

IN THE UNDERCOVER POLICING INQUIRY

OPENING STATEMENT FOR TRANCHE 2 PHASE 1 ON BEHALF OF DIANE ABBOTT MP AND RT. HON. DAME JOAN RUDDOCK PC

INTRODUCTION

1. This opening statement is made on behalf of Diane Abbott MP and Dame Joan Ruddock both of whom are core participants in Category D.
2. In 1987 Diane Abbott became the first black woman ever to be elected to Parliament. Her Parliamentary career grew out of her long-standing involvement in many racial justice campaigns. She has been a leading anti-racism campaigner for many decades. She joined the Labour Party in 1978 and was active in the Black Sections movement within the party. In 1982 she was elected to Westminster City Council representing Harrow Road (the ward in which she had been born). In 1987 she was elected as MP for Hackney North and Stoke Newington and has remained so for over 35 years. She was an early campaigner for justice for the family of Stephen Lawrence and was briefly president of the Anti-Racist Alliance in 1994 which campaigned on the issue. She has held front-bench positions for the Labour Party and Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Shadow Home Secretary. Documents disclosed in this phase of the Inquiry reveal that UCOs reported on numerous events at which she spoke during the Tranche 2 period.
3. The Rt. Hon. Dame Joan Ruddock PC was an Anti-Apartheid campaigner and former Chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (“CND”). MI5 has revealed that she was subjected to unlawful surveillance in 1983. She was later MP for Deptford from 1987 to 2015. She forged close links throughout the country with major green organisations. As Shadow Minister for Home Affairs

(1992-1994) she championed the cause of victims of racial violence. She was also Minister for Women (1997-98), Minister for the Environment (2007-8) and Minister for Energy and Climate Change (2008-10). Documents disclosed in this phase of the Inquiry show that CND was the subject of extensive surveillance by SDS officers.

4. Diane Abbott MP and Dame Joan Ruddock (“the Core Participants”) share a number of concerns which they wish this Inquiry to address in its investigation of the Special Demonstration Squad (“SDS”). Each also raises particular concerns of their own. This Opening Statement addresses the following issues:
 - i) The unjustified targeting of political campaigns
 - ii) Targeting of MPs and adequacy of disclosure
 - iii) Concerns raised by Diane Abbott MP over racial discrimination in the activities of the SDS
 - iv) Concerns raised by Dame Joan Ruddock PC over the use of information gathered by the SDS
 - v) Procedural issues relating to the Inquiry including failures in disclosure and delay.

1. THE UNJUSTIFIED TARGETING OF POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

5. Reporting in relation to both these Core Participants concerned groups which were open, transparent political campaigns and which neither sought involvement in public disorder, nor to overthrow the state. The SDS spying on these groups was both unjustified and unjustifiable.
6. In relation to Diane Abbott, she features in reports as a speaker at events held by anti-racism campaigns. Many of the intelligence reports into groups campaigning for racial justice relate to entirely open, transparent political and campaigning events. For example, UCPI0000030784-CLF is a report on a film showing by the Anti-Racist Alliance (“ARA”) at the Rio Cinema in Hackney. This would have been an openly advertised event, open to all members of the public

which did not require any sort of undercover infiltration or operation to gain information. Yet this event appears to have been attended by a UCO, and the resulting report copied to the Security Services.

