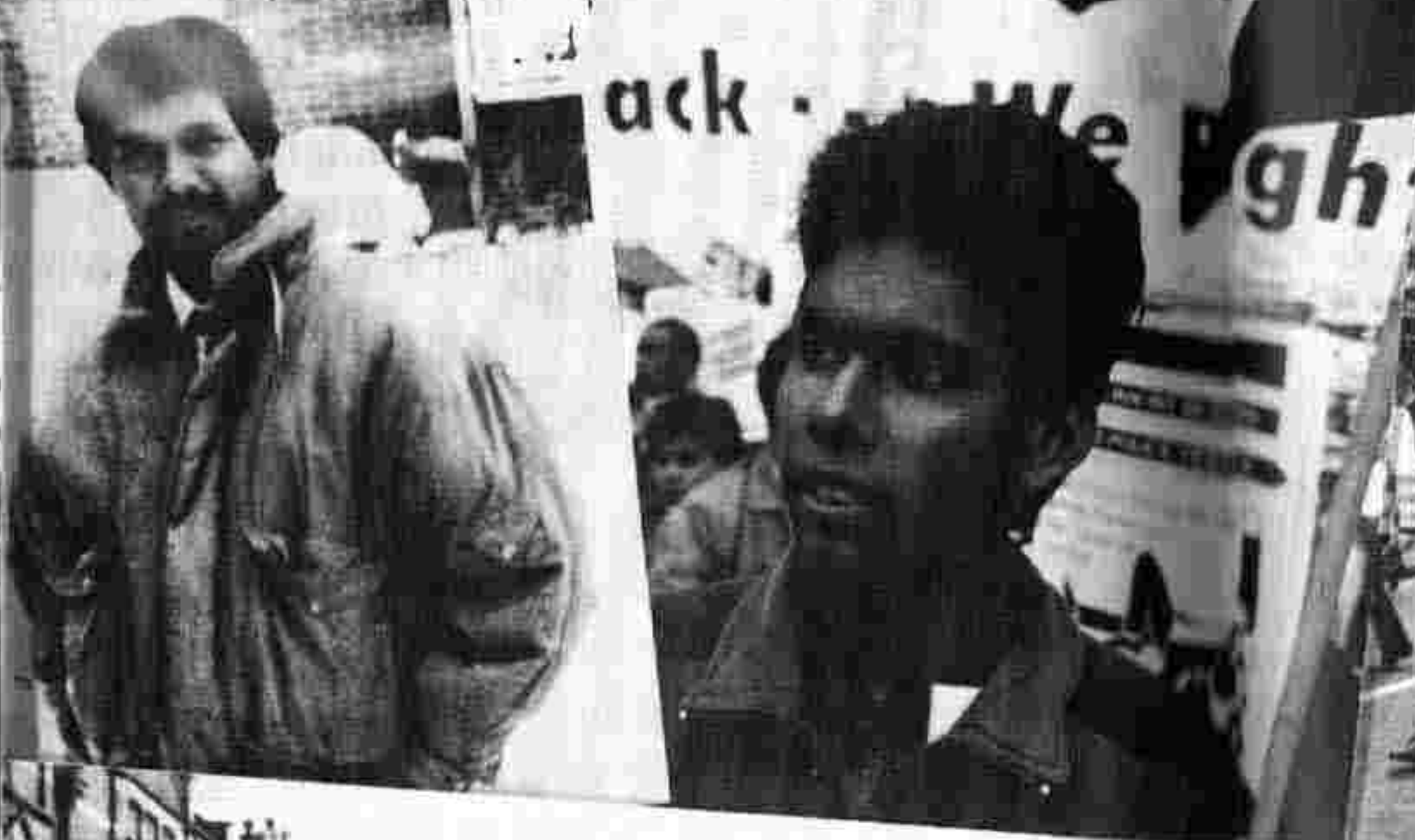
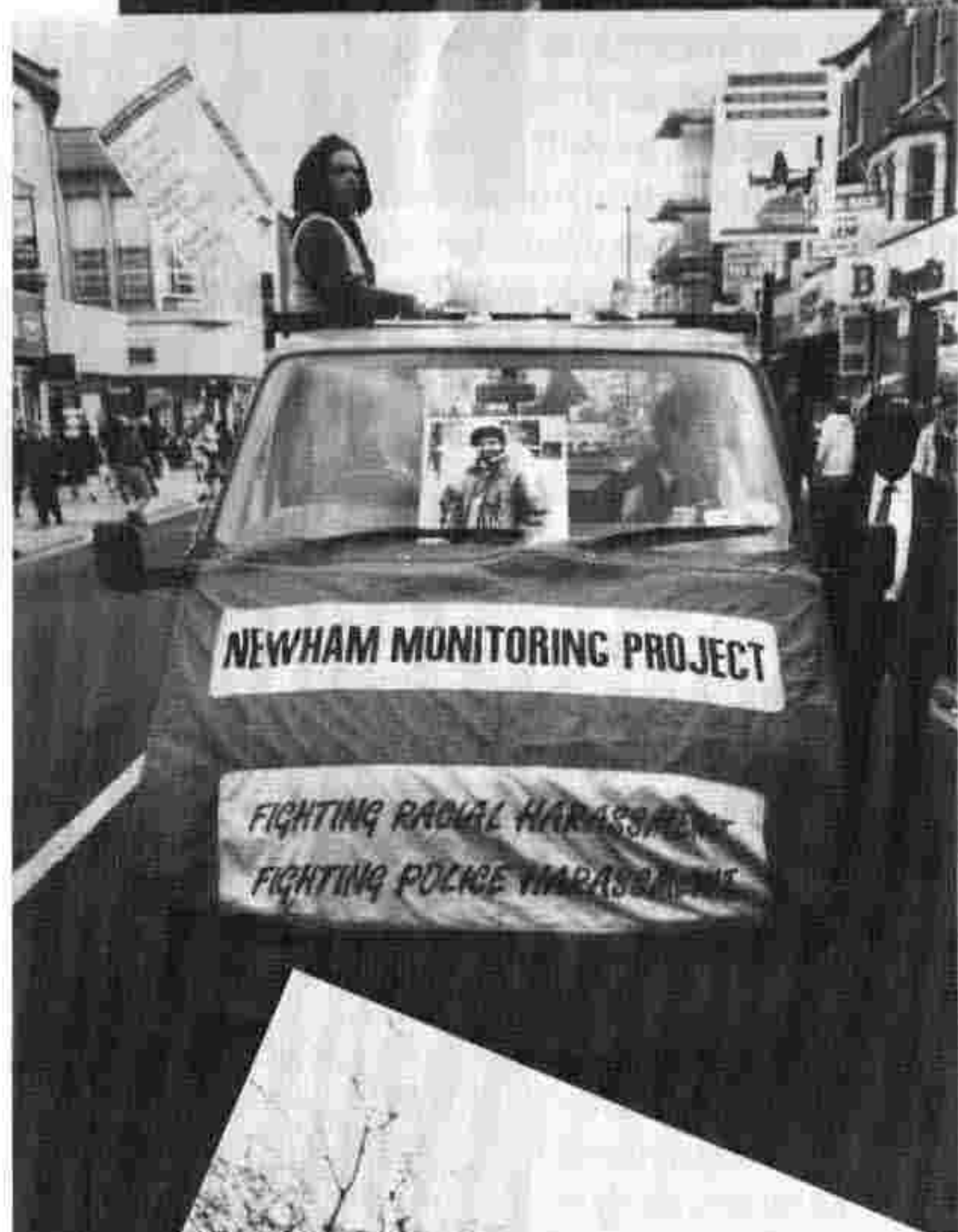
The demonstration passed the spot near East Ham tube station where Akhtar Ali Baig was murdered by racists in 1980 before turning into Warwick Road to pay our respects at the place where, twelve years later, Sahitharan had been murdered. At the spot of the murder, where 'We remember Sahitharan - murdered by racists' had been painted on the pavement, Tony Deane (Deane Family Campaign) and Jay (Sahitharan's brother-in-law) laid wreaths in memory of Sahitharan. It took approximately 25 minutes to pass this memorial. The march wound its way down Warwick Road in complete silence. Having reached Romford Road, the demonstrators marched passed Forest Gate police station and on to the new 'super' police station at the junction of Romford Road and Green Street. At this stage, despite police fears, the demonstrators, some angry though disciplined, made their protest heard in a very loud and vocal manner.

When the march went through a packed Green Street (the centre of Newham's black community), the demonstrators were met with applause and cheers of encouragement with many more people joining. Shopkeepers who had previously displayed posters, came onto the street in support. Along Green Street, the march passed the Deane family's shop where Tony and Arnold Deane were attacked by the police. One shop even had a banner hung outside its window. The protest continued down Green Street, turning onto Plashet Grove, passing the scene of an infamous battle between local black youths and racists which resulted in the Newham 7 campaign. The demonstration, then returned to Plashet Park where there was a final rally, addressed by NMP and Saqib Deshmukh who spoke about the recent racist murders in Manchester. Finally, Tony Deane addressed

the crowd, thanking them for their support and warning the police that all future attacks on the black community would be met with similar anger and protest.

We would like to thank the many friends and volunteers who dedicated many long hours and a great deal of energy to build the demonstration. We would also like to thank the black community for the tremendous show of solidarity with and support for the Deane and Sahitharan families.





# The murder of Sahitharan

**Panchadcharam Sahitharan, a Tamil refugee from Sri Lanka died after being attacked by a gang of white youths in Manor Park, Newham on Sunday 29 December 1991.**

Since 1983, thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils have been forced into exile following Sinhalese government-inspired pogroms. These refugees were later joined by thousands more young Tamils fleeing this time the indiscriminate persecution of the Sri Lankan government and the Indian Peace Keeping Force. Young Tamils were being rounded up on suspicion of being members of the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) or other militant Tamil groups engaged in a liberation struggle for an independent Tamil state.

Sahitharan like thousands of innocent civilians, was caught up in this civil war and fearing political persecution fled his home-town of Jaffna in the North of Sri Lanka. Suffering from a viral infection contracted when forced into the jungles of Sri Lanka in 1987, he initially managed to escape to Madras, India. When he finally arrived at Heathrow Airport on 16 February 1990, he was granted 'exceptional leave to remain' whilst his asylum application was processed. Due to restrictive asylum regulations Sahitharan, like all refugees, was unable to work or take up full time study. He was therefore forced to live with his only immediate relatives in this country, his sister, and her family in East Ham, Newham.

In time the work restrictions were relaxed and Sahitharan, like so many other refugees, took up employment in the low paid service sector, at a branch of John Menzies at Euston Station. It was during this period that he was able to rebuild his life to a certain degree and he moved to rented property in Sixth Avenue, Manor Park. His employment came to an end in August 1991 and amongst options he was considering for the future was the possibility of taking up studying.

But on Sunday 29 December 1991, any such dreams were cruelly shattered. At approximately 4.30pm Sahitharan was making his way home from East Ham tube station. As he came onto Warwick Road, where he was about to cross a railway bridge to Church Road, he was confronted by a gang of racist youths armed with

baseball bats and sticks. The gang attacked and savagely beat Sahitharan, leaving him with serious head injuries. This attack on Sahitharan was not an isolated incident, indeed, the very same gang of white youths were responsible for a number of attacks that day. Sahitharan, bleeding heavily from his injuries managed to escape and fled to his sister's home in nearby East Ham. In a state of shock he told his sister how he had been attacked by a group of white men. In tears he said, 'Look what has happened. I never wanted to leave Sri Lanka. Now look what has happened. I am going to die here'.

Sahitharan's sister, immediately called an ambulance, and Sahitharan was given first aid and rushed to Newham General Hospital. Approximately five hours later he was taken to London Hospital, Whitechapel for a brain scan. In the early hours of Monday morning, doctors took a decision to operate for a blood clot. Following this operation, Sahitharan was put on a life-support machine. Sahitharan was never to regain consciousness and died four days later on Friday, 3 January 1992 at 11.25 pm.

Racist violence had claimed its first victim of 1992.

fact that black people living in Manor Park are vulnerable to attack.

It was the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig, and the subsequent mass mobilisations in 1980 that led to the formation of Newham Monitoring Project. Now twelve years on, the reputation of the Project is such that NMP was immediately contacted by members of the local Tamil community. In addition many concerned people, who had heard that a 'Paki-bashing' gang was operating in Manor Park, contacted us. Our first response was to visit Sahitharan's family, offer support and express our condolences at this savage murder of one of our brothers. The grief-stricken family was concerned at that stage to sort out the immediate problems facing the family. And respecting their wishes we sought to ensure that the police and the other authorities were responding effectively and treating the murder as racist.

## The Memorial Committee

Following initial meetings with the family and with local Tamil organisations it became clear that a committee needed to be formed to co-ordinate various aspects of support-work that were becoming increasingly necessary. A Committee was constituted comprising Sahitharan's family, local Tamil organisations and other black community organisations. At the first meeting Sahitharan's brother-in-law was elected Chair of the Committee and the following brief for the Committee established:

- To secure the release of the body for the funeral (According to religious custom, Sahitharan's body needed to be cremated within three days of the death. But both the po-

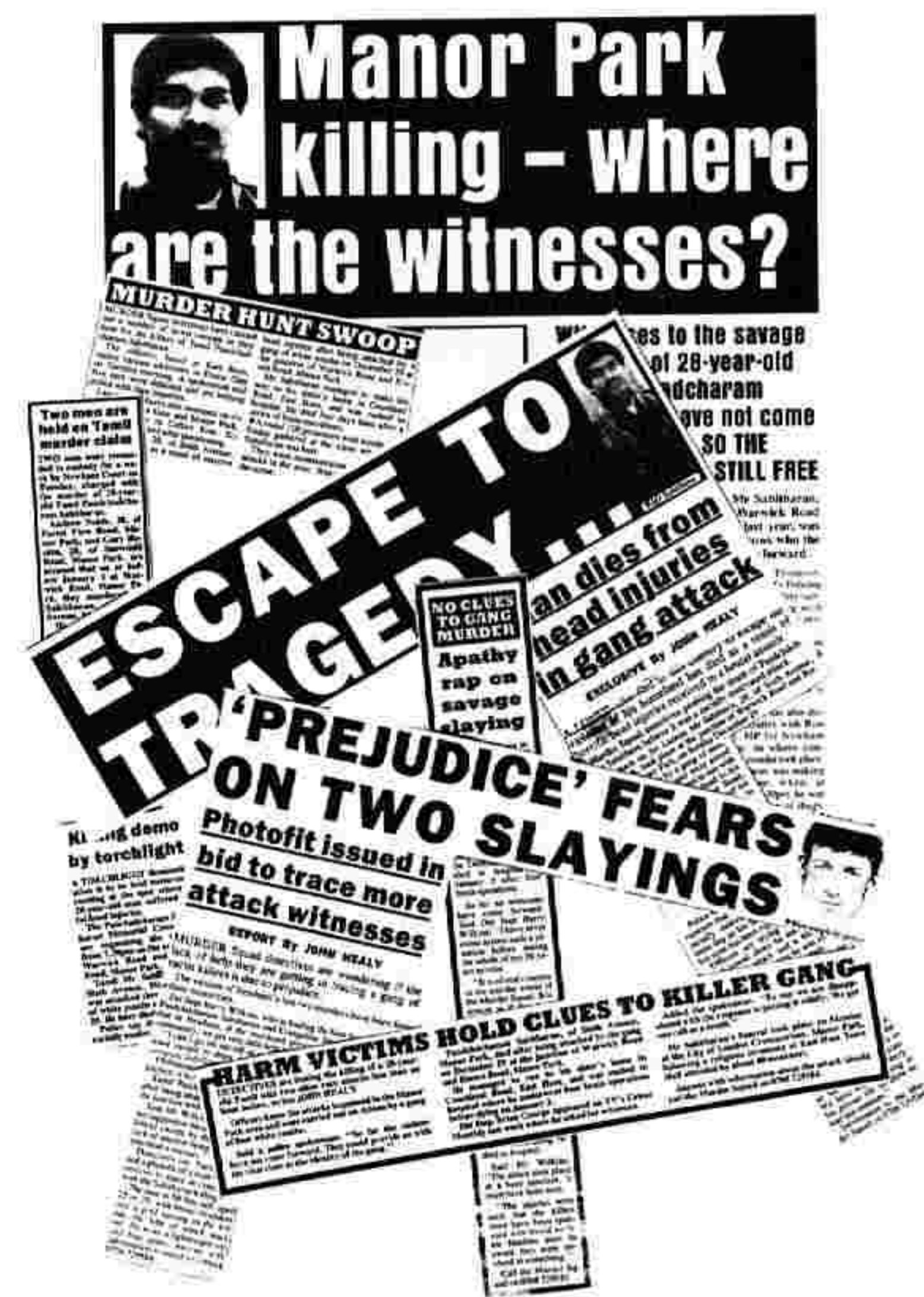
## Background to Racial Violence in Manor Park

Manor Park itself has been the scene of many of Newham's most brutal and vicious racist attacks. In the 1960s and '70s the area was a no-go zone for Newham's black population but in recent years the black communities, in particular refugees, have settled there in increasing numbers.

In 1980, 29-year-old Akhtar Ali Baig was murdered by four racists (for a £5 bet over 'who could kill the first Paki'), just a short distance from where Sahitharan's life was taken. Manor Park was also the scene of two of NMP's first major campaigns, the 'First Avenue 11' and the 'Newham 8' (see NMP Annual Report, 1983). More recently, the case of the Altaf/Khan family (see NMP Annual Report 1989 & 1990) has highlighted the

## Diary of Events

29/12/91	4.30pm	Sahitharan attacked and savagely beaten by an armed gang
29/12/91	5.00pm	Sahitharan staggers to sister's home in East Ham with severe head injuries
29/12/91	5.15pm	Ambulance arrives, rushed to Newham General Hospital in Plaistow
29/12/91	8.00pm	Police arrive at sister's house to make initial inquiries
29/12/91	10.00pm	Sahitharan transferred to London Hospital, Whitechapel for brain scan
30/12/91	2.00am	Doctors operate for blood clot
30/12/91	6.00am	Sahitharan put on life support machine. Loses consciousness
30/12/91	9.00am	Plaistow CID take statement from sister, and brother-in-law. Return later that day for further questioning
31/12/91		CID questions family on Sahitharan's friends, habits, etc
2/1/92		Sahitharan's sister, gives statement at Plaistow police station
3/1/92		Hospital informs family that Sahitharan's condition critical - likely that operation was unsuccessful
3/1/92	11.25pm	Sahitharan dies as a result of his injuries
17/1/92		Preliminary inquest opens
27/1/92		Funeral service held at East Ham town hall. Sahitharan's body cremated at City of London crematorium, Manor Park
21/2/92		Hundreds attend torchlight march and memorial service at murder spot
6/3/92		Murder suspects, Gary Hoskin and Andrew Noble given bail on £10,000 surety at Central Criminal Court
10/3/92		Murder suspects make first appearance at Newham East Magistrates Court. Date for Old Style Committal set
28/3/92		Four thousand people march through Newham in support of March for Justice organised by the Memorial Committee and the Deane Campaign
18/5/92		Local black community packs gallery for Committal hearing of murder suspects at Newham East Magistrates. Andrew Noble acquitted of murder. Case against Gary Hoskin adjourned



# CALENDAR OF EVENTS 1991

## January

- 3 67 Iraqis to be deported on grounds of 'national security'.
- 15 Thousands rally in Trafalgar Square to oppose likely outbreak of war in the Gulf.
- 16 Fighting begins in the Gulf War.
- 16 Arson attack on mosque in Batley, West Yorkshire. Many more such attacks across Britain follow in weeks ahead as racist violence rises dramatically.
- 18 63 more Iraqis and 7 Palestinians to be deported on grounds of 'national security'.
- 18 Home Secretary prohibits granting of visas to Iraqis.
- 19 Thousands march in protests world-wide against the Gulf War.
- 26 Bloody Sunday commemoration march in London.

## February

- 2 Arab detainees in Pentonville prison go on hunger strike.
- 5 Black People Against War in the Gulf launched at public meeting in Camden, London.
- 6 PC William Halliday awarded £1,000 by industrial tribunal for racial harassment.
- 13 Bishops write to Home Office minister John Patten urging amendment in Criminal Justice Bill to outlaw racial discrimination.
- 16 Pan Am bans Arabs from its flights on grounds of security.
- 19 Bradford foundry worker Mohammed Riaz awarded £2,400 by industrial tribunal for racial harassment and unfair dismissal.
- 20 11 arrested as police smash Black People Against War in the Gulf picket of Home Office.
- 21 Newham shopkeeper Padmanabhan Govindan found not guilty of assaulting police at Stratford Magistrates Court.
- 22 Rolan Adams, a 15-year-old Afro-Caribbean youth, is stabbed to death by racists in Thamesmead, London.

## March

- 1 Iraqis detained as POWs announce plans to sue Home Office.
- 3 Iranian who lost testicle in police attack awarded £25,000 without admission of liability from police.
- 8 Home Secretary frees all remaining Gulf War detainees.
- 14 Birmingham 6 freed by Court of Appeal after over 17 years in prison. Home Secretary announces Royal Commission into Criminal Justice.
- 17 East London AFA picket of BNP paper sale in Brick Lane, Tower Hamlets.
- 18 Picket of Tottenham police station on 4th anniversary of Tottenham 3 convictions.
- 25 British Rail admit bias against Asian workers in promotion tests.
- 25 Anthony Wellington wins appeal against robbery conviction in West Midlands serious crime squad aftermath.
- 25 Chris Smith MP calls for inquiry into suicide of mentally ill Delroy McKnight in Wandsworth prison in January.
- 28 Paul Dunne killed when defending black friend in racist attack in Hoxton, London.

