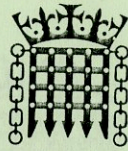


MP's

REPORT

MAY 1989

**Tottenham
Labour Party**



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

TOTTENHAM LABOUR PARTY

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A. PARLIAMENTARY FEEDBACK

1. VAUXHALL BY-ELECTION

The Labour Party NEC acted in my view, in a very undemocratic manner in imposing a candidate on the Vauxhall party. The original NEC shortlist didn't contain the majority of those nominated by the wards, including Martha Osamor, Linda Bellos, Marc Wadsworth and Russell Proffitt. I was particularly concerned that they did not select any of these and gave various spurious reasons for their non-selection.

These included in the case of Martha that she was too "simple", in the case of Russell that he worked for Brent Council and the papers would use that against him. Another reason was that by-elections are national events and the person selected must be able to represent the Party nationally. A number of questions arise immediately.

Is a worker for any organisation now responsible for the policies of that organisation and not the owners or elected members? Are we to have a two tier system of selection with desirables now able to stand in by-elections and undesirables only able to stand in general elections? Will we now see an "A" team of white only by-election candidates and maybe a few token blacks who have no chance of selection because of lack of experience, and a "B" team of blacks and others who won't be able to compete? What does the NEC now mean by being able to represent the Party nationally? Are they talking about a whites-only Labour Party? (I noticed that the recent full page advertisement in the Guardian heralding the Policy Reviews didn't have any non-white people in it.) Is this the new face of the Labour Party?

2. EUROPE

The Tories appear to have finally begun to tear themselves apart over Europe and we must capitalise on this in the coming European elections by working all out for a victory by Pauline Green. We should use the Euro-elections to demonstrate Thatcher's unpopularity and in doing so sow even greater divisions in the Tory ranks. It is growing more and more clear that Thatcher is out of tune with the rest of Europe in wanting the EEC to be a purely economic institution, with no concern for social well being, and we should not hesitate to push this message home.

3. ECONOMY

The rows are beginning to surface in the Tory party over monetary policy. Mrs Thatcher, because of lack of support for her position, has been forced to bring back Prof Alan Walters to boost up her flagging monetarist position in the light of attacks by Geoffrey Howe and the Chancellor, especially on the question of monetary union within Europe. Mrs T recently blamed the Chancellor for the rise in inflation. She was subsequently forced to apologise to him for her remarks. Inflation is again on the move despite a slowing down in



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credit and "better" monetary control. Petrol price rises, lack of local authority funding from the Govt resulting in large rate increases and higher than inflation wage settlements (eg the power workers) All this is contributing to a call from the city for even higher interest rates as a way of checking inflation. Together with these worries, house values in the South-East are falling rapidly, by some 10% in recent weeks. These will give the Govt severe headaches, and cause many of their newly won supporters to think again.

4. NAMIBIA

I spoke in the House of Commons on the current situation in Namibia on April 13th and clearly the South Africans are continuing their repressive policies. The main target of South Africa is the Namibian people's organisation SWAPO who face an immense financial task in the UN monitored election campaign which runs from July to November 1989. SWAPO has to provide for the return of thousands of refugees as well as financing its own election campaign to compete against the massive Apartheid supported parties and alliances.

The Anti-Apartheid Movement have set up a **SWAPO Election Campaign Appeal**. This Appeal has the full support of the Labour Party, the TUC, the SLD and the SDP. I trust that Wards will discuss Namibia in their meetings, raise money for the Appeal and distribute information to their members. Leaflets, speakers & videos are available from Haringey AA (881-8878).

I am currently working with rap singers including the Cookie Crew, Monie Love, MC Mell'o' and Overlord X to make a record called "Beyond the 16th Parallel". This record will be released in the Summer and will raise money for the struggle against Apartheid.

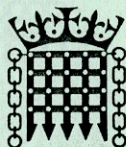
5. POLICY REVIEW

I have not yet received a copy of this document, but from what I have read in the press, I feel that we shall have an uphill struggle to sell the policies contained in the review to the electorate.

