STRATEGIES AGAINST RACISM

VOL 1

A comparison of a social movement and case studies of anti-racist
policy and practice in the local state

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The thesis compares two contrasting strategies employed with the aim of
combating particular forms of racism within contemporary Britain. Both
are assessed as political strategies in their own right and placed
within the broader context of reformist and revolutionary political
traditions.

The sociology of social movements is examined critically, as are
Marxist and post-Marxist writings on the role of human agency within
social structures and on the nature of social movements. The history of
the Anti Nazi League (ANL) in the late 1970s and its opposition to the
National Front is considered as an example of an anti-racist social
movement based on the Trotskyist model of the United Front. The degree
to which the Anti Nazi League corresponded to such a model is analysed
as are the potential broader applications for such a strategy.

The strategy with which the ANL is compared is the development of anti-
racist and equal opportunities policies within local government in the
1980s, primarily by Labour-controlled local authorities. The theory of
the local state and the political phenomenon of municipal socialism are
discussed, specifically the role of various groups operating in and
around local authorities in the formation and implementation of anti-
racist policy and practice. Following this general discussion, two case
studies in each of the areas of local authority housing, education and
employment are explored to consider in depth the problems of specific
anti-racist policies.

In summation the efficacy of the two strategies are considered as parts
of wider political currents in tandem with their declared specific
objectives.

Key Phrases: anti-racism; social movement; Anti Nazi League: local
state.

To my parents, without whom ...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introductory themes.

It is to be hoped that the title of a thesis both
indicates the purpose of the work and sets the fundamental terms of
reference which shape it. The *strategies* in question in the title
of this work are political strategies. They are specific in their
focus, inasmuch as they are anti-racist, whilst at the same time
being part of older and broader political traditions. Racism will
be considered as an ideology which is not immutable but subject to
both reproduction and alteration.[1] In this respect it will be
submitted that strategies against racism are followed by those who
believe that racism and its effects can be altered by human agency.

The object of this study is to compare two differing
approaches to combating racism, the prime anti-racist strategies of
the last ten years in Britain, and in that way to more fully
explore the way racism is confronted by the two sides of the Left
political tradition in Britain, of reformist and revolutionary
organisations.[2] The choice of the two strategies, namely the ANL
and the anti-racist policies of Left Labour Councils in the 1980s,
was based on two considerations. Firstly both have attracted large
numbers of anti-racist activists - those politically motivated to

not only fight racism but generally put that compulsion within a broader view of social dynamics. Secondly the way issues of racism are confronted by both strategies are reflective of the more anti-statist themes of 1970s in which the main objects of anti-racist attention were the police and extremist organisations such as the National Front and in the 1980s, when with the demise of the latter group the more widespread and amorphous racism in society was sought out at the local level via the local authorities.

The anti-racist social movement of the 1970s had its historical antecedents in the anti-fascist struggles of the 1930s[3] and was led by a revolutionary group, the Socialist Workers Party (SWP). The SWP argued for workers' self-activity, hostility to the established reformist political mechanisms within the capitalist state as a means for combating organised violent racism and its actions were built on an assumption that on the question of racism, as on others, the state could not be seen as neutral.[4]

The other anti-racist strategy, that pursued by those advocating working within the capitalist state, whilst adopting a Left reformist stance has, in the 1980s, been exemplified in the renaissance of 'Municipal Socialism' and the theory of the Local State.[5] Policies relating specifically to a division of the populace of the locale and the local authority's workers into sub-groups of women, ethnic minorities, disabled people and gay men and lesbians have been increasingly adopted. In particular 'race relations' policies have been initiated to redress what has been seen as a very obvious imbalance in terms of employment opportunities and service delivery within the realm of the local

council.

The thesis will draw out the contradictions between the two approaches to social change as expressed through the infra- and extra-state anti-racist strategies mentioned above and consider how these can be viewed as examples of reformist and revolutionary political theories in action. The revolutionary stance essentially locates racism within the capitalist system, irrevocably shaped by it, engrained in the activities of the capitalist state and only wholly removable by the abolition of the system which encompasses and reproduces it. It would point to the areas of corporate and state activity where unelected officials and groups have control. The structuralist Marxist argument, for example, emphasises the 'power' element in class power via the state and a suggestion that as has previously been shown, the position of socialist local councillors is such that they cannot operate truly autonomously under the weight of social forces over which they have no control, even with mass backing, unless they hand over the leadership of the campaigns to their own workers.[6] The humanist strand of Marxism in some respects throws up ways in which workers can use their potential power for change.