## April

- 1 African-Caribbean Mervin Martin, acquitted of drugs charges, to sue police and Hackney council after spending 9 months in prison and losing his council home.
- 5 Coroner demands immediate review of 'appalling' prison procedures after 'lack of care' verdict at inquest into suicide of Edwin Robinson, who was mentally ill, in Brixton prison.
- 9 Notting Hill police officer charged following allegations of planting drugs, including on Rupert Taylor who was awarded £100,000 damages.
- 12 Cheltenham Tory to be charged with incitement to racial hatred after

- remarks made about black candidate John Taylor.
- 19 Football (Offences) Bill proposes to ban racial chants at football matches.
  - 23 Metropolitan police pays V Janardanan £40,000 compensation after conviction for attempted shoplifting quashed by Court of Appeal.
  - 24 Police Complaints Authority says complaints against police have reached an all-time high.
  - 27 2,000 people march to BNP's Bexley headquarters to protest the murder of Rolan Adams.
  - 29 Vandana Patel killed by husband in Stoke Newington police station's domestic violence unit.

## May

- 1 BNP throw smoke-bomb into Friends House in London before meeting to be addressed by Reverend Al Sharpton.
- 2 Zairean asylum-seeker returned to Zaire despite last minute stay by court.
- 8 4 police officers accused of attacking Emmanuel Ziregbe committed for trial.
- 9 Orville Blair murdered on Thamesmead estate.
- 12 Metropolitan police announce permanently armed police patrols from 1 July.
- 13 Victim Support report says police failing to deal with racial harassment.
- 15 Home Office agrees to clause banning racial discrimination in the criminal justice system.
- 18 Asian and white youths clash in Bradford after Muslim graves are desecrated.
- 19 Over 600 attend NMP's book launch and cultural evening at the Theatre Royal, Stratford.
- 23 Government announces plans for further restrictions on asylum-seekers, including limiting rights of appeal.
- 25 Anti-fascists attend League of St George meeting in Kensington, London.
- 27 3 North Africans killed in clashes with the police in Mantes-la-Jolie, France. Disturbances break out in other areas.

## June

- 4 Bill Morris becomes 1st black leader of a British trade union (TGWU).
- 6 Home Office says 6,459 racially motivated attacks reported to the police in England and Wales in 1990.
- 7 Amnesty International criticises Britain's immigration procedures for asylum-seekers.
- 12 Kurdish asylum-seeker deported without case even being considered by Home Office.
- 14 European ministers agree need for EC-wide asylum policies and procedures.
- 20 Liberty launches campaign highlighting miscarriages of justice.
- 20 Cases of 2 of Cardiff 3 referred to Court of Appeal.
- 26 5,371 overseas visitors denied entry to UK and removed between January and April this year.
- 26 British Rail found guilty of discrimination against 3 Asian cleaners over promotion.
- 28 John Major calls for 'tight perimeter fence' around the EC to stop 'economic migrants'.

## July

- 1 African-Caribbean Leslie Burnett gets £40,000 damages from Metropolitan police for wrongful arrest, false imprisonment and assault.
- 2 Home Secretary announces racist Asylum Bill to keep out asylum-seekers and end legal aid for immigration advice.
- 3 Glasgow court gives Christopher Tees a 7-year sentence for racist attack on Niaz Ahmed, who is now paralysed.
- 4 Court of Appeal cuts Brian Moore's sentence and releases him for defending himself in a racist attack in Norwich.
- 12 10 Nottinghamshire policemen disciplined for racist treatment of PC Singh.
- 12 Mohammed Riaz gets £35,000 from Lancashire police for wrongful arrest and being held in custody for 3 months in 1986.
- 14 Forensic evidence show that key passages in Winston Silcott's 'confession' were tampered with.

- 23 Birmingham city council condemned for using covert surveillance on people suspected of racial harassment.
- 26 Industrial tribunal finds employer not guilty of racial discrimination for refusing to hire Muslims because he considered them 'extremists'.
- 30 Charges dismissed against 3 black men from Chapelton, Leeds after hidden camera proved police lied in court.

## August

- 12 Protests erupt in Telford after police shoot dead Ian Gordon, a 24-year-old African-Caribbean.
- 15 Kulwinder Kaur ends gurdwara sanctuary when Home Office says it will reconsider her case.
- 18 2 Senegalese workers shot dead in attack by group of Italians in Rimini.
- 19 2 Asian placement students from Birmingham leave Denmark after 3 days because of threats and racist abuse.
- 24 Anti-racist march through Bermondsey, London mobbed by BNP, Millwall supporters and local racists.
- 27 15-year-old schoolboy wins reprieve against deportation to Gambia after immigration officials insist he is 20.
- 28 Orville Blackwood dies in Broadmoor top security hospital following an injection.
- 31 Rioting on Cardiff's Ely estate as Asian-owned grocery store attacked.

## September

- 2 Disturbances in Oxford, Cardiff and Handsworth.
- 2 Rochdale council obtains injunction against 2 tenants to stop racial harassment of their neighbours or face jail.
- 6 2 men charged with attempted murder after petrol-bombing Asian home in Edinburgh.
- 9 Rita Sorhaindo wins £4,583 damages from West Yorkshire police for trespass, false imprisonment and assault.
- 10 Rioting in Newcastle-upon-Tyne.
- 11 Vic Williams who refused to fight in the Gulf War gets 14 months for desertion.
- 12 South London cab firm which refused to employ black people 'unless they looked like Trevor McDonald' ordered to pay £6,450 damages to recruitment manager who quit over the policy.
- 17 South Bedfordshire health authority withdraws maternity booklet which says that people from Central Africa and the Caribbean are an AIDS risk following protests.
- 17 'Former' BNP activist Arthur New resigns as headteacher of Gatehouse private school in Bethnal Green, London following protests.
- 17 Beginning of 8-day pogrom by Neo-Nazi skinheads against immigrant hostel in Hoyerswada, Germany. Further attacks on immigrants and refugees across Germany.
- 18 Naseem Ali miscarries after being hit by a brick hurled by racists through her bedroom window in Whitworth, Lancashire.
- 19 Chanaian refugee burned to death in neo-Nazi firebomb attack in Saarlouis, Germany.
- 22 CRE want new laws making racial harassment a crime.
- 26 Cases of Mark Braithwaite and Winston Silcott referred back to the Court of Appeal. Detective Chief Superintendent Melvin, who led investigation into PC Blakelock's murder, suspended.

## October

- 3 Sultan Mohammed, charged with police assault following BNP attack on meeting in May 1991, acquitted at Clerkenwell Magistrates Court.
- 8 Zairean asylum-seeker dies in Pentonville prison while being restrained.
- 9 European Commission urges all EC members to join forces to curb 'influx' of 'illegal' immigrants and 'bogus' asylum-seekers.
- 9 Home Secretary tells Tory Party conference that Asylum Bill is top priority.
- 10 German politicians agree to hold all asylum-seekers in detention camps.
- 16 Lady Birdwood, convicted of distributing anti-Semitic literature, given conditional discharge.
- 18 High Court decides parental choice outweighs race relations laws by upholding right of Cleveland family to move daughter from a school

- with many Asian children.
- 30 European Court of Human Rights rules that British government did not breach convention by sending home Tamil asylum-seekers to conditions of political persecution in 1988.
  - 31 Malcolm Woods, who was racially abused by Merseyside police, awarded £4,000 damages for malicious prosecution.

## November

- 1 UN High Commissioner for Refugees describes the Asylum Bill as 'tendentious and biased against the applicant'.
- 4 Tony and Arnold Deane attacked by the police in Forest Gate, Newham and charged with police assault.
- 4 CRE considers legal challenge to government's plans to remove legal aid from asylum-seekers.
- 6 Lewisham and Southwark health authority pay £5,000 compensation for racial harassment of Asian laundry manager.
- 7 Home Secretary plans for 300 extra detention centres for asylum-seekers.
- 8 Tories accused of racism against Labour's candidate Ashok Kumar in Langbaugh by-election campaign.
- 10 Anti-Fascist Action demonstration in Tower Hamlets, London.
- 11 NMP/CARF 'Burn the Race Card' picket of German embassy on Kristallnacht anniversary.
- 11 Blacks seen as 'intrinsically madder' than whites by mental health system, says psychiatrist.
- 14 Metropolitan police pays black PC £20,000 for racial abuse from fellow Territorial Support Group members.
- 15 Defend the Deane Family Campaign launched at public meeting in Barclay Hall, Forest Gate.
- 15 Department of Health refuses local authorities financial support for nearly 250 unaccompanied Eritrean children seeking asylum.
- 24 Over 600 attend NMP's 'British Justice - No Justice' meeting at West Ham town hall at which Reverend Al Sharpton backs the Deanes.
- 25 Court of Appeal clears Winston Silcott of the murder of PC Blakelock.
- 27 Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghup unconditionally bailed by Court of Appeal.
- 27 Amnesty International condemns Europe's curbs on refugees.
- 28 35 held after more than 200 police and immigration officers raid Surrey factory.
- 28 West Ham United to withdraw season tickets from supporters found guilty of racist behaviour at home matches.
- 29 Court of Appeal finds Home Secretary Kenneth Baker guilty of contempt of court over deportation of Zairean refugee in May 1990.
- 29 Inquest rules than Oliver Pryce was unlawfully killed in a Cleveland police van in July 1990.

## December

- 5 Court of Appeal apologises to Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghup and quashes their convictions for murder of PC Blakelock.
- 6 2,000 demonstrate outside London hotel where French fascist Le Pen addresses Western Goals meeting.
- 9 Lord Gifford calls for cases of 23 convicted of affray after 1985 Broadwater Farm uprising to be reopened.
- 9 National Association of Probation Officers say that up to 700 prisoners 'may be innocent'.
- 13 Detective Chief Superintendent Melvin, who conducted the Blakelock investigation, to be prosecuted for perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.
- 14 Asylum Bill breaches international law, says UN High Commissioner for Refugees.
- 16 Prison Reform Trust publishes government figures showing not only that proportionately more blacks than whites are given prison sentences but also that the sentences are longer.
- 20 Crown Prosecution Service says police who shot dead Ian Gordon in August 1991 will not be charged.
- 23 Immigration minister accused of rushing to deport Sudanese asylum-seeker to Germany, which he had left after neo-Nazi persecution.
- 29 Tamil refugee Panchadcharam Sahitharan attacked by racist thugs in Manor Park, Newham. He died 4 days later.

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TRIBUTE TO SAHITHARAN PANCHACHARAM

Birth: 31st May 1964

Death: 3rd January 1992

Sahi's tragic and cruel death at the prime of his youth came as a rude shock to us. He came to United Kingdom as he couldn't stand the stress and strain of life in Sri Lanka in his poor state of health. Undoubtedly the medical facilities here improved his condition of health. He worked with us at John Menzies for one and a half years. He was very duty conscious and his punctuality at his work place is highly commendable. He was very amiable that he made friends but had no enemies. We have never seen him in temper during our association with him. His sterling qualities endeared him to one and all. He had a subtle sense of humour and his presence in the premises, though for a short period, is a very memorable one.

We mourn his death with deep sorrow and pain in our hearts.

Our heartfelt sympathies to his sorrowing parents, brothers and sisters.

May His Soul Rest in Peace.

'Friends' in U.K.

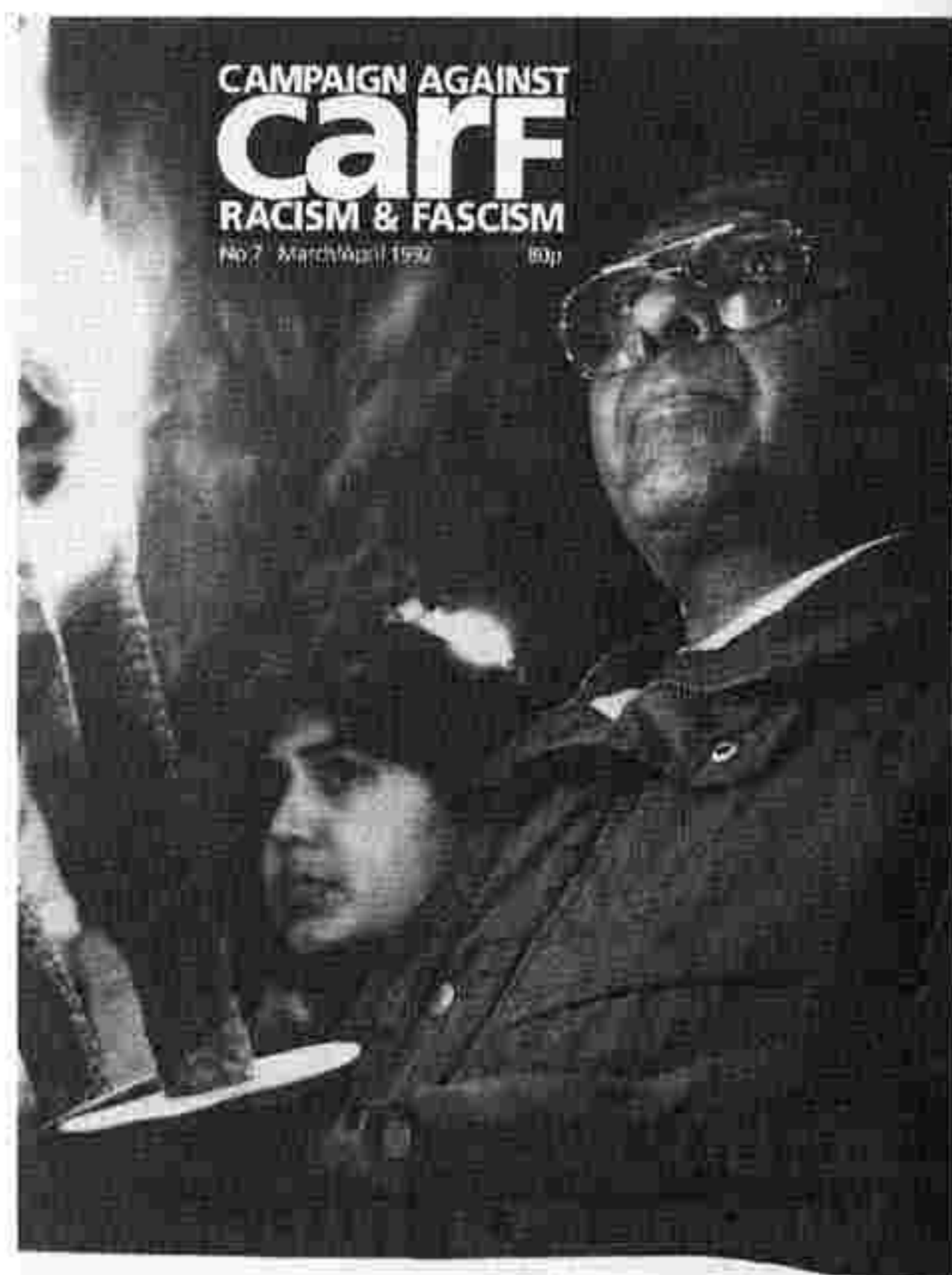
27th January 1992

lice and the coroner's office refused to release the body whilst the murder investigation was still in progress.)

- To establish legal representation for the family. This was required to coordinate contact with the police and the coroner's office as well as with a claim to the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board and any other arising legal matters. The Committee appointed Raju Butt of Birnberg & Co., a specialist firm in the area of racism and policing.
- To obtain visas for Sahitharan's family living in Sri Lanka and Germany, so as to enable them to attend the funeral.
- To coordinate the raising of funds and other support for the family through this period.
- To raise the issue of the racist murder both locally and nationally. To highlight the way in which the Asylum Bill, and the increasing use of the 'race card' in the run up to the General Election, was fuelling racism.
- To coordinate community protests around the murder.
- To launch an independent community appeal for witnesses in an attempt to ensure identification and prosecution of the attackers.

### The Funeral

Representations to both the police and the coroner's office, led to Sahitharan's body being released at the earliest possible moment. Over a hundred people attended the funeral service which was held at very short notice at East Ham town hall on Monday 27 January 1992, the body only having been released the previous Friday. A moving tribute was held consisting of a religious service conducted by a Tamil priest followed by speeches from leaders of the Tamil community, Newham Monitoring Project and a statement was read out on behalf of Sahitharan's friends. All the speakers concentrated on the grief felt by all sections of the community at this senseless and savage murder and our determination that the murderers would be apprehended and that no such tragedy should be allowed to happen again. Following the service the body was taken to the City of London crematorium in Manor Park.



### A Different Police Response

The outrage of the local black community over this racist murder ensured that the police took a different response than we have seen in the past.

There were momentary fears though that the police would overlook the obvious. For in the immediate aftermath of Sahitharan's murder, the police seemed intent on searching for a domestic interpretation, interviewing Sahitharan's sister and brother-in-law and questioning close friends. However, the evidence was such that the police were soon to attribute a racist motive to the murder.

This reaction on the part of the police differs completely from that which followed the murder of Akhtar Ali Baig in 1980 which the police described as a 'mugging gone wrong', or that which greeted the murder of Eustace Pryce in Plaistow in 1984, downplayed by the police as a territorial dispute between black and white 'yobbos'. The only conclusion we can draw from this is that Newham police have learnt over the years that the community will not allow racist murders to be deracialised or conveniently forgotten. Indeed, when

we compare the reaction of Newham police to that of their counterparts in Greater Manchester who described the murders of Mohammed Sarwar and Sidik Dada in January 1992 as 'non-racial', we see just how strong has been the community's impact in forcing the police to acknowledge racism.

Once the police had accepted that the murder was indeed racist, a murder squad was set up based at East Ham police station and door to door enquiries began. The Memorial Committee maintained constant contact with the squad throughout the investigation and sent an official delegation to see senior officers in an attempt to ensure that the police continued to treat the murder as a high level priority.

An appeal for witnesses, shown on the television programme *Crime Monthly*, initially made little progress. Eventually, however, a number of dawn raids made on houses in the Forest Gate and Manor Park area led to the detention of five people with a further six people being detained at a later date. Eventually, following a positive identification at an ID parade at Colchester police station two men were arrested, Gary Hoskin (20) of Forest View Road and Andrew Noble (38) of Snowhill Road, Manor Park and charged with murder and affray.

### The Community Appeal

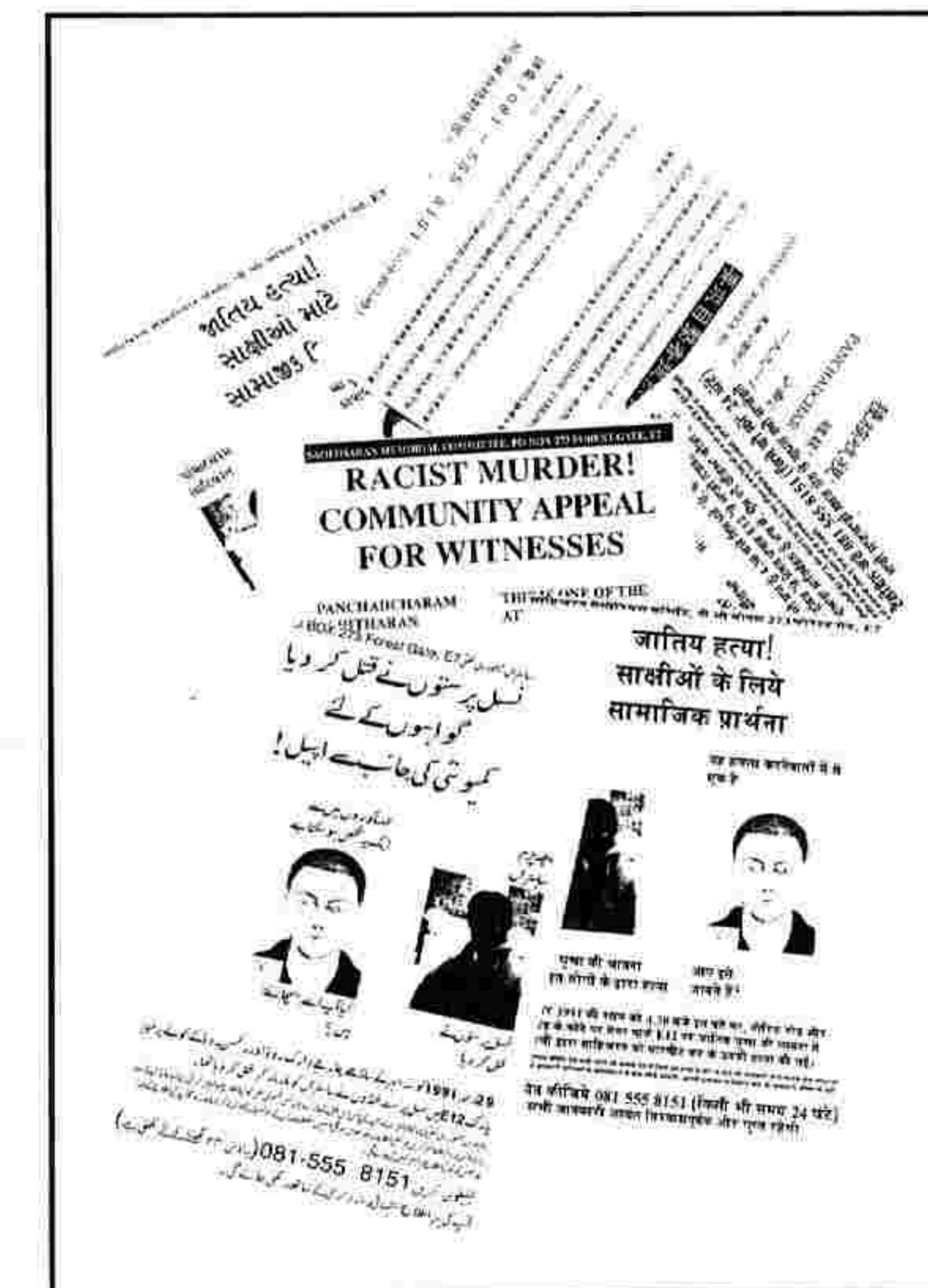
When it became clear that a number of potential witnesses who could provide vital evidence were not coming forward to make statements to the police, the Memorial Committee decided to intervene and launch a Community Appeal.

