

IN THE UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY

WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT OF Diane Langford

My name is Diane Langford and this is my Opening Statement to the Undercover Policing Inquiry.

I'm glad of the opportunity to contextualise the very detailed Witness Statement that I've submitted to the Inquiry, and, to say something further about my lifetime involvement in political activism. When I was young I witnessed the injustices of racism, sexism, and the class system, exported to Aotearoa/New Zealand by British colonialism. In London, my activism began in the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination in the early 1960s, continued through the period of this Inquiry, and is ongoing.

I became involved with the Inquiry as the result of a memoir I posted on line in 2010 that referred to the 'outing' of 'Dave Robertson' – HN45 – as an Undercover Officer. A sharp-eyed researcher, who later alerted a lawyer acting on behalf of Non-State Core Participants, spotted my blog. Otherwise, I'd never have been called to give evidence. How many others who were spied on are completely unaware that their names appear in these files?

I'll never know what career opportunities were denied to me, or what other barriers have been placed in front of me during my life, as a result of the machinations of the Special Demonstration Squad. I'll never know whether unpleasant incidents, for example, being denied credit or visas, or break-ins at my home, were connected to the surveillance I was being subjected to.

I was misled as to the number of UCOs who were spying on me. Initially, I was only aware of HN45, known to me as 'Dave Robertson.' Then the Undercover Research Group revealed HN348, who infiltrated the Women's Liberation Movement, to me. Later, I learned that several others, such as 'Dick Epps', have also reported on me in the different organisations I belonged to.

Despite the poor treatment I've received from the Inquiry, who failed to invite me to give evidence in Phase 1, as detailed in my Witness Statement, I'm grateful to the Chair for, belatedly, granting my CP status.

I'm very concerned that I was denied the opportunity to participate in the November hearings

I was perplexed that the ruling on my CP status introduces me as 'the widow of the late Abhimanyu Manchanda' as if I was merely an appendage. This is an example of institutionalised sexism observable in any traditional English graveyard: 'Here lies John X of this parish and his wife Janet X.'

I'd like to express my solidarity with all who've been unjustly treated by the abhorrent practices under investigation - to the women who were abused and deceived by UCOs, the Lawrence Family, Celia Stubbs, trade unionists, anti racist activists and organisations, and those named in my witness bundle who were members of the Women's Liberation Movement, the Gay Liberation Front, the Black Unity and Freedom Party, the Revolutionary Socialist Student Federation, the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania, the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam, the Schools Action Union, Artists for Liberation and other anti-apartheid and liberation organisations.

I pay tribute to personal friends and comrades who are no longer with us, whose names I found in my witness bundle:

Rest in Power: Dorothy El-Muracy, Palestinian women's liberationist; N.M. (Sonia) Seedo, holocaust survivor and writer; David Medalla, founder of the Artists' Liberation Front, David Maphgumzana Sibeko of the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania and Louis Eakes, Palestine campaigner, whose arrest sparked the first Gay Liberation Front demonstration in Highbury Fields in 1970. Entrapment of gay men was another aspect of undercover policing.

My hope is to join the dots between the past and present and to provide a fuller picture of the aims of some of the organisations I've been associated with.

A grim continuum is discernable from the secret police reports of the sixties, culminating in the skewed structure of the Inquiry tasked with investigating them. This continuum of state surveillance, racism, misogyny, homophobia, Empire nostalgia and 'post-truth politics' is part and parcel of an authoritarian imperative to go backwards, from action on the climate emergency to trashing women's and workers' hard-won rights, while preserving imperialism and racism amid an outpouring of white denial.

The Inquiry is mired in secretiveness, prevarication, lack of accountability and transparency. Bundles of selected secret police reports, some of them barely legible and incomplete, but still reeking of racism and misogyny were dispatched to a relatively tiny number of people in relation to the extensive surveillance operation that was being carried out by the Special Demonstration Squad and other spy agencies against thousands of individuals and groups. Enclosed with the bundle was an intimidating penal notice, threatening sequestration of assets if the contents were shared.

The Inquiry informed me on November 11th that HN348 was to give evidence on a November 18th. I was still unrepresented and unaware that I could have had access to a live feed.

At the time, this was limited to a rolling transcript only (with a 10 minute delay).

Obviously, by the time I was informed by the Inquiry that HN348 was giving evidence, the deadline for registering to attend the venue had passed.

