

NEWHAM 8

defence campaign

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TRIAL BULLETIN - WEEK 1 - (17.11.83-25.11.83)

After a number of adjournments, courtrooms not being available (!) etc. the trial of the Newham 8 - 8 Asian youths from Newham arrested for defending themselves and their community from racial attacks - started on Thursday November 17th at 2 p.m. at the Old Bailey.

A jury of 12, 5 black and 7 white people, were sworn in. It is absolutely essential that the jury should reflect the experiences of the people they are trying. The issues raised by the case of the Newham 8, the continuous and murderous attacks on black people by racist gangs, and the right of the black community to defend itself against racist attacks in the face of total police inaction, make it imperative for the jury to have a mixed composition. The mixed jury was only secured as a result of defence submissions and challenges to jurors. At the last minute the prosecution decided to lay the 'conspiracy to assault' charge on file i.e. it cannot effectively be heard during the duration of the present case. This after spending a whole year deciding what charges to bring against the eight. The defence campaign regards this as a victory for the eight, the black community and anti-racists everywhere. However, all eight still face a charge of causing an affray. In addition four of the eight have also been charged with possessing offensive weapons. Other charges include actual bodily harm and threatening behaviour.

A number of things have emerged from the court proceedings this week.

1. The plain clothes police officers involved in the original incident were members of the District Support Group (local SPG).
2. All the police officers who appeared in court have shown a startling ignorance of the high number of racial attacks upon black people in the borough.
3. According to the police the three plain clothes officers were on anti-burglary campaign in the south of the borough when they received a message to go to the school in the north east part of the borough. The arrival on the scene before the uniformed police has been explained as pure coincidence by the prosecuting barrister and 'as a rather unfortunate incident'.

The case is expected to last for another 2-3 weeks. It is essential that the daily pickets of the court are maintained and that the public gallery remains packed. Apart from showing support and solidarity to the eight youths we must also demonstrate to the judge, jury and the State, that it is the whole black community that is on trial and not just the Newham 8. The picket line was subjected to racist abuse and attack from a few racist building workers on an adjacent site. Although this has now stopped, no thanks to the police, who although they witnessed the attacks and indeed one officer got hit by egg himself(!) preferred to ignore the attacks, it is essential that we demonstrate our determination not to be intimidated either by such tactics or by the bullying attitude of the City of London Police and the Old Bailey security staff. We must ensure that our determination to free the eight smashes their obstructive tactics. All supporters are urged to mobilise for the national mass picket on Monday, 5th December, in addition to one more day.

The campaign is also desperately short of money and support groups are requested to have fund raising socials plus any other activity to raise finances for the campaign.

ALL OUT MONDAY, DECEMBER 5th DEFEND THE NEWHAM 8!

- *** Newham 8 tee-shirts, badges, stickers, posters and leaflets are available from the campaign or on the picket line.
- *** Rock Against Racism social in aid of Newham 8 defence campaign and organised by LSE Campaign Against Racism and Fascism. Thursday 1st December at 8 p.m. Three Tuns Bar, LSE, Houghton Street, WC2.
- *** Newham 8 Supporters Meeting every Sunday 3-4 p.m. For details contact the Defence Campaign.

For daily developments in the case ring 555 8151 between 6 - 7 p.m.

*** NATIONAL MASS PICKET OF OLD BAILEY CROWN COURT

MONDAY DECEMBER 5th - 9 a.m.

MONDAY DECEMBER 12th - 9 a.m.

HELP IS DESPERATELY NEEDED ON THE PICKET LINE PLEASE SUPPORT WHENEVER POSSIBLE.