

# Report from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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**Martin Dinnegan** was a 14 year old boy returning home from a local youth club on 26 June, when he was stabbed to death at the junction of Axminster Rd and Tollington Way. I was contacted by the Police Commander Bob Carr shortly afterwards and I fully supported an extensive police operation in the area which has resulted in the arrest, detention and charging of a number of people in connection with Martin's murder.

The Dinnegan family have shown amazing strength and courage in the face of this tragedy, and the local community has rallied around impressively to support them. Their church of St Mellitus, under the direction of Father Ardagh-Walter, organised and led a peace service a week after the murder. We walked as a witness to peace from St Mellitus to Axminster Rd, where over 2,000 people stood in silence before hearing short contributions from some of Martin's class mates. Among those present was Commander Bob Carr, the Catholic Bishop Bishop Bernard Longley, a representative of the Muslim community, Islington's Mayor and myself.

As well as the above, the family wrote a very poignant letter to Prime Minister Gordon Brown about the pain of losing their son, which included a heartfelt plea for tough legislation to prevent people carrying knives. We presented the letter at Downing St and I accompanied the family

in doing this and subsequently spent an hour with Matt Kavanagh, Gordon Brown's Home Affairs and Security Advisor, who treated the family extremely well and took on board the points being made.

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12/07: There was a very important debate on **Legal Aid** in the House of Commons which has been a huge issue locally, and my speech is attached to this report. Also on this subject, Islington Law Centre held an open day (13/07) at the centre which I attended and at which I had a long discussion concerning serious problems in the under funding of legal aid in this country.

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The following is an outline of *selected entries only* from my diary for the past three weeks.

The issue of **the way we treat migrants** in our society is very important and we cannot go on exploiting an invisible underclass and not bear some social responsibility for their conditions. An import debate was initiated by John Cruddas MP in parliament in which I spoke and my speech is attached (20/06).

A **parliamentary seminar by RMT** (20/06) was attended by union and community rail

activists from around the country and I spoke for the reopening of disused and mothballed railway lines, which would take freight off the road and onto the rails.

City and Islington College held an event marking Islington **Refugee week** at the Red Rose Club (20/06) which I was happy to speak at.

I travelled to the USA as a guest in order to speak at the annual “**Unite for Justice**” conference, held in Chicago over the weekend of 22/06. Unite for Justice is the principal anti war organisation in the USA, equivalent to our Stop the War, and it managed to attract delegations from most parts of the country to its assembly. I was one of a number of guest speakers who talked about the issue of foreign policy and against the Project for a New American Century, and War. I was well received by kind people who were disappointed that the Democratic majority in both houses had voted to continue funding for the war, but I did congratulate them on their 3 decisions in the House for the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq.

Apart from taking part in a number of workshop sessions on parliamentary procedures and lobbying, on the Saturday evening I was also interviewed on the stage at a very large platform by a renowned radical foreign policy commentator, Dr Phyllis Bennis. This lasted for 45 minutes during which time we talked about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as nuclear weapons. It was really nice to be with a large and diverse group of Americans with a shared belief in peace and justice around the world.

27/06: **On Tony Blair’s last day in office**  
I was fortunate in getting an oral question put to him: *“I thank the Prime Minister for his statement, and I welcome the concept of having a discussion about legislation*

*before the state opening of Parliament. I am particularly pleased with the section on **housing**, but is my right hon. Friend aware that typically, more than three quarters of the population living in inner London have no possibility whatever of buying their homes in their communities? For them, the only way out of the housing crisis is the construction of social homes, particularly council housing, so will the Prime Minister ensure that legislation promotes that? Will he also give real consideration to the plight of people living in private rented accommodation and the need for real accountability of social landlords such as housing associations, as part of the package for dealing with a very real crisis affecting many people in inner London whose lives are blighted by bad housing?”*

I strongly believe that the government’s credibility would be strongly enhanced if a date was made for withdrawing troops and that instead of spending tens of millions on weaponry in Iraq, we offered Iraq money to restore what is a deeply shattered society!

I later went to a **private viewing of the work of Harry Horne-Roberts** (25/06) which was on display at Lauderdale House, Waterloo Park, and widely written about in the papers, all credit to Harry and his parents on what is a remarkable achievement.

#### **Education:**

25/06: I was delighted to be invited to the private view of the annual exhibition of **Byam Shaw School of Art** and I complimented the college on their wish to be more involved with the local community. They had a wonderful variety of artistic endeavour on show.

25/06: I entertained **St Jude’s and St Paul’s School** students who went on a tour of parliament and then came to ask me lots of questions about life in parliament

and what was happening in their area, their community and their school. They were lovely students and a credit to their school.

26/06: I was a guest at **Ambler Primary School** where the children asked me questions about democracy. They seemed to have a very good understanding of the concept of democratic accountability.

