

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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Despite the World Cup, there has been much political activity going on and I have been busy on constituency issues, particularly housing, as well as many debates and issues in parliament, some of which are included at the end of this report.

The current news is dominated by some very ugly debates about **law and order**. The Chief Constable of Powys is right when he says that the Daily Mail has too much influence on policy and that the Home Office acts in very hasty ways in responding.

The debate about **immigration and asylum** is often characterised by racist headlines and attitudes. Many asylum seekers in London and in all the big cities work very hard to provide for themselves and their families, and in doing so they contribute to the economic success of this country. Despite this they are threatened with removal, when they deserve humanitarian and decent consideration. I raised this issue with Tony Blair on Monday during his statement on Europe and the recent summit:

Jeremy Corbyn: In the discussions about migration policy, did the Prime Minister or any of the other leaders discuss the plight of very poor people from west Africa, hundreds of whom have died trying to cross from west Africa to the Canary islands or to the Mediterranean, or those hard-working people who lead a twilight existence in every major city in Europe but none the less contribute to the economic well-being of us all? Will the European Union take a humanitarian view and do its best to assist poverty alleviation in west Africa?

The Prime Minister: We did discuss that—it was a major part of our discussion on mass migration. It is important that we work to ensure that those African countries that are in a state of abject poverty are helped; that is why this country in particular has played a leadership role in help for Africa, the millennium development goals and so on. On the other hand, the people coming into Europe often do so in extremely dangerous circumstances, as my hon. Friend rightly says, and they are often prey to organised crime and illegal people trafficking. It is important that we have solid rules in the EU that protect our borders; otherwise the incentive is for people to engage in that appalling trade continues. We need a balance: we need to make sure that there is properly managed migration with proper controls and we need to act on some of the root causes of migration in the countries of origin, and we are doing both. It is interesting that that is the single biggest issue facing EU countries such as Spain and Malta.

Student Action for Refugees have an excellent record of supporting individual cases of students threatened with deportation, and I was pleased to attend their event in parliament (June 15th) which focussed on asylum seekers pursuing further education.

I have continued to be active in my opposition to the **Iraq war**, and I spoke at the Stop the War Conference on June 10th at Friends House. I'll also be at the national rally in Manchester on September 23rd, just before Labour Party Conference opens.

Middle East: I spoke in the debate in Parliament (Westminster Hall) on June 7th on the progress of peace in the Middle East. In my speech I called for Israel to pay its due tax collections to the Palestinian

Authority. I also pointed out that not talking to both the President and Hamas was a mistake. Dialogue and recognition are important as are the ending of the settlement policy and the virtual imprisonment of the people of Gaza.

The Israeli Prime Minister - Ehud Olmert - came to the House of Commons (June 13th) just a few days after the Israeli military had killed 7 Palestinians on a Gaza beach and despite my having questions to ask him, I didn't get called to do so!

Also on this subject, I contributed to an Adjournment Debate on Palestine which is attached for your reference (June 7th). Many feel that they could never have imagined just how precarious things are in the region just now but clearly international sanctions among other things have not helped. Palestine remains in the highly unusual situation of being a country under occupation which is being asked to manoeuvre its own way out, without international support!

Please join in on this and other important issues if you can find time. Check websites wherever relevant and in this case: www.palestinecampaign.org/

I also raised at Foreign Office questions the situation facing **Iran**, calling upon our Foreign Secretary Margaret Beckett to continue talks and recognise that Iran, alone in the region, is a signatory to the Non Proliferation treaty. I chaired a meeting organised by Liberation about Iran and the threat of war. An interesting phenomena of the meeting was the relative unity between wide varieties of Iranian groups against the prospect of any war in Iran.

Diary:

Regarding London's Housing - essentially the Government must commit more money to new social housing for rent. In our borough most people cannot afford

to buy anything at all, and with the very low level of new building, only those in desperate housing need have any chance of getting anywhere. The Mayor's plan of 50% of all new developments for affordable housing should be both met and refined. Affordable must mean that, and *not* new properties of up to £400,000. Too many children are suffering from under-achievement at school as a result of poor housing.

The Labour Representation Committee organised a seminar on London Housing on June 5th in the House of Commons, which discussed the lack of rented property available in London and the rules that operate against councils building new council properties. The seminar resolved to campaign for the investment of at least £1b in the next spending round of social housing.

I have been involved in the issues surrounding **Arsenal and traffic** arrangements. Despite three years of warnings to all those involved with the new stadium it seems that there will be no station improvements at Holloway Road, which will be closed for part of match days. Planned improvements at Finsbury Park and Highbury and Islington, although welcome, are a long way off. I met TfL (Transport for London) and Islington Council representatives with Jennette Arnold to outline my fears and frustrations about this and I have also met Network Rail to discuss improvements to Drayton Park Station. The first match at the new stadium is on July 22nd and I have been invited to view the crowd arrangements at Finsbury Park Station.

Bike week has been well celebrated in Islington. On Monday June 19th myself and Jon Snow attended Gillespie School to promote cycling and see the school providing child cyclists with helmets. Congratulations to the school for promoting cycling. On Wednesday June 21st (Mid

Summers Day) I took part in the Annual Parliamentary Cycle Ride; a very sedate pedal from St Pancras to Westminster accompanied by a Police escort. On June 22nd Islington Cycling Campaign are holding a cyclists breakfast at Highbury Place to encourage cycling.