I was only alerted when HN348's evidence was coming to an end. I received an email from the Undercover Research Group telling me that Maxine Peake was reading out the transcription.

I fully support the Police Spies Out of Lives activists who organised the reading by actors to make the hearings more accessible to the public and to highlight the Inquiry's failure to do so.

Three dramatic events spring to mind when I recall the period under scrutiny:

(1) The threat of violence against her family made by HN45 to my friend after she identified him as a UCO;

(2) A fire, assumed to be a right wing arson attack, at Banner Books, where I believe a man died. The premises were under surveillance by HN45, and even if, as claimed, he'd been withdrawn from the field before the fire, it's likely he had keys made. See [MPS 0730516], a memorandum dated 7th February, 1972 stating, (v) 'He would be able to provide a plan of the bookshop and would have access to the keys of the premises.'

The possibility that a bookshop was set alight, causing a death, while under surveillance by UCOs is surely worthy of investigation?

3) An allegation of attempted rape was made during a meeting reported on by HN45, but was ignored by him and, instead, he focussed on my domestic and financial arrangements while ridiculing my partner who was caring for our baby.

[UCPI0000011741]

I want to say something about the Women's Liberation Movement

Feminism exists where-ever women resist oppression, and, at certain points in history, mass movements develop involving national and international waves of activism. I was lucky to participate in one such wave, the Women's Liberation Movement as it arose in the 1960s.

I believed then as now that this is among the most globally important causes, and that understanding the intersection of women's oppression with other forms is fundamental to transforming our world. Like all women who created the movement, my commitment was based on personal experience, recognised as political. For example, when I was in my early twenties my flatmate died of an illegal back street abortion, aged nineteen. The memory of her death remains vivid for me still, at the age of seventy-nine. Like women everywhere, I have experienced sexual harassment and assault. For years I was Mother of the Chapel, i.e, Shop Steward, in a male-dominated Trade Union, where I contended with everyday misogyny and sexist attitudes.

That the basic goals of the movement remain unachieved and resisted confirms their profound nature. It was the belief of the Women's Liberation Front, which was the group in which I began my involvement in the movement as a whole, that patriarchal, racialised capitalism cannot, and will not, meet those goals.

Discovering that groups I was involved in, and the Women's Liberation Movement as a whole, were secretly surveilled has been a traumatising experience.

It's harrowing to find out about the pernicious attitudes of officers masquerading as comrades and sisters who inveigled their way into our homes, families, meetings and lives, and the betrayal of trust is unforgiveable.

Many of the groups I belonged to are long gone, but the State bodies represented at this Inquiry, despite their nuclear weapons, army, police and air force and tactic of 'manufacturing consent,' including the ability to issue D notices to stifle reportage, are beset with fragility. The Inquiry is at pains to protect the anonymity and feelings of the State's enforcers, the secret police, who are 'embarrassed' that their friends and family might find out about their abhorrent occupation.

They claim that *they* are in peril from those of us who've campaigned against imperialism and colonialism, for peace, women's rights, workers' rights and against the state's brutal treatment of People of Colour - including deaths in state custody, which totalled 1,737 since 1990.

I turn now to some further troubling aspects of the Inquiry:

The Covert Human Intelligence Sources (Criminal Conduct) Act 2021 legalises all the criminality the spycops engaged in, though not retrospectively. What is the point of the Inquiry now? In a democratic system, are Inquiries not designed to inform governments, to help them fashion good laws, or at least benign ones?

In January 2020 a police 'counter-terrorism' document, produced by the equivalent unit responsible for the Special Demonstration Squad, listed the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, the Campaign Against the Arms Trade, Stop the War and the Palestine Solidarity Campaign as 'extremists.'

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign was established soon after the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, The Golan Heights, the Sinai and parts of Southern Lebanon. Its aims were, and still are, to call on the British government to pressure Israel to abide by UN resolutions and international and human rights law. I joined PSC upon learning the truth of the history of Palestine, subsequently visiting the West Bank and Gaza, on a fact-finding tour, and becoming an Executive Committee member and Women's Officer of PSC.

As successive governments have not acted despite Britain's special responsibility for the colonisation of Palestine, and given Israel's intensification of oppression of the

Palestinian people, the PSC continues its solidarity role as a mainstream, campaigning organisation with substantial public support.

