

**NEWHAM  
MONITORING  
PROJECT**



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
1987**

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# 1 FOREWORD

‘The most sinister, damaging and divisive group operating in the borough today’  
(*DAC Wyn Jones, November 1987*)

‘...without them my case would never have been re-opened and I would have stood no chance of justice’  
(*Mr M, victim of racist harassment*)

In a political climate increasingly becoming characterised by (i) open attacks on the very right of black people to live in this country with equal rights and dignity; (ii) the growing influence of the ‘New Right’ over policy at a central government level; and (iii) institutional attacks upon anti-racism, the mere fact that NMP is still in existence is in itself some sort of achievement. The regrettable collapse of various anti-racist community groups and the discarding of institutional strategies against racism highlight this even more. Therefore, as NMP prepares to go into the 1990s, it is essential to restate its basic principles and objectives. Political situations by definition are never static. However, the need to move with the times makes it even more important that certain basic lessons are not forgotten.

NMP was set up in 1980 to monitor racist attacks and the police response. Our major problem then was to get statutory and voluntary bodies even to recognise that there was a problem of racism in the borough. We were soon faced with a situation where we were also dealing with cases of police racism, harassment and in many cases physical abuse and violence. Consequently, the project started handling cases of police harassment as well.

It was from these beginnings that we developed a political position from which we will never deviate. NMP is nothing if it does not represent the feelings of the oppressed or direct its work towards the demands of the local black community to whom we are accountable. It is largely due to the sterling efforts of NMP’s workers and supporters since 1980 that many institutions have come to accept that racist attacks are a problem in the borough. Nevertheless, the problem of devising appropriate strategies to combat them remains.

In terms of our relationship with the local authority, we fully recognise the progress made, particularly by the housing department, though the findings of the one-year Runnymede Trust research project, sponsored by NMP in 1987, may indicate room for improvement. More work needs to be done in terms of the other council departments, hopefully an area which will be highlighted in 1987/88.

Unfortunately, the same progress has not occurred within the Metropolitan Police. Unless even limited

forms of accountability to change police structures are introduced, the Metropolitan Police will continue to perpetuate institutional racism. Although within the senior echelons of the police force there is a willingness to accept the problem of racist harassment, officers at a rank and file level refuse to implement the Commissioner’s objectives. The force continues to hide behind glossy publicity campaigns but this is no substitute for *action* on the ground that is required in terms of surveillance, arrests, prosecutions and convictions.

NMP will continue to highlight these problems through its campaign work. It was the major campaigns of the early 1980s, in particular the Newham 7 and Newham 8 campaigns, coupled with various positive changes on the local government scene, that put racist attacks on the local political agenda. NMP retains its basic commitment to highlighting the plight of black people suffering racist harassment, be it through a local community campaign, a high-profile national campaign, or mere publicity.

It is against this background that renewed attacks on NMP in 1987 should be seen. When, therefore, the *Newham Recorder* launches a major attack on the NMP, including a half-page editorial calling for our abolition, it does so with the knowledge that a group like NMP can only fold when the local black community withdraws its support. But the dreams and wild prophecies of newspaper barons are not enough to break a group like ours!

When, therefore, DAC Wyn Jones calls us the most sinister and divisive group in the borough, he does so with the knowledge that an emerging black generation is simply not prepared to put up with the criminal negligence of a force who have sat on their backsides whilst our communities have been attacked, killed and maimed and our houses burnt.

And when, therefore, the Newham Council for Racial Equality chooses to call us an irrelevant body, they do so with the knowledge that the relevancy of a black group is defined not by any favours from the establishment or groups high above, but by their reputation on the ground in the local black community. Our message to people like them is that in racist Britain those who turn a blind eye, or, worse still, side with those who oppress us, are a part of the problem we face, no matter what their intentions.

From NMP’s inception we have striven to maintain a non-sectarian approach, to build alliances with all groups across the borough who are genuinely committed to fighting racism, and to criticise only when criticism is due. We are saddened and angered by the actions of community relations officers who, during the course of the Saranjit Singh Atwal campaign (a family of a man murdered last year in

Newham who came to NMP for assistance), chose not to side with the community but with the forces of oppression. We are forced to remind them and those in similar positions that they have obtained their jobs not through any specific merit of their own but on the backs of black people's struggles.

These attacks on our work are nothing new and in fact could even be taken as a compliment to our effectiveness. What is depressing, however, is the continuing failure of many, especially those who by now should know better, to understand the factors that shape the relationship between us, black people and the police. It is this historical inability to challenge that racism which has shaped this relationship that still influences many people's misconceptions of our work. At the end of the day, what really counts for us though is the confidence of the local black community in our work.

Due to staff turnover and organisational changes, 1987 has in many ways been a difficult year for us. For these reasons, this annual report may not be as comprehensive as we would have liked. But, taken

together with our more comprehensive reports for 1982-86, we hope that it will inform and strengthen your resolve to fight racism. If the report succeeds in this we will be extremely pleased.

Our thanks once again to the support of those individuals, whether they be emergency service volunteers, project workers, or others, who have given their limitless time and energy throughout 1987. The individuals we owe thanks to are far too numerous to mention. We would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the London Borough of Newham.

This report is an attempt to document the experience of black people in Newham. It is an attempt to correct the distortions of the local paper, and to fill a void created in the absence of any political presentation of the struggles of black people. It is for these reasons that we recommend this report to you for community action to combat racism.

Newham Monitoring Project  
Management Committee



## 2 INTRODUCTION

It is with great concern that we present this year's Annual Report. For we are reporting not only on another year of Newham Monitoring Project's existence, but on a year in which the quality of black people's lives has taken a significant turn for the worse.

The basis of our work still remains the same: to offer advice and assistance to the victims of racist attacks and police harassment. However, the context in which NMP, as a grassroots organisation, operates is changing ever more rapidly. New legislation concerning housing, education, local authorities, public order, legal aid and immigration is going to have a dramatic effect upon the black community. Even more serious is the fact that the issues and concerns that NMP and other organisations in Newham and indeed throughout the country are attempting to articulate are falling on increasingly deaf ears.

It also seems that the right to *independence* of thought, and independence of action for community groups, particularly those like NMP who raise unpalatable truths, is being undermined.

If we believe a thing is wrong, then we have a duty to say so, clearly and simply, for all to hear. The case summaries presented in this report illustrate quite clearly the need to continually document the attacks upon black people, and bring them to the widest possible notice.

Throughout 1987, NMP has undergone a transitional

period in which we have seen some staffing changes. However, we continue to develop into a highly effective group and, as an organisation, we look forward to a full complement of staff for the coming year. Our housing research project (see Chapter 11), which specifically looks at the council's racial harassment policy in the south of the borough, should have concluded its field work by the end of April. We hope to give a more detailed report of its work later in the year.

It is also important for you, the general public, to know that NMP has a group of people — mostly volunteers — who staff our Emergency Service help line for people suffering racist harassment or who find themselves in the custody of the police. On behalf of the individuals who have used this service, we extend our thanks and appreciation to the people who have helped maintain this service, which is vital to our existence, over the last year. We would also like to extend our thanks to the many individuals and organisations who have rallied around NMP, attending court hearings to observe and make notes, and generally providing our workers and management with assistance and guidance over the last year.

Every year is a difficult year for NMP. While we continue to document attacks, and seek redress for the people whom we help directly, while we continue to hear of the many other attacks upon black people in Newham and our neighbouring boroughs, our work in one form or another will, and must, continue.

# 3 CASEWORK

The basis of NMP's work is the service and support we provide for black people. It is through our 'casework' that issues are identified and campaigned around. Our practice of responding to and taking up issues from the point of view of black people has not changed.

We aim to continue to give advice, help and support. We also regularly tackle other issues, such as education and housing, which though not directly our brief are inextricably woven into our work — not least because they are issues affected by racism.

Pursuing complaints through all possible channels, and at all possible levels, means that the project, with its finger on a variety of institutional pulses, attempts to ensure that the local council implement their equal opportunity and anti-racist policies. We also aim to monitor the effectiveness of the police's Racial Incidents Squad and their response to racist attacks. The Project also monitors the reaction of the judiciary to attacks, and we note that until this institution begins to acknowledge the intensity of racist attacks, and the reality of police harassment, the recourse to justice for the black community in the courts will be severely restricted.

## BREAKDOWN OF CASES

	1986	1987
Cases reported to the Project	345	309
Racial harassment	221	197
Police harassment	98	100
Other	26	12

The cases we handle are only a reflection of the work we are able to deal with; they do not reflect the real levels of racist violence or police harassment in the borough. For the second half of 1987, we had only one full-time worker (assisted by a series of locums). This resulted in NMP accruing a backlog of cases which, to date, we are still catching up with. The advent of new workers will, we hope, produce a positive new phase for the Project in 1988.

## How we hear about cases

Cases are referred to us from a variety of sources:

Direct:	47.6%
Emergency Service:	8.1%
Others (social services, community groups, etc):	44.3%

## EMERGENCY SERVICE

In 1985, the Project boasted over 60 volunteers participating on the Emergency Service line, ensuring operation for 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. 1986 witnessed a sharp fall in the numbers volunteering, but we managed to maintain the continual provision of emergency help. A large number of volunteers were students. The reason for the fall in volunteers is that they had completed their courses and moved out of Newham and on to other things.

Currently, we have approximately 30 volunteers. We have a list of 10 people waiting to be trained, and with this new influx and with fresh staff, we hope to increase the number of volunteers.

We are still updating our Emergency Service Handbook, which is long overdue.

On average, during the evening period, the line is used once every three days. Some volunteers never receive calls; others are constantly responding to emergency situations.

Once again, we must say that the use of the Emergency Service line does not reflect the high level of attacks that black people face, in terms of both racial and police harassment. And it is extremely important to acknowledge that a single call can actually come after the cumulative effects of several incidents which the victim has felt either too intimidated or too scared to report. On the other hand, some people feel such cynicism and lack of faith in being able to do something to stop the harassment they suffer that they have felt incidents hardly worth reporting.

Elsewhere in this report, the police's response is well documented, as is the effectiveness of the council. The fact that an Emergency Service is needed at all speaks volumes about the lack of effectiveness of both the council and the police.

At the Project we do recognise that there is substantial room for increased use of the Emergency Service. It needs to be more widely publicised and we must think of ways of overcoming people's natural apprehension at a time of stress at speaking to what is probably a complete stranger at the other end of a phone. We are continually examining ways of improving this.

## PRIORITIES FOR THE FUTURE

In terms of the NMP's casework/load, we also note with apprehension the changes in the law which will

affect the community directly. The new immigration laws, which will come into effect in 1988, will see a marked rise in police harassment, with the very real threat of deportation looming over the heads of the many people who, for whatever reasons, have failed to register in time. We also expect to witness the knock-on effects of these laws with regard to the treatment the black community will receive from

local government and the Department of Health and Social Security.

Changes in the police code of practice, the Public Order Act and legal aid will also serve further to marginalise the black community. All these criteria contribute to what we expect will be a heavily increased case load for 1988.

Picture by David Hoffman



In our report in 1985 we printed a similar picture. 1987 sees a different man with the same scar of racism.

# 4 PATTERNS OF RACISM ACROSS THE BOROUGH

Last year Newham achieved the notorious position of having the *highest number of racist attacks in the country*.

This year the Project handled 197 cases of racist attacks. The nature, the trends of these attacks — which include use of shotguns, airguns, ammonia, teargas, hammers, pet dogs, cars (to try and run people down) — and the police and institutional response to racist activity are reported below.

Although only about a half of the cases handled by us involved physical assault and/or damage to property, it is the gradual destruction of people's lives through continual abuse and intimidation which people find hardest to deal with and which we ourselves would highlight as an ongoing and dramatic problem.

The most disturbing feature which has emerged over the year is the growing confidence and sophistication of the racists responsible for these attacks. We have recorded in the past the open hostility and brazen confidence of attackers who, having assaulted a black person, calmly walk off. Now, however, the trend of claiming 'neighbour dispute' is increasing at a worrying rate. A 'loophole' has been found: racists know that the police are most likely to take action against the victims if there is evidence of a 'fight', or if it can be inferred that a disagreement arose.

A typical example of this is the attack on Mr J. Mr J, who is in his fifties and has a heart condition, has lived peacefully for 10 years in Manor Park. Recently, a new neighbour moved in to the area and he regularly parks his two vans outside Mr J's house.

On 16 February 1987, upon returning home, Mr J parked his own car outside his own home. His neighbour drove up shortly afterwards in his van and was heard to shout: 'You fucking Pakis think you own the streets, move your fucking van.' He got out a hammer and proceeded to destroy the window of Mr J's van, causing £850 damage. He disappeared into his friend's house and, obviously acting upon advice, arranged a few seconds later to break a wing-mirror on his own van.

Mr J came to the Project for help. Following pressure on the police, they arrested his neighbour and charged him with criminal damage. At the court hearing almost a year later he was found *not guilty*.

We feel that it is very important to draw attention to the growing trend of claiming neighbour dispute. The Project has documented numerous examples of such cases over the years. However, this year the number has dramatically increased. The implications are frightening: racists are discovering that they can, even

if they are prosecuted, still gain immunity from the system.

Our report includes a look at certain areas of Newham which have been the focus of considerable racist activity as well as anti-racist and black resistance. We will also examine the types of attacks that are occurring, the effect that they have on the victims and the black community as a whole, and the response (or rather lack of response) of the authorities, particularly the police. Where it is appropriate, we will attempt to draw out the implications of a particular incident and the police response.

## CANNING TOWN

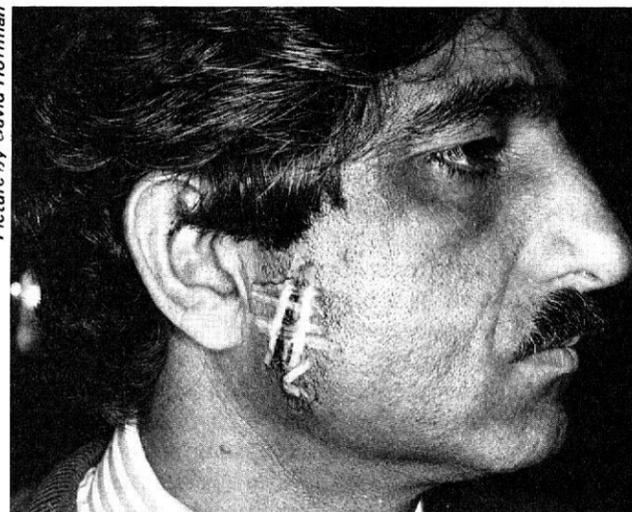
Canning Town historically has been regarded as a violent area with a thriving criminal sub-culture in which the most severe attacks take place and too often are allowed to go unchallenged. As one of three areas used to demob Caribbean ex-servicemen after World War Two, it *had* a large black population which was further increased in the 1960s by the importation of cheap labour from the Indian sub-continent. We can recall, only a dozen years ago, the existence of racist gangs such as the 'Snipers' around Rathbone Market, E16, whose aim on a Saturday night would be to 'kneecap' any black person they saw.

