

REPORT from Jeremy Corbyn MP

Parliamentary/House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

Tel: 020 7219 3545, fax 2328

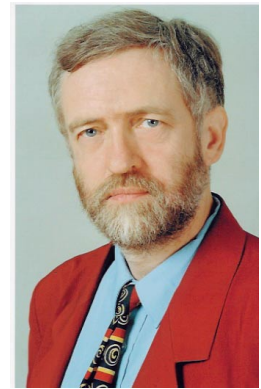
Local/213a Blackstock Rd, London, N5 2LL

Tel 020 7226 5775, fax 020 7219 3775

Email: corbynj@parliament.uk

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Website: www.jeremycorbyn.co.uk



As usual it's been an extraordinarily busy month, July always is. There has been the drama of the Butler Inquiry into the war in Iraq. I remain very critical of both the war, the decision making process leading to it, and the domination of American Far Right opinion in pushing for a pro war decision in the first place.

On the domestic front there's been some good news. I broadly welcome the spending announcements of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, despite my parliamentary intervention on job losses in the Civil Service; and of course the spending plans on transport and related departments are extreme welcome indeed.

The very high levels of public spending by a labour government are terrific, and continue to make an enormous difference to our local community, with vastly improved health, transport and education as a result. Some of this is marred by the incompetence of the local authority in accessing government funds which are made available to them, and in their bazaar policy of selling off the freeholds of large numbers of public buildings, which otherwise would be used for good social and community purposes in the future.

The Butler Report into the decision by parliament to go to war, and the evidence that was offered by the dossier of Sept 2002, have been studied in enormous depth. Strangely, all the hamming up of very limited intelligence material has meant that the only people who have been forced to resign from public positions are the BBC's Chair, Director General and one journalist, as well as the Daily Mirror's

editor. The person who was involved in chairing the Joint International Committee which advised the Cabinet and Prime Minister on the material to be published in the dodgy dossier has since been promoted to head M16! I think this is outrageous and I tabled a parliament motion calling for his removal from that position (in parliamentary interventions).

Whilst the Butler report is very well written, it seems very strange that Lord Butler won't accept that no individual should take responsibility. As an active member of the Stop the War coalition, I spoke at many demonstrations including June 30th, which was to have been the day of the handover of Iraq to a civilian Iraq administration.

Press Engagements:

22/06: BBC Radio 2 Jeremy Vine Show
22/06: Iranian Broadcasting
23/06: Daily Politics
14/07: BBC World Service
14/07: World Service News
14/07: World Service Discussion
14/07: ITN
14/07: RTE
14/07: Al Jazeera
20/07: Radio 2 Jeremy Vine show
20/07: Iranian TV

Palestine

I am the honorary chair of Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) and in that capacity I meet officials of the campaign roughly every month to discuss activities and progress. I hosted a parliamentary meeting the day after the International Criminal Court's verdict on the

illegality of Israel's security wall, which was extremely well attended. I support any peaceful and legal action to persuade Israel to remove the wall, and accept that the only long term viable peace centres upon the recognition of a Palestine state. In the last month I have also been involved in continuing my support of the family of the late Tom Hurndall, who died trying to save Palestinian children. Along with Nicolette, I attended a wonderful fund raising evening organised by the foundation. Tom's mother spoke, as did the parents of the late Rachel Corrie (killed last year by an Israeli bulldozer). The foundation is dedicated to peace and justice for all victims in Palestine and I have since tabled an EDM on its launch (enc).

I was very pleased to have the opportunity to entertain the Corrie family in the Pugin Room and express our support and solidarity with them in this period of most terrible grief.

(11/07) I was pleased to attend an enjoyable fundraising barbeque organised by Jews for Justice at the Crouch Hill community centre at which I received a very warm welcome.

What you can do: - Palestine Solidarity Campaign www.palestinecampaign.org
T: 020 7700 6192 F: 020 7609 7779
"mailto:info@palestinecampaign.org";
- Check out:
http://www.palestinemonitor.org/mustafa/mustafas_articles.htm - a very informative website by Mustafa Bhargouthi.
- Jews for Justice: PO Box 37402, N3 2XG:
jfjusticefp@yahoo.co.uk
- The Tom Hurndall Foundation:
www.tomhurndall.co.uk

Ireland

Following our delegation to Northern Ireland and the Republic in early May, we reported back at a meeting of the Parliamentary Labour Party Northern Ireland group at the end of June. I was also pleased to entertain to tea a very excitable group of youngsters from Holy Cross School, of the Short Strand, who were in London for one week on a trip organised by the

Irish community in London.

