

Witness: Neil Hardie
Statement number: 1
Exhibits: 0
Date Signed: 9th July 2022

IN THE MATTER OF AN INQUIRY UNDER THE INQUIRIES ACT 2005

INTO UNDERCOVER POLICING

FIRST WITNESS STATEMENT OF NEIL HARDIE

1. My name is Neil Hardie and my date of birth is 28th November 1955.
2. I have been living abroad for many years and I returned last year. I have known for a number of years that the groups that I was involved with had been infiltrated by undercover police officers. I was interested to read about the Inquiry and I started going through the media reports and evidence, and I came across the name Paul Gray, known to the Inquiry as HN126. I recognised the name and as a result, I opened his evidence bundle. His evidence included reporting on many events that I attended, and I suspect that one of the redacted names might be mine. I therefore knew that this was the man who had been spying on me.
3. I subsequently met with two members of the Inquiry legal team who asked me a number of questions in relation to my knowledge and experience of undercover policing. This statement has been drafted with the assistance of the Inquiry legal team.

General political activity

4. My involvement in left wing politics started as student when I was at Westfield College at the University of London, which has subsequently been merged into Queen Mary University and no longer exists. I studied history at a campus on the Finchley Road.
5. I was involved in a number of student union activities and gradually began to focus on fascism and race issues.
6. I graduated in the summer of 1977, at which point the Grunwick dispute was entering its more serious phase. I got involved in the mass picketing that took place in the summer of 1977 as it was not very far from where I was living in Kilburn. The Anti-Nazi League (ANL) was getting started at a similar time. Although it started in 1976, it did not become a mass movement until 1977.

7. I joined the local branch of the ANL in West Hampstead which also covered Kilburn. I was actively involved in that branch until 1979 when it began to fizzle out.
8. I was branch secretary for the ANL for a time during this period but I cannot remember the exact dates.
9. I joined the Troops Out Movement (TOM) while I was still a student after I attended a fundraising gig at Chelsea College in 1974 or 1975. I became convinced by their arguments after the Bloody Sunday events in 1972 but only joined at this later date.
10. I had no responsibilities at TOM.
11. I was never a member of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). I would describe myself as radical left-wing but I have never been a member of the Communist Party, the International Marxist Group (IMG), other Marxist groups, or the SWP.
12. I believe that the ANL was right to take a popular front position and work with anyone opposed to racism and fascism. The branch I was involved in had a wide range of members such as Labour party members and vicars and the suggestion that it was a front for the SWP is one that I strongly disagree with and is simply wrong.
13. As a result of the popular front approach taken by the ANL, I did work and socialise with members of the SWP.
14. I became close to Blair Peach during this time and I was particularly hard hit by his death. I was convinced by him that there was a lot more to fighting fascism than simply fighting the nationalist groups. He had spent a lot of time working with the communities and had an appreciation of the concerns and difficulties that they had.

HN126

15. I cannot recall exactly when I first met HN126 but it must have been in early 1978.
16. I would see him regularly at events and meetings. One of his roles was to sell the Socialist Worker paper which he would do at meetings and events alongside others.
17. I would sometimes see him socially. The ANL used to do fundraising parties, selling items donated by members to raise money. I clearly remember seeing HN126 at these events.