### The 'Southern Fried Chicken' and the case of Mr Lone

In last year's report we looked at attacks around the 'Raffles Pub' in Barking Road. We reported that within a square quarter mile of the pub we documented over 30 attacks over a period of three months — attacks that focused particularly around a fast-food take-away in Barking Road. Despite police surveillance, the catalogue of attacks include: (i) 29 August — arson attack — two petrol bombs; (ii) 18 September — smoke bomb attack; (iii) 19 September — broken window; (iv) 20 September — broken window; (v) 24 September — broken window; (vi) 17 October — theft — criminal damage; (vii) 6 November — attack on the owner's cousin and his son who were battered by a gang of over 20 men and women armed with knives, pool cues and bottles, and who cut Mr Lone across the face with a knife and broke his son's arm. Both Mr Lone and his son suffered severe bruising and both needed a dozen stitches. The attack on Mr Lone was so serious that he suffered permanent paralysis of his lower back and legs.

A group known as the Croydon Road Gang were mostly responsible, and four people were eventually charged with affray and GBH. One of them was also charged with an arson attack on the shop. Despite the

intervention of MPs Nigel Spearing, Eric Deakins and Brian Gould, and support from numerous councillors including the leader of Waltham Forest, and despite national publicity in the *Guardian* (10 December), *New Life* and *Asian Times* (and the appearance of Ezaz Hyat on Channel 4's 'After Dark' in January 1987, and also on Radio Four) and in numerous other journals, *all those charged were eventually found not guilty in February 1987*. A black barrister instructed by a local firm defended the racists. Police evidence was both inconsistent and insufficient, and the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) prosecutor had an ill-prepared case which steered well clear of insinuating that the case had any possible racist motive.



Mr Lone's jaw needed several stitches after attack by ICF

Following the attack on Mr Lone and his son, the owner of the 'Southern Fried Take Away' was left alone for a while, but trouble began again when groups of youths started standing around the shop. In August, two men asked for food. They refused to pay and smashed the shop window (causing over £1,000 damage). Police arrived from Plaistow and, despite guidance from over a dozen witnesses and a trail of blood, they refused to follow the attackers. As soon as they left, the thugs returned. Unbelievably, this



Window smashed by racist thugs in Canning Town

time they demanded a bracelet which one of them claimed to have lost during the attack! They punched two staff in the face and threatened more destruction. The police had by now returned and arrested the two. They took a worker who had suffered many punches to the head to provide a statement at East Ham police station. There the man (who spoke no English) was told by the police that unless he returned the bracelet they would drop the charges against the two thugs!

The two men eventually pleaded guilty to criminal damage but, in court in September, were fined only £100 each. The owner was never compensated as the police had failed to attach a compensation order to the cases — an all too common occurrence where racist violence is concerned.

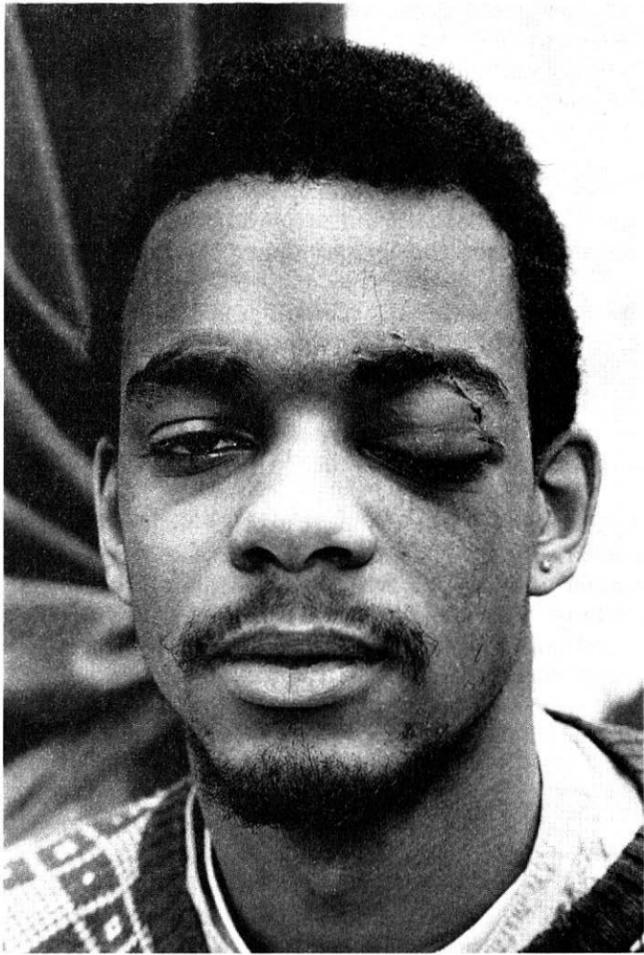
In the following months more attacks occurred in the area. The mosque in Barking Road was attacked on a number of occasions, with stones thrown through the windows, children abused and attacked on their way to and from prayers. During Ramadan, cars were scratched and stolen from. The mosque is now encased in wire meshing for protection and looks more like a fortress than a place of worship.

### The case of Trevor Ferguson

One of the most horrific attacks which took place last year was suffered by Trevor Ferguson. On 4 January 1987, a few hundred yards behind Barking Road, Trevor Ferguson was stabbed in his left eye.

Trevor had been at a party in Beaconsfield Road, E16, which was stopped twice after teargas canisters had been fired through the letter-box. The police arrived after the first attack at 1am and left saying they would keep a look-out for those responsible — these were a group of whites from a party at a house opposite in Exening Road. Following the second attack, at 3am, the party was forced to finish, and Trevor and a friend went over to the house to ask why the party had been attacked. They were then chased by a gang who threw bottles. One of them caught Trevor and cut his eye out with a broken bottle. Trevor had to be dragged back by his friend, who rescued him under a hail of bottles. When called for help the second time, the police actually *put the phone down*. Only after the ambulance service was called did they respond, and went across to the party with police dogs. Despite the fact that some of those present had blood on their clothes, the police did not arrest them and, as far as we know, no statements were ever taken.

Within the next few days the person who had held the party which Trevor and his friends attended was forced out. Racists smashed into the flat and daubed it with obscene graffiti. The council transferred her to another flat within 12 hours. A few days later, the occupiers of the neighbouring flat (a mixed race family) also had their home broken into and had similar graffiti daubed on the walls. Again they were transferred within hours.



Trevor Ferguson after the vicious bottle attack

Picture by David Hoffman

police simply fail to take statements from witnesses to the attack. Very often, as in the Lone case, it is only following pressure that the police will respond and search for the assailants. Indeed, in the Lone case it was Mr Lone and his son who forced the police to enter Raffles Pub. Even so, they still had to point out the thugs (who had bloodstained clothes) and only after they insisted did the police take the thugs in for questioning.

If this is the type of response in cases where people have been nearly killed, it is not hard to imagine the frequent complaints of reluctance and indifferent response to calls of harassment of a 'less serious' and more common nature. Yet, it is the common experience of the black community that the police, when investigating a crime where black people are suspected, leave no stone unturned. The quality of the investigation is of a different calibre altogether, with the full force of formal and informal powers used by the police.

#### Racial terrorism

There were reports towards the end of January of an off-licence owned by a black family in the same area which had been teargassed. Children came downstairs crying, and their parents, thinking they had been playing with bleach, scolded them. But when they went upstairs they too were overcome with fumes, and only then did they realise what had happened. In January, in the same area, there were two other reports of attacks on businesses where teargas was also used. The *Newham Recorder* also reported the case of a black youth who was chased into an alley and had a teargas canister thrown at him.

A pattern of such serious and coordinated attacks means that an organised group could well have been responsible. In fact, we believe that ICF members (West Ham football club 'supporters') obtained these canisters in France (where they recently became available for women to use in self-defence), and brought them here in order to embark on an orgy of racial terrorism.

The publicity which we brought to these events eventually forced the police to respond and to round up (albeit a few months later and for different reasons) some of the ICF members.

#### Community action

The Project acts as a catalyst for community action and self-defence, and at all times aims to confront racist elements in Newham. The attack in Barking Road last year on Trevor Ferguson, Mr Lone and his son, the take-away, the mosque, the off-licence owner opposite who had ammonia thrown in his eyes (and incidentally spent 10 days in hospital) prompted just such a community response. Victims of racist violence came together at the mosque with anti-racists and former members of SNARF (South Newham Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Committee (SNARF)) to:

(1) provide a support network for victims of racist violence; (2) create greater awareness of attacks in Canning Town; and (3) challenge directly institutions in the area. Members of the group also gave talks to local tenants associations and community schools. They also planned support visits to families in the area, and leafleting sessions in the streets of Canning Town to advertise their presence.

#### FOREST GATE

Although Canning Town is recognised as being a notoriously dangerous area for black people to live in, Forest Gate in the north of the borough, which is outside the heart of the black community, has gradually developed into a no-go area for black people, and this is particularly the case in and around the area of Forest Lane. For a number of years this area had been peaceful, until a white family was moved in from Canning Town. Their poison began to seep into the local area, encouraging the bigots to come out of the woodwork. The family in question focused their campaign of terror particularly on a number of Asian families in and around Odessa and Forest Gate School.

Before the white family arrived there were four Asian families living in the road; nearly three years later, only one family now remains. One family sold up and left, two were transferred by the council, and the remaining family also wants to be moved as a result of their increasing torment. The police and the council have been called over two dozen times, but no effective measures have been taken to relieve their situation.

#### A catalogue of injustice

The council began eviction proceedings against the white family, but these have since been dropped. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, racists realise they can escape justice by presenting their action as part of a neighbour dispute — this is precisely what happened in this case too. After striking her neighbour, Mrs H-H took out a summons against her black neighbour. Mrs M (who spoke no English) had actually called the police who took her to a magistrate's court. She believed that they were taking action on her behalf. However, when she got home she realised that instead of doing this, they had taken out a summons against her. Mrs H-H's case was thrown out by magistrates in a matter of minutes — but the action was sufficient to deter the council from proceeding with its course of action against the white family. This in turn influenced the Newham courts, who would not consider the actions of the white family as racist harassment. The M family were eventually transferred to a nearby property but were attacked on two subsequent occasions.

Mr K and his family of five who lived further down the road became the next victims of the H-H family's campaign. The H-H's sons stood outside their home

and threatened them. On Easter Bank Holiday, Mr K phoned our Emergency Service. A number of volunteers got to him quickly. They heard the H-Hs openly threaten to destroy his car at night so that 'no one would be able to prove a thing'.

Once again the H-Hs played the system to their advantage by immediately issuing their own summons. At this point, and with enormous evidence to link nine other families that we know were suffering racist harassment by this particular family, the Project drew together the families, local teachers, residents and the council to defend and to support the local families under attack and to confront the racists.

On 29 June a public meeting was held in Forest Gate school which drew the attention of the 200 members of the public to the frightening escalation of attacks in an area previously thought of as 'safe'. The attacks upon Urdu classes being held on Saturday mornings at Odessa school were so serious and prolonged that the parents were left with no option but to stop classes! Members of the H-H family are known to have been involved. Other attacks in which members of this particular group are thought to be involved include one where a stone was fired through the window — probably with a catapult — with such force that it embedded itself in the window opposite.

Chief Inspector Patrick from Forest Gate 'attended' the meeting, stating that those who had been identified would be arrested and charged.

At this point, although police put evidence before the Crown Prosecution Service, the case was rejected by the Crown. It was only as a result of public and police pressure arising out of this meeting that they changed their minds and went ahead with the prosecution.

Subsequently, three members of the H-H family were charged with threatening behaviour.

#### Black residents and tenants groups

From this meeting emerged the Forest Gate Black Tenants and Residents Group, comprising local people that the council and the Project had brought together to support each other morally and physically — the aim being collectively to address their common problems. The group meets every month at Forest Gate Housing Office and is an example of positive community response as the result of action leading up to the public meeting.

Mr W and his family were active members of the group. They joined as a result of Mr W being criminalised by police for defending himself. Having lived below a family of racists, who had been harassing them for over two years, they moved out but the younger sons returned regularly to visit friends in the area.

On one occasion, as Mr W and his brother were getting into the car, they attacked him, trying to cut his face with a knife. Fortunately he managed to protect his

face, and his hand took the brunt of the blow. Mr W was lucky in that he needed only seven stitches; if the injury had been to his throat it might have been fatal. When the police arrived, they took all three men to hospital. Mr W was charged on four accounts of wounding with intent and GBH. The men who had attacked him were allowed to go free.

The day Mr W went to Newham West for committal was also the day of the hearing against the H-Hs. About 50 people lobbied the court that morning. But the outcome of the case against the H-Hs was disappointing and unjust. Despite letters to the Crown Prosecution Service from Tony Banks MP, letters of support from community groups, and representation by Newham Council and an independent solicitor, the CPS prosecutor told us that the magistrates had given clear indication that they intended not to prosecute on the grounds that to bring the matter back again the next day to hear the civil suit would be a 'waste of court time'.

Having been a victim of continuous harassment for over two years, and despite a vigorous community campaign which pushed the police into action, Mr W found himself with a criminal record.



Mr W after defending himself from racist attack

Picture by David Hoffman

## MANOR PARK

The north-east of the borough, particularly the Manor Park area, has always been similar to parts of Canning Town/Custom House, which are in the south of the borough where the Project has been active. Notorious estates like Warrior Square (which were featured on the 9 o'clock BBC News following the launch of the CRE report, *Living in Terror*, October 1987) continue to present problems. Last year we handled cases from the area involving arson attacks, a stabbing requiring 23 stitches, and ammonia attacks carried out by people driving around in cars.

### The role of caretakers

One particular fact that emerged in the course of the year was that one of the suspected racist thugs was the son of the local authority-appointed caretaker.

Attention should be focused on the crucial role which caretakers are able to perform. They are on the 'scene' a vast majority of the time, unlike housing professionals; very often they know who commits acts of racist vandalism and are in a key position to support victims of harassment. We feel that greater emphasis ought to be placed on providing training and support for caretakers. When we have approached them they, like many estate residents, are reluctant to 'grass' on offenders (particularly in estates like Warrior Square and Hathaway Crescent in Manor Park) for fear of reprisals. It goes without saying, however, that where there is evidence, or well-founded suspicion, of local authority employees or their families being involved in racist intimidation or racist violence, this should elicit the strongest possible measures.

### Failure to take action

On 31 August 1986 Mr MS was drinking with his brother in the Rising Sun pub. At about 10.15pm they left with another brother and their cousin. When they got to their car, they spotted a man urinating on it. When Mr MS asked the man to stop, he was sworn at and abused. A car with four of the man's friends was parked behind Mr MS. These white men then jumped out and set upon him. He was slashed across the stomach (his wounds required 23 stitches) but before he passed out he managed to get the number plate of the car. His brother rushed into the pub, but the landlord would not allow him to use the phone. Eventually, after protest, the police were called.

The NMP are often accused of unnecessary criticism of the police. However, our criticism, far from being unjust, is based on our experience of the *refusal* of police to investigate racist attacks as thoroughly as they normally would. Over a year has gone by and, as far as we or Mr MS are aware, those responsible have not been arrested or charged. The police claim that *every time they go round to the owner of the car's house, he's not in!* But, compare this non-response by the police to the vigour and zest with which they will press the arrest of a young black person in

Newham — as reported in our next chapter.

Further evidence of the police's dismissive attitude to the issue of racist intimidation is evidenced by the case of Mr AQ, who moved into a flat he had bought in Manor Park in November 1987. The house next to Mr AQ was vacant and acted as a magnet for young children to vandalise; this they did, causing a great deal of noise and disturbing Mr AQ. On several occasions he asked them to stop and was told to 'f... off Paki'. He repeatedly phoned the police, who advised him that next time it happened he was to effect a 'citizen's arrest'. This Mr AQ did and, grabbing one of the children, took him to his parents' house.