This activism brings together my commitment to antiracism and women's liberation – for women cannot exercise what should be their unhampered right to strive for freedom under a brutal military occupation and genocidal apartheid regime which destroys essential civil society infrastructure. In this, as other instances, international feminist solidarity is, I believe, crucial.

If I was under surveillance in 1970 as a member of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, am I still under surveillance now?

I became far more active in PSC in the early 2000s, following the Second Intifada, than I was in the sixties and seventies – and remain so.

Where are the documents?

While the State can rely on privileged sections of society, plus the main political parties, to support its authoritarian imperative and McCarthyite political culture, it may be more difficult to justify the surveillance of women who were organising jumble sales, campaigning for equal pay, childcare, equal education, reproductive rights and an end to male violence.

According to reports made available, HN348 spied on 77 meetings during her deployment, of which 55 were related to the Women's Liberation Movement. If the length of her deployment is as claimed, she must have attended more meetings than I did.

Yet the Inquiry appears intent on restricting the scope of its remit to investigate the extent of spying on the Women's Liberation Movement. The Inquiry is colluding with the State by constraining the search for wider evidence.

What do we find when we read the UCOs reports?

We find the work of people acting in good faith in the hope of creating a future free of oppression, as seen through the grubby, distorting lens of officers incapable of understanding what they are spying on. The reports lay bare the prejudices, bigotry and ignorance of the kind that provoked the movements being infiltrated. This is surely the great irony regarding the covert surveillance this Inquiry is investigating: that it demonstrates precisely the reasons for the impetus for the very existence of the movements that were spied upon.

We see a shameless assumption of entitlement, and a complete lack of conscience, behaviour devoid of any compunction about intruding into people's lives and homes.

We see the state-sanctioned sexual abuse of women used as objects by men; disregard for the lives of Black and Brown people and women; racist assumptions of white supremacy; state brutality and indifference to human rights; attempts to curtail and control peaceful democratic campaigning, and the privileging of property and profit before people.

To read these reports is to see some of the greatest ideas of our time crushed into the narrow confines of a mentality absolutely lacking in the capacity to comprehend them. The Under Cover Police officers' failure to acknowledge the enormity of their wrongdoing perpetuates a culture of impunity.

We see the callous use of women's bodies by misogynous male officers who see such abuse as a perk of the job, and, a confluence of the sexist behaviour and patriarchal attitudes of so-called left wing men in socialist groups and that of those spying on them. We see the farce of female officers, paid less than their male counterparts, spying on women's organisations campaigning for equal pay. One of these, HN348, gives a prurient homophobic account of spying at a national Women's Liberation Movement conference. Was she asked to report on this particular aspect, if so why? If not, why did she make these comments? What could justify such intrusiveness?

This Inquiry reiterates the intrusive processes of surveillance, requiring the victims of spying to explain and justify themselves, when it is the perpetrators of surveillance who should be interrogated and held accountable.

Remarkably we witnesses are again being subjected to intrusion into our personal and political lives, as if some retroactive justification could be thereby found for utterly dishonourable and indefensible police actions, whereas the perpetrators of abuse are granted impunity, anonymity or the refuge of poor memory.

A primary function of progressive movements is the denaturalising of social relations, revealing that they're not inevitable or immutable. That white and male supremacy are created, not innate; that gender roles are socially constructed; that racism, heterosexism and sexism can be challenged and refuted; that it is not true that, as Winston Churchill said, white people constitute "a stronger race, a higher-grade race" that has a right to subjugate indigenous peoples.

That impoverishment, homelessness, hunger and lack of resources stem not from individual failings but deliberate policy decisions. Political activism makes it clear that human nature is not a-historically fixed in selfishness but contains great variety of potential, such as that for cooperation not competition. As the saying goes, another world is possible.

As soon as these assertions are made, they're contradicted by those defending existing power structures. Whenever a seismic shift promises to bring about social change to improve the world, a backlash inevitably arises from those with vested interests who benefit from the status quo. So it is with the movements to save our planet from the

unfolding climate catastrophe, to end white and male supremacy, to free people from exploitative labour and to liberate women from all forms of oppression.

