

From Broadwater Farm to Birmingham, Manchester to Notting Hill, Brixton to Bristol...

WARREN

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Drugs raids are Police racism



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The task for the nineties

1989 has been a year of great change for anti-racists. The authorities have stepped up their attack on the black community. The new immigration regulations, which came into force in August 1988 and allow immigration officers to issue deportation orders, has dramatically increased the numbers of deportations. There were more black people kicked out of the country in 1989 than ever before. There were also more people than ever before refused entry into Britain. Refugees have been singled out for particularly harsh treatment. From Tamils to Kurds, refugees have been harassed, ill-treated and denied their rights.

Racist attacks have increased too. In this issue of **WARnews** we highlight the problem in Camden, in north London. But the picture is much the same in most inner-city areas. The authorities have proved neither willing nor able to deal with the problem.

There have been more deaths of black people in police custody than ever before. The last issue of **WARnews** highlighted the cases of Jamie Stewart and Edwin Carr. Hundreds of others have been simply beaten up.

These attacks on the black community have been accompanied by a new barrage of racist propaganda. In the past we have been treated to scares about 'illegal immigrants' and 'muggers'. Today black people are depicted as 'drug dealers' and especially 'crack importers'. A series of high profile police raids on black districts of major cities has helped hammer home this stereotype (see pages 7-10). The aim of the anti-drugs campaign is to isolate black youth and prepare the way for an even tougher police crackdown.

While the authorities have stepped up their offensive

the anti-racist movement has virtually disappeared. The movement has fragmented into a series of local campaigns, and few of these provide a political challenge to racism. Most simply dispense welfare and advice or 'monitor' the effects of the racist offensive.

In the absence of an effective national opposition to racism, black people have been forced to fight alone. Many have turned inwards and looked to their own communities for protection and support. The backing that many militant young Asians have given to the campaign against Salman Rushdie is one manifestation of this. The failure of the official anti-racist movement has driven many young Asians into the arms of the reactionary mullahs.

In other cases black people have responded to their oppression as individuals and tried to make the best of a bad situation. The coming to prominence of the National Black Caucus is symptomatic of this trend. The Black Caucus places stress not on a political struggle against racism but on the need for black business ventures and self-help schemes to help improve the status of the black community. Neither approach is an answer to racism.

As we enter the 90s the need to build a combative, effective anti-racist movement is greater than ever. The anger of young blacks on the Rushdie demonstrations and on Broadwater Farm shows the determination to resist racism. The support for campaigns such as Julius Alexander's (see page 15) shows the possibilities of building a real anti-racist movement. This is the task that Workers Against Racism has set itself for the 90s. If you want to join us get in touch.

Keith Tompson

Workers Against Racism has never been more active. This much is clear from the cases covered in the bulletin in your hand. There has never been a better time to take the plunge and join up.

WAR was founded in east London in 1979. The motivation was the rise in the number of racist attacks and the failure of the anti-racist movement to effectively organise against them. From this small beginning as a campaign sponsored by the Revolutionary Communist Party, WAR is now a nationwide campaign. We have branches in the following towns and cities:

Scotland: Glasgow, Dundee, Edinburgh

North-east: Newcastle, Sunderland, Darlington, Middlesbrough

Yorkshire: Leeds, Sheffield, Bradford, Wakefield, Pontefract, Huddersfield

Lancashire: Manchester, Liverpool

Midlands: Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Nottingham, Leicester

South-West: Oxford, Bristol

Wales: Cardiff

London and South-East: Hackney, Newham, Tower Hamlets, Camden, Islington, Hammersmith, Brent, Brixton, Wandsworth, Peckham, Lewisham, New Cross, Brighton, Canterbury

What we stand for

- ◆ Opposition to all forms of racial discrimination
- ◆ An end to all immigration controls
- ◆ Direct action against racist attacks
- ◆ An independent anti-racist movement with no links to the police, local or central government

Please send donations to:

WAR, BM WAR,
London WC1N 3XX

Join WAR today

To join us, and find out more about our activities, send £5.00 (£25.00 for organisations or trade union branches) to: Workers Against Racism, BM WAR, London, WC1N 3XX. Tel (01)375 1702. Make all cheques/postal orders payable to Workers Against Racism

Name

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The making of EastEnders

An article by Kenan Malik about racism in Tower Hamlets which was first published in the September issue of *Living Marxism* has caused great controversy. We reprint here the original article, with a response from Neil Fletcher, Inner London Education Authority leader, and Kenan Malik's reply

'I'm not a racist', says George Landerkin, 'else I wouldn't be talking to you would I? But I believe in looking after my own'. Landerkin lives in Cubitt Town, the white underbelly of the Isle of Dogs in east London. Last November he organised a petition to keep a Bangladeshi family from moving next door. 'If you sign this', it read, 'you are objecting to Tower Hamlets letting our houses to Pakistani families when our own young couples are being denied the right to be housed in these properties'. Sixty three friends and neighbours signed it.

'I've nothing against coloureds', says Landerkin, 'but cockneys have to come first. It's like no one takes any notice of white folk any more. We've got committees for Pakis and Vietnamese and any coloured person who wants to set one up. But what about us whites? It's everyone's dream to live in a house with a garden. So what happens? It's a Paki that moves in. Sometimes I feel we have to house the whole of Pakistan before our number comes up'.

Nural Ali is every inch an EastEnders. He was born in the London hospital, virtually within earshot of Bow Bells, has lived all his life within spitting distance of Brick Lane and now works as a machinist in a small factory a hundred yards from where he was born. But he only has to step outside his front door to discover that, however much he may be part of the East End, he isn't 'one of us'. 'These days if you're Bengali you can't walk on your own', says Ali. 'In Bethnal Green Road if you walk on your own at this time of day obviously you're going to get attacked. You know what's going to happen to you—you're going to get a busted nose and a few black eyes.'

Ismot Ali wasn't that lucky. In June he was stabbed to death by a gang in front of his house near Brick Lane. His nephew, Waris Ali, was stabbed repeatedly and is still in intensive care, his pregnant wife was pistol whipped by the gang. When the Bangladeshi com-

munity organised a protest march, local whites came out of their houses and pubs to shout abuse and pelt the demonstrators with garbage, and the police piled in to arrest 40 Asians. The attack on Ismot Ali came barely three weeks after Sao Miah was kidnapped from his home on the Chicksand estate and burned to death and a Bangladeshi woman was thrown from the balcony of her second floor flat in Shoreditch. 'It's like war now', says Nural Ali.

Landerkin dismisses such talk as scaremongering. He insists that he himself would never attack his neighbours. 'I might object to them moving in', he says, 'but I'd never force them out'. Yet Landerkin's petition has provided a focus for local racists who have no compunction about using violent methods to get their own way.

Nobody knows whether Landerkin is responsible for organising more than just a petition. What is clear, however, is that he is not an isolated bigot. Many white working class people in Tower Hamlets voice similar sentiments. And not a few are looking after their own by organising what amounts to a pogrom against the borough's Asian community.

Why has east London become the scene of a virtual race war? EastEnders are not born bigots. But they have grown up in a community whose outlook has been shaped by the racism that pervades British society, and especially by the racist policies of the local council. Today many anti-racists the finger at the Liberal administration in Tower Hamlets which has become notorious for its racism since it took office three years ago. But long before then the local Labour Party had already laid the foundations of East End racism. The Liberals are building on the racist legacy of Labourism.

For decades the Labour Party ruled Tower Hamlets as if it owned the borough. The corrupt mafia that ran the party treated working class people in the area with contempt. This was clear-

ly seen in the council's housing policies.

In one of the poorest boroughs in the country, local people rely on the council for housing. A recent council report noted that, for first-time buyers, the average mortgage repayment was four times the average household income in the borough. Eighty percent of people in Tower Hamlets have to live in council housing. The council admits that 44 percent of housing stock is 'unsatisfactory': that is, slums. A quarter of all households lack at least one basic amenity. Tower Hamlets has the highest figure in Britain for official overcrowding and there are still more than 12000 people on the council waiting list. The number of homeless families has increased fourfold in seven years.