Within two hours, a large and vicious gang of the young boy's brothers and friends marched down to AQ's house. One of them set a dog on him. He managed to get away and went to Whipps Cross hospital with his girlfriend and another flat-mate. After he had been treated, and as they were about to leave, the same gang appeared — having followed him to the hospital. They were armed with knives, which they kept concealed. In a state of near hysteria Mr AQ asked a policeman and doctor nearby to take action. But the policeman threatened to arrest him, and the doctor walked away ignoring the naked threats — refusing even to call a taxi. Eventually they managed to leave unharmed and went to live with relatives in north London for a few days.

When they returned they refused to go back to their flat until members of the Project accompanied them. We were subsequently called on a number of occasions because the gang was outside Mr AQ's home.

The police in this case, as in so many others which we have documented, refused to intervene on the grounds that no criminal act had been committed. They knew full well what the consequences of a citizen's arrest in and around the Warrior Square estate would be. There was bound to be some form of retaliation.

This begs the question: if there were grounds for a citizen's arrest, then there must have been grounds for a police arrest. Why weren't the police prepared to take action when there were grounds for doing so? If they had, Mr AQ would not be looking to sell his flat and move out of the area — the plight of several black families whose cases we have handled over this year.

There is another wider issue thrown up by this attack and many others. The police have continuously said that we should not take the law into our own hands, or try and substitute for the police, yet here they are telling us to do precisely that — as indeed they did in the case of Mr S, of East Ham, whose wife went missing (*she was last seen at a Wimpy shop — the police advised him to sit outside and keep watch!*). However, if we, or other groups, suggest similar surveillance of known active racists or fascists to gather evidence to bring them before the courts, the police waste no time in rebuking us and labelling us

as vigilantes.

## OTHER AREAS IN THE BOROUGH

### Hathaway Crescent estate

One of the most practical ways in which the Project can support families under siege is to visit them regularly (and particularly in times of crisis). We did this with a family on the Hathaway Crescent estate who were being intimidated, threatened and abused on a daily basis by a group of young people. By several members of the Project arriving and maintaining a presence outside the flat for half an hour each day, the group soon got the message that Mrs H and her family were not alone. They disappeared and did not return. We did talk sternly to the boys, who complained that they had nowhere to go — no youth facilities, etc. We pointed out that torturing black families is unacceptable in *any* circumstances and that they ought to approach the council for facilities.

### Stratford

Along Carpenters Road in Stratford are James Riley Point and Lund Point — two of four tower blocks on the outskirts of the borough which have been the focus of racist activity this year. Mrs A lives in Lund Point and is on the transfer list. She lives alone with her small child. Her torment is that shared unfortunately by other black single-parent families. *Lighted matches have been thrown through the letter-box and graffiti daubed on the walls.* The culprits have not been traced, although the local authority have their suspicions.

### Upton Park

The area around Upton Park — scene of the fight leading to the Newham 7 case at the Duke of Edinburgh pub — has seen regular violence against black people. In October 1987, the *Newham Recorder* described an incident in which a white man in Charles Bronson style attacked a number of black youths in the area with a hammer. A black take-away was also the scene of a horrific attack at the beginning of 1987, when two men attacked a waiter and put his head through the glass window.

In none of the above attacks has anyone been arrested. The violence becomes even more pervasive on match days when West Ham play at home. Police survey the area and ride through back streets a mile away from the ground. The area behind Queens Market (particularly the area around Queens Road West and some of the high rise tower blocks, eg Willet House) has seen attacks on a number of black families. The Project has already handled seven cases of racist harassment this year from Willet House alone! A typical example of the type of harassment occurred when Mrs P and her son were subjected to continued intimidation. On her way back from shopping she would be abused. On two occasions she was robbed

and then threatened and abused whilst getting into the lift. When her son got in from work late at night the same gang would be waiting and would subject him to similar harassment. Mrs P was living in terror, unable to live her life normally, and eventually, after the strong intervention of her local councillor, efforts were made to have her transferred. However, others have not been so lucky.

### A bungled eviction

Having had numerous complaints about one principal offender, the council were eventually forced into seeking an eviction against him and his family, citing racist harassment as one of the grounds. As the recent Camden and Islington cases have shown, courts are reluctant to evict on grounds of racist harassment. Cases have to be well prepared. Evidence should be thoroughly gathered and presented in a highly professional manner. In this case, the political decision to evict had been taken — we understand principally on the grounds that there would be over a dozen local residents willing to testify — and the matter went before Bow County Court in Stratford.

We were absolutely astounded when in less than half an hour the judge threw the case out on technical grounds. Two notices seeking possession had been served upon the family but the wording of the first differed slightly from that of the second. The judge refused to exercise his right of discretion in allowing the case to proceed and commented on the extraordinarily stupid error. The council have appealed against the decision and intend to take the matter back to court.

Taking offenders to court is perhaps the strongest institutional sanction which can be brought to bear

on racist offenders. It acts as a deterrent to others, reinforces the council's authority, and ensures that its warnings are taken seriously. Bungling cases of this kind serves only to create amusement in local communities as endorsed by Mrs R, who gave a joyous account of the fiasco to the local paper afterwards. We hope not to see errors of this nature again.

### THE WORK OF THE LEGAL ACTION GROUP

The Legal Action Group is in the process of producing a book on legal remedies to racist harassment. The work identifies numerous existing laws which are available both to individuals and to local authorities to punish racist offenders and, more importantly, to begin to take preventive measures — developing a proactive policy in order to prevent harassment from occurring. It is not for us to review the recommendations here, but a number of remedies within existing laws are well known to local authorities, for example those contained in the Local Government Act. Section 222 empowers local authorities to support (financially) individuals within its municipal boundary and assist them in taking offenders to court — something already within the Housing Department's racial harassment policy (there are also powers available under the Housing Act and Education Act). We eagerly await this forthcoming publication, and hope the council will not shy away from its duty to test these measures.

## 5 NEW TRENDS IN RACIAL HARASSMENT

### RACIST ATTACKS ON PUBLIC TRANSPORT

#### British rail and the underground

Every year we deal with a number of cases that involve violent attacks carried out on people whilst on public transport (in addition to reports of obscene racist graffiti which we have all grown accustomed to seeing). Very serious assaults are reported to us. Last year proved no exception as the following examples demonstrated.

Mr S is a British Rail employee based in Euston, but living in Newham. As he clocked in for work on 8 September 1987, two 'colleagues' confronted him and accused him of refusing to sign a petition the previous day. They took hold of him, abused him racially, and proceeded to punch, kick and headbutt him to the floor. He was taken to hospital with numerous injuries, including a broken nose, cracked ribs and severe bruising of the face. British Transport police took a statement and charged the assailants. At their committal several months later, despite the appearance of two witnesses and sworn testimony from six others, one of the attackers was let off. British Rail has sacked him and suspended the other.

Mr S has been away from work for several months, having just had a further operation to the nose allowing him to breathe more freely. His union, the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) have offered him precious little support. They have rest and recuperation facilities, the use of solicitors, and yet they have failed to assist him, despite our pleas to their regional head office.

Mr AP, whilst on the platform of Upton Park tube station, was racially abused and severely assaulted. He received no help from staff, and when he went to West Ham police station was told there was nothing which could be done. Coincidentally, the men who attacked him walked past the police station at the very moment he was reporting the attack. Even then Mr AP had to insist, in the strongest possible terms, before the officer went out to arrest the men.

#### On the buses

Both of these cases demonstrate the risk that black people face on public transport and in public places. We have also handled two cases of serious racist attacks carried out on victims whilst on buses. The Harris Survey (see chapter on police harassment) discovered that 26% of black people would avoid public transport for fear of harassment and attack. This means that in some cases people are having to fundamentally adjust their lives and their travel arrangements to avoid the risk of attack. We would urge public transport authorities to note these

concerns and introduce measures to increase public safety, and in cases of racist violence to take action.

### EDUCATION

Education is a highly topical issue at the moment, with the government's proposed Education Bill and the recent Dewsbury School episode gaining national publicity. Anti-racist education is not high on the schools' curriculum in the face of this onslaught. In Newham, the *Newham Recorder* has been central once again in whipping up racist fervour, particularly around the issue of holidays and multi-cultural initiatives. We cannot over-emphasise how highly irresponsible we find such journalism, particularly in the face of mounting attacks upon schoolchildren.

#### Monitoring of racism in schools

If racist violence in schools is not quickly or effectively confronted, bigotry and prejudice will take root and become firmly entrenched in the minds of children at a very impressionable age. In the past we have documented attacks in schools such as Cumberland, Rokeby and Little Ilford.

Some years ago, the Project held a conference on the issue of racist attacks in schools and anti-racist education, and produced a document still available, widely read and pertinent to issues in anti-racist education today. As a result of the conference, each school in Newham was to form its own monitoring group. Many schools did, but very few survive today.

One of the most common complaints we receive from teachers is that the level of racist attacks in schools, whilst very high, is hard to estimate. Once an attack has been reported to the headteacher, it often goes no further, for fear of damaging the school's reputation. All racist attacks are supposed to be recorded and collated centrally, so the level and pattern of attacks can be effectively monitored and responded to. Yet, sadly, we have seen no real evidence of this happening.

#### Reports of racists attacks

Racist attacks around schools and educational establishments have continued unabated during 1986/87. Some of the cases of attacks around schools we have handled this year include:

(1) *The attack on 15-year-old AI*, a pupil at Trinity School, Canning Town. On his way back from games with his classmates, Ahmed had to go through an underpass where a man coming from the opposite direction charged towards him with a knife and cut him down his face. Ahmed needed 15 stitches. No one was arrested for this attack (a teacher had unsuccessfully given chase). The Project again had to

Newham Recorder 26.3.87

## POLL REVEALS EXTENT OF RACE MISERY

By PAT COUGHTREY

A MAJOR crime survey has revealed that a quarter of Newham's black residents were victims of racial harassment over the past year.

The findings of a Newham Council-commissioned poll were revealed last week by deputy council leader Cllr. Conor McAuley at a House of Commons news conference.

"Figures like this should convince, once and for all, any remaining sceptics that racial harassment exists," he said.

"It is not a minor problem. It has not been exaggerated and it is a threat every black resident faces, sometimes with murderous consequences," he said.

The report results from an in-depth poll carried out by the independent Harris Research Centre last summer. They interviewed a total of 1,063 local people — at least 279 were black.

### POLICE

The survey not only considered racial harassment, but also included views on crime in general, the fear of crime and police effectiveness. On race the poll revealed:

- Two-thirds of victims have been harassed more than once.
- Such is the dissatisfaction with police response only one in 20 incidents were officially reported.
- Of the 1,550 crimes reported to pollsters, more than half related to insulting behaviour of threats.
- Physical assault related to one in ten victims.

put pressure on the police before they sent an artist to create a 'photofit'.

(2) *11-year-old AC* was with his sister making their way home from Brampton Junior School when he was threatened by a boy his age, who abused him. He told the boy to go away. A few minutes later, the boy returned with some relatives and older youths, who punched AC in the face. His sister tried to find help but no one came to their aid. Although the probable suspects were approached by both the police and the council, it was claimed that sufficient evidence was not available to take any action against them.

(3) *JS, a sixth former at Eastlea*, was being harassed at home by a gang of boys from his school. He told them to go away and leave him and his family alone. The next day he went to school and, when coming out of the building at break-time, he was mobbed by a group of fourth formers who had been gathered together by members of the gang harassing him at home. His own friends saw what was happening and rushed to help. A couple of the chief troublemakers were suspended for a few days by the school. We commend them on their action and hope other schools show similar resolve when dealing with racist thugs.

The Project has worked closely with a number of schools this year. We have provided articles for Lister and Woodside community schools' newsletters, arranged for visits from fourth formers from Plashet School to our building, and talked about our work as well as the kind of anti-racist education they would like adopted in their curriculum. We have also worked closely with Eastlea Community School, particularly when racist attacks were on the increase at the school end of Barking Road.

We have also provided many students from higher educational establishments with advice and reference material, particularly students from LSE, NELP, Newham Community College, Kent University, Essex University and London University. We also accommodated the placement of a black law student on an exchange visit through South Bank Polytechnic Law Department for three months.

A forum now meets regularly to exchange information on the level and types of racist harassment in schools with a view to developing a coordinated response from Newham council departments, local groups, and the probation service.

## RACIST ATTACKS IN THE PRIVATE HOUSING SECTOR

In the past, most of the cases we handled arose in the public sector, principally in local authority accommodation. However, we are increasingly handling cases from owner-occupiers and tenants. Indeed, the Harris Survey disclosed that racist harassment took place within the private sector — a much greater proportion than was previously thought,

and which will raise some fundamental problems for social policy planners. The main problem for the victims of racist harassment in the private sector is that they can look only to the police and to the courts for action against perpetrators — something that we have already noted is incredibly difficult to do effectively.

In fact, about a third of the cases we handled last year were in the private sector. Some examples:

(1) *Mr B and his family* suffered repeated harassment, including having their windows shot out with an air rifle. No one was ever arrested.

(2) *Mr A and his family* live in E13 and have had problems with a racist neighbour for some 10 years. Last Christmas Mr A's family came to visit, and his brother-in-law was punched in the face; the attack resulted in a broken nose. A few weeks later — at a time when the family had begun receiving obscene and threatening calls — Mr A's teenage daughter was late coming home. On this particular day, they had received a call telling them that their daughter had been kidnapped and would be raped and then crushed to death — a video film would be taken and sent to the family! The police were actually present in the home and heard these threats being made. They maintained that Mr A should change his phone number, rather than they ask British Telecom to intercept calls! Their daughter turned up safely later on.

This case was similar to that of *Mr S and his brother* who had advertised their car for sale. Two white men came to see it and, whilst Mr S was opening the bonnet, they got in and drove it away. Over the next three days they received six threatening and abusive calls. Mr S sent his family away in fear and then, on the Sunday evening, the same two men, this time accompanied by four other friends, returned to Mr S's house with *his car* and proceeded to taunt him, urging him to come out. They then rushed off before the police could arrive.

The calls persisted for the next few days and this time, after repeated pleas, the police agreed to speak to British Telecom, backing up the family's request for the calls to be intercepted. The police found the car abandoned a few days later, but claimed there were no fingerprints or anything to identify Mr S's tormentors.

In cases of racist harassment within the private sector, where possible we try to put the families in touch with good solicitors. For example, *Mr H from Forest Gate* had been living next door to an elderly white couple who had abused his family for some 10 years. But, because of the age of this old couple, Mr H tried his best to ignore their provocations. But one day the old man came out and kicked in Mr H's car's headlamp, and scratched the entire car. Police were called but were reluctant to do anything, even though criminal damage had been committed. Mr H was

forced, through our own solicitors, to try and warn the couple to stop. Unfortunately, it has had very little effect.

Although the council's housing department does have a working party developing a policy on combating racial harassment in the private sector (the Project having been involved at one stage), time has lapsed and nothing concrete has yet come forward from it. We need to see a policy as a matter of urgency.

## OTHER CASES

We have handled several miscellaneous cases this year, not of racist violence or police harassment.