Carers Week from June 13th - 16th is an important event that helps to raise the profile of carers in our community and their need for support. I supported Islington Carers Forum at their stall in the Nags Head Shopping Centre and attended their annual end of week party at The Old Fire Station Community Centre on June 16th.

Islington Music Forum provides an excellent forum in which those who have suffered mental health problems can express themselves. With the help of professionals from the LSO (London Symphony Orchestra) they put on a fine show at the Garden Court at Sadler's Wells on June 19th.

I visited **Hargrave Park School** (June 20th) and met our good friend Wendy Meredith - the head teacher - to discuss a proposal of working closely with neighbouring schools to provide after school activity and support for parents in their needs. I am also going to their fair on Friday 23rd June.

I met with Mr Kibria whose father, the former Bangladeshi finance minister was killed in a grenade attack in Habiganj in **Bangladesh** in January 2005. There have been inadequate and slow investigations about this matter and I remain very concerned about human rights in Bangladesh and am taking part in a seminar on this at Kings College on July 15th.

The GLF (Greater London Forum) for the **Elderly** is an effective link of all the borough forums in London. I am a member of the Parliamentary panel of this group

and on June 19th I met the officers to discuss improving their financial strength so they can continue to be an important voice for pensioners in London.

The Greater London Pensioners *Association* is an entirely independent organisation that holds regular events in the House of Commons. On June 8th I attended one of their meetings at which Frank Dobson talked about the health needs of older people in London.

Derek Twigg, the Rail Minister attended an RMT organised seminar on the Sustainable Case for Rail event in the Boothroyd room (June 12th). I am encouraged that we have at last got the go ahead for the **East London Line** extension and that Transport for London are to become the operators of the North London line services. However, I am saddened that they propose to have a franchise operator from the private sector running services on the East London Line and the North London Line. I had hoped that TfL would be able to maintain its public service spirit by running the services itself. There is however, good news in that many other rail projects around the country were pushed very hard by those who attended the seminar for the reopening of disused railway lines, particularly creating the new East West freight corridor by utilising existing lines.

The North Korean Ambassador Ri Yong Ho visited the House of Commons (June 13th) and answered questions concerning **North Korea's** military and nuclear ambitions, informing those present that North Korea was prepared to divest itself of nuclear capabilities after a peace agreement is reached with the US.

With **CND**, I hosted a meeting addressed by Achin Vanaik, an old friend of mine from India Peace CND at the House of Commons (June 13th). Achin described the campaign to oppose the growing, close relationship between the Bush

Administration and the Indian government where nuclear technology is concerned.

I hosted a meeting for African Liberation Solidarity campaign with Explo Nani Kofi (June 14th) where there were a number of speakers on the legend of Kwame Nkrumah and the politics of **Ghana** and the African Union as a whole. The meeting was absolutely packed which is excellent.

The Manor Gardens Centre provides excellent services through Stroke club and Child Safety campaigns. The funding for both projects is threatened by cuts in the primary care budget. I met the director of the centre, Frank Wood and colleagues to discuss this on June 15th.

Reprieve is a UK charity that fights for the lives of people facing the death penalty and other human rights violations. Representatives (from Reprieve) came to speak to me about a prisoner in Guantanamo who has Indefinite Leave to Remain in Britain but is not a citizen and so the government needs persuading to take his case (June 5th). I have taken up the matter with the government (refer Human Rights Debate speech attached)

Hilldrop Community Centre is an excellent community centre and it has now installed a bank of solar panels to try to make the building more energy efficient. Along with the Mayor and Islington Councillors I attended the unveiling of the panels on June 6th.

On June 6th I visited residents in **Highbury Park** to discuss the vexed issue of the lack of adoption of this road by Islington Council. This issue has been taken up many times over the years and I support the residents' campaign on this.

I've done some media interviews concerning extraordinary rendition this past

month including CNN (June 7th) and Iranian broadcasting (June 9th).

I visited the **Islington Link Up Project** (June 8th) before heading off to my advice session at Mildmay. This project survives at 48 Seven Sisters Rd (formerly the Lionel Jeffrey Centre and later the Chi Centre) providing a valuable service for Afro Caribbean people in the neighbourhood but it is chronically short of funds and currently has problems with its lease.

Climate Change and pollution remain enormous issues and I attended an interesting lecture given by Mikhail Gorbachev on June 8th in which he described the Soviet Union and Russia's problems. In response to questioning, the former Soviet leader emphatically suggested that Britain should not develop nuclear power stations but should look for energy conservation and less polluted forms of energy generation.

I was one of the guests on a panel discussion about political developments in **Latin America** organised by the Cuba Solidarity Campaign. Other participants included Francisco Dominguez of Middlesex University, and the Cuban Ambassador Amanca Colque of the Bolivian Solidarity Campaign.

My advice sessions as always continue on a weekly basis and more information is available via the constituency office: tel 020 7219 3545 , 213A Blackstock Rd, N5 2LL.