

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

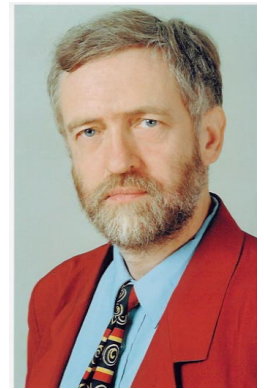
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The period covered by this report has been one of high political drama, with the Government pressure to get through the Top Up Fees vote, which I voted against because I believe that education should be accessible to all, funded by fair taxation, and should not depend upon the ability to pay!

The publication of the Hutton Report after all the painstaking detail of the inquiry was a huge disappointment, and I remain sceptical about its outcome, annoyed at the unrelenting attacks on the BBC, and sad that Greg Dyke and Gavyn Davies have both resigned over this. I do not feel the BBC needed to go to such lengths to apologise, when the government got off with no censure whatsoever.

The establishment of a privy council inquiry into the Intelligence Service will achieve little, and in the House I described this as an "Establishment cover-up".

Locally, I have been holding enormous advice bureau sessions for a wide variety of problems, including housing, social security and asylum. This is both a difficult and satisfying part of my work as an MP and as always I am grateful to my staff, for keeping the show on the road so to speak.

Press: A mixture of Hutton and/or Top Up Fees

23/01: Dutch TV Blackstock Road

27/01: World Service

27/01: BBC London at Lambeth Palace

28/01: BBC Radio Ulster

28/01: ARD Robert Green- College Green (German TV)

28/01: Al Jazeera Web Newspaper Interview

28/01: Dutch Radio

28/01: Toronto Radio

29/01: Radio Netherlands

31/01: BBC Radio London

31/01: Downing St Protest

02/02: GMTV Breakfast show

03/02: Sky

03/02: Middle East TV News (Westminster)

04/02: Lebanese TV

04/02: Hutton Debate

28/01: Stop the War Lobby – Parliament Square. This was a big demonstration in Whitehall to protest about the report which had everything to do with condemning the BBC and so little to do with condemning the government.

28/01: CND held a meeting about the Hutton report at which I spoke. It was organised by Kate Hudson, Chair CND and hosted by Alice Mahon MP) and speakers also included Glen Rangwalla, the Cambridge academic who exposed the government's dodgy dossier, and Lindsey German from the Stop the War Coalition.

02/02: Stop the war Steering Committee (Friends House). Among the general discussion at this meeting about arrangements for the next big demonstration (see below) was a discussion about the role of the Stop the War coalition in political life in general. A very firm and clear statement was adopted which emphasised that Stop the War was just that, a campaign for peace, and emphatically not a political movement of any kind.

17/02: I did a filmed interview for Poets for Peace (possibly inspired by '100 poets against the War', launched by Val Stevenson et al last year) at Blackstock Rd

What you can do: Donate or affiliate to Labour Against the War, Stop the War, or join Amnesty International or another relevant organisation.

Attend:

- the **28th February Stop the War 3rd Annual Conference** at the Camden Centre (Kings Cross). If you would like more details please ring the office on 0207 053 2153/4/5/6.

- **13th March Manchester Stop the War** have a demonstration outside the Labour Party Spring Conference.

- **20th March – national demonstration** at Hyde Park to Trafalgar Square, 12 md meet. This day is the anniversary of the vote to go to war

The Islington STWC meets Monday 23rd Feb 7pm at Whittington Community Centre, Yerbury RD. N7 All welcome. We will be planning to get the biggest turn out possible for the demo.

Keep an eye out for further details.

10/02: Alasdair Smith of Islington Stop the War (and Vivian Yates) organised a meeting at Union Chapel entitled **GUANTANAMO BAY: Internment without Trail at Belmarsh** which was excellent. This was quite a packed meeting at which Azzmatt Begg (father of a Guantanamo Detainee) spoke, as did Andy Burgin, Louise Christian and myself. The meeting was chaired by Neale Williams of the Fire Brigade's Union.

This is a huge campaign to right the wrongs and injustices that have resulted from our current antiterrorism laws which are every bit as draconian as the PTA laws which had such a long term and traumatic impact on the nationalist community in Ireland. Who would have thought they could ever be duplicated by a Labour government!