The reformist counter to both these variants[7] would be to argue not only that revolutionaries actively hinder the processes of bringing about meaningful change by their 'come the revolution' abstentionism but that they also underestimate the importance of both major and small-scale reforms in improving the quality of life for people now, rather than in some Elysian future.[8] In this respect the local authority with its

responsibility for housing, social services, education and

employment, amongst others, wields considerable power. In the 1980s

the 'local state', as it has been termed, has furthermore been seen

by the reformist Left as a refuge from and a buttress against the

worst ravages of "Thatcherism".[9]

When investigating contemporary themes such as these the

researcher is always more likely to be overtaken by events and by

the writings of others. Paul Gilroy, in his 'There ain't no black

in the Union Jack', devotes a chapter to the comparison of the two

anti-racist strategies. His arguments and appraisals are not

concordant with those expressed in this thesis but his reasons for

choosing them are valid. He sees the two currents as important :

> because each has a clear and substantial commitment to
> the cultural dimensions of struggle, moving beyond the
> confines of formal politics into popular discourses, and
> because each in a different way articulates with a class
> politics.[10]

Before venturing further into some of the questions

raised here, it is important to invoke the conceptual and

definitive criteria by which the thesis is moulded. This involves

briefly discussing, for the purpose of this thesis, the nature of

'race', racism and their relation to the state and ideology. The

general methodological framework can then be outlined before

describing the actual work undertaken and what it is hoped will be

gained by such a study.

1.2 'Race' and Racism

As Peter Fryer shows with excellent analysis, 'race' as a term used to divide up the human species has specific historical and social roots within the rise of capitalism and the advent of modern slavery.[11] CLR James came to much the same conclusion when he wrote:

> historically it is pretty well proved now that the ancient Greeks and Romans knew nothing about race. They had another standard - civilised and barbarian - and you could have a white skin and be a white barbarian and you could be black and civilised.[12]

The usage of the term 'race' frequently goes unquestioned, certainly in everyday parlance and in academic discourse there remain writers who avoid the problem by not giving a definition[13] and those who seek a more precise terminology which satisfies the various criteria set out by the vague way in which the idea of 'race' is commonly articulated.[14]

There are some commentators such as Miles, Lecourt and Alexander, who argue that there is no scientific evidence that the multiplicity of human variation can be divided up along the lines of phenotypical or genotypical variations and do not wish to use the term 'race', because of its unscientific basis and ideological connotations.[15] All seek to show, along Marxist materialist lines, that the question to be asked when looking at 'race' is not how the human species can be separated into holistic units by mental or

physical characteristics but why people should choose to delineate

humanity thus. For as Miles and Phizacklea note:

> 'Races', then, do not exist; they are socially created
> by human beings. 'Race' is not an objective, biological
> feature; it is an idea. The human species is not
> naturally divided into discrete and distinct biological
> 'races'; it has divided itself into what is believed are
> 'races' ... Hence 'races' only exist insofar as people
> think and believe as if they exist.[16]

Racism, however, is a different matter. As much as 'race' is a

human construction so its translation into an ideological setting

inscribes social meaning on supposed biological difference. As an

ideology racism is produced and reproduced under certain social

conditions. The nature of racism and the way in which it is

mediated can best be explained by referral to two key concepts for

Marxists - ideology and the state.

1.3 Ideology

The boundaries drawn around what constitutes ideology

are hardly narrow ones. The term has been formulated to distinguish

the science of ideas from metaphysics; used in an everyday

pejorative sense, e.g. when local politicians are attacked for

acting 'ideologically'; and for Marx and Marxists after him,

ideology is a given set of ideas which arise from a given set of

material circumstances that are not immutable. The nature of the

social circumstances do, however, wholly shape all ideas within

human society. Larrain argues, as other Marxists would, that

because of the distortions of human relations in class society, the application of 'Concepts such as ideology ... cannot but imply a distorted state of affairs'[17] and that ideology should be used in the context of discussing the class nature of society.