There were, in fact, a number of possible reasons why witnesses were not coming forward. Firstly, Manor Park is home to a large refugee community who are extremely wary of any contact with the police owing to the tendency within the police to treat refugees as suspected 'illegal immigrants'. This fear was further fueled at the time of Sahitharan's murder by the hysterical debate surrounding the introduction of the Asylum Bill; there had also been a number of high-profile immigration raids. But there would also have been a

scepticism within the black community as a whole. Potential witnesses may themselves have been involved in fights whilst defending themselves from the white gang. They could well have feared that the police would use this against them if they came forward to give evidence.

For these reasons, the Memorial Committee decided to initiate its own appeal for witnesses and a 24-hour help-line was set up at NMP's offices. Hundreds of leaflets were distributed concentrating particularly on all the local mosques, gurdwaras, temples and community centres where announcements were made explaining the purpose of the appeal. All information, it was stressed, would be treated in the strictest confidence: no information would be passed on to the police unless this accorded with the wishes of the individual concerned.

The community appeal was a unique strategy and as such was closely observed by groups all across the country. Its impact was two fold. Firstly, as an extension of NMP's existing strategy to build resistance to racist violence through community action it was pro-active and emphasised the community's role in fighting racism. Second, its very existence put pressure on the police to ensure that the necessary resources were deployed to apprehend the murderers. And in the long run, the Appeal proved successful. A number of witnesses approached NMP, and subsequently the police to give statements. All in all, at least twelve witnesses came forward, of these at least eight had been attacked themselves that day.



Below we try and recreate the events, using statements made by people in the area, that took place on 29 December 1991.

Mrs B

- At about 4.20pm, Mrs B was driving down Church Road when she witnessed a fight between two Asian youths and a white youth. The white youth, had blood on his face and seemed to be coming off the worse. She honked her horn and the fight broke up. The white youth began to walk towards High Street North.

Following this incident it seems that a gang of white youths went on a 'paki-bashing' rampage.

A 12-year-old Asian boy living in Warwick Road.

- At approximately 4.30pm, the boy heard shouting from outside his house in Warwick Road. He looked out the window and saw 4 to 5 white men armed with sticks and baseball bats attacking a man, who he describes as 'Tamil looking'. The man, who was trying to protect his head from the blows with his arms, fell to the floor on his hands and knees. At this point the white men walked away. Moments later, the Tamil man attempted to stand up, but collapsed after taking just a few steps. Finally he managed to stand and stumbled off in the direction of Rixsen Road. The man had lost one of his shoes and groceries from his bag were strewn all over the road. The boy later described one of the men as being of slim-build and with brown hair.

The attack the boy witnessed was, without doubt, the attack on Sahitharan.

Mr K

- At about 4.30pm, Mr K, a Malaysian student, was crossing the railway bridge between Church Road and Warwick Road. A white man approached shouting: 'Hey, you wait' and '4 pakis beat up my pal'. At this point the white youth produced a stick, hit Mr K on the temple and, accompanied by another white man, chased him down the street. Mr K managed to escape to his home nearby. Terrified, he locked himself in.

The noise from this attack brought DH and NM to the scene.

DH and NM

- At approximately 4.30pm, DH and NM were in the area around Church Road when they heard screams and shouts for help. On approaching the area linking Church Road and Warwick Road, they saw an Asian man being chased by a group of white men armed with sticks and baseball bats. On seeing DH and NM the white men shouted racist abuse, turned on them and struck DH with a baseball bat. The white men then chased DH and NM towards the Romford Road where one of them threw his baseball bat at the two friends. Fortunately, DH and NM were able to escape.

Noise from these attacks, drew BG and SA to the area.

BG and SA

- BG and SA were also in the Church Road area when, they heard shouts from the Warwick Road. As they approached Warwick Road, a white man stopped and warned them not to go towards the bridge as a group of white men were attacking Asian people.

Nevertheless, they did carry on only to be waylaid by a group of white men armed with baseball bats. SA was hit whilst BG ran back down Church Road, away from the bridge, chased by one of the white men. SB and his friends came across the attempted escape of BG and SA from the attackers.

SB

- In the early evening of Sunday 29 December, SB and three friends were driving down Church Road when they noticed a white man armed with a baseball bat. They then saw a young Asian man who looked hurt and as though he had been attacked. Further along Church Road was another white man also armed with a baseball bat and also a third white man chasing an Asian

youth. When SB and friends drove up to the injured Asian man to offer help they were told of a fight that had started when the white gang set upon the Asian men. SB and his friends parked the vehicle to see what help they could give, only to find themselves attacked by two of the white men. One of SB's friends got back into the vehicle, but the others made off towards the Romford Road. At Romford Road, SB phoned the police and was told that officers would respond as soon as they were able. SB and his friends hired a mini cab and drove back to the scene of the attack to check on the whereabouts of their friend. By this time the white men were no longer on the scene, but the windscreen of SB's car had been smashed and damage done to its bodywork.

work of the Memorial Committee and to ensure that the murderers of Sahitharan were brought to justice.

The memorial service was covered extensively by the media. South East Regional TV channels carried extracts of the service as did some local papers (the exception being the *Newham Recorder*) with the community appeal highlighted.

### Silent prayer and demo for victim of racist murder

HUNDREDS of people joined a silent protest and torchlight memorial for the racist murder of asylum seeker, Panchadharan Sahitharan. Panchadharan, had fled persecution in his native Sri Lanka only to be attacked and killed just months later by a gang of racist thugs in Manor Park.

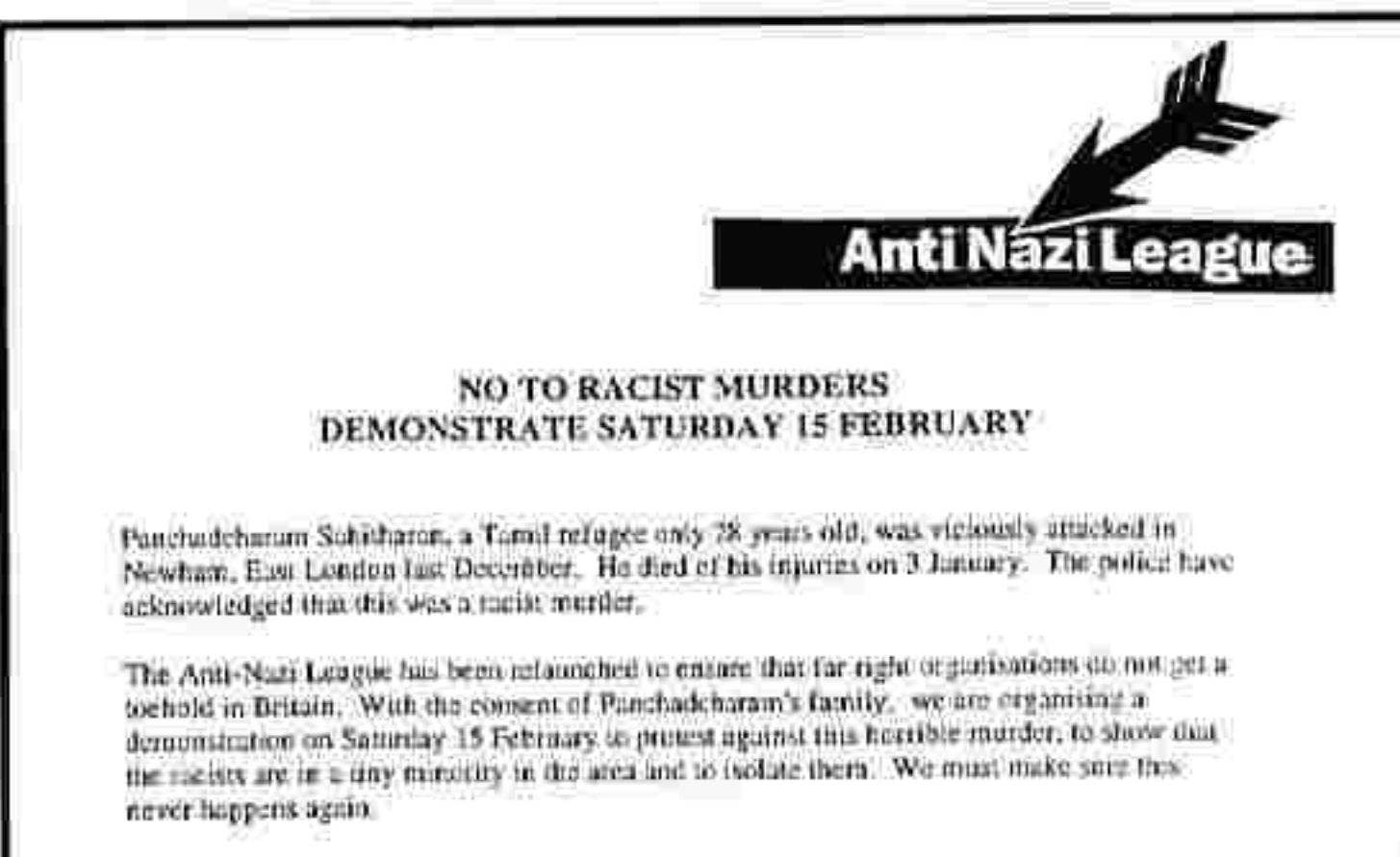


## Newham Remembers Sahitharan

The depth of community feeling called for some sort of symbolic activity and on Friday, 21 February 1992 a day of action was called in memory of Sahitharan. Throughout the day prayers were said at a number of religious institutions across Newham, and that evening hundreds of people marched in a torchlight procession behind Sahitharan's relatives and community leaders from the Lakshmi Naryana Tamil temple on High Street North to the spot where Sahitharan was attacked on Warwick Road, where a minutes silence was observed. Following the laying of wreaths by members of the Sahitharan family, the Memorial Committee and other local community organisations, prayers were offered by a Tamil priest and a representative from the Muslim community. A number of community leaders spoke about the murder, its effect on the community and how the black community needed to unite to fight this increase in racism, particularly in light of the forthcoming General Election when the race card would be played for electoral gain. Finally, a representative from the Newham Monitoring Project urged everyone to support the

## The Memorial Committee Encounters Difficulties

### ANL opportunism



On a down-beat, though, the murder of Sahitharan was taken up by some sections of the Left who attempted to substitute themselves for genuine community mobilisation. Although many



left groups gave welcome support to the Committee, the activities of the Anti-Nazi League need to be singled out for criticism.

Following a report of the murder in the *'Newham Recorder'* on 9 January 1992 the Anti-Nazi League, which had recently been relaunched by the Socialist Workers Party, seized upon the murder to try and mobilise forces. The local community, having decided against an immediate mobilisation out of respect for the grieving family, were shocked to find petitions and leaflets calling for a demonstration on 15 February 1992 being circulated by the Anti-Nazi League. Indeed, the ANL were also calling for financial support for the organisation of this demonstration, all of which was being done, they claimed, with the full knowledge and support of Sahitharan's family.

The behaviour of the ANL raises a number of issues. The failure of the ANL to consult the local black community about the wisdom of its plans demonstrates the continuing arrogance of organisations such as this to community organisation. Despite the fact that Newham's black community has a long and proud history of resistance to racism in all its forms, the ANL acted as though the black 'victims' of racism needed a white vanguard organisation such as theirs to lead black people out of their suffering. We reject this paternalistic and patronising approach. Second, attempting to legitimise their actions by using the name of the family and local organisations was highly deceitful, particularly when it came to raising funds, and should be condemned, in the strongest possible terms.

In accordance with the wishes of the Sahitharan family, the reaction of the local Tamil community and other black organisations to the ANL was to attempt to persuade its leadership to desist from its unilateral actions. A letter was sent to the ANL signed by all the local Tamil organisations urging them to call off their demonstration and support the initiatives being planned by the family and the Memorial Committee. Faced with such opposition, the ANL backed down and withdrew their call for the march. We have to report, though, that to date any money the ANL collected in the name of the Sahitharan family has not been handed over to them.

Despite this climb down, the behaviour of the ANL towards the local community continued as imperious as before. On the day of the torchlight memorial, the ANL plastered the area with its posters, which not only mis-spelt Sahitharan's name but, in failing to mention that the event had been organised by the Memorial Committee, gave the false impression that they were the campaign organisers, although they had played no part in any local initiatives. This was not only dishonest but could have had disastrous effects on the Community Appeal for witnesses which had only recently been launched. On the day of

the demonstration itself, the ANL disregarded requests from the Sahitharan Memorial Committee and the Deane Family Campaign that money should only be collected by official representatives of the Memorial Committee. The ANL were fully aware of this request, but persisted in collecting money for itself.

### A disappointing Council response

The local authority response during the campaign was largely disappointing. A number of requests were made to the council for assistance, most of which were met with silence. The main department with which there was contact through this whole episode was the Social Services Department.

The murder of Sahitharan was not only a major and psychological blow to Sahitharan's family but it also placed them under immense financial pressure. Sahitharan's sister and brother-in-law were both students with little income and a young baby to support. In a short period of time, they had to find over £2,000 to pay for the airline tickets of Sahitharan's father, brothers and sister from Sri Lanka and Germany as well as the funeral costs itself. The response of the Social Services Department to the plight of the family was to make a one off payment of £87.50 for the hire of East Ham town hall for the funeral service and to send the family a number of booklets from the DSS entitled 'Help When Someone Dies'. Despite numerous requests from the Memorial Committee including an approach to the Director of Social Services, Deborah Cameron, no additional support was forthcoming. In response to criticisms from the Memorial Committee about her lack of response, Deborah Cameron said that she was not able to give any more financial assistance and pointed to the involvement of a Tamil community worker in the Memorial Committee - a Social Services employee - as an indication of her department's support. In fact this man, who previously had been a member of NMP's management committee as well as a number of other local groups, was involved with the Committee in his personal capacity. This small, petty incident, insignificant in itself, demonstrates the lack of interest displayed by Social Services. The do-

mination of £87.50 from a special community care fund to pay for the hire of the town hall (a sum that should have been waived by the Council as a matter of course) was felt by the family to be so insulting that the cheque was returned to the Social Services Department.

The response of Newham's Social Services remained as stated by the Director:

*'The law on the financial assistance which I can provide is quite strict and I do not believe I have any authority to provide financial support to individuals or families unless this is solely for the purposes of safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children'*  
(Deborah Cameron, reply to letter from Memorial Committee, dated 27 February 1992).

Yet, even if this was the legal criteria, there is ample evidence that the situation did warrant assistance if only for the welfare of the young baby. Furthermore, discretionary power was available to the Department to assist the family through this difficult period. What was lacking was the political will. The Department's poor response can probably be attributed to fears that if support was given to one refugee family then it would set a precedent for future appeals for assistance from other members of Newham's refugee community. But when the request of the Memorial Committee for assistance is compared to the estimated £250,000 spent this year by the Department on external consultancies to 'improve service delivery' the situation becomes even more reprehensible. Priorities are political decisions made by Council officers and as such can be adapted to particular situations. To do otherwise is not only a sign of inflexibility but demonstrates a lack of concern in responding to the wishes of the community and a fundamental failure to provide services to those in need. (for further information on Community Care see page 71).

### Campaigning for Justice

On 6 March at the Central Criminal Court, to the horror of the local black

community, both Andrew Noble and Gary Hoskin were granted bail on condition of a surety of £10,000. At a subsequent appearance at Newham West Magistrates Court both the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) and the defence counsel argued for an Old Style Committal (this is when the prosecution evidence is tested in front of a magistrate as to ascertain whether there is enough evidence for the case to be committed to a higher court). The bail conditions were not contested and both men were again released on £10,000 surety and on condition that they sign on at Forest Gate police station. In fact, Andrew Noble unable to raise the required surety remained in custody.

Throughout, the Memorial Committee monitored the court appearances of the murder suspects to ensure that the CPS' presentation of the case against them was, neither ill-prepared nor deracialised and that the prosecution was carried out in a vigorous and professional manner. At the first appearance of the suspects the CPS's presentation was, as in so many cases of racist violence, half-hearted and unprepared, to the extent that the CPS were not even aware that Sahitharan's body had been released and cremated.

The fears of the Memorial Committee were subsequently realised during the Old Style Committal. Initially, the Memorial Committee intended to send a delegation, consisting of the local MP, the local authority and members of the Memorial Committee, to meet senior officers at the CPS to urge them to appoint a special prosecutor because the nature of the attack and the public interest in the case. The response of the branch prosecutor to our request was disappointing. First, he said that officers were unable to meet the delegation because of the inclusion of the local MP, arguing that they would need permission from the Attorney General to agree to such a demand. But when the Committee offered to meet without the MP present, they replied that there was no need for the meeting at all. When further questioned about the need to appoint a special prosecutor - an indicator of the importance they placed on the trial - they replied that this was not necessary and that they were quite capable of dealing with the case themselves. Subsequent events demonstrate just how shallow these statements were.

## The Trial

When local black people went to observe the trial, we were initially denied access to the Court. The case had actually been allocated to the smallest courtroom in the building and the gallery was already packed with supporters of the two murder suspects. Following our complaints, the authorities had no choice but to move the trial to a larger court sufficient to accommodate everyone.

At the beginning of the proceedings, which were scheduled to last just one day, prosecution witnesses, fearful of further victimisation, asked to be screened from the defendants. Although this request was granted by the court, a gallery filled with the friends and family of Noble and Hoskin proved too intimidating for the witnesses. This is something that the CPS should have considered and its failure to prove so was to prove costly later.

The only two witnesses called to give evidence were the two 17-year-olds, NM and SB, whose evidence is described above (see page 42).

Following an identification parade at Colchester police station, NM had identified Andrew Noble as one of his attackers. Unfortunately, due to a combination of factors - the lack of preparation by the CPS, the ordeal of giving evidence, for the first time, in the imposing atmosphere of the court, the intimidating presence of Hoskin's and Noble's families and friends - NM felt intensely pressurised and was not able to present his evidence adequately. In fact it would be more accurate to describe NM as scared out of his wits - the subsequent mistakes in his testimony rendered it next to useless.

The second witness, SB, had also identified Andrew Noble at an ID parade. Again, the factors described above led him to stumble over his evidence. As the positive identification of Noble as the perpetrator of violence that day was one of the main planks of the case against him, it began to look increasingly likely that Noble was going to walk free from the court.

## Committal Procedure

The procedure at an Old Style Committal is such that defendants do not have to give evidence in their defence; for example, they do not have to provide alibis. But if we examine Hoskin's statement to the police, which the CPS outlined in their opening address, a number of interesting points emerge. In Hoskin's statement, he claimed that he was drinking with friends in a pub in

Grays, Essex at the time of the attack. What is surely beyond coincidence is the fact that the pub is owned by the Hunt family, one of whom Hoskins claims drove him to the pub that afternoon. For those unfamiliar with racial harassment in Newham, members of the Hunt family are presently facing criminal charges for carrying out a series of racist attacks against their neighbours in South Newham (see page 14). We would also note that, according to an independent witness, Hoskin was bundled away from the scene of the attack in a blue mini. Upon investigation the car seems to be registered in the Hunt family name. We leave you to draw your own conclusions as to the validity of Hoskin's alibi.

Throughout the Committal, Noble looked self-assured, constantly smiling and joking with friends and family in the gallery. Either he was supremely confident of his innocence or he had had previous experience of the incompetence of the CPS. It seemed that the latter was true. For at the end of the day's proceedings, the CPS barrister made a submission to the panel of three magistrates to the effect that the prosecution was discharging Andrew Noble of all current criminal charges (ie murder and affray) because of 'the (in)sufficiency of the evidence does not justify the procedure'.

As the CPS had only book one day for the hearing, the case against Gary Hoskin was adjourned to another date and he was again released on conditional bail. Following questions from the Memorial Committee, the CPS have said they are unable to guarantee that the charges against Hoskin will not also be dropped as well.

## CPS Under Scrutiny

To understand how this situation came about, we must begin by examining the CPS's preparation of the case.

Crown witnesses had never given evidence in court before; and they were therefore unfamiliar with the court's procedure; they were very nervous and, most importantly scared of the consequences of giving evidence. At no point did the CPS acknowledge this but rather they carried on blindly.

The presentation of the case raises a number of points, some of which we list

- Why weren't the witnesses briefed by the CPS before they came to give evidence
- Why was nothing done to allay the fears of the witnesses of reprisals if they gave evidence
- Why did one of the witnesses have to come straight from an exam to give evidence
- Why did they not call all the witnesses to give evidence
- Why did the CPS call for all the charges to be dropped
- Why was no special prosecutor appointed
- Why did the CPS refuse to meet the Memorial Committee, so that we could raise some of these issues
- Why is it that the CPS are incompetent when it comes to prosecuting racists

When we compare this half-hearted and ill-prepared prosecution to the lengths the CPS went to, to gain a conviction against Mr Altaf. (Charged with grievous bodily harm with intent for defending himself and his pregnant sister from a vicious racist attack), then the difference in approach and priority becomes glaringly obvious. In the case of Mr Altaf, the CPS appointed a special prosecutor, and went out of their way to prepare the Crown's witnesses (the attackers of Mr Altaf and Mrs Khan), both before and during the trial itself. (see NMP Annual Report 1990).

We as black people continue to be failed by the criminal justice system. Indeed, recent events - the verdict in the Rodney King trial in Los Angeles as well as the case of Rolan Adams, a 14-year-old black youth stabbed to death by a racist gang in South London in February 1990 - demonstrate the role of the judicial system in legitimising racist violence. In the case of Rolan's killers, the CPS claimed that the murder was not racial but 'territorial'. It was this de-racialisation of the murder which led to all but one of Rolan's attackers being acquitted. In Sahitharan's case, it seems that the

CPS were willing to recognise that the motive was racial; their botched prosecution, however, shows just how much importance they attach to racism.

We will not allow the murder of Sahitharan to be forgotten and his murderers to walk free. At the time of writing, the Memorial Committee is seeking expert legal advice as to how to proceed both with regards to further action against the murderers as well as action on the wider implications of the CPS's handling of the case.