What you can do: Keep abreast of things by checking out the website: www.guantanamohric.org

26/01: Stop the War pamphlet launch: A star studded cast turned up for this event, among them John Pilger and Paul Foot, and the alternative Hutton Pamphlet was produced which outlined the conditions running up to the war.

EDUCATION / TOP UP FEES (HIGHER EDUCATION BILL)

Press:

26/01: Press: Sky TV

26/01: BBC World At 1, 4 Millbank

27/01: BBC Breakfast News – Top Up Fees

27/01: Sky News, morning and evening separately – Top Up Fees

21/01: SCGp (Socialist Campaign Group) organised a rally and public meeting entitled: No Top Up Fees - A Free Education For All, in the Grand Committee Room of the House of Commons. It was attended by Paul Mackey (of NATFHE), Helena Puig Larrauri (President of Oxford Students Union), Alan Clark (NUS Executive Member) Kat Fletcher (NUS Executive Member), Ian Gibson MP, Kelvin Hopkins MP, Lynne Jones MP, Llew Smith MP. This was to pre-empt the main Commons vote and focus on support for the principles contained in the paper produced by the Oxford Students' Union 'The Alternative Future for Higher Education'. If anyone has a special interest in this subject / vote please contact Nicolette in my office and she can provide you with a copy of the library publication on it. All of those present believe in the full restoration of grants to enable an education system free for all, and paid by progressive taxation. Sadly we have a battle on our hands when the vote next returns to the Commons again.

26/01: Top Up Fees: Ian Gibson HOC: Ian Gibson has done excellent work on this subject and we all know the battle isn't over yet. I paid tribute to his efforts

and the vote will of course be revisited at report stage.

27/01: Top Up Fees afternoon Lobby organised by NUS (National Union of Students) Louise Hutcheons, in Parliament Square . The lobby was well attended and there were still students roaming up and down Whitehall as the vote took place at 7pm I am pleased to say. A number of supportive MPs attended, myself, Bob Wareing, Kelvin Hopkins and Llyewellyn Smith to name a few I saw.

Colombia:

I left for Bogota on the morning following the Hutton Debate (Thursday 05/02) and returned on the following Sunday (09/02). The trip was organised by War on Want and Justice for Colombia (Thanks to Liam Craig-Best for this) and was a combined parliamentary / trade union delegation. It would not be an exaggeration to say that it was harrowing in some aspects, listening to testimonies of people who have been tortured (or their partners have). I attach my Morning Star article which describes the experience in further detail.

Democratic Republic of Congo

29/01: Emma Ginn organised a high-level meeting about the DRC (Democratic Republic of Congo) and a large number of people (some of them from Islington) attended. The speakers were excellent and varied, including DRC asylum seekers and groups) who came from all over the UK and Jeshram Syam from the Home Office / Country Information Policy Unit (responsible for the DRC). The event brought out a number of Congolese community groups and campaigners - many of whom seem keen to co-ordinate other events and activities. A follow up meeting will be held in March hopefully. We hope to meet Beverley Hughes and express our concerns to the Home Office

about the high level of presumption over the safety of returning refugees.

14/02: Congo meeting at St Mellitus: As usual, this meeting consisted of an excellent discussion about the situation in the Congo, and the problem of arms sales and imports of minerals from the Congo. We agreed that I would take up a number of issues in parliament, including the role of the UN backed peace keeping troupes and the British relationship with the Kabila government. When President Kabila visited Britain I was away, and Ruth Clarke went on my behalf, raising questions including the security of people returning to the Congo.

Palestine

21/01: PSC (Palestine Solidarity Lobby) – I spoke on the Palestinian/Israeli crisis and referred specifically to Jenny Tongue’s courage to speak out about suicide bombers. I tabled an EDM (561) on this subject which has, to date, been signed by a number of MPs who feel strongly in support of her recently well publicised comments about suicide bombers.

It is significant news that the soldier (an Arab) who shot Thomas Hurndall has now been charged with manslaughter. Given the circumstances, the family would wish the charge to be murder but for now our condolences and thoughts should be with this family, having lost Tom just a few weeks ago.