The idea of defunding the police is deliberately misunderstood, but expresses the optimistic hope of transforming the police into a force for good, tasked with protecting people from harm, safeguarding society from destructive criminality, upholding principles against corruption, violence and injustice. Representational politics - the notion that having women or People of Colour in positions of power will bring about positive change in itself – are clearly inadequate, as the examples of Margaret Thatcher, Golda Meir, Priti Patel, etc, have shown. Having a female police chief is meaningless without a change of culture and policy. Can we not imagine an alternative to punitive law enforcement and incarceration, and invest instead in other models centered in community, in schools, healthcare, and other methods of keeping communities safe?

I'm returning to the theme of the continuum that I mentioned earlier.

It's patently obvious that a thread runs through police policies and strategies, from the time when surveillance of myself, and my colleagues, began, to the present day.

The UCO reports from the 1970s reveal the systemic sexism, racism and right wing prejudices that have manifested repeatedly in, for example, the egregious exploitation of women deceived into intimate relationships by male officers, and the despicable acts of

spying on the bereaved family of Stephen Lawrence and on Celia Stubbs, partner of the murdered anti-fascist Blair Peach.

Endemic and horrendous violence against women continues yet the criminal justice system fails to provide justice to victims of sexual and domestic assault and abuse; Black people are killed in custody and justice is never served. Indeed Leroy Logan, founding member and Chair of the Black Police Association, commented after the police action at the vigil for Sarah Everard that the Met seemed to have gone backwards from the time when it seemed to him the McPherson Report brought a glimmer of the possibility of change.

Again, I have to ask: if I was under surveillance in 1971 as a Women's Liberation activist, am I under surveillance now? I've been actively involved in the Women's Liberation Movement throughout my life, attending meetings and conferences. My involvement post-1973 is public knowledge.

I was frequently contacted by the media for comment. For example, Prince Charles told *The Sun*, Tuesday, November 18th, 1975, that 'Women's Liberationists rather annoy me because they tend to argue all the time and start calling you a male chauvinist pig. Frankly, it becomes rather uncivilised.' The paper wrote, 'A rap for the prince came from women's libber Mrs Diane Langford last night. Mrs Langford, 33 year-old secretary of the Women's Liberation Front said: "I consider his views on women's liberation completely valueless."'

Yet the Inquiry declines to do a full search of my police records after 1973 or those relating to the Women's Liberation Movement as a whole.

As we learn more about 'surveillance capitalism' I have to ask whether I'm under surveillance as I sit here reading this?

Amnesty International, who've taken the government to court over GCHQ's Tempora Programme, have warned:

'The revelations around Tempora show that a wide net is being cast through our private lives. It's not being done with any grounds for suspicion, it's being done to find the grounds for suspicion.'

Furthermore, the entangled means of surveillance, control of knowledge, authority and power have developed far beyond the crude phone-tapping of the 1960s when a voice would cut into a conversation asking, 'Can you speak up please, I didn't catch that last bit?' Or the white van parked outside our flat with aerials sprouting from it, the occupants of which would accept a cup tea if we banged on the rear door, or, two men sitting behind us on the bus, to whom we referred the conductor to collect our fares, and they paid up.

Despite the development of mind-boggling algorithms and digital surveillance techniques, is there any difference between the secret police methods and the harvesting of personal data by means of artificial intelligence? Our personal data was hoovered up mindlessly and meaninglessly with as little empathy as if by an algorithm. This was illustrated time and again by HN45 and HN348.

For example, a report authored by HN348 on August 1, 1972: 'so-and-so is a member of the Revolutionary Women's Union. She lives in a council flat at ADDRESS GIVEN with her two children aged 6-and-a-half years and three years and her mother so-and-so. She is a divorced woman and is in receipt of £8.50 per week Social Security. She attends Revolutionary Women's Union meetings regularly and is particularly interested in agitating for 24-hour nurseries.

This woman is on very friendly terms with so-and-so. Her description is: Aged about 23 years, very thin build, medium length fair hair, blue eyes, very pale complexion, poorly clothed but neat and tidy, wears black rimmed glasses, cockney accent.'

The internationally celebrated artist David Medalla, who passed away in January, is described by HN348 like this, '... Asian features and colouring, dirty appearance, very poorly clad. He is very opposed to the current Government in the Philippines.' (6th October 1971). That government was the notorious Marcos dictatorship - just to provide historical context.

Mary Spurr, representing the Post Office Workers Union, was described by HN348 as 'bleached blonde' while Ms Spurr's testimony about the humiliating conditions she and her co-workers were forced to endure as 'Hello Girls' at telephone exchanges was not deemed 'of interest'.