## The National Context

The murder of Sahitharan, follows in a long line of tragedies that east London's black communities have had to face in the last ten years. In 1980, Akhtar Ali Baig was stabbed to death on High Street North, only a short short distance from where this latest murder took place. And in 1984, in Plaistow Eustace Pryce was also stabbed to death. In 1981, racists petrol-bombed the home of the Khan family in Leytonstone, killing Mrs Khan and her three young children, Aqsa, Kamran and Imran. In 1985 the Kassam family and their two young children Alim and Zaihir, were murdered, again in a petrol-bomb attack. Early in 1991, Alia Miah, an 18 month old baby was killed in Tower Hamlets after racists hurled wooden planks onto his pram.

Nationally, there have been many other tragedies. In 1989 alone we witnessed the deaths of: Ahmed Sheikh, a Somali refugee, murdered by National Front sympathisers in Edinburgh; Tahir Akram killed in Oldham; Kuldip Singh Sekhon died in Southall after being stabbed over fifty times; Tasleem Akhtar killed in December 1989.

This was followed in 1991 by the murder of Rolan Adams and that of Alia Miah.

Already in the first month of 1992 we have seen the murders of Mohammed Sarwar and Siddik Dada in Manchester and, here in Newham, that of Sahitharan.

On Thursday 23 January 1992, Siddik Dada, a 60 year old Withington shopkeeper, was found unconscious in a pool of blood after having been attacked by a gang of white youths armed with machetes. Three days later, whilst Siddik Dada lay in a coma in an intensive care unit, the same racist thugs struck again, this time, dragging 46 year old taxi driver, Mohammed Sarwar, from his car and battering him to death. They left his body lying in the middle of the road whilst they drove around in his car before setting it alight. Thirteen days later, on 5 February 1992, Siddik Dada died, having never regained consciousness.

## Blood On The Streets

There have been 80 known racist murders across Britain

Of these the following occurred in east London

Tosir Ali  
Dinesh Choudhry  
Ribbi Al-Haddida  
Kenneth Singh  
Altab Ali  
Ishaque Ali  
Michael Ferreira  
Kayimarz Anklesaria  
Akhtar Ali Baig  
Parveen Khan  
Kamran Khan  
Imran Khan  
Aqsa Khan  
Peter Burns  
Shamira Kassam  
Zaihir Kassam  
Eustace Pryce  
Alia Miah

and now  
Panchadcharam Sahitharan

The mood of the local community was summed up by his nephew speaking at a local meeting following the murders,

*'I had to go and identify the body of my uncle. It was such a brutal murder that my uncle's face was unrecognisable. If you took a look at my uncle's face you would understand why you must come together. If my uncle's murder can unite people to stop racist murders, then I believe, his blood will not be in vain.'*

Although the police have arrested three people, they have sought to deracialise the murders, claiming the only possible motive was robbery. But the local community are fighting back. Over 1,000 local people joined the funeral cortege taking Mr Sarwar's body from Rusholme mosque to Manchester Airport to be flown back to Pakistan. Traffic was brought to a standstill as hundreds of taxi-drivers, their cars displaying black flags, joined the cortege. A local campaign has been initiated around these murders, highlighting too the dramatic increase in racist attacks in Manchester as a whole.

These murders graphically demonstrate the reality of racism in Britain today. A racism that is propagated and legitimised by the politicians and tabloid press, through its playing of the 'Race Card' and through the introduction of the Asylum Bill and through high-profile immigration raids. Just as during the Gulf War, we are seeing an increase in attacks against our community. The future in a united Europe is bleak. Now more than ever we as a community have to redouble our efforts to build a genuine community fight-back.

# RACIST MURDERS



Siddik Dada Mohammed Sarwar  
The whole of our Community is deeply shocked, aggrieved and angered. Within 4 days and within 3 miles of each other, two of our people have been brutally murdered. Siddik Dada was brutally murdered with a machete on Thursday 23rd January. On Sunday 26th January, Mohammed Sarwar, was battered to death. A gang of racist white youths carried out both of these premeditated racist murders.

WE CALL ON ALL JUSTICE LOVING PEOPLE TO MAKE A STAND AND UNITE WITH US TO ENSURE THAT RACIST VIOLENCE DOES NOT GO ON UNCHALLENGED.

**ORGANISE NOW!**

10

## Newham: The Forging of a Black Community

In May 1991, NMP launched 'Newham: The Forging of a Black Community', a joint publication with Campaign Against Racism and Fascism which documents the growth of East London's immigrant communities in the '50s and '60s and how, out of their struggles, Newham's black community was born. The book is the result of extensive research into the social, economic and political history of Newham and includes extracts from a wide range of interviews with black people who grew up in Newham and those who came from Asia and the Caribbean to settle in the borough, providing a unique insight into the racism and discrimination that they had to combat.

Below we reprint an article on the book written by Peter Fryer, author of the highly respected 'Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain':



### Forging a black community

First of all — and here I must correct a wrong impression that my brief reference on 20 July might well have conveyed — it doesn't start in 1950 but in 1872, with the long-forgotten strike of gas-stokers at Beckton.

This was a struggle of workers driven desperate by having to work a seven-day week of up to 80 hours, with one day off a month, for a wage of less than £2 a week. Refused help by the established London trades unions, which paid no heed to the unskilled, they formed a union of their own and went on strike.

Five hundred men were prosecuted for breach of contract and six of their leaders for criminal conspiracy. Lord Justice Brett found five of the six guilty of conspiring to 'molest' their employers by planning a simultaneous withdrawal of labour.

A massive protest movement forced a Liberal home secretary to remit eight months of the year's sentence — and the movement swept forward to the repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act, the legalisation of peaceful picketing, and the disappearance from the law of the old words 'coerce' and 'molest'.

The Beckton strike was just one of a series of 19th-century working-class actions in what is now Newham, and in two short but important sections, 'The rise and fall of the labour movement' and 'The failure of the Labour Party', 'The Forging of a Black Community' asks the all-important question:

'What was specific to Newham that allowed the National Front to build a base here? Why did right-wing ideas prove popular when there was a strong left-wing tradition in Newham which dates back at least to the 19th century?'

The answer the booklet suggests is that the working-class solidarity in the area was primarily local and national, and not one in which internationalism was to the fore:

'It lacked the capacity, ultimately, to challenge the increasingly strident jingoism and overweening sense of racial superiority that characterised the late 19th and early 20th century.'

Then came World War II, which not only destroyed the physical fabric of south Newham but also wiped out much of working-class tradition and culture. The old communities, including that of black seafarers in Canning Town, were evacuated.

And instead of revitalising working-class traditions, or fighting for socialist ideas, the post-war local Labour Party was stagnant and 'oblivious to the urban deprivation and material needs of ordinary working-class people'.

So a large section of the local white working class was seduced by fascism, which 'made people feel proud of their working-class culture again, recalling the period when West Ham had been known as the "Factory Centre of England"'. Industrial success was linked to nostalgia for Empire, and West Ham was replete with imperial memories.'

This is the first time I have seen an analysis of such depth, based on sound knowledge of the entire history of a local working class and not just on half-digested fragments.

Following the police murder of Ian Gordon in Telford, and last weekend's fascist attack on an anti-racist demonstration in Southwark, the entire movement needs to work out an effective strategy for defeating racism, not just on the streets, but also in hearts and minds.

'The Forging of a Black Community' helps us go beyond 'knee-jerk interventionism' to a united resistance based on real historical understanding.

The Newham Monitoring Project has put a valuable weapon in our hands. Let's read it — and use it.

Peter Fryer,  
Workers Press (31/8/91)

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Mr Sarwar, of Avon Road, Burnage, was found in a pool of blood at a Charlton-on-Medlock car park in January.



Victim — Mohammed Sarwar  
Mr Sarwar's death and the body was released to his grieving family.

and, days earlier, of Withington shopkeeper Siddik Dada, has enraged the city's Asian community.

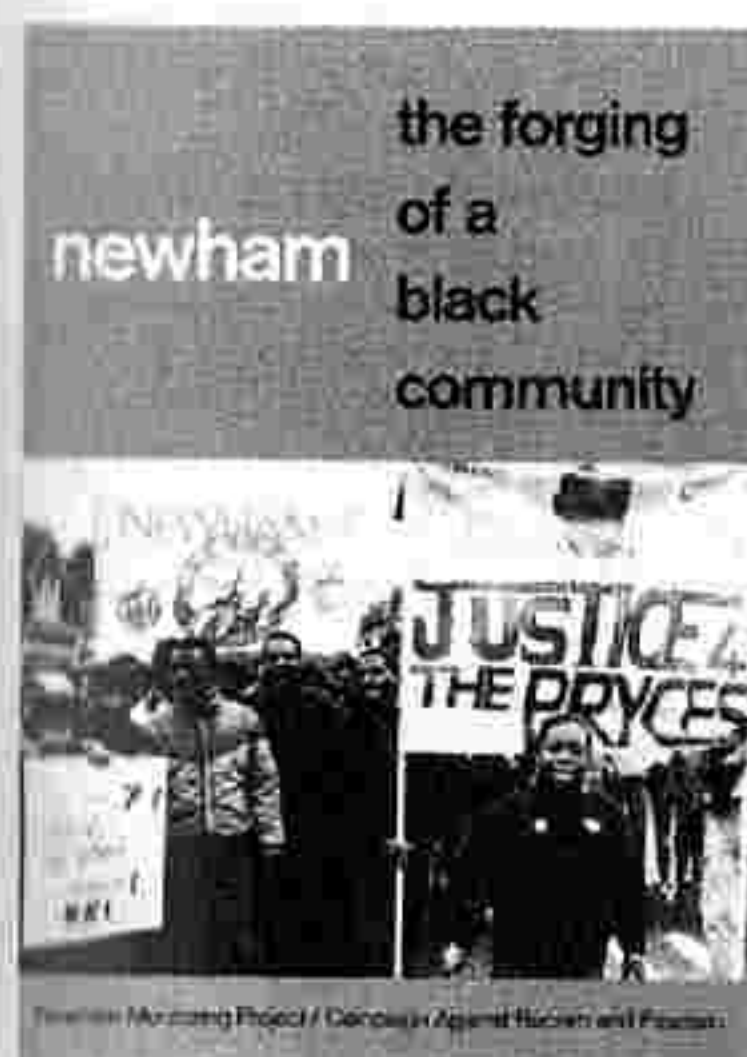
A funeral service was held at the Mosque before the vast procession made off to the airport.



Mourners with the coffin containing Mohammed Sarwar's body before the procession set off for Manchester Airport.



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Victim — Mohammed Sarwar

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Mr Sarwar, of Avon Road, Burnage, was found in a pool of blood at a Charlton-on-Medlock car park in January.

On Wednesday an inquest was opened into the killing of Mr Sarwar.

and, days earlier, of Withington shopkeeper Siddik Dada, has enraged the city's Asian community.

Jon Iqbal Srani, chairman of the Anti-Racist Alliance, said: "We think it's an issue that concerns the safety of all taxi drivers and Asian people and black people."

He added: "We want protection for the black people of this country. We need to explain and express the depth of feeling in the Asian community about these deaths and we would really like the people of Manchester to get behind us."

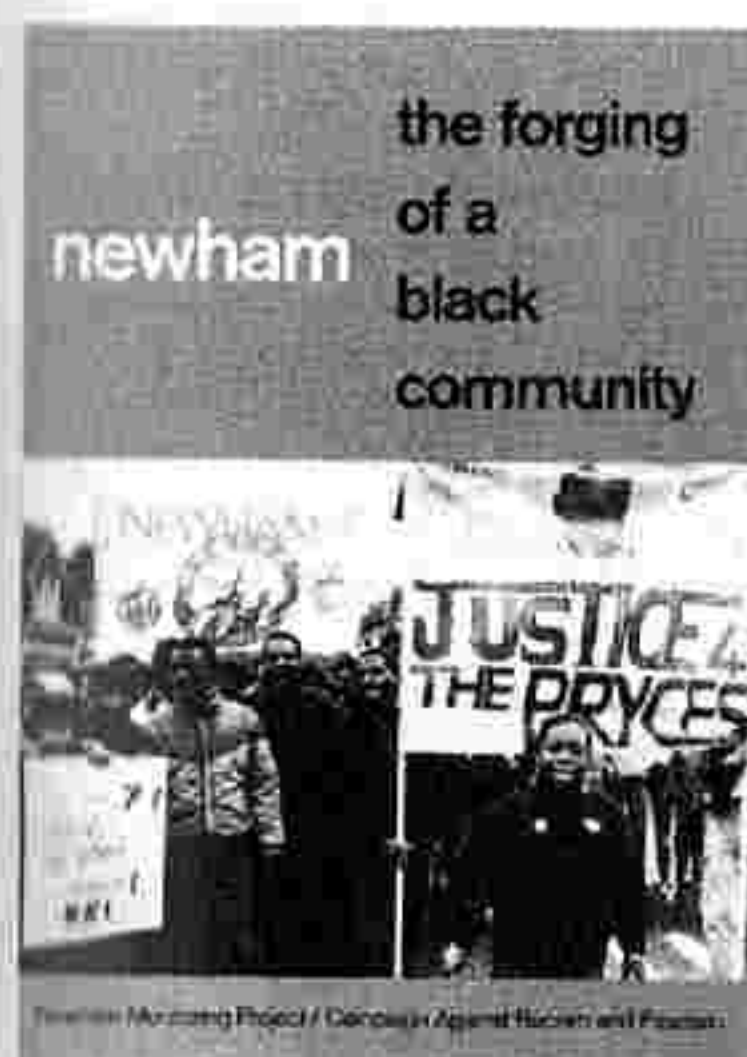
A 19-year-old youth has been charged with the murder of Mr Sarwar.



Mourners with the coffin containing Mohammed Sarwar's body before the procession set off for Manchester Airport.



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As part of its general activity and launch of the publication, NMP staged 'An Evening of Cultural Resistance' at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East. The aim of the evening was not just to publicise the book, but to encapsulate its spirit - forging a black community - by celebrating the rich and diverse music and culture that our community has to offer and the struggles from which this community has emerged.

Over 600 people packed into Stratford Theatre to enjoy comedy by Leo Chester, poetry by Saquib Deshmukh and Ahmed Sheikh, a play based on NMP's Defend the Altaf/Khan Family Campaign by Action Reaction Theatre, Kathak and Hip Hop dancers, and music including Q-Tee, Sista Culcha & Burnin Illusion, James Danton and Ghazal singers - all hosted by the incomparable Benjamin Zephaniah. The main speaker was Hardev Dhesi, NMP's first Chair, who reflected on the history of the Project and Newham's black community in general. Mr Dhesi was followed by Unmesh Desai, NMP's first worker, who spoke on the way forward for the Project and anti-racism in the 1990's.



NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT

**KEEPING THE FIGHT ALIVE**

**AN EVENING OF CULTURAL RESISTANCE**

HOSTED BY BENJAMIN ZEPHANIAH

MUSIC DANCE POETRY COMEDY THEATRE

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**BLACK CULTURAL EVENING**  
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AHMED SHEIKH ● SISTA CULCHA ● WESLEY HOPKINS ●  
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ASHRAF HAYES ● USOUBI GEMWANE ● JIMMY SANCHEZ ●  
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## 11

## Fascism and Anti-Fascism

1991 has seen a huge increase in racist attacks across London. It has also seen an up-turn in interest in issues of anti-fascism. Unfortunately, however, anti-fascism has been largely divorced from anti-racism and from the wider struggles of the black communities under attack. In fact, anti-fascist forces, who claim to be advancing strategies to deal with increased racist violence, seem to concentrate exclusively on organised fascist groups, in particular the British National Party (BNP).

The BNP is a virulently racist and openly fascist organisation which split from the National Front in the early 1980s and is grouped around their own fuhrer, John Tyndall. It has somewhere between 1,000 and 1,500 members and is active in many parts of the country. In recent years, however, the BNP has concentrated much of its energy in East London, where it has engaged in attacks on black people and desecrations of Jewish cemeteries. Many of the BNP's leading members have convictions for violence against black people and for distributing racist literature.

The murder of Rolan Adams (a 15-year old African-Caribbean youth stabbed to death on the 22 February 1991 by a racist gang on the Thamesmead estate, South London) has been linked by many to the fact that the BNP headquarters are based in nearby Bexley.

Yet despite the terrible nature of this organisation and others like it, the majority of racist attacks in Britain are not committed by fascists. Most community based anti-racist groups attribute less than 10% of the attacks they deal with each year to individuals linked to fascist organisations (in the case of Newham this is even less). It is unfortunate, though not wholly surprising, therefore, that the left groups and progressive forces in Britain who claim to challenge racist violence should concentrate their attentions exclusively on the BNP. In the last year, there have been a number of mobilisations across London aimed at challenging the BNP and other far-right groups. In an article published by CARF (extracts of which are reproduced below), the criticisms of such an approach, shared by NMP, are clearly set out.

### *Left versus community*

The most significant thing about such anti-fascist activity is that it is almost always reactive and follows a pre-set formula. It responds to a given situation and organises around a specific threat - a fascist electoral candidate or a Nazi HQ, for instance - and then mobilises its forces to meet that eventuality. Such 'floating' anti-fascism neither speaks to the problems of the local communities nor helps them to organise on their own behalf. Instead, it renders them mere venues for disconnected actions, thus leaving them to face the fascist backlash once the anti-Nazi marchers have come and gone.

This was summed up in 1978 by a member of the Bengali Youth Association, an organisation set up to contest the most extreme and consistent racial violence and harassment in Britain at the time. Having just witnessed yet another left rally

and march to remove the NF paper-sellers from Brick Lane's Sunday market, he told the organisers as they left for home that night, "Now you've had your curries and cleared your consciences, fuck off back to where you came from." That does not mean, however, that we should cease to challenge the fascist groups through marches and pickets, but that we should destroy fascism at its racist roots and not merely react to it. What recent demonstrations in Southwark, Thamesmead and Tower Hamlets certainly managed to achieve was to alert the public to the type of violent racism which the media seldom exposes. But unless anti-fascist mobilisations have the backing of community organisations and are followed by the setting up of local committees run by local people, such marches can amount to little but macho flexing of left muscle.

### *Divorcing anti-racism from anti-fascism*

Most racist attacks, besides, are carried out not so much by organised Nazi groups as by local racist gangs. For instance, in Bethell Avenue, Canning Town, Newham, a racist gang has been clearly implicated in a number of attacks including an attempt at arson. This gang, though not fascist, is clearly determined to keep the area white. The harassment has got to the stage that some black residents not only have secure letter boxes but also have perspex screens fixed to the outside of their windows to prevent damage from bricks thrown by this gang. For example, Mr A has frequently been threatened with knives, abused and on a number of occasions assaulted. In November 1991, an attempt was made to set his house on fire by throwing lit fireworks through the letter box. The harassment has caused the health of Mr A and his wife to deteriorate. Mr A, who was interviewed on radio about his experiences, was in fact abused and stalked in the presence of the interviewer. The gang congregated outside his home and one youth made clear threats by drawing his finger across his throat, indicating he would kill Mr A.

On several occasions, NMP workers were forced to stay at Mr A's home overnight in response to emergency calls from him. Despite a longstanding fascist presence in this area, these youths are not fascists but are simply racist thugs.

It is this type of commonplace, everyday racism which, because it goes unchecked and uncontested by the police and the state generally, provides the groundswell for fascism. Yet anti-fascist activists tend, on the one hand, to ignore state racism and, on the other, to treat racial violence as though it were a by-product, a sub-category, of fascism. Hence anti-fascist literature often transmits a simplistic message: get rid of the fascists and racial violence will magically disappear too.

### *Anti-fascism and old orthodoxy*

Because in Britain it is principally the white left parties and groups that dominate the anti-fascist movement, they see the fight against racism as subsidiary to the anti-fascist struggle and themselves as the historical repository of that struggle. Hence they tend to set themselves up as the leaders in that fight, resurrecting old forms of organisation (invariably from the top down) and spouting a rhetoric redolent of old victories and tired slogans. The result is that black, everyday problems get redefined by a white-dominated Left, wedded to a kind of anti-fascist rote learning. The anti-fascist movement, for example, claims that, through its mobilisations, it is 'Reclaiming the Streets' from the Nazis, and assigns to itself the role of protector of the racially abused. This paternalism shades over into chauvinism (if not outright racism) when the anti-fascist Left (ignoring over 30 years of black struggle and organisation) claims the credit for putting the issue of racist violence on the political agenda. But then the Left does not see black working class struggle as part of a British working-class history. This is most in evidence when, in its literature and slogans, it concentrates only on 'its' victories against fascism, like the Battle of Cable Street, but does not recall those black victories against racist violence and fascist incursion - in Notting Hill (1958), Southall (1979 and 1981) or

Bradford (1975).

### *Denying the black experience*

Nor does the Left have any real understanding of the nature of racial violence in black communities today. Firstly, it does not appreciate that racial harassment in areas where there are large black settlements (and a history of struggle) has become a hazardous venture, whereas violence does manifest itself with impunity on housing estates with relatively few, and isolated, black families, such as Canning Town, Bermondsey, the Isle of Dogs (in London). Attacks also tend to be against 'newcomers', particularly refugees, and not against second and third generation black families. And those who face such violence are not so much in need of crusading evangelism from passing politicians as of practical help to enable them to live safely in their homes.

Secondly, the Left does not understand the extent to which the police are indifferent to the problems of such black families, treating them, instead, as a nuisance if they complain and, indeed, arresting them if they fight back. Talk to black working-class youth in the UK and they will tell you that the burning issue for them is to get the police off their backs. For them the connection between racial violence and racist policing is even more palpable than that between racial violence and fascism. They do not want the Left's patronage so much as its support for their demand: 'Self-defence is no offence'.