These included the case of *JR*, a student at North East London Polytechnic, who was stopped at Dover with a friend last July and strip-searched for no reason. When she refused and asked for legal help, she was told that she could and would be detained for 24 hours, thereby holding up everyone on the coach. She was released and no apology issued. The National Council for Civil Liberties (NCCL) are considering the case with a similar one as a test case for legal action, and *JR* is pressing charges through a solicitor recommended by NMP.

On Sunday 11 October, 24-year-old Saranjit Singh Atwal was stabbed to death in Katherine Road, Forest Gate. The police linked his death to a series of

street robberies which had taken place in the vicinity during the same evening.

Immediately, the community rallied around the Atwal family and a Support Committee, with Pooran Singh Atwal (Saranjit's father) at the head, was formed at a meeting the following Wednesday, at which over 30 community representatives were present.

The Committee worked hard, collecting 2,000 signatures of support and placing posters in local shops calling for any witnesses to come forward. Meeting weekly, it acted as a vital source of support for the bereaved family. The Committee ensured that all that could be done to bring the murderers to justice was being done. To this end, representatives of the Committee and members of the Atwal family met with senior policemen a fortnight after the murder to establish what progress had been made with the investigation, and to make sure that a racial motive for the murder was not ruled out.

Subsequently, letters of support were received from all over the country, and Saranjit's father and brother led the annual Anti-Fascist Action March on Remembrance Sunday.

Despite the publicity brought to the case, including a picket of West Ham police station, no progress has been made with the investigation and no one has been charged with Saranjit's murder.

# 6 POLICING TRENDS

## INTRODUCTION

On what basis and what criteria is any announcement made by the police concerning the nature of the relationship between the black community and the police? This is an important question in many ways. The fact that black people should be allowed to live a life free from police harassment and with the knowledge that the police will protect them from attack is far more important than any statement the police might make. For Newham Monitoring Project, as for many other black organisations, police-black relations must be judged in terms of what the people do, not what the police say they are going to do. Our criteria for assessing the police's performance should be based on the day-to-day experience of seeing the direct results of police harassment, inaction, and its sometimes horrific effects upon individuals, families and whole communities.

In the early years of NMP's existence, police officers (from ordinary PCs to senior division officers) did not acknowledge (publicly anyway) the existence of racist attacks. This might have been for a variety of reasons: plain ignorance, in some cases, but mostly we suspect because their own sympathies were with the perpetrators of attacks. The case files and campaigns of black organisations stand in themselves as living testimony to the thousands of black people who have suffered racist attacks, ranging from the opportunistic attack carried out on the spur of the moment to more sinister attacks carried out by the teddy boys of the 1950s and '60s or the skinheads of the '70s and '80s. In the face of all this, police stood by — except, of course, when forced to act through a combination of black community pressure and community outrage.

But in terms of police response on the ground, little has changed. The issues surrounding racist attacks had touched a very raw nerve with senior police officers. National community campaigns in places like Newham and Tower Hamlets have focused attention on the police's inability not merely to apprehend those responsible but to view these attacks with some sense of seriousness and urgency. In many cases involving black people, police officers were humiliated by defence barristers in court proceedings over their lack of concern and interest in racist attacks. In one glaring public statement by a senior officer, racist attacks did not figure in the police's priority list. They received even less importance than auto crime!

Since then, however, things have changed — or they appear to have changed on the surface. And it is that surface — the public image of the police force — that has undergone major transformation. The situation in itself demanded a police response: specific procedures to record racist attacks, various 'human awareness' training schemes for new recruits (a handful of senior officers went on fact-finding trips to the Caribbean

and the Indian subcontinent) were introduced. The latest scheme is to devise special Racial Harassment Units; these have already undergone pilot operation in the London boroughs of Newham and Ealing.

And the police seek public approval for these initiatives through neighbourhood watch schemes, direct advertisements in the press (including those generally read by the black community) and through special liaison schemes like the recently formed Newham Police Community Consultative Committee.

So why is it that the Newham Monitoring Project remains unconvinced? The plain truth of the matter is that the black community is still unconvinced that the Metropolitan Police force shows any intent to deliver the level and quality of service which is demanded of it. For an institution which the black community contributes to through rates and taxes, one is tempted to write off this expenditure as a bad debt! NMP would be one of the first organisations to agree that a few officers are quite concerned about racism within the force, the police failure to deal with racist attacks and also the actions of individual police officers. However, these officers remain isolated and few in number, and are afraid to speak. But speak they must.

## CHANGING PATTERNS OF POLICING

The changing pattern of policing is, we think, best assessed by the nature of grievances and concerns which people bring to us. Many people have complained that specific areas and buildings are being targeted by police, which means also the deployment of special paramilitary squads like the newly-formed Territorial Support Group. And these squads are moved from area to area. At one moment the pressure is applied to areas of Forest Gate, then the police move on to Upton Park, East Ham, and then back to Forest Gate again.

The continual failure to conduct thorough and adequate investigation into racist attacks still prevails. On the rare occasions when a case of racist attack comes to court, the standard of prosecution has been abysmal. And the new Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), which means that the police do not prosecute but provide the evidence upon which the Crown decides whether or not to go ahead, is proving to be a major obstacle to justice and redress for black people.

We have also noticed a trend to use new public order legislation to bring charges against a black person and his/her attackers. This is not just the usual problem of blaming the victim. By so doing, a vicious personal attack to person and property is not seen as a *criminal act*, but a problem of keeping the public peace. Thus racist attacks have been reduced to a public order

problem in which both parties are seen as equally guilty of a public order offence.

Just as serious is the potential impact of proposed legislation concerning the provision of legal aid, which will have a dramatic effect on a black person's ability to establish his/her innocence in court. Initial indications suggest that certain types of criminal offence such as obstruction may no longer be included in the provision of legal aid, thus making it harder to secure adequate legal representation. This will inevitably lead to much higher conviction rates and an even greater process of criminalisation of young black people.



Neighbourhood Watch in action!

Picture by David Hoffman

We have also seen very sophisticated, and at times successful, attempts by the police to create confusion within the black community about possible causes of attacks upon black people. The initial reaction of police is to deny that an attack is racist and to search for other motives. Within a short space of time (generally within hours), rumours begin to circulate, announcements are made on radio and in the evening press, etc, stating reasons for the attack. Police may even use black police officers or other individuals in the community to give further respectability to their particular view.

Of course, NMP would not argue that every attack upon a black person is racially motivated. However, when a community suffers long years of harassment, including arson and murder, we think it only reasonable to suggest that racism is seriously considered as a motive in the initial stages. Our view has always been that we assume that every attack upon a black person is racially motivated, *unless the evidence suggests otherwise*. But, as far as the police are concerned, precisely the reverse seems to be true: a racist attack is not a racist attack until conclusively proved otherwise. And time and time again police investigative efforts are channelled into different directions. Seemingly unprovoked attacks upon individuals in an area like Newham have a deeper motivation. When will the police start recognising this through their actions, and not through slick PR statements from Scotland Yard? A total stranger does not step out of the blue and gouge your face with broken glass or attack you in the street for no good reason. And if you're black in Newham the most obvious, logical and reasonable place to start any investigation is quite clear.



New City police more sensitive, less visible

## New race cops a sham, say councils

THE first Metropolitan Police campaign against racial attacks and harassment in two of the worst affected London boroughs has run into immediate criticism from local councils.

The London boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Newham have been selected for police in their areas. The local councils

however, say they cannot be guaranteed "fair" trials. A Special (SD) Race in Crime Unit has been set up in Newham, with the aim of bringing more prosecutions and in continuing close, un-mingled, black and white night watch duties.

However, these initiatives are controversial, which has caused the town

plans of about a dozen sessions together in the police activity.

"People should be more impressed with results, rather than words," said the public relations officer.

### Accused

Five black police officers were accused of racial harassment in Newham Council, which has accused the town

The Voice

# 7 TARGETING, MASS RAIDS AND POLICE HARASSMENT IN NEWHAM

Newham is divided into two districts for policing purposes — West Ham and East Ham. Our experience throughout the last year is that certain parts of Newham have been designated by the police as 'Level 2 problem areas' — for example, Warrior Square estate in Manor Park. These areas are then singled out for a special kind of policing, including surveillance and mass raids carried out by specialist squads.

The singling out of special 'problem areas' has had the effect of furthering surveillance, penetration and the harassment of Newham's black community. We would say, based on our work, that it is the common experience of the majority of young black, particularly 'African/Caribbean', people in Newham that they would have been stopped by the police without reason — 'sus' continues to be practised even though on paper it has been abolished. The Harris Crime Survey, commissioned by Newham council, showed that three-quarters of black residents felt it was they who were on the receiving end of police discrimination.

## STOP AND SEARCH

According to the Harris Survey:

- almost a half (47%) of young 'African/Caribbeans' felt they were stopped and searched without reason
- a third of 'African/Caribbean' people felt police very often used excessive pressure whilst interviewing
- 42% of 'African/Caribbean' men felt police very often failed to take accurate statements
- a third of 'African/Caribbean' people felt unnecessary force used by police (40% for those under 24 years of age).

The black community's 'experience' of Newham police is summed up by the report:

'Only white people aged between 45 and 59 years of age proclaimed themselves more pleased than not after contact with the police — every other section of the community which had experienced contact with the police proclaimed themselves unhappy with what happened (58% African/Caribbean and 49% Asian of sample who had come into contact with the police, and one-third of them never having done so).'

Throughout 1987 our role has been (as always) to provide immediate and sympathetic legal support to the individual seeking assistance through our network of solicitors, and whether the individual is in police custody or has been assaulted by police, we provide

immediate help through our 24-hour emergency service.

## Containment policy

It is our experience that the police are trying to contain young black people in a very small area within Forest Gate, particularly around Upton Lane. This is reinforced through huge police raids which are on many occasions justified on the grounds of drugs. These raids result in the seizure of very small quantities of cannabis and arrests for obstructing the police — not warranting the mounting deployment of such huge police resources. Last year we handled cases arising from six such mass raids.

- 20/8/86: Raid on Bentley's nightclub. The cases were heard in 1987.
- 6/10/87: Raid on Upton Lane.
- 15/12/86: Clays Lane Co-op.
- 5/1/87, 13/2/87, 13/4/87: Raids in Upton Lane.

Having been called to all three Upton Lane raids, it is startling to observe how police deploy cars to seal off the roads around Upton Lane, then move in, sometimes deploying over a hundred officers. The *Newham Recorder* is also tipped off so that photographers are on the scene.

Whenever we ask the police to investigate racist attacks properly or to provide security patrols, the usual response is that they don't have the resources. However, it is the issue of prioritisation of resources which needs to be addressed. Can the police really justify spending thousands of pounds on such raids when they cannot even provide basic protection for the victims of racist attacks?

## POLICE MALPRACTICE

As well as these huge raids designed primarily, we feel, to confront, contain and intimidate the black community, we have handled many cases of direct police brutality.

Many cases of police harassment seem to occur for no obvious reason.

RP, who is in his early twenties, was drinking in the Manor Pub last June when police came in saying it was past closing time and customers had to leave. As RP and his cousins were leaving, one of the officers shouted: 'Fuck off home, Paki — or I'll nick you.' RP replied, 'You can't arrest me, I haven't done anything.' 'We'll see about that,' came the response, following

## THE SWOOP ON BENTLEY'S



● A suspect is searched.

*Newham Recorder*



● Handcuffed and tied up... suspects inside Bentley's are led away for questioning after the dramatic swoop.

# PUB RAID SLAMMED BY WATCHDOG GROUP

**Councillors told of 'overkill' by lawmen**



**'We put police on notice that any repercussions will be their fault'**

THE raid on Bentley's was condemned 12 hours later by the Newham Monitoring Project as hypocritical and provocative.

Project co-ordinator, Umesh Desai, said they condemned "the heavy-handed police operation" as "overkill" at the very best and a provocative gesture to black people in Newham at the worst.

He said: "Hard drugs are openly peddled in some establishments in the borough — mainly white. It is an indication of policing priorities that they should use up to 150 officers, some armed, and have such a major operation on harassing black youths and pubs frequented by black people on the pretext of looking for soft drugs."

He added that the raid occurred near an estate where police had failed to provide "basic protection" for Asian families who were victims of racist attacks.

He went on: "We also note the hypocrisy of the police in, on one hand, mounting such raids and policing without community consent, and on the other hand talking about community policing and trying to co-opt the community into a consultative forum."

## 'HUMBUG'

"In our opinion, such talk by the police in the light of last night's operation is nothing short of humbug and, furthermore, it exposes the total ineffectiveness of the community liaison officers of K Division and their tokenish role."

Mr. Desai concluded: "We are forced to question the real motives of the police in conducting last night's operation, and put K Division, and the local chief superintendents, on notice that any repercussions from last night's operation in terms of justifiable anger will solely be their fault and responsibility."

A spokesman for Scotland Yard said that as far as they were concerned the criticisms did not

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which the PC ran to his car, took his helmet off and, turning to face RP, ran at him and beat him to the ground. His colleague called for reinforcements, who arrived in two vans and several cars. A police dog was unleashed which savaged RP's arm. He was dragged into the van and punched and kicked by officers in it. All this time he was being sat upon — face to the ground. He was charged with both 'obstructing police officers and assault on police officers'. His cousins were also charged.

In some cases, the police abuse and violence reaches frightening proportions. The case of FO is also indicative of police malpractice.

One evening in October, FO (16) was sitting with his friends outside their homes, when he witnessed an incident in which a police officer and his colleague pulled up their car and came out to 'shake' one of the boys down, ie asking him to empty his pockets. At this point, FO intervened saying, 'Why don't you leave him alone, he's done nothing.' FO was then thrust into an arm-lock, hurled over a gate and had his arm smashed between the bar and gate-lock several times. All this took place in full view of local residents — many of them could not believe what they had just witnessed.

One of the neighbours, who had phoned the Emergency Service helpline, rushed out with her camera and took photos of the entire assault. The policeman even smiled for the camera. FO was charged with assaulting police and causing criminal damage to a PC's clothes.

However, the case against him was dropped by the police. The Project collected witness statements from those present, together with the photos, and have sought private prosecution of the policeman.

In some cases, families and friends of those arrested are also at risk. A further illustration of local police attitudes and brutality is evidenced by the case of AB.

AB's brother was stopped on Barking Road outside West Ham baths. The police then tried to arrest him, using force which he resisted. Eventually he was taken to West Ham police station.

AB, finding out a few hours later what had happened, went to West Ham police station. As soon as he gave his name the desk officer went round the back. The men who had arrested his brother came out and, in full view of the street and those in the waiting room (who promptly left), began very violently to beat him up. He had a truncheon put through his mouth, smashing his teeth. He was then charged with assaulting police and GBH!

Then there is the case of George P, whose distressed mother phoned the Emergency Service to tell us that

she was at West Ham police station and, whilst George was being interviewed in front of her and her sister, George was beaten up and thrown into a police cell and charged with assaulting a police officer.

It seems that these cases of police excesses are common to many black families. Last year, we sought to sue the police in one form or another in several cases. However, such cases can take years before they come to court and this means the results are not known. On several occasions in 1987, NMP have worked with individuals to bring private prosecutions against the police. Although we do advise people to make a formal complaint, most see little reason why they should do this when, as last year in Newham, over 250 complaints were made and less than 3% were upheld!

