

NEWHAM MONITOR

Bulletin of the Newham Monitoring Project

Autumn 82

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DEFEND THE NEWHAM 8!

8 Asian youths aged 15 - 21 were arrested on Friday, 24th September, after incidents with plain clothes police officers and face serious charges ranging from threatening behaviour to actual bodily harm.

One of the youths was hospitalised for several days as a result of his being beaten up by the police. All the youths arrested were subjected to racist abuse and harassment by the police.

SELF-DEFENCE - NO OFFENCE

The youths were defending Asian schoolkids against attacks by racist thugs. Asian kids at Little Ilford School had been attacked by armed white youths on no less than three occasions in the week leading up to September 24th. In one particular incident 60-70 white youths with iron bars and sticks went on the rampage in East Ham and Manor Park looking for Asians to beat up.

The Monitoring Project is concerned about the use of plain clothes police - in this case they didn't even declare their identity.

Since the event there has been increased police activity in the Little Ilford area and members of the Newham 8 have reported further police surveillance and harassment.

The Project has also been approached by Mr. J. who was attacked by 6 white youths outside East Ham College but was himself arrested for threatening behaviour.

Racist attacks in schools and colleges will continue unless the authorities and the unions act now.



POLICING BY CONSENT?

Newham Monitoring Project was set up in 1980 to monitor racial harassment in Newham. Our members come from black organisations, trade unions, the Labour Party, church and community groups in Newham.

In 1982 we were granted funds from the GLC Police Committee to employ our full-time worker, UNMESH DESAI. At present the project is actively involved in campaigning around police harassment of black youths, lack of police accountability, and is in the process of organising a 24-hour emergency service to give help, advice and support to victims of racial attacks and police harassment.

If you, or anyone you know of, has been the victim of a racist incident, either recently or in the past, we would like to know about it. Did the local authority or the police help? Were the attackers arrested? Was the victim arrested? If you would like to help the victims of racial attacks why not join the Project or get your organisation to affiliate. The Project needs your support now.

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A Crisis of Policing in Newham

There is a crisis of policing in London. The nature and extent of this crisis is shown by recent events in London, e.g. the Brixton and Southall 'disturbances' and the increasingly political role which the police have come to play, and increasing public disquiet over police corruption.

Newham Monitoring Project through its work in monitoring racial attacks in Newham and the police response to it believes that this crisis, if anything, is most evident in Newham. This bulletin picks up recent events and cases, talks about what we think is wrong with policing in Newham and most importantly, what can be done about it.

the need for accountability

The Metropolitan police force is the only force in the country which is not accountable to a locally elected police authority but instead to the Home Secretary. At present Londoners have no say in the use of the third of a billion pounds they pay the police.

A disturbing feature of policing in London is the police complaints system. Over 9,000 complaints by members of the public about police behaviour were investigated during 1981 ... by the police themselves.

The other main area of concern about policing in London is the whole question of police methods and a lack of police accountability. Good policing, as the police themselves admit, requires the consent of those being policed.

No effective system exists whereby the public can have a say in how they are policed. Policing methods involving the use of the SPG and Instant Response Units have also received widespread criticisms. Swamp operations, saturation policing, a heavy 'fire-brigade' style of operation and the growth of other riot-trained units equipped with special uniforms and equipment have all characterised the development of the Met towards a more



paramilitarized force as opposed to the concept of home-beat officers and policemen concentrating on their own areas.

policing — "k" style

Some distinct policing patterns have emerged as a result of our work of monitoring the police in Newham. We have found the police to be totally non-responsive in cases of racial harassment and attack. In all the cases we have handled the victims of such attacks have complained bitterly about police inactivity, a lack of sensitivity and in some cases outright hostility. The main problem we have found is getting the police to prosecute the perpetrators of such attacks, many of whom either live in the vicinity of the attack or in some cases are identified by the victims. Mrs. G. in Canning Town, the victim of such an attack by local kids, was told by the investigating officer that 'things like this always happen in Canning Town!' There was no acknowledgement whatsoever of the racial element in the case.

The other disturbing feature of police behaviour is that of petty harassment of local black youths, mainly Afro-Caribbean youths, e.g. being stopped and searched, constantly being asked to produce driving documents and so on.

The project is also concerned about the use of plain clothes police officers in



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the borough (see case of Newham 8), why they are used and in what numbers, the police helicopter constantly in use around the Forest Gate area and an irritant to local residents and allegations of racial abuse and police violence at local police stations, Forest Gate in particular.

democratic control

There are a number of things which can be done as a starting step to solving the crisis of policing in London. One of the things which NMP is campaigning for is an independent body to investigate complaints about the police, which could also have some public credibility. We are also campaigning for the right of a lay person to be allowed into the detention and interrogation areas of a police station.