### *Discarding orthodoxy, recreating socialism*

Now more than ever there is the need to make the connection between racism and fascism. Teachers who set up patrols to escort black children safely to and from schools were the backbone of anti-fascist committees in the 1970s, as were locally-based trades councils, some of which also took up cases of deportations and police racism. Today, football supporters' groups, which link the issue of racist chanting inside the ground to the fascist paper-sellers outside, are a refreshing development. Too often, though, the Left's perception of the working-class has hindered the development of anti-racist/anti-fascist perspectives. In seeing the working-class for what it should be, instead of what it is, the Left tends to overlook working-class racism. And when it does acknowledge it, its challenge to such racism is often superficial and half-hearted. Leaflets which take the 'myths versus facts'

approach come across as utopian tracts, a slightly more radical version of the multi-cultural approach of the race-relations industry. For the latter, racism arises because people don't understand each other's cultures; for the former, because the working class has a false consciousness.

And when left propaganda has a message for the black working-class, it is equally paternalistic - as though it is the white-dominated Left which has all the answers to black oppression. Utopian slogans like 'Black and White Unite and Fight' (which begs the question: on whose terms?) fail to tell us how to achieve that unity.

The lesson from the last thirteen years is surely that working-class unity is not going to spring up ready-made from Tory cuts; unity needs to be worked at. And experience shows that racism can be best challenged by working within the working class, on a long-term basis, over issues of housing, education, employment, low pay, policing, football. It is around these issues that, in some areas at least, black and white unity has become a reality. But if we are to enlarge and extend that unity, we must discard old orthodoxies and see anti-fascism not as a dogma or anti-racism as a cause but as being part of a creative socialist process.

This article clearly highlights long-standing criticisms within black communities of anti-fascist strategies that are currently in political fashion. Unfortunately, anti-fascist forces have not responded constructively to such criticism, dismissing it as, too difficult, too long term and even worse as an example of black nationalist rhetoric.

In fact, the article raises two fundamental issues. The first relates to the white anti-fascist movement's relationship to black communities and black struggle. Most anti-fascist organisations fail to grasp the essential fact that anti-fascist work that does not involve the local black community at the heart of its campaigning, and not as some ideologically correct afterthought, will inevitably be irrelevant or counter-productive. Moreover, such mobilisations will also be paternalistic, with white anti-fascists posing as crusaders against injustice and challengers of the fascists on behalf of a passive and cowed black community. This chauvinism is also reflected in the refusal of such forces to accept that black communities have fought fascists and racists since their arrival in Britain, and will continue to do so long after many of the individuals and groups that make up the anti-fascist movement have disappeared. For instance, Bengali youth in Tower Hamlets, frequently the target for BNP attacks, have fought countless battles against the BNP but as they do

not exist within the umbrella of one political group or the other, their accomplishments and their struggle is never recognised.

The second issue raised is the simplistic and wrong equation of racist violence with fascist attacks. This is simply not the case. At present, because of the political demands and nature of the BNP, the primary focus for their attacks are black people and black communities. However, as the article outlines, doing away with the BNP will not eradicate racial violence.

Clearly these are not arguments intended at preventing anti-fascist work, indeed quite the opposite. We accept that fascists must be fought politically, ideologically and physically, but there must also be an effective strategy for doing this based on current realities. Ironically, the plethora of groups launched in 1991 (and some launched even earlier) to oppose the fascist menace still cling to old ideas and slogans, whilst insisting on 'leading' the anti-fascist struggle.

Naturally, when it comes to opposing the fascists, NMP will continue to make alliances on as broad a basis as possible. However, this does not mean that we will abandon our perspectives on the relationship between anti-fascism and black struggle. At the moment, there seems to be three competing tendencies within the anti-fascist movement, all of which deny the centrality of the black grassroots experiences.

One section of the Left's forces is wedded to the idea of building a national movement from above. Based on the vanguard activities of its own members, it makes no attempt to contact local black communities, except through one-off petitions of housing estates. Another section, engrossed in what they consider to be a war against the fascists, use small, intensely paranoid and almost paramilitary tactics in concentrating on physical confrontation with small bands of individual fascists. Finally, there are those organisations that have adopted some of the slogans and language of black community struggle but, in practical terms, have revealed little or no respect for community organisation; these groups too often seek to replace genuine grassroots activity with paper organisations engaged in media campaigns.

## Campaign Against Racism and Fascism

For many of the reasons outlined above, NMP welcomed the re-launch of CARF as an independent magazine in February 1991. This organ had been in existence for thirteen years (for most of this time as a supplement to *Searchlight* magazine) yet decided to publish independently following a number of political disputes with *Searchlight*. Since CARF went its own way, the magazine and the movement have gone from strength to strength, finding a ready audience amongst black communities and activists, as well as amongst the wider anti-racist movement.

CARF attempts to provide analysis on a range of issues central to the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement in Britain. These subjects range from racist violence to organised fascism, policing to popular racism and racist laws. CARF is, however, more than simply a magazine. It is in the process of developing a national network, espousing race and class politics, as well as providing a link between grassroots campaigning organisations across the country. As CARF themselves outlined in an editorial in its first issue, they are seeking to 'develop a more vigorous and responsive anti-racist forum to co-ordinate and service the various anti-racist initiatives that are taking place up and down the country'.

In all its subsequent issues, CARF has consistently placed the struggles of black communities across the country at the centre of its remit. It has frequently exposed legislation and policing practices that attack those communities. We look forward to the continued development of the CARF network and the magazine as the only truly non-sectarian journal serving the anti-racist and anti-fascist movement.

## NMP and Anti-Fascism

Despite the many criticisms of the present movement outlined above, for the past twelve years, NMP has attended anti-fascist initiatives not just in Newham

but across the country. This support has been based on a policy of unity in action when confronting the common enemy - fascists. This is a qualification that many anti-fascist forces hopelessly fail to achieve. It was with this view that NMP attended a number of mobilisations over the past year, and below, in the spirit of constructive criticism, we outline some observations of these events.

### Greenwich

On the 22 February 1991, Rolan Adams was murdered by a racist gang in Thamesmead, Greenwich. This murder occurred only days after Bexley and Greenwich Campaign against Fascism lobbied the council chambers to protest against the increase in BNP activity in the area following the setting up of the BNP's bookshop/headquarters at 154 Upper Wickham Lane, Welling.

On 27 April 1991, the Rolan Adams Family Campaign, led by Rolan's parents, organised a demonstration which was attended by the Rev Al Sharpton and hundreds of local black youth. The demonstration was a great success. Within a few months, however, the BNP organised its own protest in the area, planning to go through the Thamesmead Estate itself. On this occasion, although there was significantly less local participation, large numbers of anti-fascists mobilised. The main body of the march went to the spot where Rolan was killed, as there were rumours that the BNP was planning to desecrate the spot. A fairly sizeable anti-fascist contingent, including NMP supporters, managed to cause sufficient disruption to the BNP march that the police eventually turned it back.

In October 1991, 19-year-old Mark Thornborrow was found guilty of the murder of Rolan Adams and sentenced to life imprisonment. In this case, even though the prosecution attempted to portray the fight as a 'territorial' dispute between two gangs, the judge dismissed this, stating that there were clear 'racial overtones' to the killing. All the others charged with murder and violent disorder, however, were acquitted.

On the first anniversary of Rolan's death, another march took place which was attended by about 3000 marchers. Attempts to get the police and the local authority to close down the BNP bookshop continue.

### Bermondsey

On the 24 August 1991, in response to a call by the Southwark Black Communities Consortium (SBCC), NMP attended a demonstration in Southwark, South London to protest at the high

level of racist attacks locally, especially in Bermondsey. Between 500-600 people attended the demonstration which marched down the Old Kent Road towards Bermondsey. On entering Bermondsey, the demonstration was almost immediately attacked by Millwall football supporters who used a pub along the route. It was unfortunate that some SBCC stewards, instead of assisting those trying to defend the march, chose to accuse them of 'sinking to the same level as the racists'.

Marchers were, from this point onwards, for almost half a mile, continually barracked, with local white racists appearing on their balconies and at the side of the road to jeer the demonstrators. At the park where the final rally was to take place, the demonstration was confronted by hundreds of fascists from the BNP and other far-right groups. The police at this stage had equipped themselves with riot gear but, following a number of scuffles, were more concerned with arresting the rapidly dwindling numbers of anti-fascists.

Marchers were eventually ushered into the park where a stage erected the night before and intended for the rally had been dismantled and stolen. The BNP had, by portraying the march as made up of outside black troublemakers, succeeded in galvanising the support of many local racists who were probably not members of any fascist organisation.

Despite police assurances to organisers that the park would be secure, many fascists and racists streamed into the park to join those already there. At this stage, the number of anti-fascist protesters, easily outnumbered by the far-right forces, had dwindled to less than 250, and after a great deal of confusion, a retreat was called. As the march left the park, the BNP and local racists taunted the march by singing 'Rule Britannia' and 'God Save the Queen'. The only palpable sign of opposition to the racists came from two white teenage girls who, after arguing with local racists, were set upon by BNP supporters and arrested by the police. The day ended with a rally, on a piece of wasteland, miles away from Bermondsey where 30-50 of the original protesters congregated.



Brothers in arms!

When we examine the Bermondsey debacle, it becomes apparent that very little work was done in order to isolate the BNP (who leafleted the local estates) or gain the support of local people. As a result, the BNP was able to portray the march as against white people in general.

The experience of Bermondsey also reminds us that sitting with senior police officers and seeking assurances of help and protection in the event of trouble, as SBCC did, does not guarantee that police action on the day will be sympathetic. Indeed, the police have frequently affirmed that they consider the BNP and NF to be properly constituted political parties and that in their view, the anti-fascists and anti-racists are the troublemakers.

The consequences for the local black community of this ill-thought-out march was to allow the BNP to organise large numbers who, drunk on victory, proceeded to attack local blacks with impunity.

Bermondsey is an extreme example of a malaise that affects the whole anti-fascist movement. The idea that national organisations, whether they be black or white dominated, can call demonstrations through sensitive areas with no base in the local black community must be laid to rest.

### Tower Hamlets

On the 10 November, an excellent turnout of over 2000 people attended a march through Tower Hamlets to protest at the BNP paper sale in Brick Lane and the significant number of racist attacks in the area. The march was, however, composed mainly of white anti-fascists from outside Tower Hamlets, and there was little or no participation from local black youth. Despite the fact that the support of those who attended was most welcome, the march was once again essentially irrelevant to the lives of the local blacks, and the organisers had no contact with the victims of racist violence that they were supposedly defending. The failure of the anti-fascist movement to go out to this section of the population is once again central to our criticisms. The local Bengali community has a long history and tradition of active resistance to racist attacks and BNP violence; they do not need crusaders but rather, active

support. We are not against anti-fascist marches, but these must not be used as a substitute for wider work. The priority of black communities, in Tower Hamlets as elsewhere, remains racist violence, and that means not just from the BNP but from non-fascist racist gangs and the police as well.

### Newham

In Newham, at present, there appears to be a degree of fascist activity around Vicarage Lane in East Ham. A near-by Jewish Cemetery has been desecrated at least twice and there have been a number of attacks on local black families (see racial harassment chapter). Also, on 23 May 1992, the National Front were spotted selling papers outside Sainsburys in East Ham. This is a very worrying development, and we will continue to monitor the situation.

Elsewhere in Newham, isolated fascist attacks have also occurred:

• On 6 August 1991, at approximately 2 am, a firebomb was thrown at the house of KO and EH. The attack, which but for the quick response of KO and EH could have proved fatal, caused extensive damage to their front hall. KO and EH immediately contacted NMP.

Within hours, however, a new development occurred. A morbid postcard with a swastika and the words 'we'll be back' enscribed on it was posted through their letter box. NMP immediately issued a press release. When NMP showed KO and EH photographs of known fascists in Newham, it transpired that they had, in the process of their anti-poll tax work, inadvertently, visited the home of Peter Hart, a NF activist who lived in Stratford.

The police said they could not act as there was no concrete evidence against Hart. He subsequently moved out of Newham and there were no further incidents.

We would like to commend KO and EH for not allowing themselves to be intimidated out of the area and in fact seeking to challenge their attackers.

### BNP thug imprisoned

In our last annual report, we outlined the case of Arthur Neslen (a young Jewish teacher with strong links to NMP) who was attacked by Tony Lecomber (third in command in the BNP) on the platform of Gants Hill tube station whilst removing BNP stickers. We are pleased to announce that in November 1991, Lecomber was jailed for 3 years for the attack on Arthur. We would once again like to commend Arthur for having the determination to see the prosecution of Lecomber through to the end.

### Man beaten by thugs after removing party stickers

## RIGHT-WINGER JAILED FOR TUBE ATTACK



A MEMBER of the extreme right-wing British National Party was jailed for three years on Friday for a vicious attack at Newbury Park Tube station.

Anthony "Bomber" Lecomber, 29, of Brisbane Road, Ilford, was described as a dangerous man after the attack on a Jewish teacher.

The victim, Arthur Neslen, identified Lecomber in a photo and after seeing a Thames Television film of him speaking at a party rally in Hainault, South Essex. Crown Court heard.

The jury found Lecomber guilty of unlawfully wounding Mr Neslen, 23, Lecomber had denied the charge.

Witnessing that Mr Recorder Brian Higgs QC said: "You and other thugs attacked him with no lawful justification. You are a dangerous man."

Mr David Armstrong, prosecuting, had said the jury that on October 12 last year, Mr Neslen, then a teacher living at Wood, was descending an escalator at Newbury Park Tube station when he noticed a member of the BNP stickers.

Giving evidence, Mr Neslen said he pushed off as many of them as he could.

"They encourage discrimination and encourage attacks - I'm intimidated by them."

Then, he said as he sat on a bench on the west-bound platform, two men sat on either side of him. Shortly afterwards he noticed a man causing an alarm.

"He kicked me in the face. I didn't do anything. He kicked and punched me a number of times."

Mr Neslen said that when the two other men ran back towards the escalator, he was seized by a man with a cut on the left side of his jaw which required five stitches.

Mr Neslen said he was later shown a number of black images of an anti-fascist publication called 'Sunderlight' and in one of them picked out a photograph of Lecomber.

He said the jury "I identified the man who attacked me. I was in no doubt when I saw it."

And after that Mr Neslen was shown a Thames Report documentary about the rise of the BNP, in which he identified Lecomber.

Lecomber was arrested on November 3 last year and immediately denied knowledge of the incident, before reversing his plea to guilty.

And during the trial he declined to give evidence. The case had heard that Lecomber was given the nickname "Bomber" after he was jailed at the Old Bailey in 1988 for charges of possessing and making explosives.

### FASCISTS BLAMED FOR FIREBOMB ATTACK

FASCISTS are blamed by race-hate watchdogs for a firebomb attack on two young flatmates.

And just three days after the outrage, the Asian man and white woman received a sick in Deepest Sympathy card.

It threatened a further attack and was just signed with a swastika.

The victims, who share a flat in Forest Lane, Stratford, were probably singled out because of involvement in campaigns against racism and the poll tax, Newham Monitoring Project claim.

Lighted rags were thrown on petrol poured through the front door of the basement flat early on Tuesday last week.

The flatmates woke quickly and were able to extinguish the blaze.

Despite their ordeal, the pair have vowed they will not be driven from their home.

The woman, who asked not to be named, said: "We will not be intimidated out of the area."

She added that they had been encouraged by a petition from local residents pleading support and condemning the attack.

Police at West Ham are investigating the incident.

A black couple fled for the safety of a takeaway after being taunted by drunken thugs in Custing House on Sunday night.

But the white gang then kicked in the window of the takeaway in Prince Regent Lane - and hurled glass shards at the terrified couple.

They were unhurt, though the shop owner was knocked to the ground. The teenage boys' apprehended attack came after they had threatened the couple in Bingley Road.



In 1991, NMP, in conjunction with local West Ham fans, decided to challenge this menace. The fans, with help from NMP, initially monitored the sale of fascist literature at the matches and then pressurised the club to include a statement

## Football club is urged to fight racists

CONTROVERSIAL race hate watchdog group Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) is calling on West Ham United to combat alleged racist and fascist activity outside the club's ground.

NMP says that members of a right wing organisation were seen selling newspapers outside the ground on four occasions at the tail end of last season.

against racism in its next match programme. Following this intervention, and with the help of the fans themselves, we were able to ensure that despite very little support from the club itself the statement was included, and that there were no further recorded sales of BNP and NF papers at West Ham. The letter we sent to West Ham Football Club demanding action was also unique in that many local groups and councillors signed it. The club were initially reluctant to take any action but in the end our persistence paid off. West Ham United pledged to withdraw season tickets from supporters found guilty of racist behaviour at home matches.

## European Fascism

The past year saw an incredible increase in fascist activity across continental Europe. At present there are 21 fascist Euro-MPs in the European Parliament. Almost every EC country now has a sizeable fascist party and, particularly in France and Germany, these groups appear to be gaining rapidly. This situation is clearly of great concern to anti-fascists in Britain and every new development is watched with increasing horror.

In Belgium, the November 1991 elections in Antwerp (scheduled to be the European city of culture in 1993), saw the Vlaams Blok fascist party gain 75,223 votes (25.3%), making them the largest single party in Antwerp. One of the 12 Vlaams Blok MPs in the Belgian parliament has a conviction for assaulting a 15-year-old Moroccan youth with a baseball bat.

Meanwhile, in Austria, the Freiheitliche Partei Osterreichs (FPO), or Freedom Party, has established itself as the second largest party in the Vienna city government, gaining 23% of the vote. The FPO, led by the openly fascist Jorge Haider, conducted an alarmist campaign around the slogan 'Vienna for the Viennese' and warned that the Austrian capital could soon be overrun by immigrants.

Italy has also seen gains for its fascist parties. The Italian fascist party MSI had four members elected to parliament, including Mussolini's grand-daughter. The Lombardy League, a fascist party from the north of Italy, also has MPs in parliament and are making frightening advances. In Brescia, they received 24% of the vote in local elections, toppling the Christian Democrats who have ruled since World War II.

Denmark has seen a terror wave sweep the country with bombs being planted by extreme right wing groups. In one bombing, a leading Danish International Socialist Party member was killed.

France and the newly unified Germany, however, give greatest cause for concern. The catalogue of attacks in Germany during September and October 1991 indicates the scale of the problem. Particularly disturbing were the attacks on a refugee hostel in Hoyerswerda where refugees were beaten and attacked. Numerous attempts were made to storm and firebomb the hostel and there were serious assaults on anti-fascists trying to defend it. The attacks led one Iranian refugee to comment that he would rather go back to Iran and face detention than continue living in Germany under those conditions. Eventually the state government, having shown no commitment to defend or protect them, evacuated the refugees.

In 1990, the Republikaner Party, led by Herr Schonhuber, a former SS officer, won six seats as the largest section of a combined fascist vote of 2,655,000. The ruling Christian Democratic Union has refused to condemn the fascists' actions or provide adequate protection for the victims. Instead they have fanned the flames by blaming 'bogus asylum-seekers' for Germany's problems. The government has set up special 'camps' in which refugees awaiting the processing of their applications will be

herded. Despite government denials that these 'camps' are not prisons, anyone attempting to leave will be automatically deported. In a country where according to the *Suddeutsche Zeitung* newspaper, racist attacks occur at an average of 78 per day, and where every state has had attacks on refugee hostels, the government's behaviour is nothing short of criminal. Indeed the problem has got so bad that recently a British court accepted a plea for political asylum from a man escaping Germany due to racist violence.

NF, so the French, German and other European governments have introduced new immigration legislation and vowed to 'get tough on illegals'.

In Britain's case, no prompting was required for the government to introduce the Asylum Bill (see outreach chapter). Yet France saw a supposedly Socialist government introduce its much heralded programme of action aimed at targeting immigrants. This programme included cutting family benefits to unauthorised workers, stricter document checks and preventing asylum-seekers from working while their claims were processed. They also extended their voluntary repatriation programme. All these measures were designed to attract FN voters, though in reality it is Le Pen who will gain, for not only is his virulent opposition to immigrants (particularly Arabs) in France paying dividends, but also the position of those already resident there is further undermined.

All the governments of Europe are guilty of shifting the debate away from large fascist votes and racism to the so-called problem of immigration thus giving more credibility to the fascists. This pandering to the fascists has reached such heights that in September, Giscard D'Estaing, the former French president called the immigration of Third World people to France an 'invasion' and demanded that nationality be secured through 'rights of blood'.

This anti-immigrant hysteria has even reached the European Commission which now argues in terms of 'stemming the flood of immigrants' entering Europe - this, despite the fact that the EC now takes less than 5% of the total world refugee population.

## Burn the race card

In November 1991, following an appeal by the German anti-fascist and anti-racist group ARI (Anti-Racist Initiative) and the women's group NOZIZWE (a multicultural womens group), NMP and CARF organised a picket of the German Embassy on the 53rd anniversary of Kristallnacht (in German Kristallnacht means 'night of the breaking glass'). Kristallnacht occurred over the 9-10 November 1938 when Nazi stormtroopers in Germany and Austria mounted a concerted attack on Jewish synagogues and property. There were many deaths and injuries, with many German and Austrian Jews fleeing.

53 years after that fateful night, German fascists are once again engaged in pogroms, but this time against black communities and other ethnic minorities and refugee groups. On 3 October 1991, ARI and NOZIZWE called a demonstration in Berlin to protest at these pogroms. 20,000 people attended including several thousand from the Turkish community. It was, however, violently

The collage features several newspaper articles. The largest headline is 'Menace of the Fourth Reich' with the sub-headline 'Germany wrestles with resurgent xenophobia'. Other headlines include 'Racist attacks raise new fears', 'German racist attacks worsen', 'Secret network of activists who seek a Fourth Reich', 'I keep on guard at night to stay alive', 'Five Britons charged after man is stabbed', 'Menace of the new Nazis', and 'Bonn line on race violence attacked'. A quote at the bottom reads: 'Hitler was a genius. Germany should be for the Germans'.

broken up by the police who then occupied the city's Turkish quarter where running battles were fought through the night between police and Turkish youth who organised to defend their community. It was with this climate in mind, that the picket was called, to express support and solidarity with the black communities and anti-fascists in Germany.