18. HN126 was an amiable workhorse. He was the 'man with the van', the go to guy for the menial jobs such as delivering placards to demonstrations and collecting newspapers and leaflets from the printers. He did not come across as a violent man. In fact, some members of the ANL probably looked down on him. HN126's background story was that he was a van driver and genuinely working class and he was not perceived as someone who knew the finer points of Trotsky. In contrast, many of the members of the ANL were 'Hampstead socialists' and quite a few went to public school and enjoyed debating Trotsky and Gramsci in the pub. HN126 did not join in these debates but he was thought of as reliable and no one ever questioned his background.
19. I was not aware that he was involved with the TOM.
20. I do not recall him being involved in any leadership roles within the ANL. However, the ANL did not operate in that way. For example, there was a rotating chairmanship of meeting. There was not really a dominant leader. This was partly deliberate, as some of the left-wing groups such as the Workers Revolutionary Party were operating akin to a cult. The ANL deliberately did not want to operate in this manner. The WRP wanted to operate with a hierarchical leadership approach and that led to a falling out with the ANL as we operated as a broad church.
21. I would partially agree with HN126's quote in his witness statement [MPS-0740761 para 218]. There were people in the ANL who wanted a punch up, but there were others who were pacifists. I never recall the ANL initiating violence; it always happened in response to actions by the National Front. The violence would occur when the National Front or other Fascist groups were marching in the same place at the same time as the ANL.
22. My view is that the Police, most of the time, were helping the National Front, despite the claim that they were trying to keep the two sides apart. I felt strongly about that at the time, and I still do now. The Police were not impartial and actively assisted the National Front in deliberate intimidation of ethnic minority communities. That is why I felt justified in taking to the streets myself.
23. I was not a saint and I did get arrested, but I never hit anybody first. I would dispute HN126's assertion that the ANL were responsible for starting the violence.
24. I was arrested during a minor fracas where the ANL and National Front were both trying to get across Westminster Bridge at the same time to protest outside Parliament. There was a mêlée and I was arrested for threatening and abusive behaviour. I did not hit anybody.

25. HN126 took part in some of these events. He was definitely at the Battle of Lewisham although I do not recall seeing him there and I do not know what he did. Everybody from the branch of ANL went to the event.
26. I did not go to Southall so cannot confirm whether or not HN126 was there and I do not recall whether he attended Grunwick.
27. In relation to HN126's participation in crime, he admits that he often drove people home after social events when he was drunk. I can confirm that I remember him doing this, although I would also agree with his comments that it was more normal at the time.
28. HN126 does not mention flyposting. We used to conduct flyposting to advertise upcoming events as was normal practice for many groups at the time. This was illegal at the time and we were all aware of that. HN126 did flypost with us but he did not mention this in his evidence. We would also paint out offensive racist graffiti which, strictly speaking, was also illegal. HN126 had the van that we needed to transport the equipment. Other than one other member who had a motorcycle, HN126's van was the only transport we had.
29. I do not recall HN126 leaving the ANL. I have no idea when he left and I was not aware his cover was blown; I know nothing about him having to move house quickly.
30. I did not know HN126 well personally and I did not ask questions about his background; we did not discuss personal details. He was a colleague rather than a friend. They were intense times with a lot of violence and we tended to talk about the work rather than anything personal.

Ros Gardner relationship

31. I first became aware about the relationship between Ros Gardner and HN126 because Ros Gardner's flat was used for the fund-raising parties. I saw them repeatedly together there. They would sit together on the sofa and she would look 'doe-eyed' and adoringly at him. This left an impression as she had a tough, tom-boy image and this behaviour was very out of character. I did not see anything more than that but I got the impression that he was staying the night.
32. On one night, I stayed behind at the end of the party to help clear up and I remember washing the dishes with HN126. When I left, he stayed.
33. They got on very well, and HN126 seemed to be a calming influence on Ros Gardner. She was one of the members of the ANL who was more predisposed to confrontation, and HN126 was able to calm her down in some situations. I remember this was particularly an issue in Brick Lane during the summer of 1978. Nationalist groups would sell papers and beat people up after dark. Anti-

nationalist groups would go every weekend at the request of the Asian communities and I remember Ros Gardner and HN126 being present. These ended up sometimes being almost like pitch battles.

