

D.S.

**METROPOLITAN POLICE**

**SPECIAL BRANCH**

14th day of December 1981

S.B. No. 1 (Plate)

Special Report

SUBJECT

Reference to Papers

Public meeting -  
'Policing the  
Police'

BOX 500

TO  
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1. The following information has been received from a reliable source:-

2. On Friday 4th December 1981 at 7pm at Kingsway-Princeton College, Sidmouth Street, WC1, Camden Committee for Community Relations (C.C.C.R.) held a meeting on the subject 'Policing the Police - A Campaign for Police Accountability in Camden'. The meeting was co-sponsored by the following organisations:-

- Afro-Caribbean Organisation
- Bengali Workers Action Group
- Camden Anti-Nazi League
- Camden Co-op Party
- Camden Trades Council
- Cypriot Community Workers Action Group
- Hampstead Labour Party
- St Pancras North Labour Party
- St Pancras South Labour Party
- West Hampstead Law Centre

3. Attendance at the meeting, made up equally of coloured and white people fluctuated between 90 people, shortly after the start, to some 40 people by the end. This reflected the disunity both of the various factions and the actual meeting.

4. Participants were first shown a video recording of the Thames Television Report on Richard 'Cartoon' CAMPBELL, followed by a speaker from the Richard CAMPBELL Campaign who explained that efforts were still being made to establish the truth about CAMPBELL's death.

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5. The meeting was then addressed by a panel of speakers chaired by Career MASANI, the Public Education Officer of C.C.C.R. The first speaker, Pat HEWITT, from National Campaign for Civil Liberties, described the accumulation of injustice against the community, Blair PEACH, Cartoon CAMPBELL etc., which enabled the culprits in the Police and Prison Services to 'get off scot free'. She explained how the 'sus law' had been abused for over a century, quoting from Metropolitan Police Orders of 1843 to support this, and condemned the Police Complaints Procedure as totally unsatisfactory. She concluded by stating that the problem facing the community was not simply Police racism, but State racism as illustrated by the Immigration Laws.

6. The next speaker was Neelham (phonetic), a young black woman from Brixton Defence Campaign. She spoke of the many 'busts' both during and after the Brixton riots, and described how many victims were now being threatened with prosecution for allegedly making false claims for damages. She explained that nothing had changed in Brixton and condemned the Scarman Report for not going far enough. In her opinion the Report only legitimized Mrs THATCHER's view of the Brixton riots; that the Police were blameless, and the blacks were the criminals. She went on to predict that future policing in the Capital would be through a policy of merely containing the blacks. In conclusion she criticized the community policing programme in Wandsworth, Birmingham, as simply buying-off the local community and enabling the Police to spy on it in a more comprehensive manner.

7. Clive SOLEY MP, the next speaker, provided the voice of moderation. Although in favour of Law and Order, he stated that it must be applied fairly. Suggested improvements included:-

- i) More local accountability by the Police.
- ii) An independent complaints procedure, on which count he felt optimistic.
- iii) The need for public prosecutors, to lessen the likelihood of 'frame-ups'.
- iv) The need for more training to combat racism in the police. One extra week was not enough, and although he conceded that racism was not acceptable to the Police, he felt that positive steps should be taken to screen new applicants for racist tendencies.
- v) A further criticism was that the Metropolitan Police recruited 80% of its members from rural areas where they had gained no real experience of a multi racial-society.

8. Azim HADJI (phonetic) of the Bradford 12 Campaign then spoke of the arrest of the Bradford 12 as an unprecedented attack on civil liberties. After outlining the history of the case, when he stated that rumours of planned skinhead attacks had brought the black youth onto the streets, he stated that the

Bradford 12 had been charged with conspiracy for the following reasons:-

- i) To stifle them as political activists.
- ii) To allow the courts to delve into their political backgrounds.
- iii) To secure convictions by "a nod and a wink".
- iv) and to ensure heavier sentences.

He then summarised the major problem as under-policing in the investigation of racist attacks and over-policing of the black community.

9. The final speaker was introduced as Gareth (phonetic), a female solicitor from the Mangrove Law Centre. She described a day's work to indicate the problems. She stated that the previous day she had represented a client at the Inner London Crown Court where PC THORNTON, the Brixton Police Officer, who, she claimed, had instigated the Brixton riots, gave evidence. That he should be allowed to continue serving at Brixton Police Station without being withdrawn or censured was she considered, a measure of the problems facing the meeting. She went on to explain how later that day she had been to Bristol where a Rastafarian had been arrested on suspicion and, although innocent, had been detained for "enquiries". His release had been brought about solely as a result of 40 of his "brothers" attending the police station and banging on the counter for 5 minutes demanding his release. "That" she stated "is what I consider real community policing". A sentiment which was loudly welcomed by the audience.