What the Project would also like is for Newham Council to form an independent police committee consisting of elected councillors and local representative groups. In order to carry out some of the functions of accountability this committee should have some real powers. It should be able to oversee police policies and practices and be able to develop its own strategies, police budgets, equipment ordered, etc. This committee should be accessible to the public and get down to the level where it really matters, namely on the streets and estates.

no cosmetic exercises

In some London boroughs liaison committees have been set up. In our opinion this evades the real issue of accountability of the police to you, the ratepayer. Liaison committees would give Londoners merely the right to air their views on policing methods without any guarantee that their suggestions would be implemented. These committees do not have any concrete powers. It is important if one is to get credibility with the people facing police harassment that such committees are exposed, boycotted and campaigned against for their total irrelevance.

We believe that the first step to achieving real accountability and policing by consent would be achieved by a police authority at a London-wide level (comprised of GLC and London borough councillors) and secondly by borough police committees which would begin to carry out some of the functions described above.

play your part!

An opinion poll in the Observer (24.10.82) shows strong support for control of the Met to be handed over to the GLC or a new police authority. More than half the sample agreed that the police picked on certain types of people unfairly. 44% believed that the average policeman was unconsciously racially prejudiced and a further 9% believed that they were deliberately prejudiced.

Such a situation can only be changed if you play your part in determining how you are policed. Remember that it is your rates and taxes that pay for the police. The Monitoring Project is an independent police monitoring group and is gathering evidence of police behaviour - good or bad - in Newham. If you have any experiences regarding police response to racial attacks or instances of police harassment - or know of someone who has - please inform the Project. Affiliate to the Project and help us with our work. After all whose police force is it anyway?

PROSECUTE MR. FORDJOUR'S ASSAILANTS

Imagine that you lost your left eye as a result of a racial attack, the police know the identity of the assailants but refuse to take out a prosecution and tell you that they have better things to do than handle your case and give your address to the father of your assailant. Hard to believe? ... Well, that is exactly what has happened to Mr. Luke Fordjour.

In January this year Mr. Fordjour lost his left eye when he was attacked by six youths outside a pub in Forest Gate. The police took some time to arrive at the scene of the attack and instead of interviewing Mr. Fordjour immediately when he was in hospital they seemed more interested in checking his driving licence and insurance than in getting information that would help them identify and charge his assailants.

Mr. Fordjour also claims that although the police interviewed the passenger of his minicab they did not take a statement. Although local lawyers and Mr. Fordjour pressed for a proper identification parade it took 4 months to organise one. Although a positive identification for which Mr. Fordjour was congratulated was made no charges have been brought as yet. Police explanations for this have varied from 'no comment' to 'there were several problems with the case!'

It is essential that something is done about the way the West Ham police have investigated Mr. Fordjour's case and treated him and their refusal to take out a prosecution.

Please help Mr. Fordjour by signing the petition enclosed, taking it round your organisation/friends and writing to the Officer in Charge at West Ham Police Station, West Ham Lane, E15.

THE THINGS THEY SAY...

"In the Jamaicans, you have a people who are constitutionally disorderly ... it's simply in their make-up. They are constitutionally disposed to be anti-authority".

Sir Kenneth Newman, recently appointed Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police

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This is more imperative given the increasing number of racial attacks in Newham. We need your practical help.

We are organising a training school for people who have volunteered to staff our 24-hour emergency service. If you would like to take part please get in touch with the Project.

If you need further information about the Project and our work or would like a speaker for your organisation please contact the Project's full-time worker - Unmesh Desai - tel: 555 3331.

OUR COMMUNITY UNDER HEAVY MANNERS!

Last February an SPG van stopped outside the Ramsay's home and the officers arrested 11 members of the family. They were beaten, insulted and taken to Forest Gate police station where they were charged with a variety of offences including violent behaviour, obstruction and assault.

The Ramsays have also been subjected to other harassment including one particularly notorious incident on 17th May when a police helicopter chased one of the defendants when he was driving home. Petty harassment of the family has continued since then.

The Ramsays come up in West Ham Magistrates Court on 22nd November at 10 a.m. and the campaign has called for a picket. Please raise the issue wherever and in whatever way you can and support the picket. It is important that this sort of harassment does not go unchecked.

The campaign is contactable at 285 Romford Road, Forest Gate, E7. Tel: 555 3331.

Force speaking to Bruce Porter, an American journalist.

"To arrest coloured people in areas of high ethnic groupings leads to trouble, so we don't and the crime figures soar."
John Newman, Police Federation Met Branch Chairman (Guardian 21.10.82).