Chagos Islands

I have been committed to the cause of the Chagossian people who were disgracefully removed from the islands in 1973 for many years. They won limited compensation in the early 1980s, and in 2000 they won the right to return in a dramatic court action in Britain, and in 2001 following activities by Tam Dalyell and myself, they won British citizenship. Some have come to the UK and many of these, and indeed those in Mauritius hope to be able to visit their islands. I was therefore amazed when on June 10th two Orders in Council were passed which gave complete control of the Chagos Islands to a British appointed High Commissioner, preventing them from returning. Subsequently I attended a meeting with the Minister, Bill Rammell, at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), and Tam Dalyell MP, and Allen Vincatassen of the British Based Chagossian Community. I expressed my anger about the decision taken. I also managed to secure an adjournment debate (07/07) which is reproduced with this report. The day before this we had attended a demonstration outside the FCO.

Since that time I have discussed with lawyers and others the possibility of a Judicial Review, and I am supporting their case to the Indigenous People's Congress at the UN in Geneva, which is being held at the end of July, as well as the Human Rights Sub commission which meets in August in Geneva.

I have been invited to be a patron of the Chagos Island Association in Britain and attended had a lovely social gathering in Crawley (15/07).

The announcement on the compensation case for the Chagossians is to be made this Thursday 22nd July at 9.30 am at the High Court. It is not likely to go on for more than one hour. The solicitor is in some difficulty over this case and I am therefore determined to offer whatever support I am able to. If any of you are free to attend either the hearing, or simply to be

outside the court on that day this would be most helpful.

03/07: **Congo** Meeting at St Mellitus Church: The situation in the Congo remains dire, with an attempted coup against the government, and continuing death tolls and foreign interference in the affairs of the country. I am in close contact with the local Congolese community and on 3rd July I attended this meeting. I also hold advice services for the community with interpreters.

There is an active All Party Parliamentary Group on the Great Lakes Region, which I am pleased to be a member of, and we have arranged a number of seminars on this issue. I also attended a meeting (23/06) with the New Immigration Minister Des Brown to plead with him to end all Congolese removals as I do not believe it is safe to do this.

I remain in close contact with the **Somali** Community, both in Islington and at a London wide and national level. Hamani Harris of Kings College produced an excellent report on the conditions facing the Somali community in Britain which and I hosted the launch (8/7) which was extremely well attended.

(18/07) I also had a meeting with the **Somali** speaking community and I strongly support their wish to have a local community centre which can provide for the needs of the community, including eliminating the poverty of many, and particularly the isolation experienced by many women.

15/07: I took part in an annual Marxism event and I described my visit to **Colombia** and my works in this subject. There was also a Colombia Solidarity Campaign speaker there. I continue to oppose the British government's arms sales to Colombia, and I am concerned about British military involvement in Colombia which was reluctantly revealed to me in a parliamentary answer last year.

LOCAL

Enormous problems in the provision of

community centres and local facilities exist and are arising, because of the continuing activities of Lib Dem council in selling the freeholds of many of its buildings.

24/06: **The Islington Chinese Association** has been doing excellent work at its centre at 33 Geisbach Rd. where it provides support, lunches, entertainment and cultural activities for the community. It will be a tragedy if it is forced to close and we demonstrated outside the Town Hall with the members of the group and Cllr Catherine West. This forced the council into serious negotiations with the group about the possibility of the purchase of the building. It is a scandal that local groups should be forced to raise many thousands of pounds that they already use for the benefit of the local community.

The Factory Centre in Mathias Rd has done excellent work for a long time but the council sold the freehold to a property company who in turn have offered to sell it to the community for a profit of between 100% and 300% for ownership of less than a year. This is an outrage of the first order and because of the Council's failure to sign a lease or pass it over the community, it lost neighbourhood nursery initiative funding to develop nursery facilities on the site. I had (24/06) a meeting with Margaret Hodge (Department of Education and Skills where she is Minister for Children and Young People) and the Government Office for London (Chris Gayle) to try to secure a children's centre which would be of enormous benefit to the children locally, and would be ideally sited next to Newington Green School.

(05/07) I was delighted to open the **Neighbourhood Renewal Community Chest** celebration event at the Andover. This was organised by the Cripplegate Foundation who have evaluated applications for Community Chest funding which has then been dispersed by them on behalf of the government. I invited all of the local groups to tell us about their work and what they had achieved. It was a very inspiring event which shows how some aspects of funding are directed to small projects within

our community.