There has been much debate in the Marxist and pseudo-Marxist literature as to the true nature of ideology and whether there exists one ideology or many.[18] From the concept of social being determining consciousness, as stated by Marx, to the structuralism of Althusser and the re-assertion of humanism by the post-Althusserians, attempts to develop a theory which can take account of a material base underpinning systems of ideas and practices altering that material base have proliferated. In his useful overview of the subject, Larrain raises a key issue:

> Ideology unites in one phenomenon, consciousness and reality. This is the reason why ideology cannot be dissolved by mental criticism; it can only be dealt with by solving in practice the social contradictions which give rise to it ... *In this sense, for Marx revolutionary practice and not science is the only way to overcome ideology.*[19]
>
> [my emphasis]

This is centrally important, as will be seen later, in the consideration of local authority anti-racist strategies which are in part based on the assumption that racism is a false idea that can be surmounted by appeals to reason and the dissemination of alternative ideas - an anti-racist counter-culture. To put it more explicitly, the Marxist argument is that the way to change the material basis of the ideology of racism is by bringing about

material change.

Marxist analyses of racism have at times tended to be reductionist - binding historical materialism within the base/superstructure straightjacket. For Cox, amongst others[20], racism developed during the nineteenth century period of slavery as a simple justification for the inhumane treatment of black slaves and has remained embedded in the national psyche ever since. This duality of a conspiracy theory (the assumption that racism was first used simply to justify slavery and then more recently to 'divide and rule' the working class) and idealism (that without the material basis of slavery for racism the idea has its own momentum) is most problematic and has been criticised by Gabriel and Ben-Tovim for not telling the full story whilst Fryer gives a fuller, more rounded attempt at an analysis of the roots of racism.[21] Lecourt has also sought to re-assert the material base of racism as an ideology. He argues that there should be:

> no intention of reducing racism to the realm of ideas
> ... ideas do not exist outside the apparatuses within
> which their reproduction occurs ... the predominance of
> a racist ideology in the ideological class struggle of a
> given social formation involves analysing the workings
> of the ideological apparatuses of the state and
> revealing the mechanisms wherby this ideology is
> reproduced.[22]

This last theme of the production and reproduction of the ideology of racism is one that has been used to effect by Robert Miles[23] who reasserts the centrality of the working class in the reproduction of the ideology of racism as part of the

contradictory ideologies prevailing at any time. He makes the point that racism as an ideology needs a material base to be rooted in and that however false, in some ways it must make 'sense' and provide real answers for people. For Miles the reproduction of the ideology of racism 'is not so much a function of ideas themselves but of the material context (which includes not simply the 'economic' but also the political and ideological) in which they are reproduced'[24].

In sum, racism is best viewed as an ideology which is not straightforwardly disseminated through the working class by ruling class dictat but rather has its own conditions of generation and regeneration rooted within the material forces operating in capitalist class society. As such racism has a 'common-sense' element and does not have to be logically consistent to be prevalent. Despite appeals to scientific evidence and the 'all equal under the skin' argument, the idea of 'race' and the social meaning attached seem almost ineradicable. If anything the recent development of anti-racism in local authorities and elsewhere has heightened people's awareness of the importance of 'race'. For if there are no 'races', how can there be 'race relations'? If one is to offer a definition of racism, it seems that Miles comes nearest when he describes it as:

> an ideology which ascribes negatively evaluated characteristics in a deterministic manner (which may or may not be justified) to a group which is additionally identified as being in some way biologically (phenotypically or genotypically) distinct.[25]

In part that ideology is mediated through the policies and practices of the state - whereby 'race relations' are managed. The nature and form of ideology is usually considered in relation to the state and in that respect an investigation of the ideology of racism in Britain is closely linked to the actions of the British state.

1.4   The State

The nature of the state will be discussed at greater length in Chapter 4 below, with reference both to the theorisation of the local state and municipal anti-racism in particular. The revival of interest on the Labour Left in local government and the politics of municipal socialism have come about in the Britain of the 1980s with the influence of the political current of 'Bennism'. As the Eurocommunist wing of the Communist Party might effectively be considered to be theoreticians for the Labour left, much of what Bennism consists of also comes under the aegis of Eurocummunism and this ties in with the notion of the 'relative autonomy of the local state'.[26] Some writers of the Eurocommunist *oeuvre*, such as Stuart Hall, are rightly critical of the lack of success in Britain of 'race relations' policies but see the solution through greater acountability and responsiveness on the part of the state.[27] Gabriel and Ben-Tovim write, in arguing for more sophistication from those who would disclaim the state as inherently racist, that:

> a more satisfactory alternative is to assume that some
> manoeuvrability is possible within political practice.
> The policies themselves then justify careful
> examination. The economic and political constraints can
> thus be considered as the necessary framework within
> which variation is possible.[28]

The problem remains in finding a realistic definition of the

'constraints'.