### TARGETING IN FOREST GATE

The practice of 'marking an individual's card' (by this we mean identifying an individual for persistent harassment) is common to police everywhere and was confirmed to us by a Forest Gate home beat officer who bragged of a particular youth who was turning 17 on 4 November and whose 'card had been marked'.

During the latter half of 1986 and early 1987, tension in the Forest Gate area reached an almost explosive level (we have already outlined the mass raids and examples of wanton brutality and harassment that occurred). It is clear to us that local police were working to a particular pattern to intimidate, isolate and harass very young black people in Forest Gate.

Chief Inspector Albert Patrick was operational head of West Ham Division at the time the raids took place. For many of the youths, it seemed that the intent of such a strategy was to 'shake down' young people, aged around 15 or 16, with a view to dissuading them from crime. In early 1987 there followed a systematic targeting campaign. Police continuously raided houses and youths were pulled in and held for days before being released without charge (as happened to George P on four occasions within two months). Police raids have even been carried out with the aid of a low-flying helicopter. In July 1987 Mrs S reported to us that her son (16) and a number of his friends had been continuously picked up by the police, and held in police custody before being released without charge. Mrs S told us that on one occasion police arrived at her home, dragged her son out of the house, and threw him into an empty skip — throwing a police dog in with him.

This was indeed a horrific story which led us to make representations to the local authority. Eventually the chief inspector moved out of Newham.

# 8 RESPONSES TO RACIAL HARASSMENT IN NEWHAM

## A THE POLICE

Over 30% of racist attacks reported to police in London last year took place in the East End. Of these, more than 80% took place in Area 2, the police district comprising Newham (where 46% of these attacks took place) and neighbouring Tower Hamlets (where 35% of attacks took place).

Newham, according to police statistics, had the highest number of racist attacks in the country last year (324 according to them — an increase of almost 100%).

Taking into account levels of under-reporting, as discovered by the Harris Survey (only 5% of attacks are reported to the police), the real level of attacks is probably more likely to be around 5,000. In our case studies we have demonstrated the variety of responses made by the police to attacks. Unfortunately, these patterns of refusing and failing to respond are common to the vast majority of the 309 cases we have handled. Additionally, we must point out that on the 50 occasions we have asked the police to provide support for a particular family under incessant threat, or asked them to patrol an area, they have responded on only six occasions. (One of these was after an emergency meeting with the chief superintendent of East Ham division.) But, if the police were to put the same effort and deploy the same resources (their argument is that they lack resources) which they use to carry out huge raids across the borough (see section on police harassment) to combating racist harassment in an effective way, then the problem would significantly decrease. They always deny this!

### THE POLICE RACIAL HARASSMENT CAMPAIGN

An example of police response to racist attacks was seen during February-April this year when they ran a huge pioneer racial harassment campaign scheme in Newham and Ealing to encourage people to report attacks to them. It involved the distribution of 100,000 leaflets in Asian languages, but the thrust of the leaflet was to put the onus back on to the community to deal with harassment through taking avoidance measures. During this period, the number of attacks reported to them increased almost 100%, yet the number of people prosecuted — the acid test of whether police action is effective or just a gimmicky publicity stunt — did not increase.

We believe that the police will initiate similar campaigns in Area 2 (Tower Hamlets and Redbridge)

this year, based on the supposed success of the Newham/Ealing pilot. However, in a document leaked to us (which the police chose not to publicise), they analysed the success of their own campaign through a poll carried out by Harris. Their poll showed:

- 47% of people asked agreed with the statement that 'The Metropolitan Police never do anything about racial harassment even if it is reported to them'.
- 39% disagreed that the 'Metropolitan Police are determined to do something to reduce racial harassment'.
- 43% agreed that 'The campaign won't do anything to reduce racial harassment'.
- 42% thought the campaign was a publicity exercise and nothing will be done.

Clearly these findings are embarrassing for the police and demonstrate that nearly half the community of Newham and Ealing felt that nothing significant would emerge from these so-called campaigns.

### NEW PROSECUTION POLICY

Then, in July 1987, a little-publicised mandatory order, issued from Scotland Yard, instructed officers to prosecute for assault in racial incidents, instead of instructing people to take civil action. The problem with this sanction has already been outlined above. However, we still receive complaints from people telling us that the police have advised them to take out civil actions in courts for assault themselves — despite the force order. Either way it has had no obvious effect on attacks because it has not been effectively implemented.

### RACIAL INCIDENTS SURVEILLANCE SQUADS

The police have consistently been pressed to construct some kind of specialist 'task force' to deal effectively with racist attacks. Although this might be needed, it can in no way be a substitute for an appropriate response by officers on the ground in a local area who may see the presence of such a squad as a good excuse for ignoring attacks.

#### How the squad works

The Racial Incidents Surveillance Squad is a team of officers operating in the whole of Area 2 district. They were set up last year, under the term Organised

Racial Incident Squad, and their brief was solely to investigate 'organised racist attacks'. We believe an internal report published on their findings drew the conclusion that there was no evidence of any organised racist attacks! Their terms of reference have apparently been changed.

It is very difficult to gauge the 'success' of these units because no figures are available to us from the police as to the number of arrests which these squads effected. As far as we know, they were active in Newham on two occasions last year — in Forest Gate in the case of H-H and also in Canning Town. Until there is real evidence that these squads are successfully addressing the problem (as at the moment there is not), we continue to remain sceptical.

These are the main 'initiatives' that police have taken. We need to make a number of points about their effectiveness in tackling the problem of racist violence.

### MARGINALISING RACIST CRIMES

The police definition of racist attacks as 'racial incidents' in itself excludes the notion of racist violence — and it is a catch-all phrase which includes any crime which a victim, or police, or a third party wishes to record as such. The inclusion of crimes such as theft, burglary, robbery (for which the motivation is financial reward, not racial bigotry) greatly distorts the real picture. The number of arrests, therefore — including arrest for self-defence — includes a number of black people. The notion of 'clear up' also reflects the huge proportion of cases which police refer to other agencies such as local advice centres, housing offices, etc, but in which they themselves have taken no action.

The Harris Survey conducted in Newham, the largest ever of its kind in Britain, focused on racial

harassment and discovered that only one in 20 racist attacks were reported to the police: thus last year a more accurate picture of the level of attacks in Newham was more likely to be 5,000.

The survey also discovered that 80% of those who complained to the police were dissatisfied with the police response. The concerns which we articulate in this annual report are merely a reflection of that level of dissatisfaction within our communities. A measure of the black community's experience can be judged by this finding: 'only unemployment and crime were seen by more black residents as being a problem than racial harassment matters'.

It is part of the overall metropolitan policing strategy to further marginalise racist crimes (as with sexual/domestic violence) by attempting to introduce Racial Incident Panels through Community Consultative Group machinery. Here, community representatives (chosen by the police) will meet to discuss cases, thus shifting the onus of response away from the police and back on to the community. Arson, murder, threatening behaviour, criminal damage, assault are all criminal offences. The police should be given no excuse for refusing to respond to them as such and as only they have the powers to do so. Yet we don't see 'Robbery Incident Panels' or 'Murder Incident Panels', so why is it that racist attacks (or rather racial incidents) are being made an exception?

In day-to-day terms, the issue of police response lies at the root of the problem of racist violence. If 150 police can raid a nightclub and arrest only a handful of people, bringing minor charges, whilst using dogs and helicopters, they could, as in the case of raids against football hooligans, penetrate racist areas like Canning Town, arresting known and active racists. That they choose not to do so is, at the end of the day, a more accurate reflection of their priorities, despite police policy declarations to the contrary and the bombast and statistics of senior police officers.

## B THE COURTS/JUDICIARY

Last year we handled over 197 cases of racist harassment. Of these, only eight went to court. In those cases in which racists were charged, only two were committed; two were bound over; and another two were let off at the committal stage. The threat of a prison sentence is seen as the strongest form of institutional punishment and deterrent. However, as our experience as outlined above demonstrates, it is notoriously hard to secure a conviction in court, especially in the two Newham Magistrates' Courts and at Snaresbrook Crown Court where most of the local cases are heard.

The principal reasons for this, as exemplified in our case studies, are:

- (1) failure by the police to conduct a thorough investigation and collect witness statements, etc;
- (2) ill-prepared and badly fought prosecutions

undertaken by the Crown Prosecution Service; (3) the resistance on the part of magistrates and judges to accept, despite overwhelming evidence (as in the Lone case), racism as a motive for attacks, preferring instead to see the attack as a gang fight or neighbour dispute, even though the attacks were unprovoked.

### THE EFFECTIVENESS OF LOCAL SOLICITORS

One of the most practical ways in which we support victims of racist harassment is to provide a legal service through local solicitors that we recommend. On the whole, solicitors we use have been good. Some of the measures taken by our solicitors have included: examination of the council's racial harassment policy with a view to seeing whether it has been properly followed; advising privately where police have not

brought prosecutions; advising owner-occupiers/tenants/shopkeepers as to the appropriate course of civil action available where police have failed to prosecute. In most cases, we avoid the expensive and futile business of issuing injunctions.

However, it is disappointing to come across very large firms, with many good progressive solicitors, who still take on the defence of racists — as did a local firm defending attackers of the Canning Town take-away, and the attackers of Mr Lone. What is even more invidious is that some firms instruct black barristers to do these cases! Most of the firms we now use have a policy of not defending those charged with racist attacks.

We have had to complain on two occasions. One case is that of Mr A. Mr A and his wife own a shop in High Street North, East Ham. For two years they were abused by an employee of a neighbouring shop. He would come into the shop, swear at Mrs A and often steal and damage goods. The police were called several times but did nothing. One day the man came in and took a melon and smashed it in front of witnesses, shouting abuse at Mrs A all the while. The police were called and said they would take action. They took Mrs A to court and then, as in the case of Mrs M (see p 0 above), took out a private summons in her name. Upon returning to the shop, they realised they would need their own solicitor so they had to hire one.

Mr A went to his own solicitors, who said they would take up his case for a fee of £100. But, on the morning the case was to be heard, no solicitor was there. Mr A had to rush to the solicitor's office but she would not agree to come unless she was paid cash there and then. This Mr A did and the solicitor then went to court. In fact, witness statements had already been taken by us.

The matter was in court for two minutes before being adjourned. At the next hearing the solicitor again refused to come. A colleague told Mr A: 'You're lucky I'm doing this for you.' He went to court and without consulting Mr A, who did not speak much English, made a deal with defence to plead guilty to a minor charge for which he received a token fine. The solicitors claimed the £350 compensation as their costs.

This kind of horror story is, thankfully, not too common. However, usual complaints about solicitors' firms relate to over-charging, breaking appointments (one man's solicitor broke four successive appointments), unsympathetic behaviour, not explaining the procedure adequately, bad preparation for witnesses in court, failing to mention pertinent facts, and delay in responding to developments.

### THE CROWN PROSECUTION SERVICE (CPS)

This is a new and independent prosecution service which now handles prosecutions for the police — instead of the police's own lawyers. The police will

collect evidence, statements, and put together their case in the normal way, but they then send it to the CPS to decide whether there are grounds for prosecution and whether the CPS barristers should prosecute the case in court. The CPS has been much criticised since its inception from all sides for being badly administered and having a poor calibre of barristers.

Unfortunately, our experience with the CPS reflects these criticisms.

### Prosecuting racists

One of our main criticisms of the CPS is the fact that, although their barristers do have the discretion, the vast majority choose not to speak to witnesses or accept evidence from us about circumstances and facts relating to a case. In the past, on occasions where police prosecuted racists, they would accept such information from us. An example is the case of Mr K from Forest Gate, mentioned earlier. The point needed to be made in the prosecution of the H-H family that a number of attacks on other families had taken place in the vicinity, schools had been closed because of their harassment, and the local authority had even had over 30 complaints of racist harassment involving them, etc. But the CPS only entered these facts into their files when pressurised by a local MP and when the housing department wrote putting these 'concerns' to them. Even so, none of these facts was mentioned in court. In fact, the CPS originally decided not to prosecute in this case, and it was only as a result of community pressure and the resolve of the 200 local people at the Forest Gate meeting in June which alerted them to the strength of feeling and prompted them to act.

Also in our experience the CPS (as are the police) are extremely reluctant to point to racism as a motive for attack, preferring to refer to such attacks as 'fights'. In the case of the petrol bombing of the take-away and the attack on Mr Lone, no mention was made of the numerous documented incidents of attacks in the area which we and others had reported and submitted to them. Witnesses who had never seen a courtroom before were put in the witness box to be sneered at — as was Mr Lone: 'You're not English, are you? So you may not have understood what was being said to you' (by defence) — with no objection from the Crown prosecution.

The five men and one woman who were charged with assaulting Mr Lone and his son were found not guilty, and the man who petrol-bombed the take-away was also found not guilty. But we feel that, had the case been better prepared by the police and vigorously prosecuted by the CPS, the attackers would have been found guilty.

Is it any wonder then that most of our community have no faith in the police or the courts? Perhaps the most alarming indictment of the CPS stems from the fact that they have clear guidelines for prosecuting

(racist) assaults and, therefore, as rate and tax payers for this service, we have a right to demand a fair and just service from them. However, we have been led to believe that the Attorney General's guidelines for prosecution of racist attacks require a standard of evidence/proof which is artificially high. This flies in the face of the Metropolitan Police mandate of July 1987 in which officers are instructed to prosecute automatically for any 'racial incident' in which an assault has occurred, instead of telling 'victims' to take their own civil action.

Although the CPS is a welcome development and a step in the right direction, we know that unfortunately it cannot be effectively implemented; we know of three cases where the CPS have refused to go ahead

## C THE COUNCIL

The local authority responses to racial harassment are informed by the 'crisis response policies' of the mid-1960s to combat 'social and welfare problems'. Consequently, although Newham Council's housing department has one of the best racial harassment policies in the country, its response can only be to deal with the effects of the problem after it has occurred.

### THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT

The housing department has evolved a complex and lengthy procedure, involving lengthy form-filling! Having almost perfected this bureaucratic response, it only remains for it to implement the procedure effectively — at every stage. However, the council now needs to move forward to develop a corporate response with a view to *preventing* racial harassment from taking place.

The council's housing department dealt with over 160 cases of racial harassment in 1986 and, although the statistics for level of attacks in 1987 won't be released until May, there is every indication that it is likely to be as high, or higher.

### Transfers and evictions

Of the cases which we have monitored, approximately one-third of those who complained were transferred. The number who will be transferred this year is likely to be less, which indicates the change in the housing department's strategy of tackling racial harassment not merely by transferring the sufferers (a policy which led to near ghettoisation in Canning Town and the south of the borough in the early 1980s), but by trying to identify and take action against the culprits, especially if they themselves are council tenants, or tenants of the larger housing associations with properties in Newham who have a racial harassment policy, as some indeed now do.

An additional factor responsible for this course of

with proceedings because of lack of evidence. Police complain that the standard of evidence required is too high. The victim of the assault sees no justice done as the perpetrator is allowed to walk off free. This vicious cycle requires investigation at the very highest level if any credibility is to be attached to the police order or to the CPS.

Our experience through these painful cases demonstrates one basic lesson: it is only through coming together as a community, through using our organisation to respond collectively to put pressure on the authorities — by telephoning, by lobbying, by writing letters or by other forms of public protest — that we will secure change or any measure of satisfaction or justice for ourselves.

action is the declining number of properties and the increasing number of homeless families. Nevertheless, although there is a definite move to try wherever possible to avoid transferring the victims of harassment, not enough is being done to identify the perpetrators or to take preventive measures.