24/06: I attended the opening of a new Treatment Centre in Islington (111 Isledon Rd) for the **Medical Foundation for the Victims of Torture**. It is a stunning building and its team will do a lot of good for people who have been through the most traumatic torture experiences.

02/07: Because of the length of my Advice Bureau I was unable to attend the leaving event for **Lester Pritchard** (Islington Town Hall) but I must thank him for his tremendous work in Islington's planning department for 30 years. With vision and integration Lester has done lots of good and I thank him well and wish him well in his retirement.

04/07: I was delighted to meet Rowan Williams (Archbishop of Canterbury) when he attended the petronal festival. It was the second visit of an Archbishop to **St Thomas's** church and the last one was, I am told, 65 years ago!

11/07: I attended the **Finfest Festival** in Finsbury Park. It is good news that the Friends of Finsbury Park has now become a registered charity following a very productive meeting I held with the Charity Commission, and the officers and friends of Finsbury Park. It was indeed a sad day when the late GLC ceased to be responsible for the park. Haringey have not looked after it well and I wish it had better, or at least *some* management, since it is a huge resource for people in London who lack sufficient open space. Friends of Finsbury Park are doing a good job.

Later the same day I gave the closing speech at the last session at the **Holloway Arts Festival** at Royal Northern Gardens and thanked the Rowan/Arts project for all their work in organising it.

13/07: **Centre 404** AGM in Camden Rd is a great support centre for people with learning difficulties, and they had their annual Garden Party and meeting which I was delighted to attend.

I am spending part of July doing my annual

walkabouts in the community, visiting local schemes, projects and a few play schemes that there are, and talking to people about their problems and the best part of being an MP.

EDUCATION/HEALTH

06/07: **St Jude and St Paul's School**: I was a guest of Year 6 who were unable to visit parliament this year because of schedule problems, so I went to a Q and A session where the students made it very clear they were concerned about play spaces, parks, and wider issues. I was delighted to try to answer their difficult questions and they are indeed a credit to their school. It was a great experience.

09/07: Sadly, John Hudson has retired from **Holloway School** and we gave him a good send off. It is no exaggeration to say that without him the school would probably have closed several years ago. He has turned it around and it now has huge central government investment and is doing very well. The new head is due in September and hopefully will carry on the good work. I understand this school now has a que for admissions.

16/07: It's that time of year again and I attended **Hargrave Park** Leavers Assembly and like so many others, this school has also improved radically over the years. Congratulations to Wendy Meredith.

24/06: I presented Records of Achievement Awards to the Year 11 students at **Islington Arts and Media School**. It is a pleasure to see this school improving year on year and this is the first group of school students who have been ALL Arts and Media students. I remain in close touch with the school and in strong support of it. Congratulations to Richard Ewing and all their staff for their achievements.

I was invited to open (02/07) **St John's Upper Holloway** Summer Bazaar and their new playground for the Under Fives and to support the governor and teachers and parents in their efforts to ensure this school fulfils its potential.

12/07: I had a briefing meeting with Marcia

Saunders of the **London North Central Health Authority** to discuss childrens' facilities in the Royal Free, Whittington and UCLH hospitals. I am determined to ensure that children's facilities remain on site and I look forward to meeting the new chief executive in due course.

15/07: I attended **Duncombe School**, Year 6's amazing assembly where they performed a very professional production of Alice in Wonderland including all 60 children. Year 5 provided backing vocals. Many parents attended, along with carers and friends. At risk of repeating myself, it was a joy to attend this event and to see the work put in by Barry O'Shea and his staff.

HOUSING:

29/06: Nicolette attended this meeting on my behalf. It focussed on promoting the **Fourth Option for Housing**. I am a member of the House of Commons Housing Council Group which has worked hard to come up with the facts and figures to persuade the government that the "fourth option" is a viable and preferable one from many angles: To address the remaining investment backlog of around £12 million over six years would require an annual revenue stream of £.75 billion a year for up to 30 years. The annual negative subsidy of £1.5 bilion and £0.55 billion profit from Right to Buy more than covers this level of investment. The historic disinvestment of capital receipts has created both a reserve and a justification for supporting this revenue stream. The fourth option is financilly viable and makes sense. I have leaflets (at the office) with a full outline of the fourth option if any one wants any.

30/06: I participated in an adjournment debate on **Council Housing** in which many Members supported the need for more investment in Council Housing. My speech is included in the Parliamentary Interventions attached.

01/07: Along with Cllr Catherine West and Derek Sawyer, and officials I visited

Cornwallis Square run by New Islington Housing Association and we were concerned about some of the management issues which are being addressed.