30/06: Cllrs Jilani Choudhury and Richard Greening came with me to Ambler where we presented awards at a Bangladesh community education event which was a real achievement for many children there in both academia and sports. I complimented the students on this.

28/06: I was a guest of honour at Islington **Arts and Media (IAMS) Leavers Assembly**, which was, as usual, a sparky and spirited event. Sadly, this was held in the wake of the death of Martin Dinnegan and several of his brothers are at the school.

I also attended (14/07) the launch of IAMS Spotlight magazine under the direction of Ashley Grey, the Arts Coordinator at the school.

11/07: I had a useful **meeting with Eleanor Schooling, Director of Education** in Islington, and received very good reports on the progress of Islington primary schools. Now, 75% of Year 7 Islington Students go to local secondary schools.

**Duncombe School** visited parliament (11/07) and I joined them for a debate on what laws they would like to introduce, which was fun and lively. I will present their leaving certificates to them at the school on 19 July.

29/06: University College Union supported the campaign to provide free **ESOL** lessons and restore the grant funding for them. Whilst Ken Livingstone, the Mayor of London has provided some funding from

the Learning Skills Council, in the long run, there is still a funding problem and there was a demonstration outside Downing St which I, along with the retiring General Secretary of Natfhe, Paul Mackney, demanded investment in language skills for people who are learning English as a second language.

17/07: I escorted 16 **Muslim Welfare House** boys around the House of Commons and later on the same day a group from Dame Alice Owen. These two groups were in fact quite different which was interesting.

18/07: I visited **St Jude and St Paul's school** to see a play put on by the students about WW11.

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Part of the celebrations for the **Lambo Day Centre's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary** included an Abolition of Slavery event (29/06) to which Wendy Wallace, the Chief Executive of Camden and Islington Mental Health Trust and myself were invited to speak. We both complimented Lambo on its work and on the excellent Afro Caribbean cuisine provided for users of the centre. I gave a description of the exhibition in parliament (having been on the advisory board) and talked about the need for our children to grow up understanding world history, including the relationship between Europe and Africa and the treatment of African slaves by the slave traders and the legacy in the Caribbean, Nth American and of course this country.

29/06: I met with a Colombian parliamentary delegation, organised by **Justice for Colombia**, along with Colombian Trade Unionists and human rights advocates who visited parliament and spent time in discussions with people in Latin American human rights work. I also met representatives from the

Colombian community in the UK. Also present was my good friend Wilson Borja, a radical Congressman in Colombia who was seriously injured by assassination attempts and now lives in fear of his life because he stands for justice and humanity in what is still a very dangerous society

29/06: **St Joseph's parish** centre was filled to the brim with parishioners who are concerned about proposals for the development of some of the open space between the Church and the very successful St Joseph's primary school. I was happy to support and help in their campaign to ensure that all/any development will be appropriate and reasonable so that the children can continue to attend a school with a certain amount of open space around them, and that the parish centre which was built by local people is able to continue to thrive and provide that vital communal meeting space, which has been so central to the lives of the many parishioners. The planning applications have not been made but many are concerned that too much of this lung will be taken away.

30/06: I was a guest speaker at Labour **CND AGM** where we discussed issues of disarmament and I reported on my attendance at the Non Proliferation Treaty meeting in Vienna in May.

01/07: **The NILP** Garden party was held at the estimable Islington Ecology Centre where music, food and good cheer was provided for all in an alcohol free environment.

02/07: Emily Thornberry and I were invited to the **LBI (London Borough of Islington's) primary schools' debating competition** at the Town Hall with a close run final between Robert Blair and St Joan of Arc. We presented medals to both teams, and cups to the winners and runners up, both of who performed

exceptionally well, and showed a real craft in coping with rational and irrational arguments. This event was organised by Kate Wilson of Excellence in Cities.

02/07: At the Arab Advice Bureau I met **with police teams from both boroughs, and Blackstock Rd Algerian traders to discuss issues of relations with the police**, crime and disorder. Some Islington councillors also attended and after a discussion I agreed to approach the police commanders in Islington to encourage the establishment of an innovative, safer neighbourhood team that covers the whole of the Finsbury Park area irrespective of local boundaries. I am awaiting their response.

25/06: I asked an oral question on **health** in the House relating to health spending in Islington, in order to emphasise the huge amounts of money that have been put into primary care, for example the 100% increase in local doctor numbers in Islington recently, and also to draw attention to the huge, growing, and rather unmet needs of mental health clients throughout both boroughs. I am very concerned that there is a rapidly growing demand for mental health assistance, and unless further funding is forthcoming, both Primary Care Trust and Mental Health Trusts will have difficulty in meeting these demands.