HN348 even spied on the Schools Action Union, another interesting example of the continuum I spoke of, as Dulwich College, the site of one of the SAU's largest demonstrations against corporal punishment, is back in the news with accusations of a rape culture reminiscent of the sixties.

HN348 collected a sample of a woman's handwriting, a woman whose home she'd been invited into. This woman's name and address feature in the files but she remains in blissful ignorance and has not been contacted by the Inquiry.

Browsing the disclosure provided by the Inquiry, I came across other disgusting examples of racism and sexism:

On 1st June 1978, a report about the Federation of London Anarchist Groups [UPCI0000021776] informs the Special Branch that a subject had cut his beard off 'to reveal that he has a long face, large Jewish nose and full lips.'

A report signed off by Angus McIntosh, about the Women's Organiser of the International Socialists, dated 22nd October, 1976, states she has a 'typically Jewish lilt

to her ... and rather prominent nose, always scruffily dressed in blue jeans and T-shirt (without a bra).' [UCPI0000021512].

'A negress was in the audience ...' according to a report on a weekly meeting of Hackney International Socialists at Centerprise in Dalston [UCPI0000010659, 13th July 1976]. The meeting discussed self-defence strategies for victims of physical attacks by the National Front.

What was Special Branch doing to stop the National Front from attacking People of Colour? Spying on anti-racists and hanging out in their 'safe houses.'

Angus McIntosh signed off on a report of another IS meeting, dated 23rd August, 1975, describing a woman speaker as 'attractive' [UCPI0000019823].

[UCPI0000015145] describes a man as 'an avid reader of Gay News with an 'effeminate manner'. The report states that the man was a member of the SWP but did not attend meetings. Details of his bank account are recorded along with details of the owners of the house in which he lived. How were these details obtained?

[UCPI0000021293] Personal details and a photograph of a woman in the Hackney branch of Woman's Voice, appear in a report dated 22nd May, 1979, describing her as '... a divorced woman who has a daughter aged six years.'

These patronising violations of people's personal space, of suppressing a child's right to demonstrate against state-sanctioned physical abuse, the racist, antisemitic, sexist and judgemental descriptions of people's personal appearance, that filled the notebooks of the secret police, may not amount to much in the eyes of the Inquiry. It's the accretion of them that are the stuff of authoritarian regimes, hence the expression 'petty apartheid.'

It's important to appreciate too, that the Revolutionary Socialist Students' Federation, another targeted group of which I was a member, as well as opposing imperialism and racist wars, campaigned for the inclusion of Shostakovich and jazz on the curriculum at the Royal Academy of Music. Today we see another period of curtailment of the curriculum to fit in with utilitarian, exploitative objectives.

I want to say something about the portrayal of my late, former partner, Abhimanyu Manchanda (Manu):

Doubtless he was under surveillance prior to the time-frame of this Inquiry, having taken part in the Indian independence struggle, and as the former partner of the late great Claudia Jones, with whom he edited the leading Black newspaper, the West Indian Gazette.

HN45 displays a vindictive hatred of Manu and a peculiar obsession with our personal relationship and child-care arrangements. He sent detailed reports to the Special Branch about what he apparently saw as transgressive behaviour – a man looking after his own child - and expressing horror that I was ‘sent out to work.’

He informs his superiors of Manu’s ‘insufferable anecdotes’ about our baby. Strangely, nothing in there about us overthrowing the state machine.

HN45, ‘Dick Epps’ et al were part of a manipulative, racist endeavour to justify their pay packet by portraying Manu as being an imminent danger to the state, implying he espoused the idea of going on demonstrations only to foment violence. This is utter rubbish. He never had any illusions about the possibility of ‘smashing the state machine.’ On the contrary, he was pragmatic about the possibility of challenging the power of the State head on. His scepticism about the willingness of sections of the white working class to give up privileges derived from colonialism annoyed many on the left and, apparently, HN45.

Why does the Inquiry refer to Manu as ‘Manchanda’ while using the full names of others? The Inquiry has picked up on the divisive tactic of labelling anti-war campaigners ‘doves’ or ‘hawks.’ Manu and Tariq Ali happened to be from colonised countries and this was a familiar ruse used by the corrupt colonial administrators of Empire, drawing on hundreds of years of experience of divide and rule.