Support for the picket came from many different sources including black, Jewish and anti-fascist organisations, as well as progressive and left wing groups. The picket was attended by over 200 people who gathered at 4pm outside the German Embassy. There was a torchlit vigil and a large 'postcard' with the names of individuals who supported the initiative, including media personalities and politicians, appearing beside a statement abhorring the fascist and racist attacks as well as demanding action from Chancellor



Kohl. Though the ambassador refused to meet a delegation from the protest, wreaths were placed beside the embassy in memory of those killed and injured by the fascists in Germany.

## Stop Le Pen

In 1991, Le Pen (leader of the FN in France who referred to the gas chambers used against Jews in World War II as a 'detail of history') visited Britain on two occasions.

Le Pen's first visit was in the early summer. He was scheduled to address a meeting of fascist Euro-MPs (they hold meetings in a different EC capital every two months), but a number of Tory party supporters were also present. Le Pen was greeted by a picket of 50-70 people, organised with two or three days notice, chanting their protest at the meeting. This picket drew an exceptionally large police presence and security around Le Pen was intensified.

In December, Le Pen returned again, and was traced to the Charing Cross hotel by anti-fascists. He was due to give an after-dinner address to supporters of Western Goals, a far-right pressure group with many members in the Tory party.

Over 2000 people were mobilised to picket the hotel. As Le Pen began his speech inside the hotel to a half empty dining room (many guests having been discouraged from attending due to the picket), the police, again in vast numbers, decided to attack the picket. Using their boots and fists, they drove the protesters away from the entrance to the hotel, pushing them into the Strand. In the fighting that ensued, a number of NMP workers, present as legal observers, were injured by officers choking, kicking and punching them. A total of 11 demonstrators were arrested, some on serious charges, and many protesters suffered minor injuries. Scenes of the picket and the police attempts to smash it were relayed to France, where, as later reported, the size of the protest greatly encouraged French anti-fascists. This protest was an excellent example of unity in action amongst all sections of the anti-fascist movement.

12

## Racism and the Media

**NMP has consistently criticised the media for not only mirroring the racism of society but actively encouraging it. This is done in a**



**number of ways: for instance, by ignoring or writing about black people in a patronising way, ridiculing anti-racist struggles, by constantly portraying black people as violent criminals, illegal immigrants, or parasites. Even when inequality is considered by the mass media, it is treated in a sensationalist manner, racism briefly becomes 'news' and then just as suddenly returns to relative obscurity. These are issues that are very difficult to take up with the media, particularly when, those with influence such as Lord Macgregor, head of the Press Complaints Council, openly states that 'there are plenty of acceptable uses of the word 'Paki' .... (In some areas) this is the language that everybody uses.'**

The racist stereotypes generated in the media result in near hysteria over issues such as 'muggers', 'steamers', 'yardies', 'possies', 'muslim fundamentalists', and, by late 1991, 'bogus asylum-seekers'. During the 'phony' election campaign of 1991/92, all mainstream political parties were guilty of playing the race card by focusing on the threat posed by these 'bogus refugees'. For example, on 3rd October 1991 the *Daily Mail* led on a story which claimed that 'Britain is besieged by bogus asylum seekers' whilst the *Sun* reminded us of the colour question when stating 'figures obtained by the *Sun* show that two-thirds of our immigrants come from Africa or Asia'.

One cannot be surprised by the tabloid press's obsession with these 'cheating immigrants' but it must be emphasised that such crude and outright racism is ultimately legitimised by the 'respectable racism' of the so-called quality press such as the *Times* who, with no evidence what-so-ever, warned that 'London will be swamped by refugees in five years.' With the re-introduction of the Asylum Bill after the general election we can expect far more of this type of media racism throughout 1992.

## NMP and the Media

Despite NMP's criticisms of all sections of the media, we continue to cooperate with journalists for the simple reason that we have a duty to ensure that the problems faced by the black community and issues of racism in general are highlighted. Thus, NMP remains a first point of reference for those journalists who want to focus on the day-to-day reality of racism rather than give the views and empty rhetoric of so-called 'race experts'.

During 1991-92 NMP was involved in television programmes for BBC, ITV and Channel 4. Our cases and campaigns were featured sev-

eral times on *South East News* and *Network South East* and we also appeared on *Heart of The Matter*, *Midnight Special*, *Free For All* and *Right To Reply*, regarding the issue of the racist backlash in the wake of the Gulf War. Furthermore, NMP contributed to a *Public Eye* programme on the criminal justice system and *Black Bag* programmes on various issues affecting the black community.

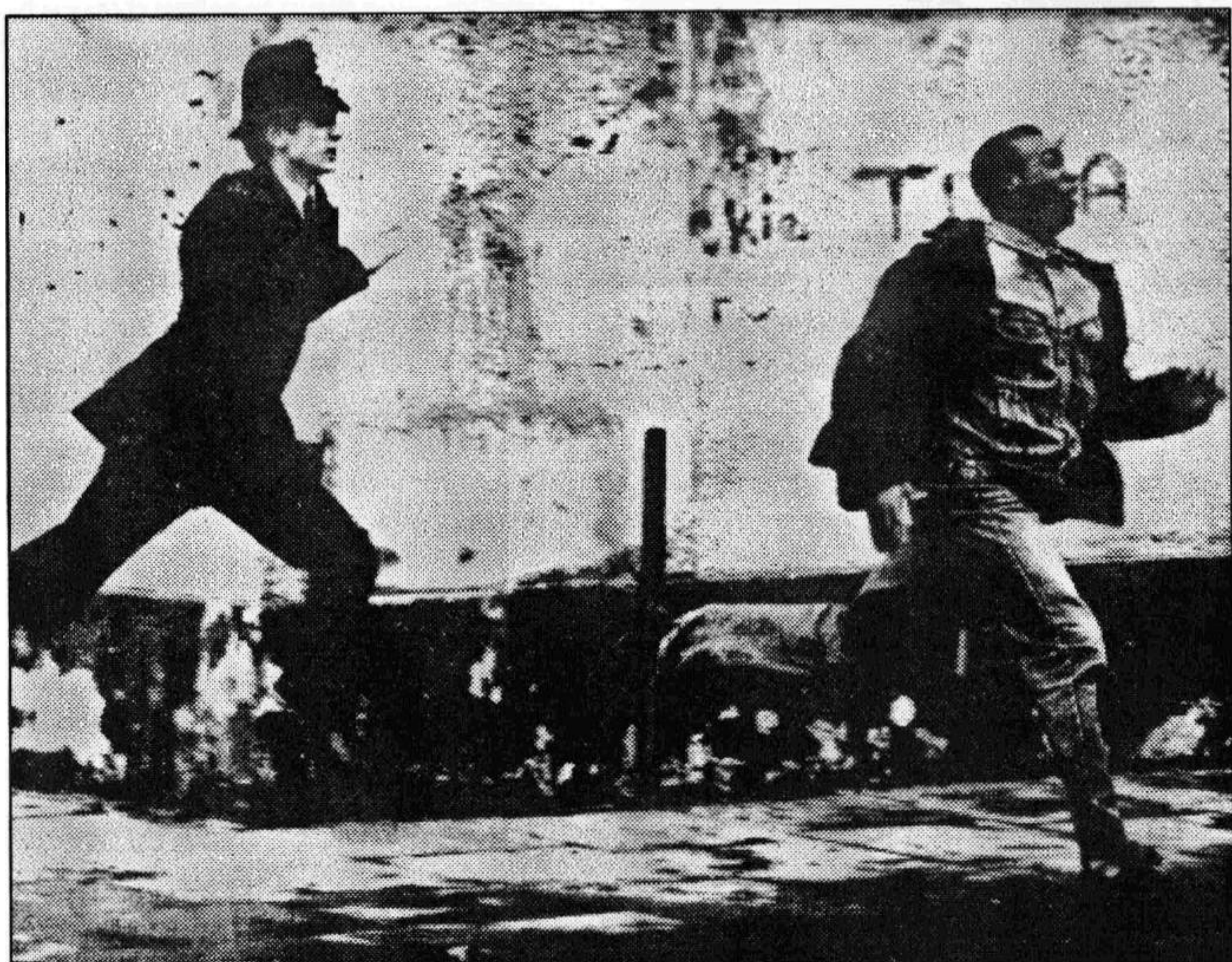
One area where we have expanded our work with the media is in the field of radio programmes which are often live and therefore free from misrepresentation. The radio stations we have appeared on include BBC Radio 1 *Newsbeat*, BBC Radio 4 *Today* programme, BBC Community Radio, Capital Radio, GLR, LBC, Choice FM, Sunrise Radio, Asian Community Radio and Starsound Radio as well as radio stations in Australia and the United States. Most recently we took part in an in-depth Radio 1 feature on racial harassment which involved us visiting various families in south Newham and allowing them to relate directly their own bitter experiences of racism. This programme will soon be broadcast and will be backed up by a Radio 1 racial harassment hotline staffed by volunteers trained by NMP.

In terms of the print media, we have featured in articles in the *Observer* and the *Guardian*, which published stories on the Sahitharan campaign and the Deane campaign respectively, and also the *Sunday People*, whom we assisted in an article on racist violence. Our local press coverage has included various articles in the *Stratford Express*, *Newham News* and the *Yellow Advertiser* as well as in the widely-distributed Forest Gate and Manor Park *Community News*. As one would expect, we have received extensive coverage in the black press, principally the *Caribbean Times*, the *Asian Times*, *Eastern Eye*, the *Voice*, the *Weekly Journal*, and the *Tamil Times*. Internationally we featured in articles in *The New York Times*, *The Sydney Herald* and in various newspapers in Sri Lanka which covered the murder of Mr Sahitharan. Over the past year we have noted that we have received increased coverage in all the left press ranging from *Socialist and Tribune* to *Militant* and *Socialist Worker*. We have also appeared in journals that do not usually cover issues of racism ranging from *Newsweek* to *ID Magazine*.

Finally, it is interesting to note that particularly diverse coverage in the press resulted from the release of NMP's 1991 seasons greetings card, a parody of a police ethnic minority recruitment poster. The point of the card's illustration was to show that police anti-racist initiatives tend to be nothing more than public relations exercises. According to a lengthy article in the *Newham Recorder* (26.12.91) the cards 'infuriated the police'. Below we reprint the piece from the *London Evening Standard* (17.12.91) that originally started the whole controversy:

EVENING STANDARD

# Yard anger at poster twisted for Christmas



The Scotland Yard poster that has been lifted for use as a Christmas card

AN EAST END police "monitoring group" has upset Scotland Yard by lifting a recruitment poster and using it as a Christmas card.

The poster, used in colour supplement ads on the Underground, shows a Donald Cullin photograph of a white policeman apparently chasing a black man. The Yard

by Ken Hyder

poster asks: "Another example of police prejudice or an example of yours?"

"Do you see a policeman harassing a criminal, or a policeman harassing an innocent person?" The punchline is: "Wrong both

times. It's two police officers, one in plain clothes, chasing a third party."

But the Christmas card sent out by the Newham Monitoring Project simply carries the caption: "Please! Please! Join the police force!! "Metropolitan police recruitment campaign".

The Yard poster has been running since spring last year and is part of a series based on issues like drugs, homelessness and domestic violence. Mr McCullin took all the pictures.

Julian Bradley, head of marketing and publicity at Scotland Yard, said: "They have used this picture and taken it out of context — a context in which we are trying to address the issues of racism in the community and in the service.

"Gestures like this do nothing to help anybody."

But Barry Mussenden, spokesman for the Newham group, which campaigns on behalf of black people, say they are victimised by the police.

He said: "It's a parody of their ad. It's a subtle, jokey dig at them."

"We view their race initiatives as public relations exercises.

"We don't believe that statements from the top translate themselves to the actions of police on the beat.

"And you only have to look at the numbers of black officers leaving the police to know that there's something wrong inside the organisation.

"Every day people come to us complaining of police racially-motivated harassment."

## 14

### British Justice - No Justice

In 1991-92, a deepening crisis of public confidence in the British police and judiciary has shaken the very foundations of the flawed criminal justice system. Below we examine some of the key issues that have arisen in order to demonstrate that British justice is, to put it bluntly, no justice at all.

### Criminal Justice Under Review?

Following the release of the Birmingham Six in March 1991, the then Home Secretary Kenneth Baker announced a Royal Commission on Criminal Justice to 'examine the effectiveness of the criminal justice system in England and Wales in securing the conviction of those guilty of criminal offences and the acquittal of those who are innocent, having regard to the efficient use of resources'.

Chaired by Viscount Runciman, the Commission is presently taking written submissions from interested parties and is expected to report its recommendations in 1993. Amongst its eleven members are a Police Commandant, a retired Lord Justice of Appeal, a former high ranking civil servant, and others of similar ilk. Indeed, the only black representative is Usha Prashar, a former Director of the Runnymede Trust.

We expect little of substance or value from this Commission other than a few tame recommendations which fail to address any of the pressing questions facing us. Indeed, we should not discount the possibility of more draconian and repressive legislation being suggested - it is worth remembering that it was the last Royal Commission that paved the way for the Police and Criminal Evidence Act (PACE) which has substantially increased police powers. Whilst having no faith in the Commission, it is imperative that we continue to raise civil liberties issues, place them on the political agenda and campaign for them to be addressed. Practical measures that should be adopted by the Commission include:

- an end to convictions based solely on uncorroborated confessions.
- the tape-recording of all police interviews.
- the establishment of an independent forensic service.
- the reintroduction of defendant's right of pre-emptory challenge of jury members.
- a new body to identify and deal with miscarriages of justice.
- the formation of an independent police complaints authority.

In addition, we must oppose a number of proposals by the Police Federation to restrict the 'right of silence' (already adopted in the

north of Ireland), introduce identity cards (as in South Africa), arm the police with American-style batons, and bring in a Riot Act, giving the police even greater public order powers that they already have.

Alan Eastwood, the Chairman of the Police Federation justified police calls for a Riot Act as follows:

*'There is a section of the community which is only too willing to riot, loot and cause injury to others and take advantage of any opportunities to attack police officers... Once such a power has been activated then there can be no excuse for anyone who disobeys the law, nor can there be any talk of police provocation or over-reaction.'*

Clearly, an even more powerful and unaccountable police force must be fought tooth and nail.

### The Tottenham Three: Free at Last

On 19 March 1987, Winston Silcott, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghup were framed for the murder of PC Blakelock and sentenced to life imprisonment. Blakelock had been killed during the 1985 Broadwater Farm uprising. An unprecedented racist lynch mob instigated by politicians and the media followed which gave the police a carte blanche to terrorise the local community. The system had its revenge and convicted three innocent men.

On 25 November 1991, Winston Silcott was acquitted by the Court of Appeal of the murder of PC Blakelock. He had been convicted purely on the basis of a fabricated 'incriminating statement'. But forensic tests had proved that the alleged statement had been tampered with by the police and critical passages added. Three days later, Mark Braithwaite and Engin Raghup were freed on bail, after the prosecution admitted it had no case against them either. Their convictions were officially quashed on 6 December 1991. The judiciary - for the first time - apologised for its 'failings'.

Credit for this historic victory lies with the families and friends of the Tottenham Three who tirelessly campaigned for



**Prison population  
September 1990**

- 16% of all male prisoners are black
- 26% of all women prisoners are black

**Sentencing**

- White males under 21 are given an average of 9 months
- Black males under 21 are given an average of 11-12 months
- White males over 21 are given an average of 13 months
- African-Caribbean males over 21 are given an average of 16.5 months
- Asian males over 21 are given an average of 26 months

The Prison Reform Trust reports that black people are 8 times more likely to be imprisoned than their white counterparts. In addition, black defendants are twice as likely to be remanded as white defendants.

**On 30 June 1989:**

- 19% of all male remand prisoners were black.
- 25% of all women remand prisoners are black

justice in the face of a racist system that was unwilling to allow any doubt to be raised about the guilt of Winston, Mark and Engin. We salute their courage.

But the campaign does not stop here. Detective Chief Superintendent Melvin who was in charge of the Blakelock investigation has been charged with perjury and conspiracy to pervert the course of justice. He must be convicted and imprisoned. In addition, all the other senior police officers and judges who played their part in framing the Tottenham Three must be brought to justice.

Sadly, Winston remains in prison, serving at least twenty years for another murder conviction. We must campaign to see that justice is also done in this other case.

**The Smith conviction**

In 1984, Winston defended himself from an unprovoked attack by Anthony Smith and his gang members at a party in Hackney. Smith was stabbed and died a week later. Winston was charged with murder and was on bail awaiting trial when he was framed with the Blakelock killing.

Winston's true defence was that he acted in self-defence. But in a sworn affidavit, he says that his solicitors advised him to change his story in the witness box. As a result, the jury saw him as unreliable and found him guilty.

In 1988, the infamous Lord Lane refused Winston leave to appeal the Smith conviction on the grounds that even if Winston had acted in self-defence and changed his story in court, this was his own fault.

Winston clearly did not get a fair trial in the Smith case. As a result, the Winston Silcott Defence Campaign has been launched to demand that Winston be given leave to appeal the Smith conviction. It deserves all our support.

**The Cardiff Three: a Cry for Freedom**

The murder of Lynette White on 14 February 1988 in Cardiff led to the largest and most expensive inquiry in South Wales police history. As a result, five

man were charged with the murder. Three of them, Yusef Abdullahi, Tony Paris and Steven Miller, were found guilty in November 1990 and sentenced to life imprisonment.

The men were convicted on the basis of a 'confession' by Steven Miller which was extracted by the police after six days in custody and sixteen interviews. Steven named seven men, including Yusef and Tony, as being at the scene of the murder. However, he immediately retracted the 'confession' following his release from custody, claiming it was made under duress.

The trial was moved from Cardiff, with its large black community, to the white area of Swansea. It was proved in court that Miller was susceptible to pressure and suggestion, having an IQ of only 75 and the mental age of 11. Not a shred of forensic evidence was presented against the men, despite there being 145 sets of finger and palm prints, semen, saliva, hair, and most significantly, a very rare male blood sample, most certainly belonging to the murderer, at the scene of the crime. Yet the men were convicted.

The convictions are even more perverse in light of the men's alibis:

- Tony Paris had over thirty witnesses who stated they saw him working at the Casablanca club before and after the murder.
- Yusef Abdullahi had thirteen independent witnesses who stated he was working on the *Coral Sea*, a ship docked in Barry, eight miles away from the scene of the murder.
- Steven Miller also had a witness who stated that Miller was with him that night.

The convictions of the Cardiff Three are yet another example of the police and the judiciary conspiring to ensure that black people are falsely imprisoned. The conspiracy is so brazen that the police admitted on *BBC Crimewatch* (March 1988) that they were looking for a white man seen escaping from the scene covered in blood. This man was never eliminated from the inquiry.

The Cardiff Three are fortunate in that their families and the local black community have mounted a concerted campaign in their defence. Consequently, the Home Secretary was forced to grant an appeal later this year. Whilst we look forward to welcoming the release of these men in next year's annual report, how many more innocent black people are languishing in prisons across the country, victims of police frame-ups, who do not have campaigns supporting them?

As Billy Power of the Birmingham Six said:

*'In this country, if the police say you're guilty, then you're guilty, especially if you are black or Irish'.*

**Police Racism Exposed**

Today, the reputation of the police lies in tatters. Yet senior officers continue to argue that it is individual officers, usually juniors, who are to blame for the present malaise, rather than the institution itself. The solution lies not in structural change, they claim, but in million pound advertising campaigns to improve the image of the police.

Below we give two examples of police racism that give some indication of the levels of racism in the police force. Unless this is recognised and uprooted, the platitudes of senior officers will do little to improve public confidence in the police.

**Rotten apples?**

*'When I entered the room, they started singing the Nazi party anthem and giving the Nazi salute... I was disgusted'.*

No, this not an observation on a meeting of the fascist British National Party but the comment of PC Brown on the everyday anti-Semitism he experienced from his fellow officers.

PC Brown, a Jewish officer of 13 years experience, took the Metropolitan police to court over attempts to prevent him from changing shifts so he did not have to work on Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath. The police, intent on preventing PC Brown from airing his grievances in open court, paid substantial damages in an out-of-court settlement.

Faced with allegations of anti-Semitism, the response of senior officers was sadly familiar. Firstly, they downplayed the seriousness, categorising it as a problem of the racism of individual officers. They then promised to rectify the situation and as always praised the courage of the complaining officer. But they failed to challenge the widespread institutionalised racism that is part and parcel of so-called 'canteen culture'.

PC Brown, realising the reality of his situation and the futility of expecting any change, decided to resign rather than face an anti-Semitic backlash. On asked for his reasons for resigning he stated:

*'There are senior officers who do not like Jews and I feel it's time to get out'.*

In addition, PC Brown also highlighted the likelihood of reprisals, including the possibility of being framed by his own fellow officers if he continued to serve as a police officer:

*'It has been made clear to me that, although I won my case, my career will not progress... it has been suggested that someone might try and plant drugs on me'.*

**Rotten barrel?**

Senior officers continue to counter allegations of widespread racism by maintaining that they remain committed to implementing the 'anti-racist practices' outlined by Sir Peter Imbert, the Metropolitan police Commissioner.

Such statements are exposed as a mere public relations sham when we examine the statements made by the Chief Constable of Strathclyde, Leslie Sharp. Speaking at a function at Prestwick Cricket Club in Ayrshire, he told a story about a mechanical umpire - originally the robot was painted white, but the glare hurt the players' eyes, so they painted the robot black to reduce the glare. To laughter, he continued, that the robot started to smoke pot, mug old ladies and rob shops.

In response to calls from the local black community for his resignation, Sharp commented, 'to say my remarks were racist is a distortion of what was a very happy event'.