Robert Miles[29] similarly urges an avoidance of the

vulgar Marxists' automatic correlation between racist effects and

racist causes in state activity. He questions the view that British

capital and the state have consciously sought to divide the working

class by the process of racialisation of part of the slave stock

(and later the working class) and concludes that the state could

not mediate racism at the behest of capital, if only because of the

fractionalisation of capital and the semi-autonomous nature of the

state in relation to capital. This does not, however, lead to the

conclusion that the state acts in a racist manner. For Miles, the

confusion occurs in others when they seek to prove the necessity of

racism for capital - thereby confusing effect with causality.

The nature of the state, its position within modern

capitalism and prospects for its reform are themes repeatedly

thrown up in the course of the thesis. For more specific

considerations of the effects of state racism in practice there are

several worthwhile studies, for example in the collection by the

CCCS and the writings of Castles & Kosack which focused upon the

importance of black labour for British capital's post-war

regeneration.[30] In these studies of racism and the state much

debate revolves around the degree of intentionality and the degree of conscious racism prevalent in various parts of the state.

There is a black nationalist, radical anti-statist, vein of writing which homes in on the state as the key force in the reproduction of racism.[31] The difficulty in looking too myopically at the state is one of losing the broader analysis which can explain why the state plays such a part in the reproduction of the ideology of racism within the framework of capitalist relations, not set apart from them. The conclusion forwarded by the anti-statists is that the working class has little to offer black people over and above their own involvement in the class struggle. The Marxist corrective might suggest that the state's task of class domination is not only basic but also its specific reason for existence and that it is a false premise to present a collective black 'community' of interests in Britain which can be used as an analytical tool in contrast with, or external to, class relations.

The definition of what the capitalist state actually consists of has been further developed by Althusser and Gramsci.[32] More recently Alex Callinicos has paraphrased Marx (On the Jewish Question) in a piece which could have been directed at those who argue for the relative autonomy of the local state. Callinicos contends that:

> Human emancipation can be completed ... not through the perfection of the state as an autonomous institution by means of its further democratisation; but by its abolition and with it the aboliton of the distinction between state and society.[33]

The debate remains over whether the state carries out

non-class tasks 'inevitably in class distorted ways for class ends

with class consequences'[34] as Hal Draper suggests; whether the

state can be transformed and with it capitalist society or whether,

as Lenin argued, 'the liberation of the oppressed class is

impossible not only without a violent revolution but also without

the destruction of the apparatus of state power'[35]. Having briefly

raised the three key theoretical antecedents to the thesis - the

nature of racism, its role as an ideology and the role of the state

in the reproduction of ideologies - the general theoretical and

methodological perspectives which inform the research can be set

against them. The methodologies adopted here are shaped by the

nature of the objects under investigation and therefore the anti-

racist social movement and local authority anti-racist strategies

are considered separately below.

1.5   Theoretical Perspectives

The theoretical basis for this thesis may at first sight

appear to be a fudged compromise between Marx and Weber. What has

been adopted is the delineation between explanatory and analytical

theory as developed by Harold Fallding[36] and from that to base this

thesis within an analytical framework. There are parallels between

the split in theories as laid out by Fallding and the twin currents

in Marxism - scientific and critical - as identified by Alvin

Gouldner.[37] The work of Fallding thus provides a useful starting

point for a delineation of the theoretical thrust of the rest of

the thesis.

One of Fallding's central claims in 'The Sociological Task' was that, 'To have a theory about anything is to have an explanation for it'[38]. He argued that at the same time as there were coherent explanatory theories for social (and scientific) phenomena, there were also less grandiose tools in the theoretician's armoury. These he termed components of analytical theory — offering a way to conceptualise society in a cogent way without constant recourse to a fuller, broader theorem. The contention that Fallding made was that:

> It involves no contradiction, surely, to acknowledge that explanatory theory is the ultimate goal of our science and to insist that we come to it by stages, each of which must be vigourous in itself.[39]

As a valuable post in this 'stagism', Fallding suggested the heuristic of the Weberian ideal type.

Weber sought to give ideal types a meaning different to that of purely descriptive concepts. If descriptive types gather together the salient features of empirical phenomena, then, as Anthony Giddens notes, ideal types are 'constituted by the abstraction and combination of a number of elements which, although found in reality, are rarely or never discovered in their specific form'[40]. Most fundamentally for Weber, as Giddens argues, the transition from descriptive to ideal types takes place when we move from descriptive classification of phenomena towards explanatory or theoretical analysis of those phenomena. Giddens terminology clashes with that of Fallding somewhat — the former choosing to differentiate between descriptive and

theoretical/explanatory analyses and the latter using analytical and explanatory theories to express much the same division. There are some problems with both these modes of analysis or at least prospective problems, with their interpretation in terms of the holism of Marxism. The development of analytical theory, as Fallding would term it, can be seen as the position occupied by much standard sociological theory especially structural-functionalism which runs as a counter-current to Marxism.