On one occasion, when a family in E16 had their house burnt down in August, it took officers from the local housing office almost six hours to respond. This type of intolerable delay is still occurring, despite the fact that the policy has been in practice for a number of years now.

Parts of the policy — for example, making secure doors, providing fire-proof steel letter-boxes and strips for doors, repairing windows and replacing them with shatterproof glass film — are not being carried out quickly enough.

The housing department is presently conducting a statistical review of the way the policy is being implemented with a view to identifying gaps and problem areas to ensure that these are 'plugged'. However, we have, in the Runnymede Project, a full year's research concentrating principally on the pitfalls of the racial harassment policy and its implementation in housing and other directorates (the full findings will be published shortly).

We would like to make a number of other suggestions of strategies that could be implemented.

- Where a black family has been forced out due to racial harassment, another black family who will not be forced out should be housed there, ensuring that no-go areas are not allowed to be established. Although the council has experimented with this unsuccessfully, other councils have found it implementable and we know that it can easily work in Newham.

- Where people are being attacked, for example children to and from school, a security service ought to be employed (private, if necessary) to escort them. Islington Council has done this successfully.

- The council's own security service, which already exists to patrol council properties, should also be used, in a systematic manner, to provide safety for families under threat. Newham security has already been used on a few occasions and has proved an effective deterrent.

- The council could, as mentioned earlier, assist its tenants or anyone in its boundary with civil action against perpetrators.

- The council's own Environmental Health Officers are in the process of setting up an emergency line for noisy parties. This should be used by people suffering from racial harassment and would act as an immediate deterrent.

### SOCIAL SERVICES

Although the housing department deals with by far the most number of cases, and in comparison to other departments does much more to tackle the problem, the education and social services departments do have a vital role to play, with numerous attacks taking place within their properties. If the political will was there, then there are a number of measures, in line with other local authorities, which could quickly be adopted.

We feel that social services have a particularly vital role to play, principally in supporting families and individuals being harassed. They are also able to provide emergency payments, child care facilities, counselling and other forms of practical help.

It is unfortunate that the social services department has not developed its procedures on responding to racist attacks. These need to be updated as a matter of urgency. The basis of social services' strategy is to provide an effective 'victim support' system. However, we have had to rely on the goodwill of social workers in the absence of any procedural guidelines. We have unfortunately come across at least three cases in which social workers were unaware of problems facing families recently transferred to their areas, simply through poor inter-departmental communications. There seems to be a general inertia before social services are seen to be responding. There is also considerable scepticism amongst many black families whom we visit when we ask them if they have contacted social services.

However, one positive development which the Project has pushed for is that where known racist offenders are, or are likely to become, clients of social services that they are refused support. Although social services have a statutory obligation to do so in many instances, it seems that social services write supportive reports for courts for primarily young offenders, and may not have to do this by law. As part of a policy of taking action against racist offenders, they could stop doing this. We hope to see this policy go through quickly.

The bureaucratic approach is one where racist violence is discussed in terms of *cases* and clients, and not individuals. If it were not for voluntary groups such as us, details of them would not readily come to public notice.

Picture by Reflex Pictures Ltd



Arson attack in Canning Town

## 9 SELF DEFENCE IS NO OFFENCE

Self-defence is no offence is more than a political slogan — it is a factual statement born from the bitter struggle of our community's fight for the right to live free from attack. The cases documented in the sections on racial harassment illustrate our lack of safety — even within our own homes, let alone on the streets — and that our safety cannot be entrusted to the police, the council or anyone else. If we are persistently and continuously threatened and attacked, and if the authorities persistently and continuously fail to protect us, we must eventually see that that failure leaves us with no choice but to defend ourselves. It is the bitter experience of our communities that the price we will have to pay is imprisonment, for if we defend ourselves it is likely to be us who are arrested and criminalised.

### 'VICTIM VICTIMISED'

The issue of 'victim victimised' is illustrated starkly in the example below, which was very similar to that of the Virk brothers case in 1976 in which three brothers in East Ham were charged when defending themselves from attack by a gang of thugs who jumped at them from a car. Following a successful community campaign, their sentences were halved at an appeal.

In the same way, Mohammed A and his family were prosecuted for defending themselves.

On 14 November 1987, MA was returning from shopping when he was sworn at by a neighbour. Over the preceding months, the neighbours had regularly abused the A family, making threatening gestures, throwing rubbish (particularly fish-heads) on to the doorstep at night.

Angered, MA replied: 'I haven't done anything to you,' and continued walking. But the man came out of his house and picked up a 10ft estate agents' pole. MA rushed indoors but his front windows were smashed. By now, MA's brother had handed him a cricket bat which he used to push the neighbour away. Then the nephew of the neighbour arrived and the two men dragged MA into the road and beat him with clubs. Mr MA's wife intervened, coming between her husband and the men, when one of them reappeared with a carving knife. The nephew smashed MA's car and beat MA's wife on the head, arm and hand with the club (she was taken to hospital later with concussion). The two men proceeded to beat MA.

By now a crowd of 30-40 neighbours had appeared, but no one attempted to intervene. MA tried without success to drag himself back into the house, and eventually was helped by his family. Meanwhile, MA's brother had telephoned the police, who arrived and went straight into the neighbour's house. They then came into MA's house, dragged MA, his brother and his cousin out and searched under the beds. MA was taken away in an ambulance and his brother and cousin were sent to West Ham police station. They were charged with GBH and were not allowed bail for over two months. MA's assailants were never charged.

In court the case was handled appallingly by Mr MA's barrister, who refused to talk to us, allowed additional charges to be brought and steered away from the racist motive of the attack. Then, despite the fact that his neighbour admitted to 'not liking Pakistanis' and the fact that the nephew had two previous charges for assaulting two black shopkeepers (and an 11-year-old son of the shopkeeper), MA was sentenced to nine months' imprisonment (he was released after three months). When a police officer, called as a witness in the case, was asked why he assumed that the A family were the aggressors, he replied: 'They [ie Pakistanis] often don't tell the truth... They often tell lies, I wanted to make sure he told me the truth.'

Understandably, MA's family wanted no publicity, so a political defence could not be fought. But MA has served a prison sentence for a crime he did not commit, just because he defended himself when attacked. His case is similar to five others we handled last year.

Why, then, should we have any faith in the institutional forces who deprive Mr MA of his liberty whilst allowing his attackers to walk free, to repeat their assaults on other members of our community? Where is the justice?

If further proof is needed, then examine the case of Mr G. Mr G was on shift work at a bus station. Whilst walking home from work, he was regularly chased through the park by a white gang. Every time he complained to the police they said they could do nothing because no criminal act had been committed. One day Mr G and his young son were walking through the park when again the youths came up and started to abuse them. Mr G picked up a stick and chased them away. He was then arrested by a PC from East Ham police station and charged with carrying an offensive weapon. His tormentors were allowed to return to continue their violence.

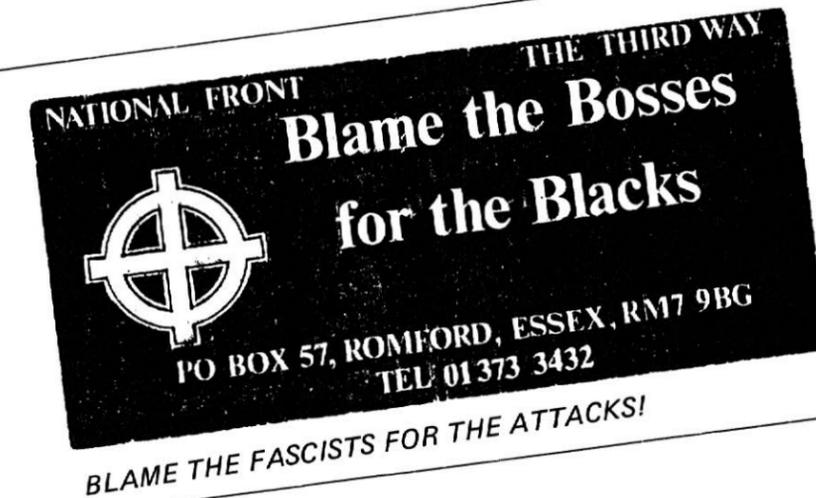
## 10 FASCISM IN NEWHAM

Part of NMP's work involves monitoring the activities of the far right. Newham has unfortunately been fertile ground for fascist support for many years now. Even in 1983, when the National Front (NF) received only an average of 0.8% of the vote nationally, Newham South had the highest nationalist vote in the country with 993 votes, representing 3.7% of the poll. In earlier elections they did even better, gaining 4.7% in 1979 and 7.8% (nearly three times the national average) in 1974.

For financial, political and organisational reasons, there were no fascist candidates standing in Newham for the 1987 general election; this also being the case nationally. It is the policy of both the current factions of the NF to contend only local council elections, so this electoral threat, notwithstanding by-elections, has been postponed for a few years.

Since leaving his High Street North flat in 1984, where he ran a commercial typesetting concern as well as regular training seminars for party members, Anderson has chosen a house in Monmouth Road to be the latest of his bolt-holes. He works hard for the party from this East Ham address, regularly giving his phone number on press hand-outs; this telephone being registered in Hipperson's name.

Anderson has had a rough time in recent years. In 1986, after the turbulent NF split that saw the opposing faction of Nick Griffin and Pat Harrington align themselves more openly with Italian terrorists, his car was subject to a bomb attack and his front windows continue to attract a plethora of heavy



### DIFFERENT FASCIST FACTIONS

The highly active Newham NF branch of the early 1980s, carefully built up by Ian Anderson, was decimated by the latest in the long history of splits in the NF in 1986. In fact, the group that achieved considerable electoral success was the one that regularly sold *National Front News* at Rathbone Market and attacked council meetings during the 1984 eviction of the racist McDonnell family. They have since split into four different factions.

#### Anderson and the 'Flag' group

The 'old guard' of Anderson, photographer Michael Hipperson and ex-Ilford policeman Peter Turpin, plus a few other cronies, form one grouping. They rally round the NF 'Flag' group, which also includes Barking's Joe Pearce in their number.

objects. In the summer of last year, his group were seen to be exploiting the issue of the use of St Bartholomew's church premises, currently used by a white pension group. The council wanted to extend the use of the building to black elderly people, but bungled PR and hysteria whipped up by the *Newham Recorder* led to a hostile public meeting in which Anderson was leading the heckling of council officers and black representatives.

It brought home to those present the way that the fascists, although not as numerous as in the past, are always waiting in the wings to seize upon any opportunity to divide sections of the community, in this case white and black elderly people.

The second grouping is a more sinister street-lighting element within the 'Flag' groups. Typified by violent jobs such as Kevin Bennett and Dave Thomas, they are always seen to be going in feet first. Thomas was arrested last year for violent behaviour at a West Ham fixture, and he was among those who spearheaded an assault on the 1986 Anti-Fascist Action Remembrance Day march. Bennett is also associated with the

football hooligan scene, forming a core of Nazi louts who cause violence at England matches at home and abroad, as well as at the more notorious London clubs. Bennett was featured in the *Guardian* last year when he spoke about his links with the tiny minority of pro-Ulster Unionists associated with the Hibernian football club in Scotland.

### The 'nationalist revolutionaries'

The opposing faction of the NF see themselves as nationalist revolutionaries. Attempts to dress up their racism as 'separate development' (apartheid, in other words) and call themselves 'racialists', not 'racists' (can you tell the difference?) all seem quite laughable when we look at a contact list showing the same bunch of glue-sniffing thugs as before the split in 1986. They are often to be found writing in to the *Newham Recorder* under the names of Dave Green and Mark Stevens. Neither person actually exists.

Newham North-East is the target area for this crew, being the home patch of British Telecom employee Dave Durant, Jackie Casgnee, Mark Askew and Brian McKeever, the latter two of Melford Road. 'Dave Green' stole an ANC flag from Newham Council. Despite his identity and address being reported to the police, he has never been arrested.

The idiot whose turn it was to be Dave Green for that week was one Ron Ferrett of Hornchurch. A recently discovered fact was that Ron is a member of the British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection — but

not for long, one suspects.

### The British National Party

The final grouping within Newham's Nazi family involves one Alan McIntosh, for some time a grave digger in a local Jewish cemetery. Fed up with NF groups, Alan is now to be seen leading the 'British Nationalist', the organisation of John Tyndall's Bristol National Party.

The BNP have never had much support in Newham, but recently they have been seen leafleting outside a West Ham home game.

So, in conclusion, we can be thankful that the effectiveness of the fascists in Newham has been lessened by the fragmentation of their political groupings. But let us be quite clear — there are several people in this borough who are trying very hard to develop a well-oiled Nazi machine in this country. The St Bartholomew's affair shows only too well that, should an opportunity arise in Newham, it will be exploited to the full to achieve these ends.

Newham has a proud anti-fascist tradition. Let 'forever vigilant' continue to be the by-word.

*Anti-Fascist Action, a broad-based, non-sectarian national organisation committed to fighting racism and fascism, can be contacted at PO Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7. Tel: 01-387 2531 (24-hour phone line).*

# 11 THE RESEARCH PROJECT

In 1986 the Newham Monitoring Project applied to the Runnymede Trust London Race and Housing Unit for a grant to develop a one-year research project. The aims of the project were to identify trends of racial harassment in Newham and examine the local government's response in terms of policy development and implementation.

The project was set up as an 'action research project', which would work with the black community and organisations in the E16 area. E16 was chosen as the case-study area because of its long-recorded history of racial attacks and the lack of black people and community groups in the area to respond to these issues. For these reasons, it was seen as essential that the project had a permanent base in the area to develop a working understanding of the community.

The project began in April 1987 and for the first few weeks was based in the Mayflower Youth Centre in Canning Town, until moving to the SOCATACH Project building in June. The work programme was divided into four phases:

## PHASE ONE

In the initial period of the research project the workers felt the necessity to develop a firmer understanding of the issues and the social context of the area they were working in. Much of the work during this period centred around the building of links with other community organisations in the area (of which there were few in comparison to the rest of the borough), developing a profile of the E16 area, with the intention of analysing service provision and facilities.

During the first phase workers also examined various sources and traced racial harassment trends in Newham, and analysed the development of the housing department's racial harassment policy from its origins as a guideline policy in 1982 to the current revised procedures in 1987, assessing how racist attacks in Newham and campaigning by community groups (particularly NMP) led to the development of this policy and subsequent changes.

In May a liaison panel was set up involving Newham Monitoring Project and senior representatives from the housing department, the education department, the police committee support unit and the social services department. The function of this group was to facilitate the flow of information between the council departments and to discuss the work and development of the project. Unfortunately, whilst the other departments have responded to the research project, there has been little response from social services, despite several attempts to incorporate them into the forum.

## PHASE TWO

During the second phase of the research project the workers concentrated on three specific areas of work: housing department and education department policy and procedures, community initiatives developed in the E16 area to address racist attacks, racism and the outreach work.

Whereas in the first phase of the research project we concentrated on policy development, in the second phase work focused on the practical implementation of the policy through the procedures. This involved discussions with various individuals operating and developing the policy and analysing various council documents to understand how the procedures are operated.