Unfortunately, the local authority played down Sharp's remarks and refused to back calls for his resignation, accepting his apology and his feeble excuses. Indeed, it was left to the *Police Review* (27 March 1991) to make the most incisive comment on the situation:

*'Mr Sharp has shown how little impact the principles of racial equality have had on the service. From now on, unthinking bigots, paid less, trained less, and motivated much much less than a Chief Constable, will be able, when accused of racial stereotyping, to plead, "I had no intention to offend anyone".'*

The fact that a senior officer like Leslie Sharp is allowed to get away with such crude racism is a clear indication of the



extent to which racism is tolerated throughout the force. It may also help us to understand why there has been an increase in racist attacks in the Strathclyde area.

### Who is the police policing?

It is precisely such racist stereotyping legitimised by senior police officers which has led to the distribution of a leaflet headed 'Message from Redland Police' by a neighbourhood watch scheme in Redland, Bristol. The leaflet warns local people to call the police if they notice black people in the area, in particular, if they see African-Caribbeans 'aimlessly wandering around looking at houses or knocking on doors'. Further words of wisdom suggest that 'if you feel uneasy about the way either one or a group of Afro-Caribbeans are behaving, dial 999 immediately'. Obviously the writer of the leaflet had just returned from a stint with the South African police.

### Police Corruption in Hackney

Allegations of police corruption and brutality in Area 2 (which covers much of East London) have been well-documented for some time. Hence there was little surprise when anti-corruption officers from Scotland Yard began an investigation into Stoke Newington police station. Evidence had come to light that officers based at the station were reselling drugs seized on the streets back onto the streets; in one instance, an officer is alleged to have made £2000 a week selling drugs. In addition, officers were routinely fabricating evidence and beating up suspects to gain convictions. Subsequently, eight officers were transferred to new duties, whilst one was suspended from duty. The tenth, Sergeant Gerrard Carroll, a former custody officer at Stoke Newington police station, committed suicide by shooting himself in a cell after being transferred to Barkingside police station.

Hackney Community Defence Association (HCDA) issued a report entitled 'A crime is a crime is a crime', in

which 30 police officers are named who HCDA says are guilty of police malpractice. HCDA are also calling for an independent and public inquiry into Hackney, Stoke Newington and City Road police stations. 1992 promises to see a number of appeals against conviction from defendants falsely convicted on the evidence of these corrupt officers. Yet anti-racist campaigners are well aware that the police's internal investigation of itself will yield nothing except another cover-up.

The case of the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad is an excellent example of how the present system ensures that officers are not prosecuted.

### Turning a Blind Eye To Injustice

In August 1989, the then Chief Constable, Geoffrey Dear, disbanded the West Midlands Serious Crime Squad after he suspected that files missing from Warwick Crown Court had been taken by police officers. Fifty-three detectives were moved to other duties, although it was stated recently that only eleven of them were under investigation. The subsequent inquiry into the Squad was supervised by the Police Complaints Authority and carried out by detectives from West Yorkshire police. The investigation took 33 months and cost over £4 million as it investigated allegations of fraud, perjury and corruption. Yet at the end of the investigation, on 19 May 1992, the Director of Public Prosecutions, Barbara Mills, stated there was insufficient evidence to prosecute any of the 226 officers investigated. Although Ronald Adams, the deputy chief constable of West Midlands, has denied allegations of a cover-up, it is interesting to note two things. Firstly, the interim report by West Yorkshire officers, which noting the disappearance of various papers, stated that 'the absence of the documents carries the unpalatable suggestion that some lines of inquiry have been thwarted'. Secondly, since the investigation began, eleven prisoners have won their appeals against conviction, after doubt was thrown on the evidence of the West Midlands detectives. The investigation by the Police Complaints Authority demonstrates the reality of the police investigating the police. As long as this system is in operation, the police will be free to frame innocent people, secure in the knowledge that they will never be prosecuted.

This investigation was a white-wash. Yet it has come as no surprise to us. For years black people have sought redress through the courts by pursuing civil actions, rather than relying on the sham Police Complaints Authority. Consequently, police compensation in the Metropolitan area alone increased from £388,000 in 1988 to £836,000 in 1990.

black remand prisoners are concentrated in a small number of inner-city Victorian prisons. These prisons are the most grim and squalid. Remand prisoners, ie people who are innocent of any charge, are confined two or three in a cell for most of the day. Facilities are so outdated that prisoners continue to have to slop out daily.

The conditions in these prisons are so atrocious that 2/3 of all suicides and acts of self-mutilations occur there. Yet when remand prisoners come to trial, black defendants are twice as likely to be acquitted than their white counterparts.

#### Untried Prisoners - June 1989

Prison	% Black
Brixton	38%
Wormwood	
Scrubs	40%
Pentonville	37%
Holloway	38%
Birmingham	28%
Manchester	16%
Leeds	13%

This is amply demonstrated by Robert Haughton, aged 29, who was released on 19 May 1991, having served six years after being framed by West Midlands officers:

*'I've gone through hell and back. It crucifies you, doing time for something you didn't do. And there's lots more innocent people inside, there really are'. That's been the way with the West Midlands... I'm going to sue the bollocks off them'.*

### Vandana Patel

Vandana Patel, aged 21, had been married for over 2 years. Throughout that time, she had suffered extreme violence at the hands of her husband, Jayantibhai Patel, to the extent that she sought sanctuary in a women's refuge. On 29 April 1991, he stabbed her to death. Horrific by itself, the murder is exacerbated by the fact that it took place within the confines of a Domestic Violence Unit (DVU) at Stoke Newington police station, where police were supposedly attempting to reconcile the couple. What is astounding is that the police were well aware of Jayantibhai's violent past, yet they did not search him and then left him alone with Vandana, whom he stabbed twelve times.

This incident raises many questions about the police's DVUs and whether officers really understand the needs of women seeking protection from violent partners. Violence against a woman is a criminal assault regardless of whether a relationship exists. There is no other criminal offence where the police would seek to reconcile the perpetrator and the victim or as Chief Superintendent Roy Clarke (Stoke Newington police station) put it, allow 'parties to talk through their difficulties' as 'a legitimate option'. The fundamental point must surely be that the police officer is there to enforce the law, not to act as a marriage guidance counsellor. In the cases of black women, this patronising attitude is coupled with crude racist stereotyping by officers who put domestic violence in the black community down to religious and cultural dynamics.

Although campaigners have called for an independent public inquiry into Vandana's death and the negligent role of the police as well as an immediate review of the policies and practices of Domestic Violence Units, to date the police and the Home Office have failed to respond. For the 100,000 women needing protection from violent partners in London alone, this silence will leave only one question - if the police fail to protect, who can we go to for protection.

### Deaths in Custody

Since 1980, over 60 black people have died in custody or due to police actions, yet to date no-one has ever charged. These murders, less publicised than racist murders, are an increasing feature of life for black people, particularly because of the increasing number of black people being remanded, sentenced or sectioned. Below we reprint an article prepared by CARF and Inquest.

Colin Roach, Blair Peach, Clinton McCurbin became household names. They were cases in which state repression was exposed because there was a black press to investigate, local groups to agitate, ask questions and support families to push the legal system to its limits in the pursuit of justice. But we cannot let any black death go unchallenged.

At every point in the custodial system, black people are at risk - of undue violence, of medical neglect, of dangerous drugs. Vulnerable young black people who are mentally unstable are being criminalised. Those who are recognised as mentally unstable are being brutalised. And all in a system where officers are a law unto themselves, where they close ranks when a death occurs, where the inquest cannot establish who was to blame for death.

Mark Fletcher, a 21-year-old African-Caribbean man, died on 8 February 1992 in Dudley Road Hospital, Birmingham. We do not know as yet what he died of or what led him to be there. What we do know is that he was taken into police custody, sectioned under the Mental Health Act and transferred to All Saints Hospital. There he allegedly collapsed after an injection of drugs was made into his spine. But why was he taken into custody, what medical treatment did he receive, what led to his collapse?

Oliver Pryce was asphyxiated by Middlesborough policemen in July 1990. We hoped that, with the inquest verdict of 'unlawful killing', returned in November 1991, his family would see justice done. But, to date, three months after that inquest, the coroner's office still has not forwarded the necessary papers to the Director of Public Prosecutions. (It has also emerged that the Police Complaints Authority, which has to investigate every



*'I just wish you'd stop bringing your work home with you'*

**Complaints of racially discriminatory behaviour by police officers in 1990 have increased by 100% since 1987, assaults by 74%, oppressive behaviour by 47%.**

**This figure becomes even more worrying when we consider that according to the 1990 PCA Report and the PCA Tri-Annual Review, 1985-91, not only have complaints against the Metropolitan Police been officially under-reported by the Police Commissioners' Annual Reports, but that only 1 in 3 complaints of racist behaviour is publicly recorded and passed onto the Home Office. Not that any police officers have ever been disciplined as a result of the 559 complaints of racist conduct since 1987.**

death in custody, was not brought in to investigate Oliver's death until two weeks after it had occurred.) Meanwhile, the family of Ian Gordon, who was shot dead by police in Telford, are shocked to have his killing judged 'lawful' at his inquest. They are calling for a public inquiry.

The mother of 24-year-old Melita Crawford just wants the Home Office to tell her how her daughter died whilst on remand at Rislely on a shop-lifting charge. Melita was found dead in her bed by night patrol officers. It is thought that she died when a packet of heroin that she had swallowed, burst. But why was someone with a history of mental illness remanded in prison? Was it recognised by the authorities that she was a drug-user? How long did it take for the emergency bell to be answered by night-staff whilst she was choking to death?

These deaths and their treatment by the authorities bear all the hallmarks of previous black deaths. In the late 1980s, youth worker Terence Brown and salesman Edwin Carr died suddenly in hospital without explanation, just like Mark Fletcher. Winston Rose and Clinton McCurbin, like Oliver Pryce, were also

asphyxiated in police neck-holds. Will the Pryce family, like the Rose family, have to wait ten years to get compensation? Jamie Stewart died, like Melita, from a drug overdose which was either ignored or misdiagnosed by police. And Delroy McKnight, like Melita, might be alive today if the emergency bell at his prison had been answered more promptly.

But for the occasional paragraph in the *Voice* and the campaigning work of Inquest, such deaths would never be made known at all. To prevent yet more similar deaths, there must be an unremitting campaign around deaths in custody, the conditions under which they occur, and get covered up.

This means alerting local and national papers to each death, passing information to black groups in each area, making sure that the families of the bereaved are supported emotionally, financially and legally.

It also means keeping up a constant pressure about the failure of the Prison Medical Service, exposing the abuses of black people under the Mental Health Act, demanding inquiries into black deaths which go beyond the confines of the inquest.

That is the only way is to prevent a future Crawford having to ask, 'Tell me how my daughter died?'

### Complaints Against The Police

Year	Total	Complaint	Total Investigated	Substantiated
1973	12,886	8,723	1,144	(9%)
1974	13,373	8,786	1,141	(9%)
1975	14,258	9,311	1,254	(9%)
1976	15,653	9,906	1,334	(8%)
1977	16,935	9,018	1,107	(6%)
1978	28,234	15,279	1,559	(5%)
1979	29,383	14,664	1,338	(5%)
1980	31,009	14,764	1,288	(4%)
1981	32,443	16,202	1,542	(5%)
1982	32,086	16,489	1,787	(6%)
1983	30,681	15,018	1,448	(5%)
1984	31,174	17,110	1,561	(5%)
1985	28,253	12,805	1,155	(4%)
1986	29,178	13,805	1,129	(4%)
1987	27,932	11,356	924	(3%)
1988	28,758	10,701	853	(3%)
1989	29,312	9,229	765	(3%)
1990	34,894	12,711	847	(2%)
1991	35,346	12,142	813	(2%)

Of the 35,346 complaints made against the police in 1991, a total of 18,586 (53%) were made against the Metropolitan police.

Even the PCA themselves recognise 'the standard of proof is unnecessarily high, resulting in the disciplinary process beginning to fall into disrepute'.

# 14

## Outreach Work: Challenges for the Nineties

**Over the last twelve years, the day-to-day work of NMP has led us to understand the importance of ensuring that the black experience play a central role in the development of strategies to counter new dimensions of popular racism and police malpractice. Our fundamental belief that the fight against racism can only be fought by the community and never by others on its behalf, has emerged from years of grassroots anti-racist work, including involvement in numerous self-defence campaigns. Through these campaigns, we have sought to increase the involvement of local people in the Project's work, and through regular talks and debates, we are able to draw upon the experiences of local black people, identifying the new demands and needs of the community.**

The 'Newham experience' has a relevance far beyond the boundaries of this borough. And for this reason, NMP has sought to take the lessons of this experience out to as wide an audience as possible from the anti-racist movement to the voluntary and statutory sectors to the mainstream political system. By so doing, we have shown that the 'Newham experience' can provide a blue-print for community struggles across the country.

### Community Care

In 1991, Newham began the process of phasing in the new NHS and Community Care Act - the ostensible aim of which is to improve the existing provision for the care of people with short and long term care needs in the community. The term 'community care' includes a whole range of services from home help to day and residential care.

People who need community care include those with mental health problems, drug or alcohol related disorders, the elderly, and those with progressive illnesses. There are also separate provisions under the new Children's Act to legislate for care issues relating to young people.

The Community Care Act is based on the principle that we should move away from institutional care towards care within the community. This entails the local authority changing its role from 'service provider' to 'service enabler', by purchasing community care from the independent sector - private companies and community organisations - in the form of contracts.

### The 'privatisation' of care

The voluntary sector has traditionally played a significant part in providing care services for the community. Within this overall picture, black community groups have responded by providing services tailored to the needs of our communities - needs which are often overlooked within the provision of mainstream services. Previously, it was community organisations who, having identified the needs, approached the local authority for funding in the form of a grant to provide a particular service. This process is now being reversed with the introduction of contracts. Now, the local authority will determine what is needed and purchase the specified services, drafting a contract that lays out what is to be done, how, when and for how much. In

fact, by introducing this legislation, the government is taking the first step towards privatising community care.

Therein lies the problem with the new contract culture. Whilst the principle of moving care back into the community is an admirable one, without proper funding, community groups could be used to provide services on the cheap, leading to inadequate services and situations where, for example, a person could be moved out of a mental institution only to be left on the streets totally unsupported. For black community groups, the potential problems are far more acute since we tend to provide a very broad range of services which would be stifled if we were legally bound to fulfil quotas regarding a specific service. There is also the problem of having to compete for contracts. Although the Act acknowledges that black people should have their needs met within mainstream provision, the fact remains that a large established white voluntary sector organisation or a private firm will be the ones able to provide a service cheaply but, at the same time, that service will inevitably be inadequate, inaccessible or inappropriate to the needs of the black community. This is why the Community Care Act is so important to the black community because it could effectively undermine black groups and marginalise black people in need.

### The Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum

In January 1991, the Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum was officially created out of an informal network of black community groups in Newham. From the outset, NMP played an active role in the forum.

In February, the Forum organised an evening seminar to inform black organisations about the principles behind the Community Care Act and the race implications of it for the people of Newham. The keynote speaker was Loraine Martins - chair of NMP and the Head of the African-Caribbean Development Unit at the London Voluntary Services Council - who emphasised that pressure must be applied to the local authority and the

health authority to ensure that the needs of the black community are met. From there, the Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum grew to the extent that it now has a membership of around 50 black voluntary sector representatives whose role it is to provide a collective voice for the black community on care issues and to ensure that the views of local black groups are taken into account by those authorities and acted upon.

Towards the end of the year, Newham Council's Social Services and Newham Health Authority jointly funded an audit of the independent sector to assess community care services currently provided by non-statutory groups. Taking into account such issues as cost-effectiveness, the idea was to determine the required nature of future contracts and as such, this study will have crucial long-term implications for Newham as a whole.

The Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum had serious doubts about the consultants appointed by the Council to undertake the audit, in particular their commitment to race and equal opportunities and the extent of their local knowledge in a borough where over 40% of the population is black. The Forum raised these concerns on numerous occasions with Social Services but were consistently ignored, calling into question its commitment to race and equal opportunity issues.

The Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum then enlisted the support of the Health Forum - a network of mainstream voluntary sector care organisations - in organising a boycott of the audit. By taking this stand of non-cooperation, whilst at the same time negotiating with the Health Authority and Social Services, the Black and Ethnic Minority Community Care Forum succeeded in securing funding to appoint a consultant who they felt would bring a black and ethnic minority perspective to the audit and a broad anti-racist framework. It remains to be seen whether Newham Council and Newham Health Authority will genuinely take on board the views of the Forum to ensure that black people are heard in this new age

of community care.

## Asylum-seekers under attack

The Asylum Bill was without doubt one of the most vicious and racist pieces of legislation that any British government has attempted to introduce. Although it failed in its first attempt in parliament, due to the guillotining of legislation in the run up to the General Election, it remains on the government agenda to be re-introduced in the autumn session of parliament. To understand the Bill, we need to examine its provisions as well as the context within which it was proposed.

### The race card

In previous reports, NMP has documented the growth of European racism and its increasing legitimisation by governments and institutions. Whilst many welcomed 1992 and the creation of a single European market, the black and refugee communities have consistently attempted to raise the issue of 'Fortress Europe', a Europe that was closing its borders to all black people, immigrants, refugees and migrants, in the name of a common European policy on immigration. It is within this context that we have to place the Asylum Bill - legislation which draws from a new popular anti-immigrant and anti-refugee racism that is sweeping across Europe.

The Asylum Bill is legitimised by claims that Europe is facing a flood of 'bogus' asylum seekers. Whilst the tabloid media print racist scare stories as they did in the late 1970s and early 1980s, the so-called quality press legitimise the numbers game. It has now become a question of 'how many can we let in' and 'how best can we achieve integration', rather than questioning the role of the West in creating refugees by installing and supporting dictatorships in the 'Third World'.

All this has led to a massive increase in racist violence against black people throughout Europe and the re-emergence of fascism. In France, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Sweden and Austria, the fascist parties have made massive electoral gains by running on anti-immigrant platforms. Here in Britain, the Tory Party was prepared to play the race card to win the General Election just as it had done in previous elections.

### Different faces, same message

*'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour'*

Peter Griffiths, Conservative candidate in Smethwick, 1964

*'People are rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture'*

Margaret Thatcher MP, Conservative leader, 1978

*'We can't have the whole of Asia and Africa coming to live in London'*

Peter Lloyd MP, Immigration Minister, 1991

## The Asylum Bill

The Asylum Bill was first announced on 1 November 1991 together with draft Immigration Rules and draft Asylum Appeals (Procedure) Rules.

The proposed Bill would, claimed the then Home Secretary Kenneth Baker, speed up the removal of 'bogus' refugees who were abusing asylum procedures to avoid immigration controls. The government also announced an increase in prison detention places by 300 and the recruitment of 260 new immigration officers.

### Its main points and implications:

- removes right to independent legal representation
- removes right to legal aid
- removes right to bail for detained asylum-seekers
- removes right of homeless asylum-seekers to council housing
- removes right to appeal against refusal of asylum
- introduces compulsory fingerprinting of all asylum-seekers
- introduces fast-track system allowing only 48 hours to apply for leave to appeal
- limits category of people accepted as refugees
- doubles the fines for airlines carrying people without 'valid' travel documents to £2000

(Note that these measures are retrospective in that they affect all asylum-seekers with decisions pending).

The Asylum Bill will not only prevent refugees fleeing death from entering Britain to claim asylum but will actually prevent them from fleeing their countries in the first instance. It does this by placing immigration officials at potential points of departure as well as prosecuting airlines for carrying refugees without 'valid' papers. It is in effect condemning refugees to persecution, torture and death.

Asylum-seekers if they do manage to enter Britain will face untold denials of basic human rights, such as the right to independent and free legal representation. The Bill also legitimises the criminalisation of refugees, through various measures, such as compulsory fingerprinting and, for the first time, the detention of people who have not been charged or convicted of any criminal offence. In addition, it reinforces the role of the police as an arm of the immigration authorities which will in essence legitimise police raids and arrests of all black people, in the

search for so-called 'bogus' asylum-seekers.

## Stop the Asylum Bill campaign

On the announcement of the Asylum Bill, hundreds of organisations came together in broad alliances such as the Asylum Rights Campaign. In addition, the Refugee Ad-Hoc Committee for Asylum Rights was formed, comprising refugee organisations supported by black community groups. A parliamentary lobby was called to oppose the Bill and there were pickets outside the Home Office and vigils in Trafalgar Square. This activity culminated in a mass demonstration through London on 18 January 1992, organised by NUS London Area in conjunction with refugee organisations. A number of speakers spoke about the Asylum Bill and its implications, including NMP.