Labour offered local people little more than a chronic housing shortage and slum standards. But with council housing so important to working class people in the borough, they have jealously guarded their access to it. When Asian immigrants started to arrive in the fifties, locals regarded them as competitors for scarce resources, a view actively promoted by local Labour politicians and councillors.

The Labour Party blamed immigrants for housing shortages, slum tenements, inadequate social services and deprivation. Stepney Labour MP, Peter Shore, told the East London Advertiser that he 'understood' the



SIMON NORFOLK

'anxieties' of racists who had complained in the paper's letters pages about the 'flow of immigrants' into the borough:

'The fact that they tend to concentrate heavily in a small number of already densely populated areas inevitably increases the housing and social problems that already exist. This was, of course, one of the main reasons why the Labour government decided to cut back the number of immigrants.' (3 May 1968)

Racists in Tower Hamlets, fighting Bengalis instead of the council

Labour politicians like Shore endorsed the prejudice that Asians were responsible for depriving white workers of basic amenities. At the same time, the Greater London council, which owned much of the housing stock in Tower Hamlets, as well as the local council, made it clear that white EastEnders could expect the best of what housing was available as their birthright. Asians were ghettoised in the worst blocks on the oldest, most rundown estates.

A series of reports over the past 10 years has revealed the extent of official racism. In 1982 the Spitalfields Housing and Planning Rights Service reported that on the 10 most desirable estates in the borough, the proportion of black tenants was less than five percent; on some it was as low as 0.3 percent. A follow up report two years later showed that nothing had changed under the left wing GLC administration of Ken Livingstone. 'Somewhere, somehow', it concluded, 'deliberate decisions must have been taken over which estates they [Bangladeshis] were going to be "allowed" to live on.... Nothing said or done by the GLC administration over the past three years has changed this' (SHAPRS, Bengalis and GLC Housing Allocation in E1: A Follow-up Report, 1984). Three years later in 1987 an investigation by the CRE came to the same conclusion.

By blaming immigrants for the housing shortage and ghettoising them in slum areas, the Labour Party ensured that people's anger about their housing conditions acquired a racist form. The squeeze on council housing over the past decade has brought this anger to the boil. As their housing conditions have deteriorated, white tenants have become increasingly resentful of Bangladeshis. At the same time the flagrant racism of the current Liberal administration has made bigotry respectable. The result is a racist backlash of unprecedented proportions.

There has been virtually no council housing built in Tower Hamlets since the early eighties. The results can be seen in rising figures for overcrowding, homelessness and those on the waiting list. And while working class people have been squeezed out, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) has built thousands of luxury homes for sale at inflated prices in the Docklands. The effect has been to make housing in Tower Hamlets today as expensive as in Westminster.

At the same time as putting the local housing market even further beyond the reach of local people, the Docklands development has reduced the availability of council housing. Many estates, such as Riverside Mansions, Waterlow, Monteith, Lefevre and Lanfranc have been sold off to private developers. The council has also put individual houses on the market. One council house in Tredegar Square was recently sold for £215,000. Right to

Quote

It's the pressure on the area, the pressures on the children, the pressures of overcrowding on existing families. We're not building any houses, we're losing a lot, they know that and they are resentful.

buy legislation has further diminished housing stock. The neighbourhood housing office in Cubitt Town reckons that 10 percent of council stock has been lost in this way. And another 450 council homes will soon be lost when the council demolishes the St Vincent estate to make way for the new Docklands Highway.

The authorities have tried to make up some of the losses (and help out developers hit by the housing market slump) by housing a few tenants on the new luxury estates. This has led to new conflicts as the yuppie owners object to living next to council tenants, especially Asian families. On Thomas More Court last month, owner occupiers formed an association for the sole purpose of organising against the mainly Bangladeshi council tenants who now occupy part of the estate.

The effects of the Docklands development have been particularly felt on the Isle of Dogs. While luxury flats costing more than Islanders would earn in a lifetime go up all around them, the local community has to put up with crumbling pre-war estates. 'We've had no new council housing since 1980, which means there's no new housing for the children', says local housing officer Jack Bannister (not his real name). 'The majority of people live in substandard housing - cramped, damp flats with rotting windows and asbestos. The locals have

always relied on the council for housing. Now they feel betrayed.'

Schooled in decades of Labour Party racism, locals have vented their frustration on the Island's tiny Bangladeshi community. The first Bangladeshi family in Cubitt Town came in 1985. They were welcomed with shit through the letter box and a pigs head left on the doorstep. Over the past four years another 14 families have joined them. Nearly all were homeless, with no choice but to move there. But none feels safe.

'It's very scary', says Kutub Uddin, who has been in the area for nearly two years. 'You never know when you're going to get attacked. It's mainly our old people and the children who bear the brunt of the attacks. Many children have been beaten up at school.' Cubitt Town primary school has responded to the violence by segregating the children. The school now has two playgrounds, one for whites and one for Bangladeshis. Kutub is incensed. 'They're treating Asians as second class citizens and they're treating white kids how to discriminate.'

'The Bangladeshis are an obvious scapegoat', says Bannister. 'Very often the locals would say to us "we're not racist, we just want our children to have decent housing". They pinpoint in on what they see as the best housing going to families from outside the Island while their own community can't get anything.'

'Most of the people on the Island are good, warm, very community minded people. They want to get on with each other. I don't believe they're any different from anyone else. It's the pressure on the area, the pressures on the children, the pressures of overcrowding on existing families. We're not building any houses, we're losing a lot, they know that and they are resentful. Their resentment can't be directed against the LDDC, they don't see them. They know the council, they know us individually. Then they see down the street a Bangladeshi family moving in and that becomes the focus of their resentment.'

This resentment has been fuelled by the token anti-racist policies which many council departments pursue. Now that Tower Hamlets is decentralised many Labour controlled neighbourhood areas, like the Isle of Dogs, continue to pursue the kind of equal opportunity policies which the central Liberal administration has eschewed. Such policies have done lit-

tle to improve conditions for the black community. But they have created a backlash among the white tenants. Many cannot understand why, after decades of telling them that 'whites come first', officials now call them racist when they try to keep Bangladeshis out of their streets. They resent the fact that Asians seem to be getting housed at their expense. And they object to well-paid council officers who don't have to put up with their housing conditions lecturing them about how to behave.

'All the local authority ever says is "That's racist, you mustn't be racist"', says Therese Shanahan, a Labour councillor on the Island and an anti-racist campaigner. 'It never actually does anything. It's all very well to come down to the tenants association meetings and say "you all have to behave like this". But what you have is white middle class people who don't know what its like to struggle, who don't know what its like to be a woman on her own trying to bring up a couple of kids, having the social services come round and threaten to take your kids away because you're not looking after them properly, having the police come round because the kids are causing trouble, having the local authority come round because you can't pay your rent. Hassle, hassle, hassle from every institution. And then you have some middle class person come round saying you're racist when all you're concerned with is finding somewhere decent to live - no wonder you explode.'

The racist policies which the Liberals have pursued over the past three years have made a bad situation worse. While Labour makes a pretence of providing equal treatment, the Liberals dispense with such niceties. They make no bones about the fact that they are out to protect the white community. The effect of Liberal policies has been to make local bigots more confident about speaking out.

The new administration swept away quangoes like the Race and Housing Action Team and the Ethnic Minority Committee. It restored such discriminatory policies as the 'Sons and daughters' rule, under which people with parents born in the borough get priority housing allocation. It caused a storm by evicting Bangladeshis from bed and breakfast hotels on the grounds that they made themselves intentionally homeless' - by leaving Bangladesh. The council even suggest-

ed dumping Bangladeshis to a ship moored on the Thames. Not surprisingly the Liberals have found favour with the likes of George Landerkin.

In the chauvinist climate created by the Liberals, every aspect of life takes a racist form. The effects of the teaching crisis in the borough, for example, have fallen almost entirely on the Bangladeshi community. Last term 280 children were denied school placed because of lack of teachers. All but four were Bangladeshi. Up to 1000 may have to be kept at home when schools open this month; nearly all are expected to be Bangladeshi.