26/06: I hosted the patrons of the **Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC)** of which I am one) at their tea in parliament to discuss the work of PSC and the launch of its new DVD outlining the excellent work PSC does. I would encourage all of you to join this very efficient and important organisation if you can spare a few pounds a year. Their website is <http://www.palestinecampaign.org>

27/06: **The East London line extension** was the subject of a special debate

initiated by my colleague Martin Linton MP (Battersea). I support this project being promoted to transfer the East London line tube to the new concept of London over ground, and to construct an extension from Dalston via the North London line to Highbury and Islington station. This is all good news and I strongly support the project. The function of the debate was to allow Martin and others to speak in support of an extension into Clapham and Wimbledon as part of phase 2, so that it will bring into South East London a large area that is currently denied any direct access to the tube network. As my speech (attached) indicates I am in support of this project and I welcome the support for reopening railways. The previous government acted in such a way that we simply tried to protect railways from closure! Sadly, Transport for London insist on doing the work through a contractor, rather than how it should be done, directly by the public authority.

27/06: I was guest speaker at an **Islington North Labour Party meeting on Ireland**, which historically brought together Sinn Fein, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), and the SDLP (Social Democratic and Labour Party) under one roof, for a serious discussion on the future of Northern Ireland. Thanks to Mick Gilgun, Gary Heather and others for organising this event.

28/06: There was a special debate on **India and Development** in which I used the opportunity to raise the question of the treatment of people who suffer discrimination by caste and descent, and I attach the speech for your information. I strongly support the programme that has developed in India, especially in relation to rural education and health services. I made this clear in the debate and I spoke mainly about discrimination on the basis of caste which is still rife.

03/07: DSN (Dalit Solidarity Network) held its annual meeting which reported a year of real progress in campaigning against discrimination by caste and descent. The Network has been quite successful in fundraising as well as in persuading the British government to support the Ambedkar principals, which denounce discriminatory employment practices by British companies investing in India. I was re-elected as Honorary Chair of the network.

04/07: **The Peter Bedford Trust** held its annual day of celebrating success, together with the Mayor of Islington and we presented awards which marked real achievements for people with learning difficulties.

05/07: **The National School of Government** had a day in Islington with students from Warwick Business School who were managers, mostly in the public sector, from various departments and agencies. They spent time talking to, and studying people and issues surrounding the Andover Estate.

Together with Barbara Sidnell and Theresa Coyle of **Tollington Community Association**, as well as Dave Ronan, project manager for **estate improvements**, we talked and asked questions in the community rooms at Durham Rd. Support and food was provided by the Turkish and Kurdish Women's group.

06/07: I was a guest on the weekly BBC "**On the Record**" program where I had a discussion with Mark Beale MP among others, re the government's constitutional changes and enhancing the role of parliament, which I broadly welcome.

07/07: I was re-elected Chair of **Liberation** at its AGM held at St Pancras Church Hall. Professor Kamal Chanoy was guest speaker. He gave a fascinating and

well-informed speech concerning the issues of secular government in India, and the problems arising from the war in Afghanistan, as well as the politics of Pakistan and neighbouring countries.

I then went on to attend the street party in **Annette Road** and congratulated the organisers there on a successful event. **Holloway Arts Festival** then followed where I heard the Red Rose singers in full voice.

The following day a **film on park life by Justine Gordon Smith** had a special showing at the Holloway Odeon. The film raised special issues concerning the use of our open spaces and provoked a lively discussion among the audience.

I concluded the day with presenting football awards at the **Elthorne Festival**.

09/07: I was invited to present a talk on Mexico at **Marxism 2007** which is held at the University of London Union about 250 people attended and heard my analysis of the political situation in Mexico, followed by a well informed and lively discussion about Mexico's relations with the USA.

10/07: I had a very useful discussion with Paula Khan, Chair of Islington PCT (Primary Care Trust) and Rachel Tyndall, Chief Executive of Camden and Islington PCT, on the likely effects on Islington of the Darzi proposals and the realisation of **primary care** and the effects it will have on my community. We have made enormous progress in increasing the number of GPs, and the concept of polyclinics is in many ways an extension of the health centre concept.

10/07: I was a guest at **Your life, Your Say**: a service users event at the St John's Way Day Centre where I described my job and answered questions.

13/07: GLA Member, Jeanette Arnold and I paid an early morning visit to **Finsbury Park and Highbury stations** to meet with TfL (Transport for London) officials to look at the very welcome and enormous investment in improving both of these stations. The plan is to make them fully accessible and into a more efficient interchange between different lines and buses.

I visited **Alsen Day Centre** to celebrate its opening and to congratulate Lloyd Combs on his award of an MBE.

14/07: I was a guest at **Carila's** (Latin American organization) 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary at library, in which they quite rightly celebrated support and participation from the Latin American Community over all this time.

16/07: I was invited to be a guest speaker by the **Irish Labour Party** at their annual Tom Johnson political discussion in Galway. I spoke about the international perspectives and prospects of socialists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The day (16/07) concluded with the All Party Group on **Mexico**, and me being elected as their secretary.

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My Advice Sessions continue as usual and the number to contact if you wish to seek assistance with a personal problem is: 020 7561 7488