10. The meeting was then thrown open for questions and this was the cue for a long series of polemics, which gradually halved the audience. The meeting appeared equally divided amongst those who sought to link the black struggle to the struggle of homosexuals, women and the Labour Movement, and a vociferous predominantly black contingent, who asserted that the only solution was for blacks to take the law into their own hands and have nothing to do with 'Policing the Police'. This caused considerable embarrassment to the organisers, whose efforts to pass a resolution to set up a monitoring group with 2 members from each interested organisation, to monitor Police harassment, to press Camden Council to campaign for Police accountability, and to provide an effective administration for relevant campaigns met with stubborn resistance from the majority of the blacks present. Amid growing confusion, it was finally resolved that the groups involved should further examine the problems and then call another meeting. Matters were brought to a close during a state of total disarray at 10pm.

11. To sum up, the meeting was sharply divided between a predominantly white section intent on placing the Police, and in particular Kentish Town Police Station, under the microscope on the question of racial bias, and a predominantly black section intent on defending their 'brothers' from racist attack and neither asking for nor wanting help from the white community, no matter how good their intentions. The meeting did little to unite the two camps."

12. A leaflet issued to all present is submitted with this report.

13. Persons present at the meeting:-

Azim HADJI RF [REDACTED] Privacy  
(p/w [REDACTED])

Gareth RF [REDACTED] Privacy  
(female Solicitor)  
(p/w [REDACTED])  
Privacy

Neelhan U/I  
(Brixton Defence Campaign)

Pat HEWITT RF 405 [REDACTED] Privacy

Clive SOLEY MF

Zareer MASANI RF 402 [REDACTED] Privacy

[REDACTED] U/I  
[REDACTED] U/I

(Afro Caribbean Organisation)