What you can do: Attend:

- a public meeting this Thursday on 19th February meeting with a presentation on “**the Wall**” by **Martial Kurds** (recently returned from Palestine), 7pm at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square.

- Following PSC’s AGM on 28th February (a Saturday) **Mustafa Bharghouthi** will be addressing a public meeting in the main room of Friends House at 7pm. Jeremy will chair the meeting entitled: the Situation in Palestine: a Challenge to Humanity.

- Join Palestine Solidarity Campaign
www.palestinecampaign.org
T: 020 7700 6192 F: 020 7609 7779
"<mailto:info@palestinecampaign.org>";
Jews for Justice: PO Box 37402, N3 2XG:
jffjusticefp@yahoo.co.uk
CAABU: 020 7832 1310

Somalia

11/02: I called for an Adjournment Debate in Westminster Hall in which I spoke of the needs of the Somali community here and I have enclosed the debate in the February parliamentary interventions section of this report.

SENIOR CITIZENS

22/01: GLPA (Greater London Pensioners Association) met at the HOC (House of Commons) to discuss campaigning issues and the government's Pension Bill. I approve of the pensions protection fund aimed at guaranteeing workers retirement savings, but remain concerned about the constant reduction in the proportion of pension income from public sources, as opposed to that of self financing. I strongly endorse the article by Rodney Bickerstaff in the Morning Star on 13 February.

EDUCATION/ ASYLUM

22/01: Hackney & Islington Refugee Training Partnership AGM (Africa Centre in Elthorne Rd). I was guest speaker and spoke about the need for training which this organisation manage so well. The government funding of training schemes is one side of what is otherwise a 'hard cop and soft cop' policy coming out of the Home Office.

28/01: Education Action International (former World University Service) Stakeholder Panel meeting. I routinely address this group at their training sessions, which see so many refugees get appropriate qualifications to work and study here. I spoke about the need for involving refugee communities in setting up projects with

their experience in conflict resolution, eg Rwanda and I agreed to take part in future sessions.

THE ASYLUM AND IMMIGRATION BILL:
The situation for asylum seekers will be worse than ever if this bill goes ahead and measures include

- reducing the right of appeal to one only, with no recourse to higher courts
- no appeal against decisions by the Home Secretary (now clause 11). This will apply to immigration decisions as well as asylum decisions, so it will become harder for UK citizens who are settled migrants to get permission for family members to come here, whether for visits or to live.
- Asylum seekers whose claim has been refused could have their children taken away if they do not agree to return to their countries, no matter what dangers await them.
- Asylum seekers who arrive with no documentation face two years' imprisonment.
- All this is in addition to the proposed cuts in legal aid, which mean that solicitors will no longer have a chance of properly representing their clients. Many asylum seekers are already destitute because of section 55 of last year's act.

There is a significant EDM to be tabled this coming Monday by Neil Gerrard and I will be signing it. Read the briefings and follow the links at www.jcwi.org.uk and www.ncadc.org.uk.

What You Can Do:

- **Lobby Parliament - 24th February 2004, 2-4pm on the Asylum and Immigration (treatment of Claimants etc Bill)** (assemble at St Stephens Gate, Westminster). This will be an opportunity to meet your MP and make your opposition known to this bill, the third reading of which will take place on Monday 1st March 2004.
- **Contact** the Lobby from the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers (CDAS). If you have any enquiries, please contact CDAS on 07941 566183 or at info@defend-asylum.org.

(OTHER) PARLIAMENTARY EVENTS

10/02: LAP (Labour Action for Peace) – we are still trying!

11/02: Socialist Campaign Group Editorial meeting – we discuss the monthly publication of Socialist Campaign Group News at these regular meetings.

LOCAL ACTIVITIES:

26/01: Official opening of City and Islington College Sixth Form Centre with Alan Johnson M.P. Chris Smith and I attended, as did others from all walks of life. The building is wonderful, situated as it is on the Dame Alice Owen school site it is a brilliant example of spending public money on something useful. It is a tribute to the governing director Keren Abse, and the college principle Frank McLoughlin.