7. In relation to Joan Ruddock, the reporting primarily relates to her role as Chair of CND. CND was the largest anti-nuclear weapons campaign in the UK during the Tranche 2 period. It organised many large-scale demonstrations. These were well-organised open demonstrations. As the SDS reporting confirmed in an intelligence report dated 04.06.82 which contained details of the “Notes for Marshalls and Stewards” on an upcoming demonstration: “It is obvious from the instructions given in the document that the organisers of the demonstration wish the event to be peaceful and intend to give police every co-operation” (UCPI0000018233). Nonetheless the CND was repeatedly referred to in SDS Annual Briefings and explicitly targeted, often at the request of the Security Services. To the extent that CND was viewed as subversive, or had the potential to be influenced by subversive groups, the assessment by the SDS as recorded in a meeting with the Security Services on 08.03.84 is telling: “SDS said that their assessment was that there was no effective ring of subversives unduly influencing the democratic structure of CND” (UCPI0000029329). CND was an organisation with a very strong democratic structure that was not involved in subversion in any way and this fact was known to the SDS.
8. In relation to both Core Participants, the groups spied on were open, campaigning organisations often directly engaged with the democratic process. There was no legitimate reason why such groups should have been targeted for surveillance, either directly or indirectly. The complete lack of lawful authority and regulation for the SDS activities identified in the interim report following Tranche 1 enabled this unjustified and unjustifiable police surveillance to go unchallenged.

2. TARGETING OF MPS AND ADEQUACY OF DISCLOSURE

9. Announced in Parliament by the former Prime Minister Harold Wilson in November 1966 and in place ever since, the Wilson Doctrine prohibits the targeted surveillance of MPs by state agencies¹. The Wilson Doctrine “continues to apply to all forms of surveillance and interception that are subject to authorisation by Secretary of State Warrant”². It is part of a broader principle that state agencies must not be used to undermine the democratic process. As stated in their initial Opening Statement for the Inquiry³, these Core Participants are concerned over the erosion of the Wilson doctrine against police surveillance of MPs, inappropriate collection of personal information, and Parliamentary privilege.
10. The former UCO Peter Francis has revealed that both Diane Abbott MP and Dame Joan Ruddock were spied on by UCOs whilst they were MPs. Peter Francis indicated that he personally collected information on Diane Abbott while he was deployed undercover infiltrating anti-racist groups when she talked at meetings and demonstrations he attended⁴. He reported details of her activities to his Special Branch superiors. Peter Francis also revealed that undercover surveillance of Joan Ruddock, which began during her time as Chair of CND, had continued in the 1990s while she was an MP⁵. Peter Francis stated that the Special Branch files were typically “very extensive” and often contained personal and private information. It is notable that only Labour MPs appear to have been targeted.
11. Following the establishment of this Inquiry in March 2015, in an urgent question in Parliament on 26.03.15, Peter Hain MP requested that the remit of the Inquiry

¹ See <https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN04258/SN04258.pdf>

² As stated by the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown in 2009 ([HC Deb 21 July 2009 c1166W](#))

³ UCPI0000035076 at [185]

⁴ [‘Police continued spying on Labour activists after their election as MPs’](#), The Guardian, 25 March 2015

⁵ *ibid*

include the surveillance of the MPs named by Peter Francis including these Core Participants⁶. Both these Core Participants spoke in the subsequent debate.

12. Diane Abbott stated:

Ms Diane Abbott (Hackney North and Stoke Newington) (Lab): As one of the people under surveillance in the 1990s, I assure the House that I was never engaged in anything illegal and I certainly was not engaged in seeking to undermine democracy. On the contrary, many of the campaigns I was involved in served to reinforce democracy by engaging with people who otherwise thought they did not have a voice, notably the Stephen Lawrence campaign. I am clear in my mind that that surveillance could not have happened without authorisation at a very senior level, and I want to know who authorised it and on what grounds. Above all I feel I am entitled to an unredacted copy of my file. What happened is not just a breach of privilege, it is a breach of the privacy and confidence of the many people I have worked with down the years on the campaigning I did in the 1990s.

13. The response from the Minister for Policing, Criminal Justice and Victims, Mike Penning, was that he would “do everything I can to make sure that the documents are released”. He went on to state that “it sounds ludicrous that that should have taken place in the mother of all democracies, and we have to find out exactly what went on.”