Persons and organisations mentioned:-

Blair PEACH RF 402/78/251

Richard 'Cartoon' Mentions  
CAMPBELL

Camden Committee  
for Community  
Relations

Afro Caribbean  
Organisation

Bengali Workers  
Action Group

Camden Anti-Nazi  
League

Camden Co-op Party

Camden Trades Council

Cypriot Community Workers  
Action Group

Hampstead Labour Party

St Pancras North Labour  
Party

St Pancras South Labour  
Party

West Hampstead Law Centre

National Campaign for  
Civil Liberties

Bradford 12 Campaign

Richard CAMPRELL Campaign

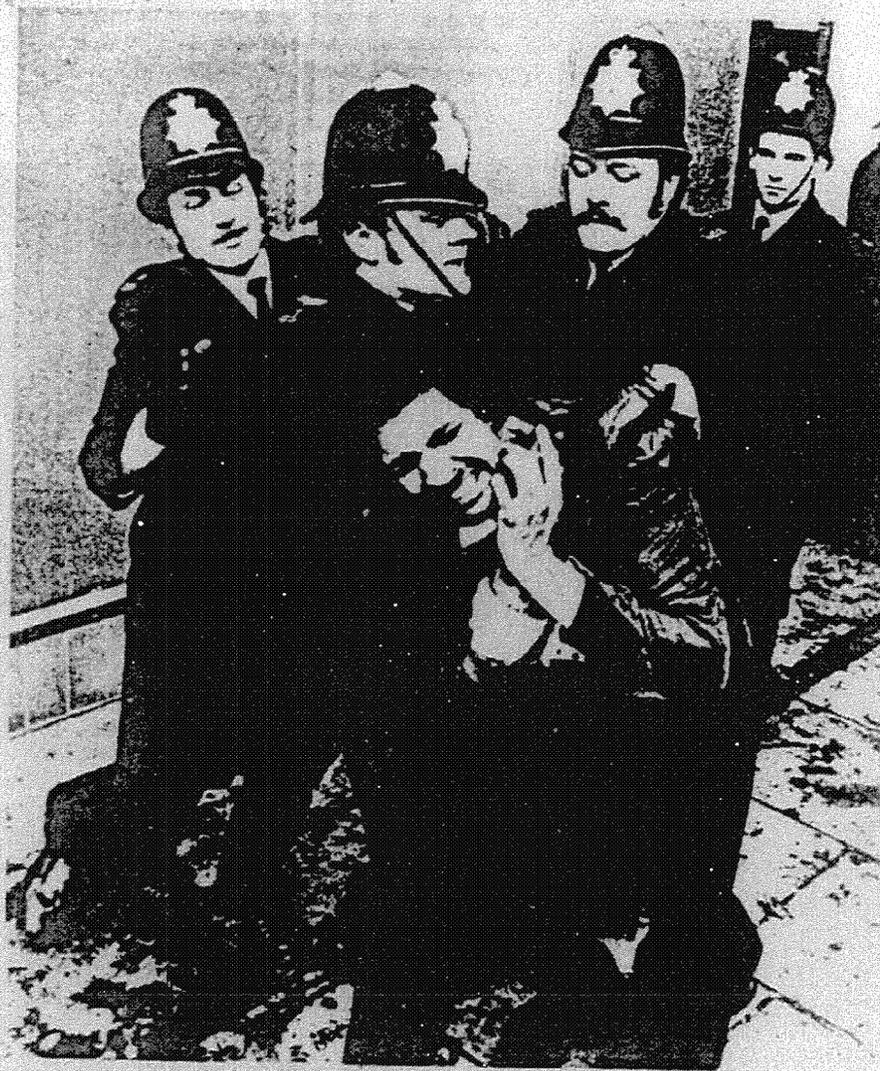
Brixton Defence Campaign

Mangrove Law Centre

Trevor Butler

CHIEF SUPERINTENDENT

# policing the police...



CAMPAIGN FOR  
POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY IN GAMBEN

## WHAT IS POLICE HARASSMENT?

The police are responsible for enforcing the law, and they have wide powers of search, arrest and surveillance and the right to prosecute suspects in courts. These powers are supposed to be exercised within limits prescribed by the law. Police harassment occurs when the police abuse their powers and victimise particular individuals or sections of the community or when they break the law or their own disciplinary code, deny citizens their legal rights, and obtain evidence or statements by unlawful means.

### DOES IT HAPPEN IN CAMDEN?

In Camden, as elsewhere, police harassment is all too common. Here is a typical example. In November 1977, Trevor Rhone, a black resident in Camden, was on his way home from a late-night party. He was stopped by police officers, racially abused, forcibly searched and then arrested without a word of explanation. At the police station, he was refused his right to make a phone-call and charged with being drunk and disorderly. After the police charge against him was dismissed in court, Rhone lodged an official complaint against the officers concerned. But an internal investigation by the police cleared the officers of any malpractice. Rhone decided to sue the police for damages in a civil court and brought a private action for malicious prosecution, false imprisonment and assault. In January 1981, almost three and a half years after the original incident, he won his case and was awarded 1600 damages. The case won national publicity and was discussed in the House of Commons. But to this day, no criminal or disciplinary proceedings have been taken against the police officers responsible.

### DID YOU KNOW THAT:

1. the police aren't entitled to search you or your home without a warrant, except for a specific offence;
2. that the police must inform you of the reason for your arrest and allow you to contact a solicitor, relative or friend;
3. that the police cannot hold you indefinitely without charging you with an offence;
4. that they have no legal power to take your fingerprints or photograph without the permission of a court;
5. that you are not obliged at any stage to make statements or answer questions;
6. that the police cannot interview children under 17, except in the presence of a parent or other independent adult;
7. that you don't have to show the police your passport or other documents except for a specific offence!

If the police do any of these things without your permission they are acting unlawfully and you can lodge a formal complaint. You may also have grounds for a private action for damages against them. But many people don't know their rights, so the police can enter and search their homes, examine their passports, subject them to interrogation and later claim that all this was done with the permission of the district.

### WHO GETS HARASSED?

Police harassment is not confined to blacks. Many sections of the white community also encounter police hostility and prejudice - battered women, prostitutes, gays, trade union pickets, political activists, unemployed youth and sections of the Irish community. This is because the police, more than any other government agency, reflect the class, sexual and racial prejudices of the establishment and are mostly isolated from the community they are supposed to serve.

Nevertheless, given the extent of institutional and overt racism within the police force, blacks undoubtedly suffer the most from systematic police prejudice. This may take two forms:

1. over-policing, eg passport checks, street harassment and mis-using powers of search and arrest to incriminate innocent members of the black public;
2. under-policing of offence against blacks, eg refusing to take racial attacks seriously or even intimidating and prosecuting the victims.

A recent submission by CCCR to the GLC's Police Committee shows that both kinds of police malpractice are widespread in Camden, and cites several detailed case-histories as evidence.