The most striking example of the new climate is the offensive the police have launched against the Asian community, as demonstrated by their attack on the July march protesting about the death of Ismat Ali. Nural Ali was one of the 40 marchers arrested. 'The police are the real racists', he says. 'They're the National front round here. They pick on us everywhere we go. It's happening all the time and it's going to happen more and more. Our people are going to have to get used to it.'

The police offensive has in turn encouraged racist thugs. 'The police have been telling whites "do whatever you like with the Pakis, we'll help you"', says Ali. 'If the whites do something they get away with it, if we do something we get charged. Because we are young and we are Bengalis, we have to stand up for our rights and we become criminals.'

Labour hopes to retake the council next year. But will it make any difference? Even Therese Shanahan isn't sure:

'I don't see things changing that much. In terms of what's available, in terms of housing stock it's going to be even worse. But if you take something like the murder in Bethnal Green, there would be a view from the borough, as elected representatives, supporting the community.'

Tea and sympathy from the council won't be enough for the Asian community. They need practical assistance to help protect their communities against racist thugs, in or out of uniform. And it will take a political campaign inside the white working class to isolate people like Landerkin, and convince other EastEnders that they have a common interest in turning their anger against the authorities and political parties which have sold them short and blamed the problems on the Bangladeshis.

Neil Fletcher Leader, ILEA leader

I write to protest in the strongest possible terms about the misleading and inaccurate reference to our two Cubitt Town school contained in the article by Kenan Malik.

There is no truth whatsoever in the statement that children are segregated in the playgrounds. There is not one playground for whites and one for Bangladeshis. Each school has its own play area and the younger (infants) children (under eight) use one and the older (eight to 11) use the other. As it happens, there is a similar proportion of Bangladeshi children in both schools so both play areas are used by them.

I am appalled that you published such a statement undermining good race relations without making any attempt to check its accuracy with our press officer at County Hall or the schools. I demand that you publish an immediate retraction and apology with a clear statement of the true position.

Kenan Malik

I did not raise the issue of racist attacks at school and segregation in the playground; the Bangladeshi community did. The comments about segregation in my article come from Kutub Uddin, general secretary of the Cubitt Town Bangladeshi Cultural Association. Bangladeshi parents also expressed their concern at a number of meetings in Cubitt Town over the summer. I am surprised Neil Fletcher has no knowledge of this given that Ilea representatives were at some of these meetings.

On 13 June a meeting of the Isle of Dogs Race Committee was presented with a number of reports which



showed an alarming rise in the scale of racist attacks on children both inside and outside schools in the Cubitt Town area. The committee asked Tony Janes, chief executive of the Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood, to convene a special meeting to discuss the problem.

This meeting was held at George Green school in Cubitt Town on 6 July. Attending were a number of Ilea employees and officials including the head teachers of Cubitt Town infants school, Cubitt Town junior school and

Taking on the racists - no reliance on the authorities

George Green school; the acting head of Seven Mills school; the deputy head of George Green; and the deputy education social worker from Ilea Division 5. Also present were Isle of Dogs Neighbourhood officials including the chief executive, the acting head of policy, the race adviser and Cubitt Town housing office team leader.

On the previous day, Bangladeshi parents had met under the auspices of the Bangladeshi Cultural Association to discuss what points to put to the meeting. Parents report that two major issues of concern were raised: the scale of racist attacks and the fact that children appeared to be segregated in the playgrounds.

Two parents' representatives, Elias Miah and Mr Choudhury, attended the

A month ago Siho Iyigven was one of the 'ordinary' Kurdish refugees who had escaped from Turkey at the beginning of 1989 and was awaiting an answer to his application for asylum. Finally the home office made the decision to send him back to Turkey - in his coffin.

On 5 October both Iyigven and his cell mate had been refused leave to remain and had been told that they were to be sent back to Turkey. They both set fire to their bed clothes in the cell at Harmondsworth detention cen-

special meeting on 6 July. According to Elias Miah, he asked the school authorities why the children were segregated in school playgrounds. He says that a representative of the teaching staff replied that they too were concerned about the separation of Asian and white children, but that they had insufficient teachers to ensure otherwise.

The Neighbourhood chief executive presented a report on this meeting to the racial incidents panel. Under the heading 'School Perspective', the report notes that in George Green School 'play often took place in separate racial groupings' and that at Cubitt Town Junior School 'children did not integrate well in their play'. In the section 'The Way Forward', the report records

the remarks of the Turkish Prime Minister (now President even!) Ozal. The line is that 'most of those who left are seeking a better life. Not all of them were escaping for political reasons'. Worse still, the home office called Iyigven's death a tragic event and suggested that he had committed suicide.

Given these circumstances it was not very surprising that on the demonstration I met a lot of people who were confused about the Kurdish refugees and their status. It should be said however that the Kurdish issue is very clear. The Kurdish people, with a specific language and culture are demanding independence and autonomy from Turkish rule. They are seen as the enemy within by the oppressor country, whether it be Turkey or Iraq or Iran (each of which have a piece of Kurdistan within their borders). The Kurds are treated as second class citizens and officially discriminated against within these countries. Those who flee to Britain either have political reasons to leave Turkey or they wish to start a better life without fear. Both should be defended against injustice and oppression. This should be our response to the claim that they are not genuine refugees.

In the past year the Kurds in Britain have faced harassment and hostility, the responsibility for which rests with the British government and its racist laws.

Not surprisingly more than 90 per cent of protesters behind the coffin were Kurdish or Turkish. Supporters of Workers Against Racism and a few small delegations from left groups represented the rest of Britain. The small British contingent demoralised many Turks. The mood was one of anger and sadness, not because they had lost a comrade, but also because of their isolation from support in Britain. In the absence of protest on their behalf by British anti-racists it is not surprising that much of the Kurds anger is directed not at British racism but at the Turkish state.

Mediha Saba Harringay

the feeling of the meeting that 'Whilst integration of play patterns was difficult some attempt should be made to bridge the divide between black and white children'. The implication is that no such attempt was being made at that time.

The chief executive's report implies that the authorities accept that segregation exists but seem to believe that it happens naturally. Bangladeshis, on the other hand, feel that it is the result of the way their children are treated.

I recorded an interview with Kutub Uddin on 8 August. He said of Cubitt Town junior school 'In Cubitt Town school, they're treating Asian students as second class citizens. The thing is, they've got two playgrounds and one is used only for white people and one is only for Asian people.' When I asked him how he felt about this, he replied, 'They're teaching white kids how to discriminate. They've no right to do such things...The head teacher was saying they're very short of teachers so where students come together white pupils beat up Asian pupils and they can't control them'. I tried to contact the school for its response, but as my interview with Kutub took place during the school holidays this proved impossible.

I saw Kutub Uddin and Elias Miah once more on 25 October, after receiving Neil Fletcher's letter. They both confirmed that there had been segregation in the playground. Both were also worried that the authorities seemed to be complacent about the situation. For example, despite the 6 July meeting having agreed that 'a follow up meeting would be held in September to review the situation at that time', no such meeting had so far taken place.

Thus, despite Fletcher's assertion to the contrary, it is widely accepted in the area that some form of segregation takes place. As for 'undermining good race relations', the intensity of racism in Cubitt Town ensures the isolation of the Bangladeshi community. As my article argued, Labour's token anti-racist policies have tended to reinforce this isolation and to deepen the divisions.

At Cubitt Town junior school, the lack of resources meant that it was easier for the authorities to prevent racial violence by keeping the two groups separate, or at the very least by not actively promoting integration. I am not suggesting that Ilea has a formal policy of segregation; but in the context of a shortage of resources, the consequence of Ilea's bureaucratic approach to anti-racism is to reinforce the isolation of the black community.

If any apology is merited, it is from Ilea. The authority should apologise to Bangladeshi parents in Cubitt Town, and more generally to the black community in London, for its failure to tackle racism in schools.



Kurdish refugees defiant: a nail in the coffin of British 'fairplay'

tre and threw themselves into the flames. Iyigven died and his cellmate is still being treated for 30% burns at Stoke Mandeville hospital.