Whilst not wishing to enter the Marxism/sociology debate here, the implications from Fallding are that there are elements of sociological theory which, whilst resting upon certain assumptions regarding the nature of society, can be held to be 'above ideology'. It is one thing to recognise one's theoretical antecedents and quite another to deny or deny by omission, their existence. There are some examples of sociological research in which the writers seek to set out their theoretical stall above any one paradigm, in an effort to most fully represent the complexity of modern society.[41] In a similar vein many notions antithetical to the basic premises of Marxism, re class society etc, seek to nestle under the wing of Marxism (as will be seen in Chapter 4).[42] For that reason alone it is worth reiterating the argument of Gouldner :

> Marx did not think of his theory simply as a social science (the view of "clubby" academicians who want to "normalise" Marxism into something familiar). It was also a doctrine of violent revolution.[43]

If Gouldner chooses to locate within Marxism two tendencies - scientific and critical - then thesis may be defined as both analytical and critical. It is analytical in Fallding's terms; not a contribution to explanatory theory but a supportive analysis to Marxist theory on racism and relations to the local state. Similarly, the thesis also has a critical side which, as Gouldner somewhat simplistically puts it, eschews the tendency to 'plunge into action at some point, in the expectation that action will resolve epistemological ambiguities'.[44]

1.6 Methodological Perspectives

In the first chapter of their book 'The Local Politics of Race', Ben-Tovim et al present a spirited defence of the role of the researcher as wholly involved with and having an effect upon the subject of their research. Not all researchers explicitly share their commitment to 'inject the products of social science into the political and policy process'.[45] The methodology of this thesis is, in some respects, moulded by and a response to, prior 'race relations' writings. The choice of categories in the case studies in the 'local state' section, for example, owes a debt to Daniel.[46] Approaching the task from a Marxist viewpoint there are a number of forthright texts which offer a critical analysis of the failings of previous state initiatives on racism but are less than straightforward on the Marxist approach to fighting racism as a part of the struggle against capitalism.[47] On the other hand, there are several studies, ranging from the liberally concerned to the urban managerialist, on the various

ways that local authorities can seek to lessen the effects of racism

remove discrimination by greater integration of 'race relations'

structures within a corporate management organisation and the increased

political commitment of senior officers and councillors.[48]

In emphasising their approach to what is essentially action

research, Ben-Tovim et al argue that,

> In our view 'research' should be seen as a normal attribute
> of political action which involves, or should involve, a
> form of analysis based on a realistic and concrete
> assessment of the balance of political forces and the
> consequences of different courses of action.[49]

This thesis features to a large extent an investigation of

the local policy making structures on 'race relations'. What are drawn

as conclusions, however, may not have as direct an input as Ben-Tovim

et al would hope for in terms of improvements to be made in local

authority policy and practice. The research is more generally concerned

with identifying and establishing the limitations upon the various

groups and interests involved in the local politics of anti-racism and

thus suggesting the constraints on how far local authority anti-racism

can hope to develop.

The other major part of the thesis looks at what may be

attainable through the development of an anti-racist social movement

and whether the specificity of a social movement is both a positive

factor and at the same time a self-imposed limit on its aims. As mooted

earlier, this research did involve a considerable degree of researcher

involvement, not only participant observation. The formal procedures of

the research process were followed where appropriate but by necessity

these were supplemented by the involvement of the researcher in political campaigns and making political interventions, which in some eyes might seem to subvert the notion of the impartial observer. While there are ambiguities in the analysis and the political thrust of Ben-Tovim et al, they are critical of those who argue for value free-research on 'race' in condemning the abstention of the researcher from the research-based intervention. They write:

> Attempts to depoliticise the research process are unrealisable and serve to undermine attempts to mount a serious and effective challenge to institutionalised racism and inequality. In our view the focus of the research question, the context in which it is carried out and the use to which it is put make research process political from beginning to end.[50]

This thesis, is, therefore political and deals with a highly politicised subject. What it does not do is to seek to avoid the political attitudes and roles of influentials within anti-racist activity. Nor does it assume that the fundamental weaknesses of either strategy against racism can be located without recourse to their relations to the capitalist state and the way in which change is brought about in capitalist society.