34. I do not know whether HN126 pursued her, or whether it was the other way around. I did not see evidence of that.
35. If it was Ros Gardner who initiated the relationship, it raises the question as to what training the officers received on how to respond to this scenario. It was bound to happen given the close-knit nature of the group and the dangerous situations that we were often involved in. I do not think the Inquiry has addressed this question directly so far.
36. I knew Ros Gardner well, although she was more of a colleague than a personal friend. She was very dynamic and committed to the cause. She was one of the people you would go to if you wanted something done.
37. I would see her at least once a week, either in meetings or out leafleting.
38. I would see HN126 and Ros Gardner together at the fundraising parties and they were about once a month. They were not always in Ros Gardner's flat but they were there regularly.
39. Most people assumed that they were an item but I am not aware if anyone asked directly. I did not speak to anyone about it directly. I felt it was not my business and they were two consenting adults and therefore it was no one else's business. Clearly my view would have been different if I had been aware that HN126 was a Police Officer.
40. Looking at it now, there is clearly an issue about consent as the relationship was based on a deception.
41. I cannot recall exactly who else would have been aware but most of the inner circle of the ANL would have known. By inner circle I mean the committed group that turned up to every meeting and event in contrast to the outer circle which would only turn up to the big demonstrations.
42. I do not recall HN126 having a close relationship with any other group member.
43. I did not see any intervention by HN126's managers and I have no proof that they knew about the relationship with HN126.

Politicians

44. I suspect that HN126 reported on elected politicians. The SWP were heavily involved in the Grunwick dispute and the associated picketing. In the reporting on this dispute, HN126 refers to the Brent Trades Council, which played a large

part in the organisation of the pickets. The Secretary of the Brent Trades Council was Jack Dromey, who went on to become a Labour MP. I am sure that HN126 reported on his activities as part of the Brent Trades Council, although he did not name him.

45. There were other members of the ANL who were elected politicians, such as Ken Livingstone, who lived around the corner, and sometimes attended meetings; he may have been reported on by HN126, if he was including lists of people who attended meetings, as Ken Livingstone was a member of the GLC. Another was Lena Jeger, who was also a Labour MP during this period.
46. Paul Foot, whose uncle became the leader of the Labour party, also had a major role within the SWP and he attended several meetings in the Kilburn area as a speaker. He was a charismatic speaker and could draw a large crowd. Paul Foot was in charge of distribution of the SWP paper and was a level above HN126. Paul Foot was regularly haranguing local district distributors, including HN126, to sell more papers.
47. I find it difficult to believe that the connection to Michael Foot was not reported by HN126 and I would like to know what happened to those reports. Michael Foot was a prominent figure in the Labour Party, and I don't know if the reporting had any bearing on Michael Foot's defeat in the 1983 election to Margaret Thatcher.
48. The Police have made a big deal of justifying the use of undercover policing for maintaining public order. I believe there was another side of it in that they were actively obstructing freedom of expression by left wing groups and that included reporting on people who were currently or became elected politicians.

Individual involved in serious criminality

49. A woman, who I later discovered was Astrid Proll, worked as a mechanic in West Hampstead. She worked on the vehicles of some of the members of the ANL, including on HN126's van. I was not aware at the time that she had been involved in the Baader-Meinhof Gang in West Germany. She was uncovered and extradited to Germany to face trial.
50. I have suspected for some time that HN126 may have identified her. She did attend SWP and ANL meetings and had taken an active part. I suspect that HN126 identified her during this period and if he did, it must have gone to the Security Services. It seems too much of a coincidence that they were in the same place at the same time. I saw them attend the same meetings and demonstrations and she worked on his van, which was always braking down.
51. To my knowledge, it has not been disclosed how the police identified her. I do not have proof, but I suspect that this was HN126.

Blacklisting

52. I suspect that reports submitted by the SDS were used for blacklisting. The Inquiry has heard that it happened in the construction industry, but I suspect that it went far beyond that. I believe that it happened to me.
53. We were all aware that at major demonstrations we were being photographed and filmed. We knew that the Police had observation posts on top of derelict buildings that the demonstrations passed. I believe that these photographs were used to compile dossiers on people for blacklisting and were sent to public services, the civil service, and universities. I do not know the extent, nor how long this practice went on for, but it was widespread. And I'm sure that it affected many more people than the sexual abuse with activists.
54. I also believe that the reports may have been used in relation to deportations in some cases, such as what happened to my colleague [Privacy], who was a porter at [Privacy] Hospital. He was arrested in Brick Lane and he had family living there. He disappeared shortly afterwards – he and his family - and we were told they were deported. I have no evidence, but I suspect SDS reporting contributed to this event.

Statement of truth

55. I believe the content of this statement to be true.

Signed: Neil S Harche

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