29/01: Thames Water meeting (213a Blackstock Rd): This private meeting centred on the tragedy of the burst main in Wallace Rd. Most residents have not yet gone back to their properties and remain temporarily rehoused. I am in touch with Thames Water and the Residents and the residents are meeting next week to discuss their situation and the future of their own housing and I will do my best to support them in their needs.

We also had an earlier meeting at which The Chief Executive and the Director of Operations, along with the person responsible for compensation on the ground were present. They have now set in place a program of improvement for mending all of the dodgy water mains in Islington, and because of the increase rate of water flow and traffic, as well as the age of the pipes, this is a big task. They will keep me informed, as well as those affected, about each road closure/works.

Proposed Council Cuts have inspired myself, along with Chris Smith to get busy, and a **public meeting and lobby of the Council is**

organised for 26th February, 6pm at Islington Town Hall. What is proposed is a dire catalogue of cuts which will have enormous impact. On February 26th the Council is meeting to decide on their budget for this year and if you can make the meeting you will hear how badly local organisations are to be hit, if we fail to stop these cuts from going ahead.

02/02 Eid Festival at Friends House. I attended the Muslim Association of Britain and gave Eid Greetings to over 300 people present and received a very warm reception in return.

** Eid is an Arabic word derived from `aada that means a recurring event. In Islam it denotes the festivals of Islam. It is otherwise known as the Feast of Sacrifice and it is the most important feast of the Muslim calendar, taking place in the last month of the Islamic calendar in which millions of Muslims from around the world make an annual pilgrimage to Makkah in order to workshop.

26/01: RMT Parliamentary meeting at which current issues facing the railway industry including the new franchises of the train operating companies, and maintenance contracts undertaken by Network rail.

03/02: London Gp CR 16 Hilary Perrin – this meeting focussed on the run up to the Mayoral and European elections to be held on June 10th. I welcome Ken back into the party.

Black History Month is in March so keep an eye out for any events you hear about relating to this.

Don't forget the Liberation May 22nd event to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of this wonderful organisation founded by Fenner Brockway in 1954. Put this in your diary for 6pm as it should be an event worth attending with music and more.

Sadly

10/02: The funeral of Hugh Jenkins was held at Putney Vale Cemetery and privileged as I am to call myself a good friend, I spoke of his

good works campaigning for peace in CND and as a politician (MP for Putney). He was made a peer and he often claimed that the House of Lords was a refreshment room for retired gentleman which was quite unfair since in reality he spoke with huge passion about the principals of many things including the public funding of the arts. The church was full of Labour supporters from the area as well as local MPs and a huge number of actors and artists who had been supported by Hugh when he was Minister for the Arts. Bruce Kent, (Lord) Alf Dubbs, Ian McGarry also spoke.

Roger Sutherland was a local political activist in the party, and involved with us over many years, and the peace and anti war movement and a wide range of eclectic interests. He tragically took his own life in his own home two weeks ago. I am concerned that his state of mental health seemed to me to indicate that he should have been kept in a secure unit. I am taking the matter up with the Chief Executive of the Trust and I attended his funeral which was a humanist, green affair, and a very moving occasion.

The Memorial Event for Ivor Thomas is to be held at the Red Rose on 1 March at 7.45 for 8pm.

31/01: Advice Surgeries are as usual held every Friday with one additional Advice Surgery this month held for the Congolese community.

ADVICE SURGERIES FOR FEB/MARCH

Friday 27th February, 10 a.m. – 12 noon.
Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way,
London, N19.
Appointment only, please ring after 22nd
February to book.

Friday 5th March, 4 – 6 p.m.
Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, London,
N7

Appointment only, please ring after 29th
February to book.

Friday 12th March, 10 a.m. – 12 noon.
Mayville Community Centre, Woodville
Road, London, N16.
No appointment necessary but please be
prepared to wait.

Friday 19th March, 4 – 6 p.m.
Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, London,
N.7.
No appointment necessary but please be
prepared to wait.

Friday 26th March, 10 a.m. – 12 noon.
Caxton House, 129 St. John's Way,
London, N.19.
Appointment only, please ring after 21st
March to book.

If you prefer: You could write to Jeremy
with details of your problem. His address
is: 213A Blackstock Road, London, N5
2LL. The office telephone number is 020
7226 5775.