14. Dame Joan Ruddock, giving her farewell speech as an MP, also spoke, she said::

Dame Joan Ruddock (Lewisham, Deptford) (Lab): In 1981, I was elected as chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. Two years later, an MI5 agent, Cathy Massiter, blew the whistle on the surveillance, the phone taps and the collection of special branch reports on me. She cited political interference in the service and said that what had happened was illegal, and she resigned. In 1987, I became a Member of this House and took the loyal oath. In 1997, I became a Minister, and I subsequently signed the Official Secrets Act. How is it that surveillance was carried out on me for all that time? I want to know and to get the Minister to understand: who authorised that surveillance, and on what grounds was it authorised? He needs to answer those questions, because this is a political issue. It is his—the Home Office’s and the Home Secretary’s—responsibility.

I am leaving this House, and I can do no more than make these points, put in a freedom of information request to the commissioner and write to the Home Secretary, but, frankly, this affects all MPs. Even though I am leaving the House, the Minister needs to do something. The future Government

⁶ [HC Deb 26 March 2015 c1581](#)

need to ensure that there is a proper investigation. This should never, ever have happened to Members of this House.

15. The response from the Minister was:

Mike Penning: That is exactly why the inquiry is being put in place... I have every sympathy with Members of the House, including those who have left it, and that is why the inquiry is being held.

16. This Inquiry is charged with carrying out the investigation into the concerns of these Core Participants that the Minister said would take place.

17. There appears to be a disconnect between the volume of material gathered by undercover police on MPs as indicated by Peter Francis, and the material actually disclosed by the UCPI to date. There also appears to be a disconnect between Peter Francis's revelations and the statement of UCO HN65/"John Kerry" who claims that: "elected politicians were exempt from the usual research and referencing process"⁷. The Core Participants ask that these discrepancies are investigated, during this Tranche and in future Tranches, to ensure that the Inquiry uncovers the full truth of what took place.

3. CONCERNS RAISED BY DIANE ABBOTT MP

18. Annual reports for the SDS indicate that concerns over campaigns on racial issues were a key aspect of targeting. The report for 1980 makes the following prediction: "the effects of campaigns over racial and employment aspects are already to be seen on the streets and plans are being laid for major demonstrations as the year progresses" (MPS-0728962). The Anti-Nazi League, a variety of local anti-racist/anti-fascist groups, and, predominantly black, family justice campaigns, regularly feature in the groups targeted across the T2 era. What is also clear from the Annual Reports is that local black campaigns remained largely free from influence from other organisations. As the 1982 Annual Report states: "SDS information has indicated that no links exist between the highly politicised Brixton anarchists and the local young black community.

⁷ MPS-0743186 at [158].

All attempts to build bridges between the political and purely criminal elements have proved a total failure". The characterisation of the "local young black community" as "purely criminal" reveals a racist perception that underpinned the approach taken to the black community and black activists. It is important to acknowledge that racism now. It also ignores the well-established political campaigns that were active during this period. Moreover, even though the SDS recognised that there were "no links" between black-led groups and "white anarchist agitators" the SDS continued to view black-led campaigns with inherent suspicion.

19. Many of the reports produced during this period explicitly acknowledge that the groups spied on were not involved in disorder. However, the purported justification for infiltration appears to be a concern that these groups might be taken over by other organisations. This assumption that black-led organisations could not preserve their own independence similarly displays racist attitudes that were present at the time.
20. For example, on 24.08.83, the Security Services visited the SDS to discuss sources in the Hackney area. The Security Services expressed an interest in 50 Rectory Road, N16, the headquarters of the Hackney Community Relations Executive "which has recently let rooms to the subversively controlled Campaign Against the Police Bill." But stated "Other coloured groups also meet at the same address"⁸. It was agreed that HN88/"Timothy Spence" was to be deployed to the Stoke Newington area "initially without a precise target" and "familiarise himself with Stoke Newington and Hackney and whatever subversive undercurrent he could detect". This explicitly undirected deployment is symptomatic of a racist assumption that areas of London where black-led campaigns for racial justice were growing should be viewed with suspicion.
21. HN88 details in his statement that he viewed his deployment as primarily geographically based and did not have any direction towards particular groups.⁹