I remain very concerned about the lack of investment for new build and there's nothing like what is needed. The threshold has gone down from 15 to 10 relating to social housing in London, but we have to go much further and much faster and we will continue pressing for this until we make a dent in desperate housing shortage, which blights the lives of so many.

TRANSPORT

The government has made two welcome announcements this month, firstly on the abolition of the Strategic Rail Authority and the transfer of some powers of Network rail over to Transport for London, which will mean much better London integration of bus, tube and rail transport.

(20/07) Alistair Darling stated another £300 m of investment into London's transport infrastructure, with broad approval for the construction of Crossrail. Together with Martin Lynton MP (for Battersea) I have been pushing for the **East London line extension** to provide a route from Clapham junction through to Highbury and Islington, and Finsbury Park. Martin and I met John Armitt, Chief Executive of Network Rail, to argue the case for investment in London's infrastructure, and to push the case for the East London line. This meeting took place before the transfer of much of the responsibility over to Transport for London.

I will be working closely with Jeanette Arnold to push the East London line and for the urgently needed improvements to Finsbury Park station and its interchange.

ELDERLY:

25/06: **Age Concern Over 50s Festival** at the Rocket was a success and I did a Q & A session, with Jeanette Arnold and Cllr Bridget

Fox.

15/07: **Islington Pensioners Forum:** I gave a parliamentary report to them. They've now been in existence for 20 years and have achieved much and deserve congratulations for their hard work. Commander Barry Norman of Islington Police was also there.

PARLIAMENTARY:

29/06: I met Stephen Richards of MacMillan Nurses who is an old friend of mine as well as being the Regional Director of **MacMillan Nurses.**

01/07: I served on the **Standing Committee** regarding the Chilterns area of outstanding natural beauty: (est of conservation board) order 2004 and the Cotswolds area of outstanding natural beauty (est' of conservation board) order 2004. I strongly support the orders and wish we had such areas of beauty nearer us.

03/07: I spoke in the International Section of the newly formed **Labour Representation Committee**, put together by the Socialist Campaign Group and held at Congress House.

06/07: I went to a **CAB event hosted by David Lammy** who expressed grave concern about the shortage of effective lawyers in our community, and the problems of funding.

07/07: The **Dalit Solidarity Network** held an event in Westminster Central Hall and I attended in my capacity as trustee. I reported on our activities at the World Social Forum in January earlier this year.

ASYLUM/IMMIGRATION

Apart from my Des Brown meeting referred to earlier, I have also had talks with the Home Office officers, with whom I often disagree, but I welcome the introduction of any method which will speed up the immigration process, for people suffering as a result of this lengthy and drawn out process.

ATHLETICS

10/07: I didn't think this heading would turn up in this month's report but alas, I attended the Hi and Is Sport Relief event in Finsbury Park. Whilst last month, St James Park was the athletics venue, this month I was at the far more glamorous surroundings of Finsbury Park athletics track, where I took part in the first series of mile runs which is organised the Hi and Is, who should be congratulated on their good works here.

PEACE ACTIVITIES:

23/06: I took part in a **Woodcraft Peace Walk**, from the Ghandi Memorial statue in Tavistock Square, to Conway Hall in Red Lion Square, in the pouring rain. *Most* of the children appreciated *most* of the walk.

13/07: I met with a **Hiroshima Peace Group** at the House of Commons and they joined a Labour Action for Peace meeting following this.

STUDENTS

Sarah O'Neill and Imani Backes, both of La Sainte Union High School did work experience at both the parliamentary office, and the constituency offices (a week in each place) who were a terrific help.

Regular Advice Surgeries take place, mostly on Fridays. THERE ARE NO ADVICE SURGERIES IN AUGUST. Telephone 020 7226 5775 for further information about Advice Surgeries. **The pattern each month is as follows:**

1st Fri, 4 - 6 pm (**by appointment**): Old Fire Station, Mayton Street, N7

2nd Thurs, 10 - 12 noon (walk in): Mildmay Library, 21-23 Mildmay Park, N1

2nd Fri, 10 - 12 noon (walk in): Mayville Community Centre, Woodville Rd, N16

3rd Fri, 4 – 6 pm (walk in): Old Fire Station,
Mayton St, N7

4th Fri, 10 - 12 noon (**by appointment**): Caxton
House, 129 St John's Way, N19

Additional Advice Surgeries I held this month
included (24/06) a Turkish Women's Advice
Surgery at Durham Rd CAB.