## Newham Immigration Action Committee

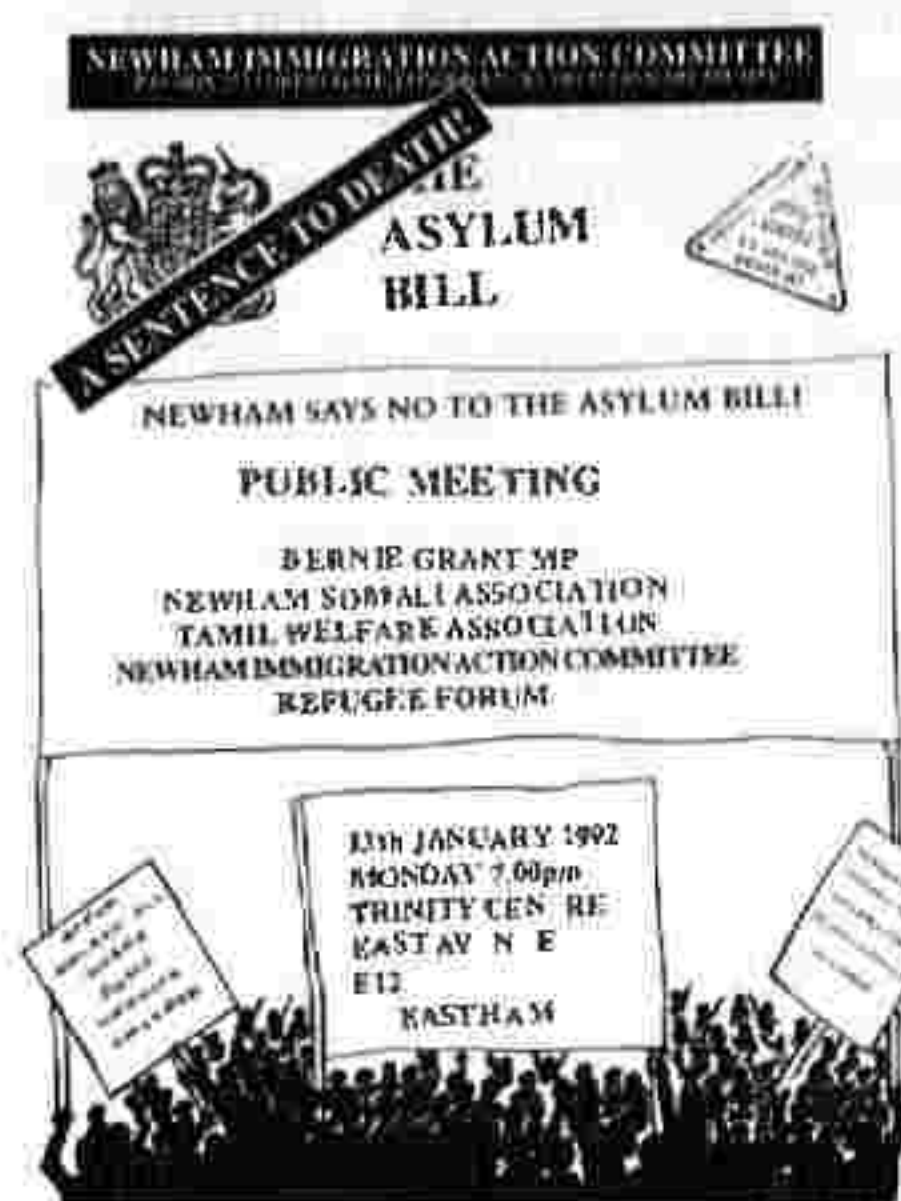
NMP, together with local refugee groups, black organisations, Newham Rights Centre and a number of community activists, initiated Newham-based activities around immigration and asylum issues. The aim was to create in the Newham Immigration Action Committee (NIAC) an organisation capable of reacting to emergency situations such as deportations, and coordinating pro-active work around immigration/asylum issues. In addition, NIAC intends to run information campaigns on immigration issues and people's rights within the local community. NIAC also attempts to bring together organisations from within



the 'settled' community and the 'new' refugee communities. In essence, we are attempting to forge unity, through



As the national campaign against the Asylum Bill lobbies Parliament, local groups in Newham are united against what they see as 'just another stage in a long line of racist legislation'.  
The Anti-Racist Action Committee has been set up in Newham, uniting all black and Asian groups with Tamil and Somali refugee communities in a campaign publicising the much wider issues affecting refugees and black communities.  
The Asylum Bill will affect all black people, ethnic and Indian, from Newham's Maritime Point, one of the groups involved in the Campaign. 'You can't tell it's a danger by the colour or any skin'. He says the Bill is 'confronting us with a choice: we defend all black people, including police officers to catch all 'immigrants' that include false entry. It is a test of moral courage that he believes is passing through. 'Immigrants in their various are also scared. As a result of refugee families in other struggles.'



struggle, within the black community around common issues, thus ensuring that those wishing to divide the community into various hierarchies with the refugee community at the bottom, are unable to sow the seeds of division.

### Newham says no to the Asylum Bill

With the introduction of the Asylum Bill, it became apparent that the immediate energies of NIAC had to be focused on informing local people about the implications of the Asylum Bill. A multi-lingual leaflet was produced and distributed all across Newham. Over 150 people attended a public meeting held on 13 January 1992 addressed by representatives from refugee organisations and NMP who spoke about the increase in police powers and racist violence that was taking place, against the background of the racist murder of Sahitharan. NIAC also mobilised local

people to attend the national demonstration against the Asylum Bill that was to be held later that week.

NIAC, realising the importance of forcing all local institutions to oppose the Asylum Bill, targetted the local authority. This was important not only for symbolic reasons but because many of the proposals in the Asylum Bill needed the active co-operation of local authorities in implementing provisions such as the housing regulations. On 17 December 1991, NIAC members packed the gallery of East Ham town hall. A motion opposing the Asylum Bill and calling on Newham Council to support an information campaign about the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers was tabled by Cllr Goodman (also a member of NIAC) to the Full Council meeting. The motion was successful and led to the Council sent a letter to the Home Secretary outlining their opposition. We reprint some extracts below:

*'In Newham, we strongly believe that all those who have a well founded fear of persecution should be afforded sanctuary in any country committed to civilised and humane standards.'*

*'This Council has experienced, at first hand, the activities of the 'extreme Right' in attempting to exploit irrational fears about refugee "swamping", "avalanches", "tidal waves" and the like. We have also witnessed where that rhetoric leads and the misery induced by racially motivated and abuse against young and old, men and women. The Council shares many of the real concerns expressed about racism and racial violence in Europe...'*

Letter by Steve Timms, Leader of the Council (24 December 1991)

Although we managed to get the Council to oppose the Asylum Bill, the campaign to force the Council to refuse to implement the regulations continues. For, as demonstrated in a letter by workers at the Homeless Persons Unit to local Councillors, there are moves within the Council to accept passports as a means of identification. With the reintroduction of the Asylum Bill, opposition to racist practices by Council staff in the front-line needs to be fully supported and built upon. Below we reprint sections of the statements made by the workers:

*'We do not believe that inspecting passports is at all necessary to help speed up our investigation. Is requesting to see passports in some circumstances completely innocuous? Given the likely introduction of the Asylum Bill the answer has to be No. And what if someone refuses to offer their*

passports because... they fear the consequences?'

*As a workforce committed to working with anti-racist policies we call on you to confirm that, irrespective of the details of the legislation:*

- 1 *The Homeless Persons Unit will continue its present practice of not contacting the Home Office or I.N.D. under any circumstances.*
- 2 *Newham Council will not deny any Asylum Seekers who are homeless and in priority need the right to temporary or permanent accommodation.'*

Letters by HPU workers

### International anti-racism: a common agenda

As already stated, because of the growth of European racism and fascism, NMP stresses the importance of incorporating international perspectives into the domestic agenda and creating a European network of organisations to co-ordinate anti-racist initiatives. Throughout 1991, we have continued to work closely with refugee and anti-racist organisations both here in Britain and in Europe. The number of European organisations visiting NMP, eager to learn from the experiences of Newham's black community and its mode of organisation, is growing.

In addition, as in previous years, we have been invited to a number of forums as keynote speakers to share our perspective on Europe. This have included a public rally of the Standing Conference on Racism in Europe, the Waltham Forest conference on 1992 and a conference against immigration controls in Manchester. We were also invited to speak at a meeting of European refugee organisations in Portugal.

### NMP speaks in Berlin

On 20 April 1991, NMP was invited by the Berlin-based Anti-Racist Initiative to participate in a conference about the growth of European racism and effective strategies to counter it. The Anti-Racist Initiative, a group active in anti-deportation campaigns since 1986, also wanted to use the opportunity of the conference to rally progressive forces in Berlin to form a new united grassroots initiative against racism and fascism. The conference was attended by over 30 organisations including refugee speakers from Spain, Italy and France. NMP was able to contribute with practical assistance in initiating a local

24-hour hotline for victims of racist violence. The conference enabled us to hear of the growth of racist violence and neo-Nazi groups that is taking place across Germany since 'unification' and strategies to counter this. What became clear was the difficulty of organising in what was formerly known as 'East Germany'. It was the links made at the conference which led NMP, together with CARF, to launch solidarity action on the anniversary of Kristallnacht.

### NMP in Ireland

NMP was invited to participate in a delegation of black people to the north of Ireland. The delegation was drawn from all sections of the black community and included trade unionists, community activists, lawyers and academics. Its brief was to meet Republican community and human rights activists and exchange information and ideas. The trip was remarkable for all concerned not only because we heard first hand of the experiences of community struggle waged in very difficult circumstances, but also because of the similarities in the experiences of black and Irish people and the responses of our communities to oppression, denial of civil liberties and police criminalisation. The experience of Irish people with regards to policing strategies needs to be continually analysed, the necessary lessons assessed. For, undoubtedly, what is tested in Belfast today, will be used in the black communities tomorrow.

### A youth fightback in Manchester

The anti-racist movement has to be able to address the demands of local youth. Although many people talk about effective youth work, and integrating youth into local community groups and the wider anti-racist struggle, this remains largely unfulfilled.

However, there have been some successes in places such as Manchester. Here there has been the development of an Asian Action Group (AAG - which means fire in Urdu). The group, run by young people themselves, is attempting to organise against the growing problem of racism and police harassment in



the area.

NMP has worked closely with AAG, attempting to provide assistance whenever requested. Subsequently, we were invited to speak at one of AAG's meetings in Rochdale. Following this successful meeting, AAG launched a rights card, similar to that used by NMP and funded through NMP's student contacts. These cards were distributed at the official launch of AAG attended by over 150 people. Amongst the speakers at the launch were NMP and Tony Deane, both of whom welcomed the official launch of AAG and looked forward to working together in the future.

### Working with students

Throughout 1991-92, our links with local schools improved immensely. In fact, we now give talks to most schools on issues of policing and racist violence in the borough and our rights cards continue to be in great demand.

A number of school pupils have also sought to do 2-week work placements with us, and this has led to increasing numbers of local students using our resources not only for their own school work but for personal projects as well. We hope that in the coming year we can produce a special video on racism aimed at schools as well as organise a series of open days for young people.

Our work within the student movement, detailed in the 1990 Annual Report, has continued with improved links with the Polytechnic of East London, not only around campaigns but also with the day-to-day work of the Project. We welcome the formation of a student anti-racist group at the Polytechnic which we hope will lead to increased involvement of students in local campaigns.

Important links have also been established with the local Community College. NMP has provided information stalls for college events and spoken to many groups of students about our work. Other local colleges where NMP has links include those in Redbridge, Barking and Tower Hamlets. We look forward to developing a stronger relationship with all these institutions in the coming year.

NMP has also received invitations to

speak at meetings and seminars from many other colleges in the country. We have addressed NUS London, NUS National and black student conferences on the work of NMP and its campaigns. Again the support of NUS London has been invaluable and has acted as a catalyst, directing much of the wider student anti-racist movement into genuine community campaigns.

### Local and national links

Throughout 1991-92, organisations have come to the Project to learn from our perspective on anti-racist work. This has included social workers, probation officers, housing workers and youth workers, to name but a few. Our greater contact with Local Housing Officers in Newham can only be described as encouraging as they are the front-line staff able to identify and challenge racism within their own housing patch.

We have also continued to play our part in the formulation of new strategies to deal with legal remedies to racial and police harassment. We have contributed to *Legal Action* (Journal of the Legal Action Group), Shelter's national housing briefing, and have worked with Liberty on the issue of miscarriages of justice.

Groups who have visited the Project include the World Council of Churches, Evangelical Christians for Social Justice, and Sheffield Refugee Forum. In addition, workers from across the country, from Sheffield, Manchester, Nottingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Brighton, Birmingham and Coventry have visited us.

Events we have addressed include a meeting in Nottingham on British justice, a conference on fascism in Exeter, and a march against police harassment in Liverpool. In addition, we have spoken to trade union branches, Labour Party wards, anti-apartheid meetings and a meeting of the Association of London Authorities - Race Equality Committee. We also helped organise the 'Free the Tottenham Three' march.

Locally, NMP has provided assistance to community events such as the Newham Asian Mela and the Africabana celebration. Following the success of our anti-racist festival in 1990 and our evening of cultural resistance in 1991, we try to inject our vision of positive cultural anti-racism into these events.

We have also prioritised developing links with new groups such as the Somali Community Association and the Newham Chinese Association. We have, for instance, carried out educational work with Chinese youth on issues of policing and racist attacks and have provided stalls at Somali events. As refugees and other vulnerable groups are, to a large extent, the new targets for racial harassment, we have had to ensure that they are aware of all our services.

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## Resources

NMP has a number of resources which are available to local community groups and affiliated members. A deposit may be required on some items, with prices being negotiable according to the users financial position.

### • Newham Monitoring Project Exhibitions

*The History of Racism in the East End* (23 panels which illustrates the history of racism in London's East End)  
*Conspiracy* (12 panels which document different campaigns and struggles of black people in Britain)

### • Video/Reading Library

A selection of videos, books, journals and reports on issues related to racism, fascism, policing and civil liberties. Telephone for details

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Below we list some suggestions for further reading

### • Publications available from Newham Monitoring Project

*Annual Reports* (1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990)

Accounts of the struggle against racist violence, fascism and police harassment in Newham in the context of trends and events nationally

*Newham: The Forging of a Black Community* (1991)

History of the struggles of the post-war black community in Newham based on interviews and original research (published jointly with the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism)

*The Dividing Line* (1986)

Brief history booklet on racism in East London and NMP's work to accompany a film that NMP made with BBC Open Space

*Racism and Racist Violence in Schools: Towards Establishing Effective Anti-Racist Policies and Practice in Newham* (1990)

Critique of tokenistic multi-culturalism which proposes a new positive anti-racism that improves education for all children

*Newham Communities of Resistance Information Pack* (1990)

Series of papers on the implications of 1992 on black and refugee communities in Newham and elsewhere in Europe.

### • Publications available from the Institute of Race Relations

### *Race and Class*

Quarterly journal of black and Third World liberation.

Subscription is £12 (individuals) and £16 (organisations) per year

• *Policing Against Black People* (1987)

• *Deadly Silence: Black Deaths In Custody* (1991)

### • Other publications

• *Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF)*

Bi-monthly magazine covering key issues in the anti-racist struggle.

Subscription is £7.50 (individuals) and £12 (organisations) per year

• *Duncan Forbes, Action on Racial Harassment: Legal Remedies and Local Authorities* (Legal Action Group and London Housing Unit, 1988)

• *Peter Fryer, Staying Power: the History of Black People In Britain* (Pluto Press, 1984)

• *Paul Gordon and Francesca King, New Right, New Racism* (Searchlight, 1986)

• *Paul Gordon, White Law: Racism In the Police, Courts and Prisons* (Pluto Press 1983)

• *A Sivanandan, A Different Hunger: Writings on Black Resistance* (Pluto Press, 1982)

• *A Sivanandan, Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism* (Verso, 1990)

• *The Arrivants: A Pictorial Essay on Blacks In Britain* (Race Today Collective, 1987)

• *The Broadwater Farm Inquiry: Report of the Independent Inquiry Into Disturbances of October 1985 at the Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham* (Karia Press, 1986)

• *Loosen the Shackles: First Report of the Liverpool 8 Inquiry into the Race Relations In Liverpool* (Karia Press, 1989)

• *The Migrant and Refugee manifesto* (Refugee Forum and Migrant Rights Action Network, 1989)

• *Murder in the Playground: The Report of the Macdonald Inquiry onto Racism and Racial Violence In Manchester Schools* (Longsight Press, 1989)

• *Policing In Hackney 1945-84: Report Commissioned by the Roach Family Support Committee* (Karia Press, 1987)

# Financial Statement

Income and Expenditure Account for Period ended 31 March 1991

Income	1991 £	1990 £
Grant Funding	108,264	96,682
Other Income	14,917	6,873
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	123,181	103,555
	<hr/>	<hr/>
Expenditure		
Salaries & National Insurance	63,045	58,392
Rent, Rates, Light and Heat	2,151	1,044
Repairs and Maintenance	6,585	4,259
Insurance	1,620	1,464
Telephone	5,890	4,354
Stationery, Postage and Office Mat's	6,433	5,258
Printing, Publicity and Reports	6,477	8,941
Literature and Subscriptions	693	333
Audit and Accountancy	1,845	1,843
Legal Fees	92	573
Courses and Conferences	583	1,615
Travel and Subsistence Expenses	5,105	4,474
Volunteers' Expenses	1,877	3,352
Bank Charges and other expenses	327	696
Equipment Purchased	11,011	2,354
Recruitment Advertising	110	-
Festival Expenditure	4,804	-
10th Anniversary Expenses	2,438	-
Book Expenses	43	2,448
Petty Cash Expenditure	628	-
Sundries	108	-
Corporation Tax re 1987 and 1988	50	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	121,915	104,135
	<hr/>	<hr/>
(Deficit)/Surplus For The Period	1,266	(580)
<b>Balance Sheet AS AT 31 MARCH 1991</b>		
	1991	1991
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>	£	£
Debtors and Prepayments	10,489	4,171
Cash at Bank and In Hand	21,774	15,331
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	32,263	19,502
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Creditors and Accrued Expenses	19,166	14,349
Bank Overdraft	6,228	-
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	(25,394)	(14,349)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	6,869	5,153
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>REPRESENTED BY</b>		
Accumulated Surplus	4,792	3,526
Defence Fund	2,077	1,627
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	6,869	5,153

# Affiliated Organisations

Affiliation to NMP is open to anyone who lives or works in Newham and agrees with the constitutional aims and objectives of the Project.

- \* AFRICAN REFUGEE HOUSING ACTION GROUP (ARHAG)
- \* ASIAN WOMENS RESOURCE CENTRE BEHNO-KI-MILAN
- \* BIRNBERG & CO SOLICITORS
- \* BRIGHTON POLYTECHNIC STUDENTS UNION
- \* BRIGHTON ANTI-FASCIST ACTION
- \* BRIGHTON LAW CENTRE
- \* BRISTOL RACE EQUALITY COUNCIL CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACISM AND FASCISM
- \* CANNING TOWN & GRANGE WARD LABOUR PARTY
- \* CANNING TOWN MUSLIM WELFARE ASSOCIATION
- \* CASTLE WARD LABOUR PARTY
- \* CITY OF LONDON ANTI-APARTHEID GROUP
- \* COMMUNITY LINKS
- \* COMMISSION FOR FILIPINO MIGRANT WORKERS
- \* CUMBERLAND SCHOOL NUT GROUP
- \* EAST LONDON ACTTS (NEWHAM BRANCH)
- \* EAST LONDON BLACK WOMENS ORGANISATION (ELBWO)
- \* EAST LONDON IRISH YEAR OF ACTION EASTWARDS TRUST (HOSTELS) LTD
- \* E. EDWARD SON & NOICE SOLICITORS
- \* FIGHT RACISM! FIGHT IMPERIALISM!
- \* FOREST GATE WARD LABOUR PARTY
- \* FOREST GATE YOUTH CENTRE
- \* GENERAL UNION OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN
- \* GREATFIELD WARD LABOUR PARTY
- \* GREENWICH ACTION COMMITTEE AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS (GACARA)
- \* GUJARAT WELFARE ASSOCIATION
- \* INDIAN WORKERS ASSOCIATION GB (EAST LONDON)
- \* INTERNATIONAL ASIAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION
- \* ISLAMIC ASSOCIATION
- \* JEWISH SOCIALIST GROUP
- \* LEICESTER RACIAL ATTACKS MONITORING PROJECT (RAMP)
- \* LITTLE ILFORD YOUTH CENTRE
- \* LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS STUDENTS UNION
- \* MALAYALEE ASSOCIATION OF THE UK
- \* MANCHESTER MARTYRS COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE
- \* MANOR PARK WARD LABOUR PARTY
- \* MAYFLOWER FAMILY CENTRE
- \* MIGRANT RIGHTS ACTION NETWORK
- \* MUSLIM WELARE ASSOCIATION
- \* NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS
- \* NATIONAL UNION OF STUDENTS LONDON AREA
- \* NEIGHBOURHOOD CARE PROJECT
- \* NEWHAM ALCOHOL ADVISORY SERVICE
- \* NEWHAM ANTI-FASCIST ACTION
- \* NEWHAM ASIAN WOMEN'S PROJECT
- \* NEWHAM CHINESE ASSOCIATION
- \* NEWHAM CITIZEN ADVICE BUREAU
- \* NEWHAM COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS UNION
- \* NEWHAM INDEPENDENT LABOUR PUBLICATIONS
- \* NEWHAM CND
- \* NEWHAM COMMUNITY ADVICE UNIT
- \* NEWHAM CONSORTIUM FOR YOUTH
- \* NEWHAM DRUGS PROJECT
- \* NEWHAM NALGO BLACK WORKERS GROUP
- \* NEWHAM NALGO
- \* NEWHAM NORTH EAST LABOUR PARTY
- \* NEWHAM NORTH WEST LABOUR PARTY
- \* NEWHAM REFUGEE FORUM
- \* NEWHAM RENEWAL PROGRAMME
- \* NEWHAM RIGHTS CENTRE
- \* NEWHAM TAMIL COMMUNITY HOUSING CORPORATION
- \* NEWHAM TENANTS AND RESIDENTS FEDERATION
- \* NEWHAM WOMENS EQUALITY UNIT
- \* ONE LOVE (BEDS)
- \* POLYTECHNIC OF CENTRAL LONDON STUDENTS UNION
- \* POLYTECHNIC OF EAST LONDON STUDENTS UNION
- \* PLASHET WARD LABOUR PARTY
- \* PLASHET SCHOOL NUT GROUP
- \* SOCIALIST EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION
- \* TAMIL WELFARE ASSOCIATION OF NEWHAM
- \* THEATRE ROYAL STRATFORD
- \* TOM ALLEN COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE
- \* TROOPS OUT MOVEMENT
- \* THIRD WORLD FIRST
- \* UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK STUDENTS UNION
- \* UPTON WARD LABOUR PARTY
- \* WORKERS POWER

\* Other organisations which support and agree with the constitutional aims and objectives of NMP although not based in Newham.