6. HEALTH

The strength of opposition to the White Paper continues to concern many Tory backbenchers with marginal seats, as well as not so marginal ones. The key opposition at the moment is coming from the medical profession, and Kenneth Clarke's much publicised agreement with them is proving somewhat farcical, as their campaign against the White Paper is continuing unabated. I think it is very clear that the public simply does not believe the lies which the Government is putting out about the purpose of the White Paper, and Kenneth faces an enormous hiccup in his personal rise to political stardom.

As if to convince us all of their commitment to publicly provided health care, the government yesterday announced the appointment of a number of infamous industrial axemen to run it. Rover Cars asset-stripper Graham Day, and British Steel union basher Sir Robert Scholey will join Sainsbury's supremo Sir Roy Griffiths and British Aerospace boss Sir Kenneth Durham on the new NHS policy board. These are all people who have built their reputation by privatising the public



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sector. Are we really expected to believe that the Government is committed to preserving the NHS in the face of these kinds of appointments? Needless to say no space can be found on the board for a nursing representative!

7. TRANSPORT

There have been some interesting developments lately on this front lately, culminating in the recent announcement that the Government is to devote £6,000 million to road building in the next few years, to finance a major motorway building programme. It is also to encourage the development of so called Toll Roads. (I have heard of one law for the poor and one for the rich, but are we now to have separate roads too?!)

Clearly the only solution which the Government has in mind to Britain's transport problems is to build more and more roads, which will lead to more and more traffic and more and more congestion - especially as all the roads will in the end lead to the same already congested parts of the country, such as London. The ELAS proposals are clearly part and parcel of this crazy approach. (see later)

8. RIGHT TO REPLY AND PRIVACY BILLS

The might of the media, and associated forces combined as expected to kill off both of these Bills, with all the vested interests coming out in force to defeat them.

9. PARLIAMENTARY QUESTIONS

I asked questions on the following in the past period: Tax Allowances to large Corporations in Enterprise Zones: Planning permission in Enterprise Zones: Student Loans Plan: Payment of Social Security Benefits to the disabled when residing abroad.

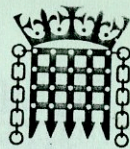
B. CONSTITUENCY MATTERS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to thank the Party and all the many individual members who sent messages of condolence on the death of my mother on the 22nd April. On behalf of my family, I thank you all, and especially for the floral tribute which was sent to her funeral from the Party. Your kindness, and that of the community generally, has been a great consolation to us through a very difficult period.

1. POLICE ATTACKS ON THE BLACK COMMUNITY

As members may have read in the press, the situation as regards the relationship between the Police and the black community in Tottenham has taken a serious turn for the worse in recent weeks, and I have felt it necessary to speak out strongly on this. The number and seriousness of the cases which have come to my attention have left me with little option. The invasion of the homes of three black families, by large numbers of Police with dogs, for no reason, involving unnecessary violence and racial abuse, followed by the charging of members of the families who tried to defend themselves, is totally unacceptable, and must be seen in the context of a rise in the number of incidents reported to me and other agencies of the harassment of black people in Tottenham.



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I have attempted in recent months to use the channels open to me to get this problem addressed. I have written to the Commander of the Metropolitan Police Peter Imbert, and to Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary, as well as having referred a number of cases to Chief Superintendant Stacey of the Tottenham Police. In each case the response has been entirely unsatisfactory - either to deny that such racism exists in the police Force, or to insist that there are acceptable channels for dealing with such complaints. Neither is of course true.

I therefore felt that it was time that the black community met to decide how it respond to this worsening situation. The meeting took place at the West Indian Centre on Sunday 21st May, and was literally standing room only. I feel that the attendance was a measure of the frustration which is building up in the black community about this issue. The meeting agreed on certain steps which could be taken, which I will report to the General Committee. I was pleased incidentally that some Councillors managed to attend the meeting, but disappointed that more Tottenham Councillors did not attend. The party must be seen to respond to this major issue when the community requires it.