On 28 October 4000 people followed Iyigven's coffin from Stamford Hill to Downing Street. Police refused a request to allow a delegation to deliver a letter of protest to the Prime Minister. At the end of the five-hour march representatives of Kurdish and Turkish groups condemned Britain's racist immigration controls.

You will know that since the beginning of this year nearly 4000 Kurds have arrived in Britain seeking refugee status. So far, out of 600 interviewed only 75 have been granted refugee status, and most of the rest have been repatriated back to Turkey. Another 300 have been given an exceptional leave to remain for up nine months to one year but have been treated like criminals or public enemies. Many are still suffering in detention centres.

The British government has echoed

Drugs, lies, and Racism

Black youth used to be 'muggers'.

today

Then they took to 'steaming'.

Now Britain's police chiefs and government ministers tell us that black youth are the cause of a 'crack' epidemic, and a series of military style raids have been carried out on black communities throughout Britain.

War News investigates



Emmanuel Oliver reveals the truth behind the new crackdown on crack

Crack. That's the new enemy stalking the streets of Britain. Press, politicians and the police all agree, so it must be true. Sunday newspapers carry regular features on how easy it is to get hooked on crack. TV documentaries show mass burials of 'crack babies' unceremoniously being dumped in the ground in twelve-inch coffins. News bulletins highlight the sub-machine guns and other military hardware that constitute the tools of the trade. Police launch well-publicised raids on largely black areas to protect us all from the evil of crack.

But ask yourself this. If Britain is



SIMON NORFOLK

Whose side are you on?

Cracking Brum

'Don't crack', urged the Birmingham Evening Mail in July. 'We can unite to defeat the drug that turns children against their parents and mothers against their babies.' It was part a major local drive against crack.

Advertising hoardings on the side of every bus shelter show 'a typical Midlands family' (white of course) with the now infamous warning 'Don't Crack'. Information packs have been sent to every school warning the youth of 'this new instantly addictive drug being peddled on our streets'. Local MPs from Labour's Clare Short to Conservative Anthony Beaumont Dark have backed the campaign, and Margaret Thatcher has commented approvingly.

To accompany the press and advertising campaign, the police have stepped up their campaign against black people. Having previously concentrated on cafes frequented by black youth (many of which have been forced to close), the police are now turning their attention to pubs and clubs.

The Cannonhill pub in Balsall Heath (raided five times in as many months), the Compton in Handsworth, the Bolton Arms in Small Heath, the Brewers Arms in Highgate (three raids at the last count) have all been victims of crackmania. Even upmarket places like Gilligans in Moseley have been raided.

The results of this campaign have been less than spectacular. So far there has been one trial in Birmingham involving a crack find. 'A small piece of crack was found on the grass', claimed the Evening Mail. The one other publicised case involves a man accused of possessing cannabis and of allowing his house to be used as a 'crack factory'. No crack was found, and the accused claims that even the cannabis was planted by the police.

The raids may have turned up no drugs, but they have provided a perfect opportunity to harass the city's black community. Hundreds of black youth have been arrested on minor charges as a result of the so-called 'crack raids'. Birmingham's 'Don't crack' campaign has provided the police with the perfect excuse to crack the whip at the black community.

Jim Banks



Tools of the trade

SIMON NORFOLK

Oper

In September hundreds of police invaded the Broadwater Farm Estate in north London under the pretext of a drugs raid. We reprint here an account from the Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign about the raid. While we do not share all its conclusions, we think it is important for our readers to know exactly what happened that evening. -

On Friday 23 September, at about 4.58pm, six unmarked furniture vans entered the Farm. Seconds later hundreds of police, accompanied by invited members of the media, and a number of figures from the Haringey race relations industry, rushed yelling up the stairwells of Tangmere and two other blocks, terrifying children playing, and nearly knocking over residents who got in their way. The police were armed with pick axe handles, sledgehammers, crowbars, axes and firearms. Many of them were in bullet proof vests or full riot gear.

Their orders were to enter certain specified premises, including the Youth Association, and to detain anybody congregating on the 'deck' area of Tangmere aged between 15 and 30 years. At the same time, their colleagues were sealing off a large area of Tottenham, and turning the Farm itself into a 'no-go' area. No one was to enter or leave without being searched, and having their name and address taken.

About 40 persons were detained

awash with crack, how come the high-profile raids in Wolverhampton, Tottenham and elsewhere have unearthed barely enough of the stuff to put a smile on Frank Bough's face? And if crack barons have seized Britain's inner cities, why does most of the disturbing footage relating to drugs and crime come from New York, Washington and Los Angeles?

The reason is that the crack scare is largely a figment of the authorities' imagination, but one that is very useful in allowing the police to declare war on Britain's inner cities. The propaganda war against crack has more to do with legitimising the state's assault on the black community than with protecting our collective welfare against hard drugs. Its main effect has been an increase in the harassment of the black community and the further isolation

of black youth from society as a whole.

As the crack scare gathers momentum, fiction becomes fact and reality is lost beneath a mountain of hype. Following a raid on Manchester's Moss Side and Hulme area in November, the police roped in a local headmaster to help justify the fifty arrests. The headmaster claimed that 8-year old children from were being sold crack by 15 year olds from another school. His evidence? A handful of used matches in the playground. Following a raid on a pool hall in south London, television viewers were shown a torn piece of foil in the kitchen as evidence of crack use on the premises.

The defensiveness of many anti-racists towards the crack scare has made it difficult, if not impossible, to challenge the attack on the black community. The statement from the

Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign in this issue of **WARnews** (see page 8) reveals the reality of September's police raid when hundreds of officers invaded the Farm. But in the immediate aftermath of the police raid, when it was not yet clear that only 2lbs of cannabis would be discovered, the response from many within the community was far less decisive.

Bernie Grant, MP for Tottenham, told the Caribbean Times that 'Drug dealers have no place in Tottenham', and went on to say that he was 'glad that this raid was conducted by the police without the violations of the 1985 operation'. His main criticism was that the raid was 'deliberately sensationalised' and 'extremely expensive'. Even the Defence Campaign was not immune from this equivocation, complaining about the

ation Kingfisher

handcuffed on the deck - including members of staff of the Youth Association and the Co-op - before the 'community' policeman for the estate passed among them, picking out those who were taken down to the furniture vans, strip searched and in some cases then arrested. These included at least one member of the Youth Association staff and a young woman and her 10 month old baby. All three were released without charge.

As the evening wore on, the continued presence of hundreds of police on the estate led to a number of scuffles, and another ten people were arrested, bringing the total to 38. Only 18 of these were actually charged with offences connected with the supply of drugs. Despite early reports of seizures of 'substantial' quantities of cocaine, the raid recovered no evidence of hard drug dealing, and less than 2lbs of cannabis, a measly haul by any standards.

Community organisations on the estate needed no convincing that 'Operation Kingfisher' was not about drugs. 'The police have come here for one purpose and one purpose only, to criminalise and terrorise our community', commented a Defence Campaign spokesman on the night. Indeed, if the raid was about drugs, a number of important questions remain to be answered by police. Why were the offices of the Defence

Campaign illegally searched, and two of its key personnel arrested on sight as they attempted to enter the estate?

More importantly, perhaps, why were warrants for the raid issued on 23 September, only one day after the Police Complaints Authority announced that Det. Chief Supt. Melvin - the officer in charge of the police 'investigation' into the uprising here in 1985 - is to face disciplinary charges as a result of the way that self-incriminating statements were obtained from arrested persons? Was the raid, emotionally described by the notoriously pro-police journalist Chester Stern as 'the recapture of Broadwater Farm', timed to coincide with the fourth anniversary of the uprising? Why raid at 5pm, when children playing on the estate would be terrified and separated from their parents, but when police would be sure of a good spot on the six o'clock news?