⁸ UCPI000029226

⁹ MPS-0748356 at [51] and [71]

Given his wide geographically based deployment, HN88 reported on a number of different groups including many small organisations campaigning on issues of racial justice. He accepts that to the extent that there was a threat to the groups on which he reported he accepts that there was an “anti-fascist element”. Groups which he infiltrated included: Hackney CND, Hackney Campaign Against the Police Bill, Hackney Police Monitoring Group, East London Campaign Against Racist Attacks and Police Harassment.¹⁰ HN88 also reported on a wider selection of groups including: the Newham Monitoring Project, Newham 7/8 Defence Campaign,¹¹ the Colin Roach Defence Campaign,¹² as well as several more minor community racial justice campaigns.¹³ HN88 states repeatedly in his witness statement that he did not view any of these groups as subversive: “their aims were to improve particular aspects of society, from their point of view, rather than overthrow the current workings of the state”.¹⁴ Moreover, in relation to public order concerns he states:

“I did not witness riots or activists throwing things at the police. I did, however, witness marches that would not have been notified to the police in advance, obstruction of the highway and pickets outside police stations that blocked access.”¹⁵

22. HN88 explicitly connects his fears over public disorder to the racial composition of the area stating: “There was a potential challenge to public order at rallies due to anti—police feeling from, in particular, black youths in the area.” (at [138]). However, this fear is undermined by his own experience where he states that in relation to violence to either people or property the most he witnessed was “shouting and insulting behaviour” (at [189])

¹⁰ Ibid at [75]

¹¹ Ibid at [87]

¹² Ibid at [135]

¹³ Ibid at [130]

¹⁴ Ibid at [92], see also [191]

¹⁵ Ibid at [187]

23. There appears to be little to justify this open-ended geographically based deployment which reported on a variety of local groups campaigning on issues relating to race and policing other than an unwarranted fear over politically engaged campaigns in an area with a large ethnic minority population. The involvement of the Security Services in a deployment that covered groups which were recognised by HN88 as not subversive on any sensible meaning of the term is also questionable.
24. Concerns over racial bias in the SDS operations do not end in the 1980s. In the Annual Report for 1992-93 the deployment of UCO HN78/Trevor Morris/"Anthony Bobby Lewis" is described as including "anti-establishment groups particularly from ethnic minorities in East London"¹⁶. The following year it is described in similar terms¹⁷. This clearly displays a suspicion and fear of the activities of politically active ethnic minorities.
25. In connection to Diane Abbott's role within the Anti-Racist Alliance, the Annual Report for 1991-92¹⁸ describes the group as consisting "mainly of individuals from the Labour Party" and notes that "the organisation itself does not appear to pose any serious threat to public order, although the events it organises, inevitably, provide a vehicle for other more confrontational individuals and groups." Again the organisation is recognised as not creating any public order concerns or being subversive, but is tainted by an unjustified fear that it cannot withstand infiltration from others.
26. Another example, UCPI0000033349, is a report dated 16.02.95 on the first meeting of the National Assembly Against Racism ("NAAR"). This was a predominantly black-led anti-racist group, largely seen as the successor to the ARA. It was not involved in public disorder or subversion of any kind. Indeed, the report itself states that the Assembly is "a vehicle for lawful and democratic opposition to racism". HN78/Trevor Morris/"Anthony Bobby Lewis" claims that

¹⁶ MPS-0728968 (the description is taken from the summary of a redacted section)

¹⁷ MPS-0722654 (again the description is taken from the summary of a redacted section)

¹⁸ MPS-0728957

“the risk of extreme groups high-jacking the organisation, whether successfully or not, would have been justification for reporting on it” (at [128]). The suggestion that a black-led organisation campaigning on issues of racial equality was inherently susceptible to being taken over by extreme groups is itself reflective of racist assumptions. It perceived the black organisers of those groups as no more than vessels for the intentions of white political activists. This perception was both contaminated by racism and revealed to be false. Those organising the NAAR were well capable of maintaining their independence from outside influence. As the report had to conclude: “Attempts by the more extreme political groups to hijack the Assembly... will probably be unsuccessful due to the diverse and independent nature of its component groups”. To think that it would have been otherwise displays racist attitudes and assumptions about the inability of black-led organisations to maintain their independence.