I attached an Exhibit to my Witness Statement, a contemporaneous New York Review of Books article by the American novelist and political correspondent, Mary McCarthy, who saw Manu differently:

'The Manchanda group had been described in the newspapers as favoring violence, and the Tariq Ali group not, but actually Tariq Ali was organizing dramatically for violence—that list of first-aid stations, the instructions published in *The Black Dwarf* on what to do when gassed—on the supposition, amounting to prophecy, that the police would start or "provoke" it, whereas Mr. Manchanda, when I asked him whether it was true that he planned to storm the US Embassy, shrugged and said simply, "We are too few." In Grosvenor Square, the next day, a lilting voice I thought I recognized as his could be heard urging restraint on the crowd, though possibly this was merely *pro forma*.'

'Letter from London, The Demo' – New York Review of Books, December 19th, 1968 – which can be found on my blog <http://abhimanyumanchandaremembered.weebly.com/vietnam-solidarity.html>

The full essay is worth reading as McCarthy gives an evocative description of the time and place.

The reason given for spying on us was to gather intelligence about forthcoming demonstrations and possible infractions of public order. The futility of this is illustrated

by a demonstration consisting of a maximum of a dozen of us, walking with cardboard placards, in support of Huey Newton in 1969. We were astonished to arrive at Grosvenor Square to be met by at least a thousand uniformed police and row upon row of parked up police vans.

In my Witness Statement I dealt with the Inquiry's inappropriate Rule 9 written questions about my personal relationship with Manu.

Now I'd like to examine the significance of another question, [11.3] in which the Inquiry refers to a list of 'targets' for picketing and asks my view of these proposed actions

On the list were Dow Chemicals and The Playboy Club, representing two of the campaigns I was deeply involved with. What did the Inquiry have in mind when they asked me about Dow Chemicals? Is the implication that Dow Chemicals, whose inhuman war crimes have never been accounted for, was under the protection of the British State?

It may help the Inquiry to know that Dow Chemicals was the manufacturer of Napalm, a firebomb fuel/gel mixture used by the American military against Vietnamese civilians. The gel-like consistency, especially developed by Dow, allows the substance to stick to human flesh so that its targets can't extinguish the fire or brush it away. First, it burns through their clothes, then their skin, then their flesh and bones.

A nine-year old Vietnamese child's infamous portrayal as 'Napalm Girl' was the subject of a photograph published world-wide. She was running naked in the middle of a fire-ball, her skin peeling away in fiery sheets as she ran. Her name was Phan Thi Kim Phuc.

A New York Times article on March 4, 2019, "Why Napalm is a Cautionary Tale for Tech Giants pursuing military contracts," advises Google, Amazon and Microsoft not to get involved with defence contracts. Dow Chemicals is cited as an example of what can go wrong: the paper warns that Dow only received a measly five million dollars for the Napalm contract, ultimately sacrificing billions of dollars in lost revenue due to reputational damage.

I plead guilty to being one of those who helped to cause reputational damage to Dow Chemicals.

The continuum I spoke of earlier, can be perceived in UK state protection being accorded to Israeli arms manufacturers, in particular, Elbit, who boast that their equipment is 'battle tested' on Palestinians, despite widespread public disgust at the brutal treatment meted out to Palestinian civilians.

What was behind the Inquiry's question about picketing the Playboy Club? Does the Inquiry regard The Playboy Club, whose employees are referred to as 'Bunny Girls,' as an institution worthy of special protection by the secret police?

I agree with Alice Robson, reviewing 'Misbehaving - Stories of Protest Against the Miss World Contest and the Beauty Industry,' who wrote:

'A distance of 50 years didn't lessen my revulsion at hearing that pageant host Bob Hope bragged about taking the winner to Vietnam to "give the GIs the hots". It feels like a triumph when he is driven from the stage.' [Red Pepper, Spring 2021]

HN348 referred to the 1970 Miss World protest as an event that was organised by the Women's Liberation Front, prior to her deployment. The protest against the Miss World Contest was not organised by the Women's Liberation Front, although I attended the demonstration. It was a magnificent disruption of an exploitative commercial event degrading to women. It was not a threat to public order or security.

When she attended the 1972 National Women's Liberation conference at Acton Town Hall, what was HN348's motivation in describing women kissing?

Did her handlers ask her if there were lesbians at conferences? Was she hoping these reports would find favour with her voyeuristic bosses? If not, why did she deem it important to report to her handlers about women displaying affection, the music played 'to get people in the mood ...' and details of food and drink served?