During phase two the workers also concentrated on initiatives to fight racism and racist attacks in E16 taken by the council as well as by voluntary organisations. We assessed initiatives such as SNARF, CARE and other similar but smaller groups in the area. The workers tried to analyse how effective the initiatives were in addressing racism in the area.

## PHASE THREE

The third phase of the research has been concerned with developing and executing question sheets, gaining access to racist harassment case files from the council and analysing Newham Monitoring Project's case files.

There have been five question sheets drawn up, aimed at developing a firmer understanding of council policy and procedures on racist harassment and how they affect tenants who have been subjected to racist harassment.

The researchers carried out interviews with officers at all levels of the housing department, the education department and schools in the E16 area. This was necessary so as to understand the role of the race officer in the development, monitoring and implementation of the racial harassment policy. The other question the research project wanted to address through the interview was how the officers who were mainly responsible for the implementation of the racist harassment policy (ie Local Housing Officers) understood the policy, what training they received to allow them to implement the policy, and, in view of the council's prioritisation of racist harassment, how much time the officers were able to devote to carrying it out.

The education interviews were completed to gain an understanding of the anti-racist policy operated by individual schools and in the education department

[continued at foot of page 32]

# 12 NMP AND THE MEDIA

Traditionally, and true to form, 1986/87 has witnessed the general media's 'flavour of the month' coverage of racist attacks and police harassment. Only the black press consistently keeps the issue of racist attacks and police harassment on the agenda. Until there is a climate which is truly sensitive to the problems that black people face daily, and which documents the attacks with a seriousness which is so often afforded less important issues, then the media will continue to report events in the irresponsible, sensationalist manner which is prevalent today and has been so for decades.

In spite of the various transitions that the Project has undergone over the past year or so, NMP still remains one of the first points of reference for those seeking information and statistics about racist activities. The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) annual report, issued at the end of September, contained disappointingly (yet totally predictable) high figures for racist attacks and also evidence that black people were totally sceptical about institutional responses to such crimes. As part of a response to that report, NMP featured on a live phone-in on BBC Radio London, as well as participating in another radio programme about black people and housing issues. NMP continues to be approached to appear on various TV and radio interviews — for instance, Channel 4's 'After Dark'.

Indeed, NMP is conscious of the need to utilise television, radio, newspapers and periodicals as a means of informing the wider public about our work and anti-racist struggles locally, nationally and

[continued from page 31] as a response to the anti-racist document produced by the education department in 1985. The document was produced with the intention of being a draft for all educational establishments to produce one appropriate to their situation. The researchers wanted to discover how many schools had produced their own document and how effectively it was being introduced.

The final interview was with victims of racist harassment, to gain an understanding of how the housing and other council departments respond to cases of racist harassment. Through this we also tried to gauge if the response of the service has improved as a result of the development of the policies.

The project has now entered the final stage, where all the information is being collated, analysed and finally written up for the completion date at the end of April. The primary aims of the document will be both to make recommendations to the council as to where their policies and procedures can be made more effective and to be used as a campaigning document for the voluntary sector.

internationally. At the same time, we are only too aware of who does the reporting, who owns the documenting machinery, and, ultimately, who has access to information. Consequently, we attempt to balance ill-reported events with factual reports in more supportive and sympathetic magazines or newspapers.

## WHAT THE PAPERS SAID

At the time of the Project's interim report in 1986, Mr Ezaz Hyet of the Southern Fried Chicken on Barking Road was the victim of what was to become a catalogue of alarming attacks by racist thugs in the area who frequented an infamous local pub and were part of the notorious Inner City Firm (ICF).

For well over a year, Mr Hyet suffered attack after attack upon his person, his staff, his relatives and his property. Mr Hyet's limited recourse to justice left him with little option but to move from the area. These facts were catalogued in the *Asian Herald* and the now defunct national *Daily News*, which gave Mr Hyet's case a centre-page spread.

The new year — 1987 — began with the horrific attack on a young black man, Trevor Ferguson, who lost the sight of his left eye after a vicious bottle attack by some young white men who were known to the community. Once again charges were not brought. Another black family was alienated from the justice system.

This was covered by the *Newham Recorder*, though it frequently skirts the issue of race unless the white person is the victim. Scaremongering about so-called vigilante squads was about the most help they could offer. The coverage of NMP's work by this particular local newspaper has not been a constructive one either.

As mentioned before, with the release of the CRE's report in September the Project contributed to both the BBC and ITN news coverage (limited as it was). We also took part in a film series commissioned by Channel 4 on the black struggle and modern socialism and various community responses to this phenomenon. The series should be aired in the spring.

An article in the *City Limits* weekly magazine the month before served to highlight the work of the Project and the extent of racist attacks that occur not only in Newham but in the East End as a whole. The figures from a recent Harris Survey illustrated what for us was and still is the tip of the iceberg. The report showed that one out of four black residents was a victim of racist harassment, and that sadly only one in 20 incidents were reported.

The article also documented the constant threat that

# STREET PATROLS AFTER MAN, 24, IS BLINDED IN SAVAGE ATTACK

# VIGILANTE SQUAD ON THE MARCH

## RACE ATTACKS—NOW ONE AN HOUR

AN EAST END BOROUGH IS NOW ENGULFED IN A TIDE OF RACIAL TERROR'. JACQUIE HUGHES REPORTS.

Once every hour a racist attack takes place in the east end borough of Newham. The latest shocking statistics, compiled by the Newham Monitoring Project using police statistics, show attacks in the borough in the first three months of this year have more than doubled since the same period last year. When known rates of under-reporting of incidents are taken into account, Newham has experienced a massive 252% rise in racial attacks, while on paper almost every other London borough has witnessed a decrease.

A Harris survey of the borough found that one in four of Newham's black residents has been a victim of racial harassment in the past year, but only one in 20 incidents were reported to the police. Fewer than one in four black residents is satisfied with the police performance on racial harassment.

The figures confirm what we have always said, that reported incidents are just the tip of the iceberg," said Nishat Kanwar of the Project. "Newham is now engulfed in a tide of racial terror."

The Project is concerned that there are now incidents in parts of the borough once considered relatively 'safe', such as parts of Forest Gate, where families on two particular estates are being subjected to continual low level harassment.

"We are also beginning to see the re-emergence of 'reception committees', groups of hostile white residents who turn out to meet black would-be tenants of empty council property," said Kanwar. And the tactics employed are very clever. Children under 16—the legal age for prosecution—are employed for attacks—and racists have started responding to allegations and charges of racism by taking out private summonses for assault and threatening behaviour against their victims.

Newham's housing director has admitted that the 'band of racism' is extending from the south to the north and centre of the borough.

Community groups are now working with the

council on a 'zone targeting strategy'—the idea of moving three or four Asian or Afro-Caribbean families into an area together. On a number of occasions the local police have joined with groups in recommending that families with known records for racial harassment be evicted.

But the problem is not just housing. The overall performance of the police has decreased, says the Project. Despite a racial harassment campaign in the area earlier this year, and the presence of special 'racial incident squads', the number of arrests stayed the same. The Project says it has a list of cases where police have not taken action on incidents brought to their attention, or where they have failed to provide protection for victims of continuing attacks. And the community's dissatisfaction with the police is reflected in the Harris survey findings. Sixty five per cent of black residents said the police were not interested in racial incidents. One tenant, a victim of racial attacks for more than four years, said "the police often say there is nothing they can do, so the people don't bother reporting incidents any more."

Now the local community has taken the initiative. Individual shops and businesses have started hiring private security firms to protect themselves against attack, and last month, out of a public meeting of over 222 Forest Gate residents, a support network—the Forest Gate Black Residents Group—was formed. Members will protect each other, and each other's houses. Members are considering withholding rates and rents in protest.

Yesterday local people picketed Newham West magistrates court where George Watson was charged with grievous bodily harm for defending himself in a racist attack. Later this month a mass delegation, probably supported by MPs Tony Banks, Paul Boateng and Bernie Grant, will go to the House of Commons and lodge a series of demands: it will call on the government to make racial harassment a legal offence, and ask for changes in the way the Crown Prosecution Service works. Since the CPS was introduced last year, community groups say it has become more and more difficult to secure action on cases, even when the police recommend prosecution, because the CPS's demands for evidence are too stringent.



In the early hours of last Tuesday morning, Anna Sullivan was woken by the explosion of three petrol bombs thrown through the front window of her Islington house. Ms Sullivan and her family escaped unharmed from the blast which completely gutted the downstairs of the house. A long time prominent anti-fascist and anti-racist campaigner, Anna Sullivan has received death threats and abuse for many years. The date of the attack is exactly a year on since the mass Anti-Fascist Action demonstration in Islington's Avenell Road, where a house was being used as the headquarters of prominent European fascists. Ms Sullivan has accused the Police of treating her aggressively and dragging its feet over the case. Her son is currently taking out a civil action against Islington police in connection with wrongful arrest and charge in another incident. "This bomb was obviously meant to kill us," she said, "yet the police have failed to follow up leads I have offered." Since local MPs Chris Smith and Jeremy Corbyn complained about the police's behaviour, they have been 'more friendly' she said. (Jacquie Hughes)

By HUGH MUIR and JOHN HEALY

VIGILANTE patrols begin operations in Newham today (Thursday) after a man lost an eye in a savage racial attack.

Volunteers calling themselves Community Patrols will tour areas of Plaistow and Canning Town.

Protestors also plan a picket of East Ham police station, in High Street South, this evening.

They say police have failed to tackle the problem.

The vigilante plan follows a brutal glass attack on a 24-year-old painter and decorator Trevor Ferguson.

Surgeons at Moorfield's Hospital failed to save the sight in his left eye after a three-hour emergency operation.

His family will officially complain about the police response, saying officers ignored obvious lines of investigation and allowed possible suspects to leave the scene. Newham Monitoring Project have organised the picket.

Spokesman Unmesh Desai stressed the vigilante patrols are not connected to any group.

"The aim is to reassure people," he said. "Families are living in fear."

Supt John Ball, operational head of East Ham and Plaistow police said: "Vigilante groups are something people should not get involved with. We have sufficient officers to deal with such matters."



MR FERGUSON

The attack on Mr Ferguson followed an incident at a family party in Beaconsfield Road, Canning Town on January 3 in which CS gas was twice fired through the letterbox.

Mr Ferguson spoke to white youths at another party, in nearby Exning Road, and asked if anyone there was responsible. Mr Ferguson was "polite throughout and acted with great restraint," said a police spokesman.

People were questioned at the scene and an unsuccessful search carried out, he said.

"It wasn't until the following day evidence came to light connecting the occupants of the Exning Road party with the incidents."

Police are looking for a white man, slim and about 5ft 9ins tall. They are appealing for witnesses to contact them on 5938232.

■ POLICE CAMPAIGN SPLITS RACE GROUPS: BACK PAGE

active anti-racist people face, such as Anna Sullivan whose home was petrol-bombed in the early hours of the morning.

At the beginning of October, a picket was staged at West Ham Magistrates' Court to put pressure on the court in relation to a white family who were charged with threatening behaviour against a black family. This case was covered factually in the *Guardian*, but was not even mentioned in the *Newham Recorder*.

The murder of Saranjit Atwal Singh followed soon afterwards and it was in relation to this murder that the *Newham Recorder* launched one of its most vitriolic attacks against the Project.

## DISTRAUGHT FATHER DEFENDS POLICE HUNT FOR KILLER

# MURDER CASE CRITICS RAPPED

By JOHN HEALY

The Project knew of the murder only minutes after it had occurred and instantly initiated the Atwal Family Support Committee, which was set up to campaign around the murder, to support the family through their grief, and to put pressure on the police to complete their investigations swiftly and successfully. At no stage had the Committee or the Project stated that the motive for the murder was racial, but it had been stressed that this could not be ruled out. It was felt that the motive of mugging, introduced by the police, was somewhat tenuous as the police found close to £300 in cash on Saranjit's person.

The *Recorder's* first coverage of the murder was a straightforward piece of journalism — reporting the known facts. However, as the case began to prove more and more inconclusive, and the calls for the police to stop dragging their feet became louder, the *Recorder* attempted to discredit the NMP and its work. This was done by attempting to foment division within the community by highlighting the differences in approach of the Committee and the Newham Council for Racial Equality (NCRE), and claiming that the Atwal family were in support of one group over and above another and were indeed satisfied with the way the police were conducting their investigations.

This was not the case. The family, still grieving the untimely killing of their son, were being supported by the community with regular up-dating meetings where strategies were developed on how best to go forward.

The right to reply to the damning accusations made by the *Recorder* were muted and edited in the public opinion column. At every juncture, the *Recorder* failed to recognise that the Committee, which included NMP representation, had the total backing of the family. And a letter sent to the *Recorder* by the Atwal Support Committee was ignored.

The injustice caused to the Project is secondary to the injury caused to the Atwal family during their grief. And when juxtaposed with the coverage of the murder contained in the *Stratford Express*, has left little doubt in the minds of the community where the *Recorder* stands in relation to the murder of one member of our community.



MR. ATWAL

**THE father of a murder victim has spoken out against a pressure group just days after it was labelled "sinister" by a police chief.**

Mr. Puran Singh Atwal dismissed claims by Newham Monitoring Project (NMP) that police were not keeping the family informed of all developments concerning the brutal slaying of his son Suranjit, 25.

The dead man's heartbroken mother Mohinder Kaur Singh made a plea for community peace and urged witnesses to come forward to solve the killing of her machinist son.

She said: "I would like to find peace in my heart. I hope someone can help."

Mr. Atwal said NMP claims that the family were being kept in the dark by police were not true. "Police are trying their best to tackle this murder," he said.

On Friday NMP accused police of failing to provide information and called for more action.

Deputy Assistant Commissioner Wyn Jones angrily denied their allegations and branded NMP "divisive, sinister and destructive."

Mr. Atwal said until the killer or killers were traced the community couldn't feel safe. He felt his son may have fallen victim to muggers because he looked gentle.

Suranjit was attacked near his home in Katherine Road, Forest Gate, on October 10.

Mr. Atwal had no idea if the attack was racially motivated.

Newham Council for Racial Equality chairman Mr. Frank Jackman called for calm.

"Demonstrations could only be unhelpful," he said.

Murder team head Det. Supt. Ron Chapman said their best lead to date was a robbery in nearby Whitfield Road minutes before the attack on Suranjit.

A gang of two Asians and one white youth, one armed with a knife, ran towards Katherine Road.