27. The undercover officer HN78/Trevor Morris/“Anthony Bobby Lewis” was one of the few black police officers working in the SDS. He states in his witness statement for the Inquiry that he experienced various forms of racism whilst in the Metropolitan Police and Special Branch. This included matters which lead to him bringing a discrimination claim against the Metropolitan Police. Significantly, HN78 includes evidence of incidents of racism from senior officers within the SDS¹⁹. He specifically identifies HN86 as a racist officer and states that this was confirmed to him by the former UCO Peter Francis.
28. The presence of racist officers within the SDS is of particular concern given the role the SDS had taken on in investigating groups that were campaigning against racism within the police force. HN88, for instance, who infiltrated the Roach Family Support Committee, the justice campaign following the death of Colin Roach by gunshot wound in the foyer of Stoke Newington Police Station in 1983, acknowledged that the group was not subversive and did not present any greater risk than other single issue campaign groups. He nonetheless seeks in

¹⁹ At [23]

his witness statement to the Inquiry to justify his targeting of this group on the basis of its criticism of the police, and on an explicitly racialised basis of the “potential challenge to public order at rallies due to anti-police feeling from, in particular, black youths in the area”.²⁰

29. The SDS targeting of campaigns around the deaths of black and Asian people, or the activities of black MPs, uncomfortably mirror the very complaints that campaigners were making about the disproportionate policing of black people and the lack of respect for the rights of black and Asian communities. These were groups or activists campaigning about the very issue of police racism and police accountability. To covertly act in ways which assisted in preventing police accountability therefore represents a particularly disturbing dimension to the abuse of trust placed in the police.
30. It is important not to lose sight of the suspicion with which black-led political groups were viewed in the 1980’s and early 90’s. Such organisations were often seen as *ipso facto* subversive and such attitudes are reflected in the activities and reporting of the SDS. All of this ignores the simple fact that anti-racist organisations were typically well organised, open, campaigns which did not concern themselves with public disorder. Many of the smaller groups campaigning on racial issues which feature in the SDS reports are not directly represented in the Inquiry. However, concerns over racism in the SDS are one of the key areas of the Inquiry’s terms of reference. Diane Abbott asks that this Inquiry gives close scrutiny to the apparent racial bias in the way SDS activity was carried out.

4. CONCERNS RAISED BY RT HON DAME JOAN RUDDOCK PC

31. Dame Joan Ruddock raises concerns about the use to which information gleaned from reporting on CND and related groups was put by state agencies.

²⁰ MPS-0748356 at [128]

32. It is clear from documents disclosed to the Inquiry that direct requests were made by the Security Services to the SDS to target CND. These requests were often coupled to political and diplomatic concerns at the time.
- i) On 18.05.84 direct requests were made by the Security Services for copies of the CND Executive Committee and National Council minutes ahead of demonstrations planned for the visit of President Reagan²¹
 - ii) On 20.07.84 the Security Services expressed concern over a reduction in coverage of CND following the planned withdrawal of HN65²²
 - iii) On 20.11.84 the Security Services provided a direct written briefing to the SDS regarding information sought at the CND annual conference in Sheffield. UCOs were asked to “note names and/or political flavour... of as many of the speakers and delegates as possible”. They were also asked to obtain copies of the General Secretary’s annual report and the Treasurer’s report. Particular interest is taken in relation to those seeking to change “the leadership’s passive approach to campaigning” with particular reference made to the visit of President Reagan.²³
 - iv) On 15.12.83 the Security Services visited the SDS and, amongst other matters, “stressed our interest in regional representatives elected to the CND National Council”²⁴
33. The SDS appears to have been only too willing to carry out such surveillance at the request of the Security Services with little regard to the propriety of such infiltration and to their own assessment that CND was not susceptible to subversive influence. Moreover, the SDS does not appear to have given much regard to the fact acknowledged by HN65/”John Kerry” that: “Quite a lot of the

²¹ UCPI0000027542

²² UCPI0000036110

²³ UCPI0000027545

²⁴ UCPI0000028728

information could have been obtained without resorting to undercover methods”²⁵.