Despite one of the longest reports I've seen in any of the available documents, that includes several pages of description of the food, drink and music, and scenes of women showing affection, HN348 told the Inquiry:

'I was not specifically instructed to report back everything and part of my role would have been to filter out certain things from very long meetings.'

Did her handlers ask her to collect information on the numbers of People of Colour at every event she spied on?

If, as claimed, she didn't recognise the language used in some of the reports attributed to her, does she stand by the content of the reports? Was there a double or triple input in the writing of reports? According to her account, first she writes by hand, then it's typed up by another spycop working in the 'back office.' Is she suggesting that the ignorant and voyeuristic comments therein, were added by a second or even third person?

I'd like to say a bit more about the deeper, problematic issues associated with the Inquiry.

The trajectory of the Inquiry so far raises questions concerning shibboleths such as the separation of State and judiciary and 'policing by consent.'

In the United States, Angela Davis, the Black Lives Matter movement and others have made mainstream the 'abolitionist' concept of truly 'policing by consent.' Where might unbridled state surveillance fit in to the concept of 'policing by consent?'

I have no sympathy with the SDS yet I found the psychiatric reports on one officer – in his plea to avoid accounting for himself before the Inquiry – distressing. The officer had developed a dual personality disorder and was happier living in his ‘legend’ identity rather than in his actual one. He exhibited symptoms of severe PTSD. His ‘suitability’ for the so-called ‘work’ he was doing, had never been assessed, nor had he received any treatment or counselling. He was used as ‘cannon fodder’ by the state, placing those close to him in jeopardy.

Inquiries since the McPherson Inquiry have been devalued by the manner in which they’ve determinedly obstructed genuine ‘inquiry.’ For example, Priti Patel, set up an inquiry into the atrocious police violence against women at Clapham Common, an incident that she herself set in train.

While the Inquiry is heavily weighted in favour of the State, how are we going to find out when the abuse started? I hope the Inquiry will not be deflected by the myth of ‘a few rotten apples.’ The cynical attitudes of the UCOs as evidenced by their misogynist reporting in the past and current lack of remorse makes it inevitable that any opportunity to take advantage of women would have been taken. There’s never just one cockroach.

Where are these files kept? Who has access to them?

Dozens of people, whose names recur in the files I’ve had sight of, have absolutely no idea that the secret police came into their homes under false pretences and spied on

them. At the bare minimum anyone whose private space was violated, resulting in them being named in these files, should be informed and invited to be part of the inquiry.

The asymmetrical structure of the Inquiry is a bulwark against truth, transparency and accountability.

I'm in awe of the lawyers working so hard on behalf of non-state core participants. The state bodies, including the National Police Chief's Council, the National Crime Agency, The Met, the Home Office, etc. have various teams.

Then there are the police CPs: designated lawyers for Met Officers and individual officers who've decided not to be represented by The Met. All are funded separately, so they all get to put forward their own positions, whereas the hundreds of NSCPs are often limited to one legal team, funded directly by the Inquiry. Hence, it is something of a fluke that I was eventually called to provide my recollections.

I believe my own lawyers have just a small team of two present throughout to represent all non-state CPs generic interests. My barrister and solicitor are only funded to be present at the hearings on the days when I give evidence and when a witness directly related to me gives evidence.

It is my understanding that state bodies and their designated lawyers will have a presence throughout. Is that fair or balanced?

If the State is investigating the State isn't that the ultimate Conflict of Interest?

Regarding the anonymity granted to UCOs ...

Naturally, those of us who were spied upon wish and need to see the faces of those responsible, in order to have closure. Otherwise, we continue to suspect our friends and fellow activists – a corrosive by-product of the indefensible violation of human relationships perpetrated by Under Cover Officers. But instead, they are granted anonymity.

A request for a photograph of HN348 was declined by the Inquiry as they were not holding one in their files. Why not ask HN348 to supply one, as requested by my legal representative?

This doesn't inspire confidence. Rather, it bears out the idea that, as Audre Lorde put it, 'the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house.' It is clear that women, People of Colour and others working for a better world will need to continue with our grassroots campaigning on behalf of ourselves and one another. However, my hope is that this Inquiry will, in fact, prove useful to us in such struggles for justice, human rights and freedom.

Diane Langford

13 April 2021