Politically, the raid was marked by an enormous effort at news management by the police. Reports have noted that the newspapers which they brought with them - the Mail on Sunday and the News of the World - are not exactly known for their independent critical stance towards the police, but the reality is more worrying even than that. The police originally wanted only one newspaper reporter and one



SIMON NORFOLK

Defence Campaign spokesman Stafford Scott

photographer. Both of these were to come from the Press Association. The idea was to saturate the Saturday and Sunday papers with a police version of events, and to provide them with the photographs that the police allowed to be taken. The other newspaper reporters were indeed there as a result of their close links with the police. However, they found out about the raid (in one case several weeks in advance) from their own sources inside the Met. So much for the police's 'top secret'

lack of consultation over the raid. Many anti-racists seemed nervous about wholeheartedly opposing the police operation.

So long as anti-racists accept that such raids are necessary to deal with the problem of drugs, and confine themselves to simply quibbling about the details of the operation, they cannot decisively oppose police attacks on black communities. While many people have a genuine concern about drug-abuse in our communities, we should be clear that this does not make police interference in our lives any more acceptable.

Police raids, such as that on Broadwater Farm, have nothing to do with concern about whether the black community is overdosing on crack, draw or lucyade. They are nothing less than a declaration of war on the black com-

munity. As chief superintendent Stacey, one of the officers involved in planning the Broadwater Farm raid, put it, 'We made it clear to anyone who wanted to take us on that they couldn't possibly win'.

The drugs panic is the latest stage in the state's effort to isolate the black community from wider support within society as a whole, and so to neutralise black resistance. The demise of the official anti-racist movement has given the police a free hand in launching their offensive. The authorities are so confident that they can brazenly the Broadwater Farm raid as 'an enormous success' whilst at the same time admitting that they found virtually no drugs, and absolutely no hard drugs.

In twelve months time most people will have forgotten that no drugs were found on Broadwater Farm. But they

will remember that the police launched a huge raid in order to sort out the drug barons. The effect of such raids is to sensitise people to the idea of a permanent police occupation of our inner cities.

Anti-racists must expose the anti-drugs drive for what it is - a means of legitimising the attack on the black community. There is no crack problem in Britain. But there is a problem of a racist police force and a racist government attempting to criminalise the black community.

SIMON NORFOLK



Community against its 'leader': Dolly Kiffin saved from local anger by the Met

preparations.

More seriously, strenuous efforts were made to represent the race relations stooges that were a part of the raid as being independent observers from the community itself. The Defence Campaign has called on the Council and all black and other community organisations in the borough to break links with the police until they offer a satisfactory explanation of their behaviour. This is not simply because police motives are widely considered suspect, but also because they have demonstrated that they will deliberately misrepresent the authority and remit of anyone unwise or unprincipled enough to enter into a dialogue with them.

In the light of the police's claims that taking invited representatives of the media and race relations industry along with them somehow constituted a form of accountability, it is also worth remembering that most of the questions about the raid

raised by local people are concerned with its operational detail - the timing, the number of police used etc. It is decisions of exactly this sort which police have repeatedly insisted fall outside the bounds of any kind of acceptable democratic control.

No one should underestimate the dangers of wide scale drug abuse, and the social conditions which create it and which it recreates. But we should recognise that these dangers do not even begin still less end with the 'spiral of violence' which we are constantly told threatens our inner cities. We have to ensure that the spectre of drug abuse, and particularly at this moment 'crack', is not used to justify draconian new powers for police, as well as costly and ultimately failed exercises in collective punishment like 'operation Kingfisher'.

Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign
23 Oct 1989

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'By any means necessary'

Malcolm X – the last speeches

Bruce Perry [ed]
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One of the most emotive images of the sixties is the menacing picture of Malcolm X holding an automatic carbine rifle with a full clip of ammunition. 'By any means necessary' runs the legend. Today that defiant pose, looking out of the window, gun in hand, has come to signify a determination to resist oppression. The fact that the picture expresses more Malcolm X's desire to protect himself from his rivals in the 'Nation of Islam', than a response to racism, is largely overlooked.

Malcolm X was a key figure in the black movement of the 60s. He articulated the anger and frustrations of many young working class blacks, especially from the Northern ghettos, who had largely been ignored by the civil rights movement. At the same time, however, many people exaggerate his historical importance. This is partly due to the hysteria whipped up by the US government who targeted him as Public Enemy No 1. Equally, the failure of the left to create a coherent anti-racist current in the US working class gave greater credibility to Malcolm X's views.

'The last speeches' is a useful document, helping to provide a balanced view of both Malcolm X's strengths and his weaknesses. The book contains six interviews and speeches covering the period from January 1963 to February 1965 and shows the direction of Malcolm X's politics towards the end of his life. It straddles the period of transition from when he broke with the Nation of Islam to the founding of the Organisation of Afro-American Unity.

The wit and eloquence of Malcolm X is plain to see. Much has been written about his ability to captivate any audience and this is well conveyed throughout the book. What is also clear is his attempt to find a solution to racism with the confines of a capitalist America. Throughout the book, but most strikingly in the first speech, he demands separation of US blacks as the solution to racism, citing 'Chinatown' as a model:

'They don't call Chinatown in New York a segregated community, yet it's all Chinese. But the Chinese control it. Chinese voluntarily live there, they control it. They run it. They have their own schools. They control their own politics, control their own industry.'

It is an approach that reduces the struggle against racial oppression to a fight for a greater share of existing

resources. The fatal flaw in Malcolm X's strategy was his failure to grasp that capitalism itself is the source of black oppression.

The first speech has a sense of Malcolm X's self-confidence that is missing from the other five. He had become aware of the limited appeal of the Nation of Islam and its puritan outlook. He found himself advocating a non-religious all-black organisation to replace it. He also came around to the idea that whites could play a positive role. This apparently dramatic shift reflected his own isolation and the desire to include as many people as possible in his project.

The impact of his collapse of self-confidence is clear from his interviews. In response to one questioner he rather defensively justifies the right to self-organisation: 'I respect government and I respect laws. Does the government respect us? If the FBI, which is what people depend on to protect the morale and property and the lives of people, can't do so – then I think it's only fair to expect an element to do whatever is necessary to protect ourselves'. Far from putting a positive case

for the black struggle, Malcolm X's isolation forced him to retreat into pleading for the right of black people to organise independently.

Malcolm X's fiery rhetoric and his overt militancy have led many to regard him as representing a significantly different and more radical tradition to that of Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement. 'Malcolm X's Last Speeches' reveals that the difference lay largely at the level of tactics rather than of political programme. Both believed that black people could find respect and justice inside capitalist America. What distinguished Malcolm X was his preparedness to use 'any means necessary' to bring it about.

Emmanuel Oliver

Malcolm X speaks



Uniquely horrific

Loosen the Shackles

Lord Gifford QC

There are some things which are immediately identifiable as uniquely Liverpudlian: the Beatles, 'The Boys from the Black Stuff', Brookside. But few people outside Liverpool 8 will identify the harsh intensity of racism as uniquely Liverpudlian. 'Loosen the Shackles' shows that racism in Liverpool is 'uniquely horrific'. The report shows that 'scousers' can only be white, and that blacks, according to Liverpool's police, are 'those fucking niggers down there'.

The report is the product of an inquiry into police racism. What actually comes out of the report is a picture of the complete isolation of black people from the wider white community. The ghettoisation of blacks in Liverpool is virtually complete – in housing, education, the labour market, the provision of social services. The experience of one black man quoted in the report is revealing. On seeing a vacant council flat in an area outside of Liverpool 8, the man approached the district housing office only to be informed that the flat was 'not for your kind of people'.

Black people who have ventured out of the south Liverpool ghetto in search of work have been terrorised back into Liverpool 8 through a combination of hostility from white workers and discrimination from employers who refuse to even interview those with

foreign-sounding names.

The trade unions are not much of a comfort. One district secretary of a major trade union told Gifford 'There is some working class banter, words such as nigger and coon are used but they're not meant maliciously'. Jim McLean, district secretary of the engineers union revealed the collusion between the council and the unions in excluding blacks from the council workforce. A system of trade union nomination rights existed, under which the unions could allocate one job in four to whoever they saw fit. Few, if any, went to black workers.

