

EAST LONDON CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE POLICE BILL
c/o P.O.Box 273, Forest Gate, London E7. Tel. 5558151

ORGANISE AGAINST RACISM

Over the last three months racist attacks upon black people in London, especially East London, have reached an alarming level. The catalogue of racist violence makes for frightening reading.

Tower Hamlets: A frightening escalation in stabbings, intimidation and harassment of Asians, especially isolated families living on Council estates, has occurred over the last three months. This is epitomised by the rash of attacks that have occurred in Stepney since the end of April. Gangs of up to fifty racist white youths with the help of neighbours have been terrorising Asian households - and are continuing to do so. The response of the police has been one of inactivity, collusion (refusing to prosecute the attackers even when identified) and hypocrisy (e.g. being extra quick in blockading and searching a mini-bus belonging to an Asian youth organisation on the grounds of 'suspected vigilantes carrying offensive weapons'). Where private prosecutions have been brought from sheer desperation due to police inaction, the Asian victims have themselves been threatened with criminal charges (for defending themselves against racist thugs!) unless they drop the prosecution. The situation in the borough remains potentially explosive unless immediate and positive action is taken. And these attacks have taken place at the same time as the near fatal stabbing of two Bengali youth workers in Brick Lane and two racist murders in the Aldgate area.

Newham: In Newham, in the last three months, in addition to the countless cases of abuse and attacks against black people and their homes, at least three near-fatal attacks have taken place. In April, an Asian man was the victim of a savage attack outside the Tropicana Wine Bar, a minutes walk from East Ham Police Station. In May, 58-year old Mr. Ganga Dharan was attacked by people who had been drinking in the same wine bar, and was beaten up so badly that it is feared he will never be able to work again. In the same area, another Asian man would have died from a stabbing if it had not been for prompt medical attention. Asian families in the Manor Park and Canning Town areas of Newham have suffered from a continual state of harassment, with endless cases of women being molested, children beaten, windows smashed, daubing of fascist graffiti, and families living in a near state of siege.

Lewisham, Greenwich and South-East London: In Lewisham and Greenwich, marauding gangs of fascists have been involved in a number of serious attacks upon black people. In Lewisham, a fascist attack upon a GLC stall resulted in the stallholder being severely coshed. At the same time racist attacks in the Deptford and Catford areas have sharply increased. In May, an Asian man was the victim of a vicious attack in Woolwich in the course of which his eyes were gouged out. There have also been organised fascist attacks on Asian students at Thames Polytechnic and other reports indicate that there has been a sharp increase in attacks upon black families on different council estates around Greenwich.

Although the fascists are known to be organising a lot of these attacks from the Crown and Cushion pub in Woolwich (a wellknown watering hole for Nazis in South-East London) as yet the police have failed to take any positive action whatsoever. In the meantime these attacks go on ... and on ... and on ...

Attacks throughout London as a whole have also increased. In March, two black taxi-drivers were found murdered near Heathrow Airport and a 42-year old Asian man was murdered in Acton in May. At the same time these attacks have met with the standard police indifference and indeed hostility. Six Asian youths in Newham at present face charges ranging from criminal damage to conspiracy when after no less than five attacks in one day (7.4.84) upon Asian people in the borough, Asian youths defending themselves from an attack by white racist youths outside the Duke of Edinburgh pub, known to be a haunt of local fascists, found themselves arrested instead by the police. To date not a single white youth has been arrested. Indeed, just recently a judge was forced to order an inquiry into police investigation of the stabbing of a black youth,

17-year old Richard Campbell, by a white youth, Dean Burgess. Judge Shindler commented: 'This case has been hopelessly investigated. That young man was so badly injured his intestines were hanging out, but there is not a shred of evidence which identifies Burgess'.

The beleaguered black community in East London, which has faced racist attacks of an unprecedented ferocity for the last two decades, has yet to be given the protection in the form of special squads and plainclothes police officers afforded to scab miners in Nottinghamshire from alleged intimidation by miners on strike.

Racist attacks are not confined to the fringe activities of fascist groups, although the regrouping of the right is cause for immediate concern. This alarming increase in racist attacks over the last three months has to be seen in the context of a general rightward drift in society towards more strident forms of state authoritarianism. And we have seen over recent years how this new authoritarianism is being put into practice by a police force who have now become a law unto themselves. Increased police powers under the Police Bill will only serve to give the police greater confidence to carry out intimidation and harassment of the black community and individuals defending themselves from racist attacks, and will not alter one iota police abuse of powers or challenge police racism.

And now, fascist policies on race and immigration are in a sophisticated way being incorporated into Tory thinking. The criminalisation of black people, equating them with the current economic crisis and a breakdown in law and order, and institutionalised state racism has provided an official cloak for fascist groups to carry out their murderous attacks on the black community, socialists and trade unionists. After three years of internal infighting, the NF with a new youthful leadership and close connections with Italian fascists and the BNP have emerged to try and reclaim their old stomping grounds in East and South-East London. The catalogue of racist violence of the last three months is a partial result of this regrouping - and a development which we would be well advised to take into account.

These attacks are going to continue, indeed they will gather momentum as Summer approaches. In the face of total police indifference and hostility are we going to go through yet another long hot summer of attacks and murders without any action whatsoever? We cannot afford any more summers like 1978 and 1979 - the task of informing and organising against these attacks has to be carried out **NOW!**

WE WOULD URGE YOU TO:

- * Distribute these leaflets around your borough, at work and in any organisation or group you may belong to.
- * Draw the attention of the police and local authority, school, etc., to these attacks and force them to take effective action.
- * Set up local campaigns against racist attacks and police harassment in your borough. Only community action will force the authorities into doing anything about these attacks.
- * Raise support for the East London Campaign in any organisation or group you belong to; ask us to come and speak at your meeting, and get in touch with us for more information.

There is a more than pressing need for increasing co-ordinated work, solidarity and mobilisation against these attacks. If the authorities fail to respond, each one of us should begin to think about ways and means of organising the defence of our communities in whatever way we see fit. It is important that these attacks are publicised to the widest possible audience and we develop the community self-organisation that will ultimately defeat these attacks.

FIGHT RACIST ATTACKS! FIGHT POLICE HARASSMENT!

SPONSORED BY: NEWHAM CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE POLICE BILL; HACKNEY CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE POLICE BILL; CAPA; FEDERATION OF BANGLADESHI YOUTH ORGANISATION; GREENWICH ACTION CAMPAIGN AGAINST RACIST ATTACKS; NEWHAM MONITORING PROJECT; NEWHAM YOUTH MOVEMENT.