### 'POSITIVE POLICING'?

Over the last two years, independent public enquiries, sponsored by the National Council for Civil Liberties, Lambeth Borough Council and the Greater Manchester City Council, have investigated police/community relations. They have been unanimous on one point - that 'saturation' or 'fire-brigade' policing, which criminalises whole communities, lies at the root of violent police/community conflict, a view widely confirmed by evidence to the Scarman Inquiry into the Brixton riots last summer.

But Government's response so far has been to ignore this overwhelming evidence and throw its weight behind 'positive' as opposed to 'traditional' policing. The move towards positive policing has meant:

- \*arming the police with riot-gear, CS gas, plastic bullets and water-cannon, making even greater use of the Special Patrol Group, similar para-military riot-squads and sophisticated electronic surveillance techniques;
- \*new recommendations from the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure which, if enacted would make police procedure and treatment of suspects even more open to abuse and more difficult to challenge in the courts than at present.

IN SHORT, THE GOVERNMENT'S ANSWER TO THE RIOTS HAS BEEN TO ESCALATE THE VERY FORMS OF ARBITRARY AND REPRESSIVE POLICING WHICH TRIGGERED THEM OFF.

Last summer, Camden escaped the kind of violence which devastated Tooting, Moss Side and several London Boroughs. But growing police harassment in Camden, alongside the national build-up of 'positive' policing is bound to have its repercussions here. It is especially worrying that the Special Patrol Group, never before deployed in Camden, has been brought into the Borough twice during the last 13 months, despite its disastrous impact on community relations in other London Boroughs.

### POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

The debate about policing has raised three issues:

- 1 Should the police continue to police themselves? Under the present complaints system, the police alone have the right to investigate complaints against themselves. The results have been farcical: according to Home Office figures, not a single complaint against the Metropolitan Police was upheld in the years 1973-78. Even some Chief Constables and the Police Federation now acknowledge the need for an independent ombudsman to investigate public complaints against the police.
- 2 Is Community Policing the answer? Handsworth (Birmingham) is often quoted as a successful example of 'community policing' - greater use of home-beat patrolling and community liaison. Yet many who are at the receiving end are not so enthusiastic and argue that community policing, by itself, leaves unaltered the institutional structures and aims of the police and, at worst, is a more subtle form of police surveillance of the community.
- 3 Should the police be made accountable to a democratically elected police authority? Recently, police authorities in Manchester and Merseyside have been trying to assert their powers, however limited, to control their police forces. But London is unique in having no elected police authority at all. London ratepayers contribute £240 million a year to the Metropolitan Police, but have no say at all in how their money is spent, because the Metropolitan Police is directly responsible to the Home Secretary. This is an anomaly which the present GLC's Police Committee is committed to ending, and several local campaigns have been launched in other London boroughs to support such a change.

### WHAT CAN YOU DO TO ACHIEVE POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY?

Those of us who suffer the day-to-day effects of irresponsible and prejudiced policing cannot wait for this debate to be decided in Parliament. There is much that can be done locally to monitor and counter police harassment and press for changes at national level. If you live or work in Camden, you can help to build such community pressure in the following ways:-

- 1 Report all incidents of police harassment to your local law centre or to CCCR, who will assist in making formal complaints or bringing private actions for damages against the police.
- 2 Report incidents to your local councillor and MP and press them to raise the matter with the leader of the Borough Council, the local police commander and the Home Secretary.
- 3 Help us to monitor local policing by sending us any relevant information. CCCR already convenes a Racial Harassment Monitoring Group, one of whose main functions is to record and monitor information about police practice. The sponsoring organisations listed below are also considering setting up a Police Monitoring Group to concentrate specifically on this problem.
- 4 Help to build a grass-roots campaign for police accountability by convening a citizens' watch committee in your area, which could bring together and provide support to victims of police harassment, act as a check on your local police station and liaise with the borough-wide Monitoring Group mentioned above.
- 5 Raise the issue in your own workplace, community organisation, political party or trade union and try to get resolutions of support for the campaign sent to the press, the Leader of the Council, MPs and the Home Secretary.

This leaflet is sponsored by:

AFRO-CARIBBEAN ORGANISATION  
BENGALI WORKERS ACTION GROUP  
CAMDEN ANTI-NAZI LEAGUE  
CAMDEN COMMITTEE FOR COMMUNITY RELATIONS  
CAMDEN CO-OP PARTY  
CAMDEN TRADES COUNCIL  
CYPRIOT COMMUNITY WORKERS ACTION GROUP  
HAMPSTEAD LABOUR PARTY  
ST PANCRAS NORTH LABOUR PARTY  
ST PANCRAS SOUTH LABOUR PARTY  
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