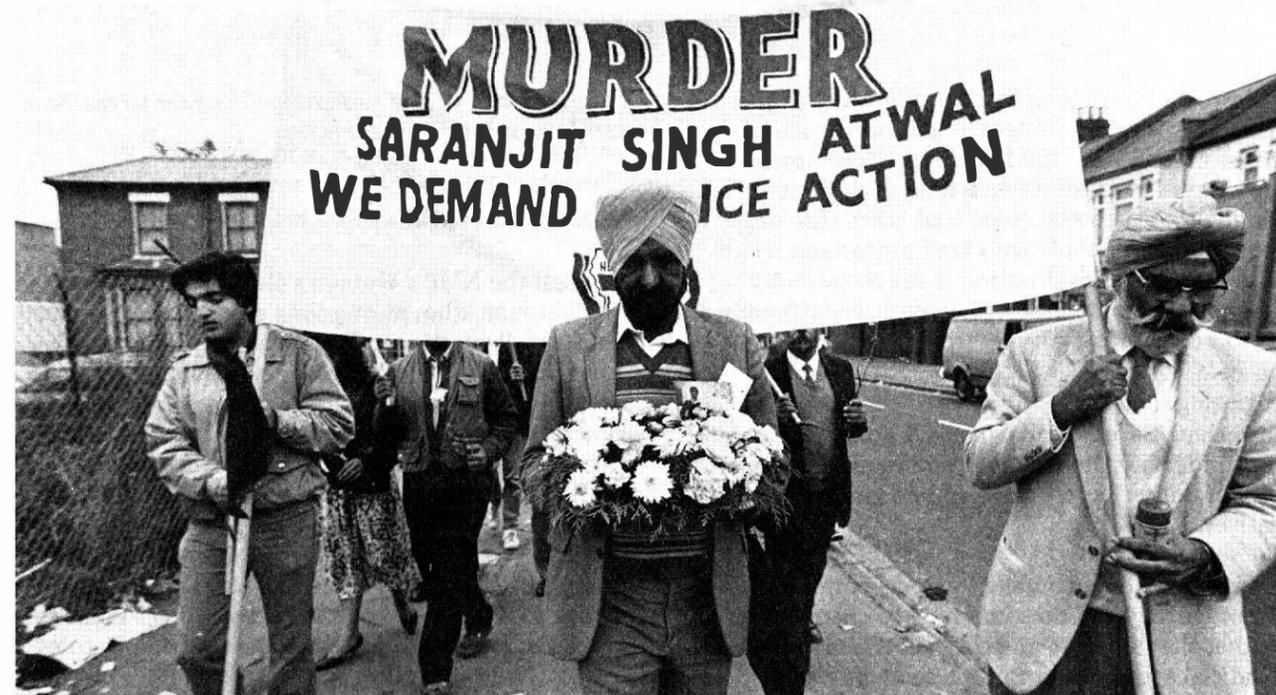
Mr. Chapman revealed there had been nine muggings in the area in the three weeks before the killing — and all the victims were young Asian men.

Information on the murder to police on 5/3/87.



Suranjit . . . murdered.

Newham Recorderd 5.11.87



Atwal Singh Support Committee wreath-laying ceremony

Picture by David Hoffmann

The *Newham Recorder* followed this with sensationalist headlines about religious festivals being celebrated by all children, regardless of culture, in Newham schools. The implication was that this celebration of different cultures would, in some way, violate English children's rights. The *Recorder* then examined the nursery rhyme issue, using 'the Chapatti man' in a derogatory manner, as opposed to the traditional 'Gingerbread man', to put a slur on efforts to incorporate anti-racist education into our children's lives.

Despite their hostility to multicultural or anti-racist education, the *Newham Recorder* seems quite prepared to feature in its letters column thinly-veiled National Front correspondence. Indeed, the offensiveness of the *Recorder's* journalism appears to be going unchallenged and reflects the political climate of the day in which any genuine anti-racist work is readily and eagerly attacked.

## THE ATTACK ON ANTI-RACISM

The NMP does not expect positive support from major institutions when our very existence challenges unjust institutional practices. Nor do we expect everyone to be converted to anti-racism because we document the amount of racial attacks that occurs in Newham. We do recognise, however, the need for just reporting, and the necessity of keeping the issues of racist attacks and police harassment in the minds of people who do not have to suffer it but can effect change. Fair and responsible coverage of these issues will go some way towards that change. There is little need for sensationalism because the facts themselves often provide their own vivid proof of the difficulties met by black people.

## POLICE CHIEF ATTACKS 'SINISTER' MONITORING GROUP

On Sunday, 12 October 1987, Suranjit Singh Atwal was stabbed to death in Newham, east London. The police soon made it clear that they believed the motive for the killing to be robbery. However, the Newham Monitoring Project (NMP), which points to a history of racist killings in the borough, is dissatisfied with this theory since over £200 was found on the body of the dead youth.

Since this tragic killing, a campaign to denigrate the Newham Monitoring Project, which is pressing for a full and thorough murder inquiry into Suranjit's death, has taken place in the pages of the local press, including the *Newham Recorder*, which, as regular readers of *Searchlight* will be aware, has a long history of hostility towards community defence campaigns.

As usual, the line being taken by the local press seems to mirror the views of the

police. On 5 November, the *Newham & Docklands Recorder* reported that police chief Deputy Assistant Commissioner Wyn Jones had described the project as "the most divisive, sinister and destructive group operating in Newham today". Then, on 12 November, the *Newham Recorder* carried an article alleging that Suranjit's distraught father was more than happy with the police's murder inquiry. Although it was not actually stated as such, the implication was that Suranjit's father was in full agreement with Commander Wyn Jones' description of the NMP. This is not true.

It is deeply disturbing that such a senior officer should denigrate an organisation that has such a high reputation for helping the victims of racial harassment. Perhaps it would be wiser to reserve such judgments for those groups who carry out the racial harassment and destroy black family life in the first place.

*Searchlight*

For too long the Project has documented habitual attacks on anti-racism in all spheres of the media. The use of the term 'black racism' (which is, we believe, reported as a means of balancing racist incidents so that not all victims are black) has been incorporated in the council's policy on racial harassment since 1985. This, unfortunately, lends credence not only to the kind of abhorrent journalism featured in the unsympathetic local press but also to the continual glib racist jibes featured in the so-called 'gutter' press. This too is part of our fight and, with the support of magazines such as *Searchlight* and *City Limits* and other enlightened journalists, we aim to continue to counter it.

## 13 HOW WE WORK

The Newham Monitoring Project continues to place great emphasis on our outreach and development work, as we still find that local people are not as aware of our existence as we would like. We are becoming more acutely aware that there still exists a large majority of people who are uninformed about their civil rights. This situation is exacerbated by radical changes in the law which we are continually at pains to keep abreast of.

Recognising that the heady days of the Newham Eight and Newham Seven campaigns have gone, it remains for us to identify the demands and requirements of the community that we serve and be guided by their initiatives.

There is a need to encourage the local community to believe that they can do something to change their lives; that they do have an effect on the institutional and judicial systems and can get some measure of justice in the face of regular intrusions into their rights. This not only involves regular debates or talks around the police and/or racism, but wholesale involvement of local people in the many varying areas of the Project's work, such as the women's group, housing, education and policing sub-groups, and the running of the Project in a voluntary capacity. This, in turn, enables us to draw on the experiences of others and maintains the Project's reputation for credibility within the community with the greatest involvement of the greatest number of people.

We are at the moment re-examining the effectiveness

and efficiency of the sub-groups in order to devise a way forward into the nineties.

### WOMEN'S GROUP

Through the NMP's Women's Group, which is made up of women who, at one time or another, have made use of the Project's services, it is hoped that many issues particular to women encountering both racist and police harassment will be addressed and consequently reflected in all areas of the Project's work, as we are conscious of the heightened vulnerability that black women face in a racist world.

This group is an extremely large component of the NMP contingent, with some 190 local names on the mailing list at the end of 1987. It is a good point to acknowledge the unstinting hard work that Carole Burgher, the caseworker until August 1987, put into the group and the unswerving support that she gave the women.

Towards the end of 1987, the group met twice, once as an introductory meeting to the new staff, and the other time to discuss the new immigration law which was to take effect from the beginning of 1988.

The mailing list is currently being up-dated as the group has not yet realised its full potential in terms of the valuable contribution of a revitalised group, making inroads and playing its full part in NMP's existence in the New Year.

## 14 WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Inform us of any racist attack (including graffiti, abuse, damage or other incidents) you know of or any attack you think has a racist motive — by doing this we will be better able to monitor such attacks more accurately.
- Inform us of anyone you feel has been harassed by the police on racial grounds, have had their rights abused, or unnecessarily detained without charge. If charged, ask them to come and see us. Let us know of any policing tactic in the borough that you feel needs drawing attention to. We will then place pressure on the police to account for their action.
- Bring to our attention anyone who feels that the police have acted improperly in any way and wish to make a complaint. We will assist people in making their complaint.
- Advertise our 24-hour Emergency Service. We need more volunteers to join the service and encourage others to participate. You are generally required for at least one evening a month. Not too much to ask in the struggle!
- Invite us to talk about our work at a meeting of your trade union branch or any community group / political party you may belong to. This should stimulate discussion and debate, which is one of the opening shots for effective anti-racist work.
- Affiliate to Newham Monitoring Project, come to our meetings (details from the Project), and publicise our activities in whatever way you can. Keep an eye out for our activities, meetings and demonstrations, and help us to support you.
- If you have been the victim of any form of racism, and have any contact with the police, always keep a note of the names and numbers of any officers you speak to, even on the phone. The greater the number of participants, the more reflective we are of those we represent.

**REMEMBER WORKERS AND IDEAS ARE NO SUBSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION!**

**JOIN THE FIGHT NOW!**

Picture by David Hoffman



Picket outside Newham West Magistrates Court

# 15 LIST OF 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 user's financial position.

## NMP Exhibitions

### 1. *History of racism in the East End*

23 wipe-clean, wall-mountable panels which illustrate the roots and examples of racism in London's East End.

Hire fee: £10 per day

### 2. *Conspiracy*

12 wipe-clean, wall-mountable panels which document different campaigns and struggles of black people in Britain.

Hire fee: £5 per day

## Visual Aid Resources

1. *Video camera*, which is a lightweight VHS portable fully equipped camera. Hire fee: £8 per day

2. *Portable video recorder*, VHS format, with full remote control; compatible with video camera, comes with carrying case. Hire fee: £5 per day

3. *Colour television monitor*, 20-inch, full remote control and indoor TV aerial. Hire fee: £5 per day.

### Megaphone

Battery-powered, hand-held loudhailer suitable for demonstrations or pickets. Hire fee: £10 per day

### Cassette Recorder

SuperScope professional cassette recorder with triple head system. Hire fee: £5 per day

### Video/Reading Library

A selection of videos, books and reports on racism. Currently a catalogue is being compiled, including videos made by the Project, eg 'The Dividing Line'. Telephone for details.

### Services

1. *Printing*: We can do printing for individuals or local community groups, depending on the size of the order. Approximately 1p per copy, A4 double-sided.

2. *Translations*: These can be arranged for all Asian languages — quickly, cheaply and professionally. Approximately £6 per 100 words.

# 17 FINANCIAL STATEMENT

## BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 1987

	1986	1986
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>		
Debtors and prepayments	19,190	17,063
Cash at bank and in hand	6,018	39,199
	<u>25,208</u>	<u>56,262</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		
Creditors and accrued expenses	13,601	43,444
Specified revenue funding	6,828	11,100
Bank overdraft	2,193	—
	<u>22,624</u>	<u>54,544</u>
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<u>2,584</u>	<u>1,718</u>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>		
<b>INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT</b>		
Surplus brought forward	1,718	4,547
Surplus/(Deficit) for the year	866	(2,829)
	<u>2,584</u>	<u>1,718</u>

## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 1987

	1986	1986
<b>INCOME</b>		
Grant funding	96,058	88,739
Transfer of specified funding	4,272	3,900
Other income	1,075	1,238
	<u>101,405</u>	<u>93,877</u>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Salaries	41,001	38,530
Administrative services	—	1,070
Rent, rates, light and heat	2,082	1,075
Repairs and maintenance	2,052	1,497
Insurance	557	163
Telephone	3,513	3,312
Stationery, postage and office materials	7,723	5,810
Printing, publicity and reports	10,250	10,085
Literature and subscriptions	1,324	488
Audit and accountancy	862	920
Legal fees	420	—
Courses and conferences	782	422
Motor, travel and subsistence expenses	5,934	4,780
Volunteer's expenses	2,308	1,381
Bank charges and other expenses	1,465	709
Equipment purchased	15,005	23,325
Recruitment advertising	2,045	—
Loss on cancelled orders	—	1,139
Project expenses	3,216	—
	<u>100,539</u>	<u>94,706</u>
	866	(829)
<b>LESS: PROVISION FOR SPECIFIED FUNDING</b>	—	2,000
<b>Surplus/(Deficit) for the year</b>	<u>866</u>	<u>(2,829)</u>

# 16 BIBLIOGRAPHY

Below we list some suggestions for future reading:

## Policing and racial violence

*The Broadwater Farm Inquiry: report of the independent inquiry into disturbances of October 1985 at the Broadwater Farm Estate, Tottenham* (Karia Press, 1986)

Paul Gordon, *White Law: racism in the police, courts and prisons* (Pluto Press, 1983)

Institute of Race Relations, *Policing against black people* (IRR, 1987)

*Policing in Hackney 1945-1984: a report commissioned by the Roach Family Support Committee* (Karia Press, 1987)

*Racial violence and harassment* (Runnymede Trust, 1986)

## Fascism

*Searchlight* (This is a monthly magazine that examines developments on the far right. It costs £1.00 and is available from most good bookshops)

Paul Gordon and Francesca Klug, *New right, new racism* (Searchlight, 1986)

## General literature

Peter Fryer, *Staying power: the history of black people in Britain* (Pluto Press, 1984)

A Sivanandan, *A different hunger: writings on black resistance* (Pluto Press, 1982)

Also see *Race & Class*, a quarterly journal produced by the Institute of Race Relations. Subscription is £10 (individuals) and £14 (organisations) per annum.

# 18 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

ASIAN LADIES GROUP, HAROLD ROAD CENTRE  
BEHNO-KI-MILAN ASIAN WOMEN'S GROUP  
CANNING TOWN MUSLIM WELFARE ASSOCIATION  
CASTLE WARD LABOUR PARTY  
COMMUNITY LINKS  
CUMBERLAND SCHOOL NUT GROUP  
DEAN AND COMPANY, SOLICITORS  
EAST LONDON ACTSS (NEWHAM BRANCH)  
EASTWARDS TRUST  
FOREST GATE WARD LABOUR PARTY  
GREATFIELD BRANCH LABOUR PARTY  
GUJERAT WELFARE ASSOCIATION  
INDIAN WORKERS ASSOCIATION (GB) LONDON EAST  
INTERNATIONAL ASIAN WELFARE ASSOCIATION  
MANOR PARK BRANCH LABOUR PARTY  
MILAN GIRLS PROJECT  
NEWHAM ASIAN WOMEN'S GROUP  
NEWHAM CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU  
NEWHAM CND  
NEWHAM IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL ADVICE SERVICE  
NEWHAM NALGO SOCIAL SERVICES SHOP STEWARDS COMMITTEE  
NEWHAM LABOUR PARTY YOUNG SOCIALISTS  
NEWHAM NORTH EAST LABOUR PARTY  
NEWHAM NORTH WEST LABOUR PARTY  
NEWHAM RENEWAL PROGRAMME  
NEWHAM WOMEN'S GROUP  
NORTH EAST LONDON POLYTECHNIC LABOUR CLUB  
PLASHET BRANCH LABOUR PARTY  
PLASHET SCHOOL NUT GROUP  
RAMGAHIRA SIKH GURDWARA  
ST STEPHEN'S BRANCH LABOUR PARTY  
SAHALI WOMEN'S GROUP  
SINGH SABHA (LONDON EAST)  
SOCIALIST EDUCATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
SOCIETY OF ST FRANCIS  
STARDUST YOUTH CLUB  
STEERING COMMITTEE OF ASIAN ORGANISATIONS AGAINST RACISM  
UPTON BRANCH LABOUR PARTY  
URBAN STUDIES CENTRE  
ZEBRA PROJECT