Gifford's descriptions of black people's experiences in Liverpool makes harrowing reading. Unfortunately he also falls prey to the dominant prejudices about the black community. Of Liverpool 8, he writes 'There are certain crimes which are particularly prevalent. Crimes against property and dealing in drugs'. That's the same chestnut Merseyside police dig out to justify their constant harassment of the city's black community.

Gifford shows the real nature of the drugs panic: 'It is difficult to see how there could be only 180 reported cases of possession and trafficking in the 12 months to August 1987, yet 961 drug related arrests between January and July of the same period'. Yet, incredibly, he goes on to recommend that the police pay more attention to the problem of drug-related crime.

Read 'Loosen the Shackles' if you want to know the scale of racism in Liverpool. But don't expect to find a remedy. For that contact WAR, asap.

Emmanuel Oliver

Camden Larrabee the
Rising Future –
scale of racist
attacks

The year of the

The London Borough of Camden is better known for the fashionable Lock market, antique shops, boat rides, Regent's Park and tv-am than for squalor and racist violence. Yet behind the expensive facade Camden is also home to the grey Somers Town and Regent's Park estates, and to a fair-sized Bangladeshi community.

This has been the year of the racist attack in Camden's rundown estates. The number of attacks reported has risen sharply, and that gives only a glimpse of the real situation: the experience of police hostility means that many black people don't report attacks. We have acquired some confidential papers which give a picture of life for the immigrant community in Camden, and reveal the Labour council's inability to deal with the growing problem of racism. The papers include details of 31 racist attacks carried out between March and July, supplied to the council by the police:

'On Monday 27th March 1989, 9.10pm, lighted pieces of paper were put through the letter box at XXXX NW1. A net curtain was set alight but fortunately was extinguished by members of the X family'.

'Mr X reported that on Monday 24 and Tuesday 25 April he was subject to verbal abuse by a group of local white youths. He also complained of being spat at and missiles thrown from upper floors of his block of flats'.

'Car smashed up at XXXX on 9 May

1989 in a racially motivated attack'.

'Petrol bomb made from milk bottle thrown at XXXX on 15 May 1989 in a racist attack'.

'On Sunday 21 May 1989 at 18.50 outside XXXX NW1, Mr X, aged 20 of XXXX was approached by two white men aged about 20 years, verbally abused and then chased, caught and hit on the head with a lump of concrete which necessitated hospital treatment'.

'On Wednesday 31 May 1989 at 16.00 outside XXXX Mr X of XXXX NW1 was racially abused and assaulted, whereby he sustained a suspected fractured skull by 4 white youths'.

'On Tuesday 20 June 1989 at 5.30pm at XXXX NW1, the Bengali workshop was besieged by a large group of white youths carrying sticks. Later that night a group of 5/6 white youths chased some Bengali men in XXXX NW1, threw a bottle and then racially abused Miss X of XXXX who happened to be passing'.

The council's own documents reveal that between January and June 1989 84 racist attacks were reported to either the social services or housing departments - up from 37 in the previous six 37 3 months. Of these 36 were attacks on Asians, 30 were attacks on Africans, five on Jewish people, three on Afro-Caribbeans and 10 on 'others'. The majority of the attacks were serious physical attacks; 33 involved abuse or threatening behaviour, 21 involved a

physical attack, 16 involved broken windows and other damage to property, six were abusive telephone calls and letters, 11 involved putting 'items' through letter boxes and banging on doors.

The confidential reports go on to detail Camden council's response to attacks on black people living on its estates. In 90 per cent of the cases mentioned, the council's only advice to the victims has been to uproot themselves and move home. But it can take up to two years to be offered alternative accommodation. Even then, the family concerned will only be offered one transfer. Many of them turn down the alternative flats they are offered as unsuitable, and so they are left to sit it out in their present vulnerable accommodation.

Camden's transfer policy is a shambles. A supplementary report concedes that 'only one request for transfer has been agreed'. The confidential report concludes that 'in the present circumstances of housing shortage and limitations imposed on local authorities, housing transfers may not be a possible action or solution to help the families in need'. In other words, the only policy which the council has adopted is a non-starter.

The report proposes another solution, suggesting that the council should employ a full-time solicitor to begin taking legal action against racist attackers, including injunctions and

'I have never experienced such

Over the past few weeks refugees from East Germany have received a very warm welcome in the West. But there is one former citizen of the German Democratic Republic who has faced a less than sympathetic welcome. 'I have lived in Britain for twenty four years' says Gesine, 'and I have never in my life experienced the depth of hatred and violence that I have in the last eight years'.

For almost a decade Gesine and her two sons have been the targets of a vicious hate campaign. Neighbours on their council estate in Gospel Oak, Camden, have spat on them, physically assaulted them, fired air rifle pellets at them, burgled their flat and stuffed rubbish and burning rags through their letter box. The

reason? Because, unlike the new arrivals in the West, one of her sons, Andreas, is of mixed race.

'I first noticed the hatred when he began going to school on his own', recalls Gesine. 'He began crying in the morning and refusing to go to school. When I found out that it was more than bullying I was horrified. I refused to force my son to go to school where he was being racially attacked. Although the headmistress was sympathetic, she said that there was little she could do. It got so bad that Ilea even threatened to take me to court because of Andreas' attendance record'.

Gesine managed to move Andreas to a less hostile school and the attacks stopped. But her problems

were only just beginning. One day, in the summer of 1986, Andreas was attacked in the street by a group of six white youths. They called him a 'dirty Paki' and left him battered and covered in spit. Two weeks later a gang of children broke into the flat and smashed up Andreas' room, while leaving the rest of the flat untouched.

But it is not just racist attacks that Gesine and her family have faced. They have also had to put up with years of indifference, evasion and downright deceit at the hands of officialdom. Shortly after the racist break-in, Gesine applied to be rehoused. It wasn't until July 1987, one year after her case had been submitted to the local council, that

racist attack

evictions.

These documents clearly illustrate that it is impossible to combat racist attacks through the bureaucratic machinery of a local council. The operative policy is to move the victims. In the first place, this is sidestepping the issue; there is no guarantee that it will protect the family concerned, and it risks turning estates into 'no-go' areas for black people. In the second place, the transfer policy does not even work.

Camden's fall-back option is to prosecute the attacker. This presupposes that the police can and will arrest the racists (something they have been none too keen to do in the past, even when the evidence is available), and that the courts will convict them (again, the record gives little encouragement).

Injunctions, eviction notices and other formal procedures are of little or no use. Even if there were successful prosecutions (which there have not been), the most likely reaction would be a backlash and an increase in tensions as racists rallied behind a martyr. The alternative is to try to organise local people against the racists and isolate the attackers. This is the approach which Workers Against Racism has championed. It is also the only approach that works.

Keith Tompson

hatred'

she was deemed to be a 'top priority' for rehousing.

'I knew the police were unsympathetic to what was happening because they refused to protect me from the wrath of the people I knew were doing the attacks - they wouldn't give me any guarantee that I would be safe from attack if I took the culprits to court. They referred me to the race unit of Camden council. So I took my case to the council'.

After she had been a 'top priority' for transfer for 10 months, the council sent Gesine a letter outlining its policy on racial harassment. They said that they would only process her claim if she faced a 'threat to life and limb'. Gesine is scathing about

the 'words but no action' response of her local councillor, Rose Head. She is even more bitter about the manager of the area housing team, Greg Taylor, who told her that she has 'to learn to accept these things'.

Meanwhile the attacks continued. Her black neighbour had his flat gutted. Still nothing was done. The family's first offer of a new flat was in November 1988, over two years after the application had first been lodged. 'It was an insult' said Gesine, 'a two-bed flat for three of us. I rejected it out of hand'.

This October the family were finally offered an acceptable flat in an area with less of a racist atmosphere. But Gesine remains bitter at the haughty and high-

handed treatment she has received from the council. 'I know that all of Camden suffers from racism, and I'm sure that the area I'm moving into isn't exempt. But I feel safer in a new place where my friends are more available to help me.'

'Right from day one, the council, the police, in fact every official body involved in my case has treated me as the problem rather than the racists. While they were busy ignoring the problem it was a miracle we haven't been seriously hurt in the attacks'.

