

# REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

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This month was no less busy than last, and among the high points were a trip I made to Mumbai, for the “**Peace Mumbai**” initiative. This wonderful event was organised by Focus on the Global South in order to bring together issues of globalisation of the economy; destruction of the environment; social needs of housing and health; of course the enormous issues of war and peace in the region; and the grim link of liberal economics with war!

Organised on the eve of George Bush’s visit to India and Pakistan the Conference was attended by several hundred activists from South and South East Asia and I had the pleasure of addressing it, as well as several other meetings including one in Delhi. I was also able to move forward the Dalit Solidarity agenda against caste discrimination which remains one of slow progress in India.

The Conference declaration noted that the “War against Terror” was in reality the dubious agenda to promote US military and nuclear interests. It reached agreement to seriously promote economic policies not led by the market, as well as neo liberal free for all methods, regional cooperation to address the agrarian crisis. Discussions on inter state issues such as Kashmir and the water supply problems also took place.

In an era focussed on a grim march towards nuclear re-armament, the Conference called for a nuclear weapons free South Asia. Since both India and Pakistan have weapons and have spent huge resources on their

Development, this is a welcome step forward.

**The ID Cards** bill is in the Lords today following recent progress towards compulsory identity cards, much to my disgust, since the House of Commons voted to overturn a Lords amendment that would ensure that people applying for passports would be free to choose whether or not they had an ID card. I very much hope that the Lords maintain their stand on this, in keeping with Labour’s manifesto on the non compulsory aspect of the cards!

**The Education Bill is having its second reading** today and having attended various briefings and discussions over the past few months I remain against its core endeavour to do away with comprehensive education. At the time of printing this report the vote is yet to come and much speculation exists about whether or not the government will win the vote thanks largely to opposition votes! I will not help this bill along!

**Archway:** This Monday I will meet with Transport for London, Pemberton Bus Garage and members of the local community in an inclusive discussion (Better Archway Forum) about the Archway area. This is our preferred method which is in stark contrast with that of the expensive consultants employed by the council. The Forum has taken on a number of issues via focus groups and now needs to put together its collective views. Issues which are being covered that are central to the campaign include the use of transport links,

traffic management around the gyratory system and hopefully, getting the buses away from residential areas.

**Palestine:** What to say using diplomatic words! Yesterday's (14/03) incursion of Jericho's prison was an outrage and could not have happened without the British (and US) monitors abandoning the prison as they did. I have not yet heard anything to convince me that this was done for sound reasons, and the speed with which the Israeli Defence Force moved to attack the prison following the monitors' departure certainly leaves one asking questions about possible collusion by the UK, with the Israelis.

I attended an (almost in these days of such anti terror legislation making spontaneous demonstrations illegal) spontaneous protest opposite 10 Downing St in protest of this attack which is having very damaging consequences throughout Palestine and especially in the Gaza strip.

Aside from this episode, I spoke at a Trade Union Conference on Palestine organised by PSC (Palestine Solidarity Campaign), especially Bernard Regan of the Executive. This was a well attended event (11/03) with contributions from (among others) five Palestinian visitors all of whom are busy challenging the occupation in their own unique way.

I also chaired a meeting "Dawn of Democracy in the Middle East" (06/03) organised by Al Aqsa, which discussed the aftermath of the elections.

**Animal Welfare:** Yesterday (14<sup>th</sup> March) saw the Third Reading of this bill, symbolic of much progress for society's attitude to animals in the past 100 years. The main purpose of this Bill was to bring together and update legislation to promote the welfare of vertebrate animals other than those in the wild. A wide range of issues were covered including performing wild

animals in circuses, and the tail docking of dogs. I always get a lot of correspondence on the subject and animal lovers can rest assured I will always vote to support the animals!

Today Sally Banks (wife of the late Tony Banks MP) launched a report from the International Fund for Animal Welfare which looks at the continuing Canadian seal hunt. Tony had been very involved in working toward getting a ban on the cull of seals and Sally urges everyone to support a permanent ban on this cull which takes place in Canada every spring.

**Below I list just a few of the events I have been involved with over the last month.**

20/02: I met with the Chief Executive at the Whittington – David Sloman - to discuss the prospects for the new building, the extension to the hospital and the general performance and concerns about the trust status of UCH (University College Hospital) on other local health facilities.

I also met with the Chief Executive of Circle / Anglia (Mark Rogers) to discuss local housing developments and I expressed my wish to see more housing for social rent being constructed in the inner city areas. I was rather alarmed to find that the funding formula of the Housing Corporation makes it extremely difficult to refurbish existing buildings! The Corporations' funding therefore is inevitably skewed towards brown and greenfield sites rather than rehabilitation. I am taking this matter up with the Secretary of State.

I have been invited to be a member of the Advisory Board for the House of Commons and House of Lords joint exhibition in Westminster Hall in 2007 to commemorate the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Slave Trade Abolition Act. I am delighted to be involved in this initiative and welcome the high priority that the Government is giving to the

bi-centenary. Today I met with Mike Kay of Anti-Slavery International to discuss how to progress this event.

21/02 I attended a Stop the War Press Conference in advance of the demonstration this weekend (18/03) and I continue to call for the withdrawal of troops wherever I happen to be and today it was in the chamber.