2. ELAS ROAD PROPOSALS

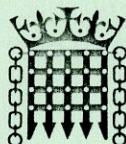
I met with other London M.P.'s and Paul Channon about this, but got very little information about the Government's intentions. It appears that no announcement will be made until late summer about whether the proposals will be implemented. However I have kept in close contact with local campaigners on this, and protested in the local press and to the Minister, about the fact that letters written by Tottenham people have been met by responses which are devoid of any mention of the implications of the proposals for Tottenham as opposed to Hornsey (now a marginal seat of course.) I spoke also at a meeting of about 500 people at Tottenham Town Hall against the proposals this month. There is enormous opposition building up against the proposals, and THORN, the local group organising the campaign is to be congratulated.

3. PUBLIC WORKS REDUNDANCIES

I was approached by local workers whose jobs are threatened who were concerned that residence in the borough seemed to be an irrelevant consideration in the selection for redundancy. I wrote to Public Works to enquire as to whether this was true, and found this to be the case. I really do think that this is to be deplored. It cannot be right that Haringey workers, who after all are themselves paying the rates which support the service, are losing their jobs, while other who live miles away often in Tory boroughs are losing theirs. Perhaps councillors might take this on board.

4. CLOSURE OF THE RACE EQUALITY UNIT

I was amazed to hear on the grapevine that the Council's Race Equality Unit has been closed down. I gather this was done without consultation with anyone, even the Labour Group. This a very serious development in my opinion, and requires some explanation. If the local leadership, like the national leadership, finds race issues an embarrassment, then it should have the courage to say so.



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5. M.P.'s OFFICE

Once again, whilst I must thank those who have come in to give their help, I would like to ask other Party members to consider whether they can spare a little time to give a hand in the office at 247a. I have only one full time and one part time staff, who are stretched to the extreme. I still very much need someone who can type, and there are a large number of other routine tasks which can easily be done by volunteers. Hours are to suit, as the office is often open late into the evening and at weekends if you have time then. If you can offer to help, please ring 800 5994 without delay !

6. LATEST LIBELS

At the risk of spreading the untruth further afield, I should like to state that there is no basis whatsoever in the the allegation that I am the proud possessor of a second home in Wales, or anywhere else for that matter. I am seeking an apology from the magazine concerned.

7. LOCAL ENGAGEMENTS

I attended the following events in April/May : Opening of One Spirit Batik Workshop, Winkfield Community Centre ; Seven Sisters Meeting ; Plevna Day Nursery ; Health Authority Meeting ; Visit of Minister to St. Anns Hospital ; Launch of Lemmy Findlay Trust, WILC ; Photo-call with Pauline Green ; Annual Council Meeting ; THORN Road Proposals Public Meeting ; Broadwater Farm Defence Campaign ; Public Meeting on Policing in Tottenham.

C. OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Launch of the Parliamentary Black Caucus ; Anti-Apartheid National Committee, Glasgow ; SWAPO Public Meeting ; London AAM Kassinga Day ; West Indian Standing Conference AGM ; Anglo Dutch Conference, Northampton ; Police Complaints Authority ; Meeting with Cheddi Jagan, Guyana Opposition Leader ; National Assn of CABX ; Black Doctors Assn Annual Dinner ; Prism Group.

PRESS AND MEDIA

For various reasons there has been quite considerable press and media attention since my last report. The launch of the Parliamentary Caucus attracted a considerable amount of international press coverage, particularly in the USA. I also did a review of "Mississippi Burning" for O1 for London. I have also taken part in one of Granada's "Hypotheticals" series on racism, the police and other issues, which I gather is to be shown on Wed 31st May at 10.45. The Policing problems in Tottenham have attracted considerable local and black press interest, and the Vauxhall selection has of course given rise to a great deal of coverage.

BERNIE GRANT H.P.

24.5.89