Nigel Lewis



PANDORA ANDERSON

Camden barracks: the Rowley Estate - scene of racist attacks

The framing of Delroy Burris

Andrew Calcutt
reports on how the police
have brought violent
disorder to the streets
of Liverpool 8

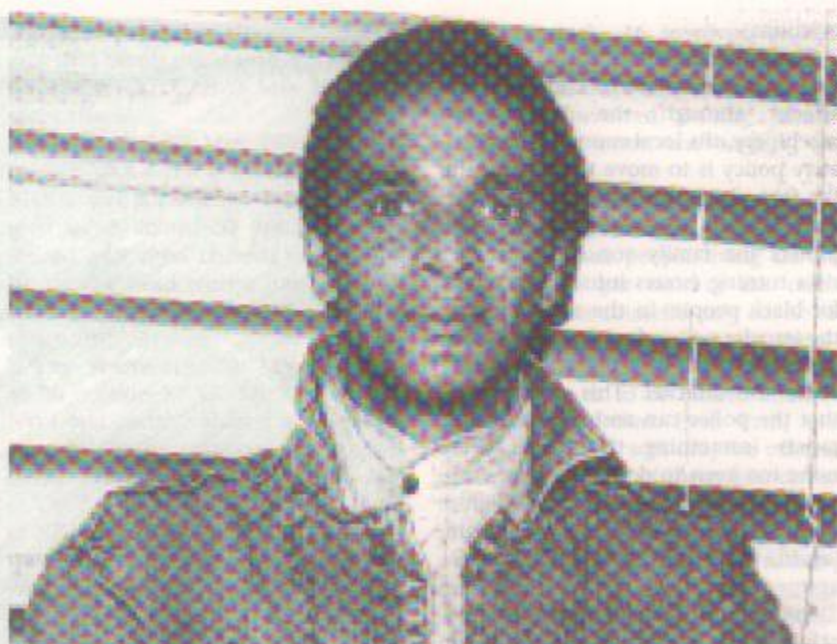
Merseyside police have finally got there man. Delroy Burris, a prominent black community activist from Liverpool 8, was convicted of violent disorder under the 1986 Public Order Act. In fact, the police caused the disorder and then framed Burris on a trumped-up charge.

On 7 October 1988, plain clothes police patrolling Granby, the heart of Liverpool's black community, arrested a 15-year old youth and placed him in the back of their Peugeot Cavalier. A number of young blacks protested about the arrest. Police claim that Burris was among them and that he encouraged the others to rock the police car, shouting 'turn the fuckers over'.

In fact, Burris had come over to find out who had been arrested so that he could inform the lad's parents. He was looking through the rear window when the car juddered backwards, knocking him to the ground. Four days later he was asked to report to Hope Street police station. He was formally arrested and charged with causing 'violent disorder'.

Police made up the evidence to fit their case. Since the offence of violent disorder can only be committed by three or more persons acting together, police witnesses claimed that Burris was one of a group of four or five. In fact he entered and left the scene on his own. According to police a large number of cars were blocking the road causing them 'to fear for their safety'. This was true. But most of the cars were police vehicles and it was black youth who had cause to fear for their safety. The police even accused Burris of 'falling down dramatically' and lying about being hit by a police car.

The case against Burris is part of a long-running campaign against black youth in the area. Over the past 18 months the authorities have used the Public Order Act to impose South African township-style policing in Liverpool 8. Dozens of young blacks have been hauled up before the courts on 'violent disorder' charges. In every case the scenario is the same: police raid the



Delroy Burris — Liverpool police have him in their sights

area, harass young blacks on the street and then slap charges of 'violent disorder' on anyone who protests, or simply happens to be around.

As one of the leading activists in the area Burris has long been on the police hit-list. In April he was acquitted of another violent disorder charge. He sued the police and won. Now they have their revenge. And they haven't finished yet. The local force is preparing to throw further charges at Burris.

Merseyside police have been able to

get away with their bare-faced frame-ups because black youth in Liverpool 8 are fighting alone. In a city whose racism Lord Gifford recently described as 'uniquely horrific' (see page 11), the authorities have managed to isolate the black community from wider support. Until anti-racists stand alongside black people in resisting police intimidation, the authorities will continue creating violent disorder in Liverpool 8, and young blacks will continue to pay the price.

The murder that was'nt

'If it was two blacks who beat up an old man it would have been different', says Khalid. 'A bloke of 65 years old has died at the hands of racists and they're doing nothing'.

On 29 September two elderly Yemeni men were travelling home on the number 69 Rotherham bus following prayers at the mosque. Two racist thugs began hitting, kicking and beating them, until the bus driver threw them off. The two elderly men went to the police station to provide details of the attack. After the interview both men were advised to go home, even though Mohammed Moussa was obviously injured and suffering from shock. Two hours later Moussa died.

The attackers have been arrested and charged with assault and

threatening behaviour. Murder and manslaughter apparently do not apply when the victim is an Asian of Yemeni origin. And to show just how even-handed they are, the police have reprimanded Moussa's friend and given him an official caution for carrying a penknife.

The murder has provoked anger and dismay among the Yemeni community in Sheffield. The Yemeni Community Association called a demonstration to coincide with Moussa's funeral. Over 250 Yemeni people joined the march from the mosque to Tinsley cemetery. 'The law of this country is responsible', said one. 'We obey the law and yet the racists are allowed to kill us'.

Steve Delaney David Duncan

DO THE RIGHT THING

Director Spike Lee

Spike Lee ends his very good film with two quotations. One from Martin Luther King describes the loss of humanity incurred by anyone who uses violence. The other, from Malcolm X, maintains the necessity of fighting back in order to survive.

Since final scene in the film is the gutting of Sal's Famous Pizza joint after a black youth, Radio Raheem, has been murdered by police, you could conclude that Lee's sympathies are with Malcolm X. This may well be so, but 'Do the Right Thing' does not lend itself to simple conclusions. Racism, for Lee, is not a black and white issue.

The film upends radical stereotypes of the black community. The 'right on' black activist is a pain in the neck. The youth on the street are selfish and insensitive. Older men while away the hours drinking beer boasting about the quality of their sexual equipment and making chauvinist remarks about the Korean shopkeeper who has come into the neighbourhood. Lee does not issue the oppressed with an extra ration of virtue.

Lee himself plays Mookie, engaging but feckless, who delivers Sal's pizzas as slowly as possible because there are a lot of distractions on the street. Mookie gets what he can out of his relationship with his girlfriend but leaves her holding the baby.

Sal himself is in many ways the most sympathetic character. A big, soft Italo-American who has had his pizzeria in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant area from way before it became a black ghetto. He saw the kids grow up and he still feels part of the neighbourhood. So, despite the hatred and shame felt by his eldest son at having to serve 'niggers' he aims, to stay put.

Lee restricts his tale of New York life to one day, the hottest of the summer. Confining the action to 24 hours and one street gives a framework to the random nature of the conversations and incidents of street life. Not much happens because it's too hot, but Buggin Out, vain, and petty minded spends most of the day trying to organise a boycott of Sal's. He wants Sal's photographs of Italian-Americans, his 'Hall of Fame', to be replaced with Afro-Americans.

The diners eat the pizza and ignore Buggin Out and the wall decorations. But after a long day Buggin Out wins the support of Raheem who owns the heaviest ghettablaster on the block, and the meanest stare this side of Mike Tyson. Tagging along is the street idiot who seems to have an endless supply of a single 37.3 photograph for sale - Martin Luther King and Malcolm X shaking hands.

BLACK AND BLUE

Director Rupert Gabriel

Like 'Do the right thing', Rupert Gabriel's 'Black and Blue' has at its core the senseless and vicious killing of a black youth. This time though it's for real - the film is based on murder of Clinton McCurbin by two policemen in Wolverhampton town centre in 1987. Working on a shoestring budget Gabriel has made a film that is accurate and truthful. It shows that racism is not accidental and exceptional but part and parcel of life in Britain today.

