

Muslims rejoice as city rejects animal rights campaign

By Jim Greenhalf

A HIGHLY-charged debate watched by hundreds of people ended last night with Bradford Council voting to keep serving halal meat to Muslim children in schools.

Catcalls from animal rights campaigners in the packed public galleries of City Hall were drowned by applause and shouts of "Allah" after the Lord Mayor, Coun. Norman Free, announced the 59 to 15 vote in favour.

Only 74 of Bradford's 90 councillors actually voted. Four members were absent, which means that up to 12 must have abstained. Two Labour councillors, Mrs. Doris Birdsall and Ken Baxter, voted against.

Two Liberals who spoke against halal slaughtering, Kath Greenwood and Richard Binns, voted in favour.

The debate, which took more than three and a-half hours with 41 speakers, took place after an estimated 3,000 Muslims had demonstrated peacefully outside City Hall.

The result was greeted joyfully by Muslims. But former Animal Rights Movement co-ordinator Mrs. Kathryn Reynolds said she was disappointed.

She is to ask the Ombudsman to investigate the council's handling of the whole issue, which had turned into one of whites versus Asians.

Coun. Free also criticised the way the original decision to serve halal meat had been taken by seven members of the education special sub-committee. He called it a "dangerous precedent."

Set back

Another member, Coun. Graham Seager, called on the Government to set up a working party to look into the 1974 Slaughterhouses Act, which allows the slaughter of animals without pre-stunning to accommodate the religious faiths of Jews and Muslims.

Several members said good race relations in Bradford had been set back years by the whole issue.

Judging by the reaction of

YES!

Halal stays on menu



Thousands demonstrate before the debate



One youngster's view of things

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Praise after demo goes off without a hitch

by Gill Gosling

ORGANISERS behind the demonstration in which more than 3,000 Muslims packed central Bradford yesterday have been praised as "magnificent" by a city police chief.

The protesters staged a peaceful demonstration at The Tyrls before Bradford Council debated the halal meat issue in City Hall.

Chief Supt. Bill Roper, the police chief with the task of monitoring the mass protest, was delighted with the Muslim groups' handling of the event.

His men kept a low profile, with 16 officers on duty round the fountain.

Chief Supt. Roper said: "I am absolutely delighted with the way these people behaved. I

thought that the stewards whom they appointed did a magnificent job in making it a very peaceful demonstration."

Meetings were held between the police and organisers last week to work out the best approach.

Chief Supt. Roper said: "I appreciated the very close liaison which they had with us prior to the demonstration, which always makes it very much easier for them to demonstrate their democratic right, and for us to ensure that they go safely with the minimum of disruption."

Crowds which started gathering before lunchtime came from all areas of Bradford, with banners and placards claiming their right

to have ritually-killed meat in schools.

Main speakers were Sher Azzam, president of the Council of Mosques, his deputy C. M. Khan, and representatives of the Bangladeshi community and the various mosques in the city.

Among the Bradford councillors who spoke were Labour men Mohammed Ajeeb, Abdul Hameed and Barry Thorne, and Tories Eric Pickles and Peter Gilmour.

Hundreds of Muslim children had been kept off school to attend the protest. Many carried placards saying, "Don't take my lunch from me" and "Bradford keep your promises."

Three banner-waving Muslim schoolchildren were also heard chanting: "We want fish and chips," in a light-hearted aside to the main issue.



Protesting — Coun. Mohammed Ajeeb



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