22/02: Labour party supporter Mrs Lillie had her 100<sup>th</sup> birthday and I went to her party at her home in Annette Rd.

I have regular meetings with different Safer Neighbourhood Teams and I also attended a public meeting called by St George's Ward regarding the Safer Neighbourhood project at Tufnell Park School. I am pleased that I continue to find the participants in the Safer Neighbourhood Schemes very eager and enthusiastic about this task.

01/03: I met with Andy Murray of the Stop the War Coalition where we discussed how to take the peace process forward including the launch of an EDM about bringing the troops home.

From meeting Andy I headed off to WC1 to attend Unison's Labour Link forum.

Diane Abbot had organised a public meeting about "Stop Violence against Women". A separate issue which arose was about the lack of follow up of "failed asylum seekers being deported to places of great danger especially the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) and we called for a halt to such deportations as we've already achieved with Zimbabwe.

The Rt Hon Hilary Benn was the guest speaker at Socialist Campaign Group and he advised us on the current state of international development which, for all its shortcomings, is much better than it was before Labour came to power. So much more to do of course.

02/03: I spoke at a Brent Stop The War event.

03/03: I met with a gathering of Somalis (from Sheffield to Bethnal Green and most places in between) with the aim of discussing relations between young Somalis and their elders, though the subject was broadened to include a discussion of politics in Somalia.

Following this meeting I held two advice surgeries which took care of the rest of the day!

04/03: I attended a public consultation for local residents / key stakeholders at the former Whittington site. This was organised by Circle / Anglia and I registered my objections to the low proportion of affordable rented homes to be developed on the site, as well as what I see as the excessive bulk of the planned buildings which amount to overdevelopment.

Today was also a branch campaigning day for both Finsbury Park and Mildmay wards.

I later attended and spoke at two separate AGMS: Labour Action for Peace and Labour Heritage.

05/03: Hillrise campaigning activities took place today.

07/03: I attended a meeting "Is UK policy on Cuba being undermined by Washington?" This title came about no doubt because of the role of Caleb McCarry, the US state department official who is dealing with future policy towards Cuba, with the apparent aim of completely undermining Cuba's existing sovereignty. Myself and others were outraged that he was invited to meetings at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

08/03: John Hutton came to speak to Socialist Campaign Group on matters relating to his role as Department of Work

and Pensions Minister including future pensions policy in respect of the State pension and the role of final salary company pensions.

Soon after that meeting I spoke in an adjournment debate on Venezuela (I am vice Chair of the APPG on Latin America).

09/03: The Tom Brown Memorial meeting is held every year in Peterborough and is dedicated to the memory of all those working people who have and continue to give their lives to the struggle for a better world. I was pleased to be this year's guest speaker. Fortunately for all of us I happened to have access to some visiting Palestinian speakers and so took a Women's officer - Nadia Hamdan - from the PGFTU (Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions) to Peterborough with me.

10/03: Two advice sessions took up most of today.

11/03: Today was a busy Saturday starting with local campaigning at a street stall in Stroud Green Rd and then moving on the Islington Labour Party's Women's celebration at the Red Rose Club. All those who attended will be pleased with the event and how well it was organised by Ruth Clarke and others, not least because it brought together many local women with party members.

14/03: Steve Merritt has completed an interesting report on the problems of water supply in the Thames basin area which indicates that in terms of water sustainability, London and the South east are by far the worst areas in the whole country, and unless this huge issue is addressed, one must question the huge scale of development of new housing in the Thames Gateway and other areas.

I sat in on a Defence Select Committee hearing in which Kate Hudson, CND's chair, was a witness against the replacement of Trident. Dr Rebecca Johnson also gave evidence and I support them both.

Stop the War organised an event in Parliament Square today hoping to raise awareness of Tony Benn's letter to the UN General Secretary which covers 20 points concerning the illegality of the war and the occupation of Iraq. This letter will be signed by many more people at the **demonstration this weekend**.

In the evening a significant group of Islington North Labour Party members came to the Commons to hear the Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP discuss the current state of international development, and to inspire Labour party members to unite with the people to continue to progress Labour's good works. Thanks to all who attended and to Hilary Benn for his inspiring talk.

15/03: I went along to join Baroness Andrews, Cllr Catherine West and Christine Mabey with "Living Streets" today. We discussed ways in which the streets around the Highbury and Islington area could be considerably improved from the benefit of liveability and pedestrians.

One day I hope there'll be a month where I don't have to include the topic: **Sadly:** Marian Bell was a very active Labour party member at one point and recently passed away. I spoke at her funeral (07/03).

John La Rose (many of you will know of him if you didn't know him personally) also passed away and as well as attending his funeral, I have tabled an EDM to mark this sad occasion.

Press engagements this month included:  
22/02: PRESS: ITV London Tonight

05/03: BBC Radio Five Live Principles in Politics.

14/03: BBC News 24

Advice Sessions were as busy as always this month with the most common problem people remaining housing, then

immigration, and after that a mixture.

Sessions continue each week and if you know someone who needs my help please ask them to telephone 020 7226 5775 and Ruth Clarke or Dave Horan can advise them on my behalf. END