Black and Blue opens with a concentrated collage of images of how McCurbin met his death: Saturday in a clothes shop; the credit card that Clinton is alleged to have ripped off; the violent death at the hands of the police. An ordinary Saturday in downtown Wolverhampton.

A simple narrative follows. Charles is a young and very straight black bank clerk played by Eastenders' Gary Macdonald (the only professional in the cast). Charles is not a rebel. If he does not think policemen are wonderful he certainly feels they are only doing a job. So he is embarrassed when he bumps into Suki, an old school acquaintance who is now an anti-racist activist, as she hands out leaflets in the town centre. He is even more put off when she tries to pick him up.

Charles may be a model, if boring, young man. But he is still black. Therefore for all his protestations he is going to be held equally responsible for causing an obstruction - being on the street - when a self-satisfied plod decides to move on Suki and her friends. Rational explanations cut no ice with the constabulary even when you say 'officer', don't wear dreadlocks and work in a bank.

It's Saturday and Charles is out shopping with two white friends from

It proves a potent combination when they go to confront Sal. With Public Enemy assaulting his eardrums and Raheem too proud to turn down the volume, Sal explodes. He smashes the machine with a handy baseball bat and Raheem goes for him. The police arrive and Raheem is choked to death on a police truncheon.

What's the right thing to do? Lee's film would still have caused controversy in a society as racially divided as the United States if it had ended here. But it doesn't. Mookie crashes a dustbin through the pizzeria window and within minutes the community has consigned it to flames. Sal loses a lifetime's work because of a moment's anger and a police killing he had nothing to do with. This seems unfair to Sal but Raheem lost his life and that seemed more than unfair to Mookie, to

Telling it like it is

Alan Harding reviews two films about the reality of racism on both sides of the Atlantic

work. He wants some new clothes because, much against his better judgment, he has agreed to go with his friends to a warehouse party. The interminable wait while his credit card is checked out shows that some things won't do nicely if you are black.

That night in his new gear, and looking not a little out of place at the party, Charles bumps into Suki again. She is going to make her move for Charles, but before she can a scuffle breaks out. Some fool calls the police and Charles now wants to play the role of the useful citizen. It's the same policeman as in the morning and he doesn't have any time for Charles's help. In fact it looks as though Charles might spend the night in a police cell until Suki gets him away and to her flat. You get the impression though that Charles might have preferred the local nick but he manages to survive until Sunday morning.

The local radio is on. The DJ stops and there is a newflash. Samson - involved in the previous night's scuffle - has died in police custody. One more killing in racist Wolverhampton - it could even have been Charles!

It's the end of the film but not the end of the story. Black and Blue is a polemical film even though it is not strident. It demands that you do something about the problem it illustrates. A good way to start is to get hold of a copy and organise a meeting around the film. If you are interested, contact Workers Against Racism.

Spike Lee and to me.

Do the Right Thing is a brave and ambitious film. Lee is honest enough to indicate that he doesn't have the kind of pat answers which liberals always spout. And he is brave enough to explore the difficulties of creating an anti-racist movement in a divided, atomised and brutalised society. Little wonder the liberal establishment was up in arms about the film.

In the film the street idiot replaces the Hall of Fame with his own photograph and Lee leaves us with the words of two of the martyrs of black America. Their words remind us that the anti-racist movement in the United States has still to get beyond the noble suffering of Martin and the blazing, righteous anger of Malcolm X. Until it does, 'Do the Right Thing' will be telling it like it is.

Julius Alexander fights on

Julius Alexander has been in Britain since 1984. He has two British born children, a newly born son, Julius, and a daughter, Jannika. His mother and two brothers have been here since the 1950's. He has a sister who was born here. The home office say Julius is an illegal immigrant, an overstayer. Regular readers of War News will be aware of the case

Ever since Julius was arrested by immigration officers in October 1988 he and his wife and their three children have been living a life of fear and insecurity. WAR has been waging a campaign against Julius' deportation for over a year and there are now signs that the campaign is reaching a crucial stage. Sadly it is just at this time that one of the campaign's most consistent supporters, the Polytechnic of North London Student Union, has abandoned its practical support for Julius and his family. Keith Thompson reports:

'You can't come in here!'. The speaker was Michael Collins, senior administrator at the Polytechnic of North London, who was strategically placed outside the annual general meeting of the students' union. The entrance to the Holloway Road site of the polytechnic was barricaded by security officers equipped with radio telephones.

Anybody without an identity card was refused entry to the meeting. This included the children of the many women who had come to protest about the lack of adequate nursery facilities. As a result of management's policing of the meeting, these mothers were denied the right to participate in a debate which directly concerned them.

I was there to urge students to continue their support for Julius Alexander, a former employee of the polytechnic. Management sacked him the moment they realised he was the subject of a deportation order. Despite a campaign for his reinstatement he was not re-engaged.

A large general meeting had voted to oppose the sacking: pending his reinstatement the union would employ Julius. In the event Julius was employed for just a month before the union executive got cold feet and decided not to treat him as an employee and to pay him out of other funds. The executive broke union policy without even referring the matter to a general meeting of students.

Later, during the summer holidays when no students were around to object, union president Payne Mthimkhulu wrote to Julius telling him that there was no cash available to continue paying him. The letter

informed Julius that the July 1989 sum would be 'the last payment until such time as the students' union decides how to proceed with the Julius Alexander Campaign'. The president had no mandate from students to take such a decision.

The decision was an act of political cowardice in the face of threats from the Polytechnic management.

At the annual negotiations between the union and management to decide the level of student union funding the authorities put the screws on the union representatives. Michael Collins made it clear that management disapproved of how the union had been using its cash: to fund an anti-deportation campaign on behalf of a former employee.

It was suggested that if the union had this kind of cash to 'throw away' then it could make do with a lower amount in its annual grant from management. The president capitulated to this threat of sanctions against the union in the most craven manner.

The payments to Julius are not a matter of charity: they are essential to allow the campaign against his deportation to go forward. Since he is categorised as an illegal immigrant by the home office, Julius has no right to work. His wife Maureen had her income support cut following her marriage to Julius: they are expected to support themselves and three children on £45 a week. By refusing to continue the payments the union executive was effectively siding with the home office.

The annual general meeting was set to debate these developments and decide what to do next. Supporters of Julius Alexander placed a motion before the meeting calling for Julius to be re-employed and payments to him to be backdated to July 1989. However, in the days leading up to the meeting the union president and the secretary Malcolm Harden were conniving against the campaign.

They contacted the NUS solicitor about the legal consequences for the union should the motion be passed. The aim was to find a way of opposing the motion without getting into a discussion of politics. The union bureaucrats preferred to hide behind a legal loophole than justify politically their opposition to continuing the

campaign.

The letter from the solicitor was predictably defensive, pointing out that the payment would be 'ultra vires' unless Julius was 'genuinely employed' and unless his campaign was a bone fide society with a constitution approved of by the executive. The letter indicated that even in legal terms there was no reason why the union should not continue to pay Julius and set up a support group. Yet the NUS leadership and the PNL president pretended otherwise.

They tried to construct a legal case against paying Julius in order to conceal the real basis for their opposition to the motion: that is their cowardly submission to the diktat of the polytechnic management.

In the end the annual general meeting voted overwhelmingly to support Julius, pay him a monthly salary and set up a support group with a £1000 budget.

This was a huge endorsement for the campaign. But the president and secretary immediately announced that they would refuse to implement the policy. They declared that 'the AGM has not got the power to mandate us to act outside the law'. There were calls for them to resign.

Following the meeting the telephone lines between the union and management never stopped buzzing. The executive have been trying desperately to avoid paying the Julius Alexander campaign.

Instead the executive called an emergency general meeting to overturn AGM policy. The EGM mobilised 400 students many of whom were openly racist. It voted against allowing Julius into the meeting and backed the union leadership by withdrawing the commitment to employ Julius.

Since the EGM, supporters of WARnews have launched a campaign to win back union support for Julius. Almost 150 have joined a Julius Alexander Campaign Society, and the union have been forced to grant a budget of 2000. A week of action is planned for 4-8 December, culminating in a picket of the home office. If you want to get involved phone us on (01) 375 1702.