34. Given the amount of resources deployed by the SDS and the Security Services into obtaining information about CND and those connected to it, the question must be asked as to what use was the information put? Given the clear political and diplomatic angles that arise, an obvious concern is whether the information was used for political means or shared with foreign intelligence agencies.
35. The Corporate Statement on behalf of the Security Services does not dispute that information gleaned from SDS sources may have been shared with foreign liaison partners (UCPI0000037010 at [128]). The witness claims it would be a disproportionate exercise to ascertain definitively it if it was. No attempt to do so has been made and the witness declines to give an opinion as to whether such sharing was likely. This response is unsatisfactory and does not appear to accord with an attempt to get to the truth of how and why SDS officers were deployed into an organisation like CND and the Inquiry is asked to examine this aspect in more detail.
36. Regarding the domestic use of information obtained from SDS sources, there are concerns that such information was passed to Government Ministers who clearly had a political interest in seeking to discredit CND. There are also concerns that information from SDS files was used for the purpose of vetting individuals for political and other appointments. That past involvement in one of the largest anti-nuclear movements could inhibit the future career of those concerned is reminiscent of the authoritarian regimes which the SDS and Security Services claimed to be fighting against.
37. The Inquiry is asked to investigate these issues fully and fearlessly and to expose the extent to which the SDS was used by the Security Services to spy on the peaceful democratic campaigning organisation that everyone, even the SDS, recognised CND to be.

²⁵ MPS-0743186 at [142]

5. PROCEDURAL ISSUES

38. The disclosure and Rule 9 process for Tranche 2 has been heavily delayed for the non-state core participants (“NSCPs”), which has had the effect of marginalising the input from NSCPs and in many respects, excluding them from effective participation.
39. The disclosure process has been subject to repeated delays. The hearing bundle, while due to be disclosed in April 2024 remains incomplete as at 24.06.24. The large volume of documents for the hearing bundle are instead being disclosed in a piecemeal and haphazard fashion. Tranche 2 hearings have had to be split into phases in order to accommodate the issues arising from delays in disclosure. However, disclosure has still been further delayed even for the reduced number of officers being dealt with in the July hearings, with some disclosure released less than 2 weeks before hearings commence.
40. It is notable that the impact of these delays has almost exclusively been to the detriment of NSCPs. The State CPs have generally had sight of many documents for several years whilst NSCPs and their RLRs are expected to sift through thousands of pages of disclosure in a matter of weeks.
41. Of particular note in relation to delay is the sad death of Monsignor Bruce Kent in June 2022. General Secretary and Chair of CND during the 1980s, he would have been well placed to assist the Inquiry with many aspects of its investigation. This assistance has been lost through delays in the Inquiry’s processes.
42. The Inquiry is asked to ensure that issues arising from delays and particular delays in disclosure to the NSCPs do not reduce the accountability of those responsible for the SDS. The Inquiry is asked to take steps to minimise the prejudice to non-state core participants affected by the delays.

CONCLUSION

43. The Inquiry is asked to investigate the matters set out above. The concerns raised by these Core Participants reflect wider concerns raised by other NSCPs.

This Inquiry presents a unique opportunity to examine key aspects of the interrelationship between policing and the democratic process in this country. The Inquiry is asked to seize this chance to make recommendations for lasting change which will prevent any repetition of the abhorrent activities conducted by the SDS and ensure future protection for civil liberties of citizens in the UK.

Owen Greenhall
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24.06.24