1.7 The anti-racist social movement in Britain in the late 1970s.

An obvious, though important starting point is the fact that the anti-racist social movement, under the auspices of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), was a short-term contemporary event, being most active in the period 1978-79. While it can now be looked at in its totality with

the benefit of a decade's reflection it is not long enough ago in historical terms to have merited the scholastic works from which the enterprising researcher can draw inspiration (or information). In that respect the definitive account of the anti-racist movement has still to be written and this can be only one view of it.

Looking at the anti-racist movement as a whole has led, for the purpose of this thesis, to a study revolving around the ANL and its relations to the rest of the movement and to the British state, particularly the police. This is not only because of the primacy of the ANL and the challenge it presented to the National Front (NF) but also because of the stress it placed on the avoidance of the usual forums of political change, the local elections, the council chamber and the Houses of Parliament. It will be noted that often in the course of the thesis the ANL is referred to as though it was *the* movement. This is not done with the intention of ignoring the contribution made by others but rather to highlight the leadership in the movement given by the ANL and its centrality in the demise of the NF (although this is contested by some chroniclers of the period who would point to the way Margaret Thatcher assumed the racist mantle in the run up to the 1979 General Election.[51]) The questions have to be raised not only of the import of the ANL in the defeat of the NF but also the degree to which its tactics brought it to the fore of all anti-racist groupings at the time. In the adoption of a conceptual framework with which to explore the ANL as an anti-racist mass social movement, there were two central elements to be integrated - the *analytical* and *contextual*.

The *analytical* framework is built around the problematic of the sociology of social movements. Much of this field has been informed by social psychologists and influenced by the works of Erving Goffman and the theory of symbolic interactionism[52] in exploring motivational forces which drive individuals into collective social activity. The majority of this work, emanating from the United States, drew upon the experiences in the US in the 1960s of the civil rights movement[53], the women's movement and the gay rights movement.

Neil Smelser's 'Theory of Collective Behaviour',[54] although now dated, is still noted for typologising and analysing the various forms of collective behaviour which at their most complex fuse into the social movement. The key areas to be explored for Smelser were - (i) whether social movements are more sophisticated forms of collective behaviour; (ii) whether there are different levels of social movement activity which can be delineated; and (iii) if it possible to assess who joins a social movement. For the purpose of this thesis these questions have been best explored, from a social psychological angle, by the American writers Lofland and Zircher & Snow. In particular they attempt to draw out the psychological and motivational aspects appropriate to the type of social movement under analysis here.

The emphasis on the sociology of social movements is made to place the anti-racist movement in a sociological context which not only provides a suitable working typology of the movement but which can fully take account of the political motivations and internal political ferment and contest for ideas within a social movement. The representation of the movement may not be easily accomodated within the models provided by the above mentioned writers, not least because of

their broader assumptions about the nature of conflict and change within society. There are also difficulties in including the cognitive angle in terms of social movement organisation, ideology and strategy within such a framework which is presented at the level of relating to the pre-constituted movement. Whilst the synchronic analyses of the above authors have uses in typologising social movements, it may be that without taking a diachronic view the root causes of discontent which throw up social movements are played down or ignored completely. It was with this in mind that a comparison was drawn between a social psychological analysis of social movements and what Marxist writers had to say on the motivation of individuals acting in concert to bring about social change.

Apart from the works of Heberle, Touraine and Roberts and Kloss[55] there has been little written on social movements, *qua* social movements, from the Marxist or quasi-Marxist school. There is a clear anti-psychologism in a writer such as Poulantzas, who in his famous debate with Milliband stressed the importance of viewing individuals as 'bearers' (*trajer*) of social relations (echoing Althusser)[56]. By contrast Sartre and Thompson sought to re-assert the humanist element in Marxism which takes account of the way individuals are positioned within social activity and engage in collective action in concert.[57] The attempts of Marxists to put the individual into historical forces, primarily classes, without locating any key individual as the driving force of history, gives a more rounded if less constructed analysis of the impetus behind social movements. Once again the issues of Marxist humanism - as

with those of the sociology of social movements - are raised in Chapter 2 not for their divertive merits but in an attempt to develop a typology for the anti-racist social movement which could take account of societal factors, such as class relations and political currents, whilst taking acount of what made the ANL attractive to non-aligned individuals.

The *contextual* perspective refers to the historical forebears of the anti-racist social movement. As will be noted in much greater detail in Chapter 3 below, although the images of Civil Rights demonstrations in the U.S. may seem more relevant, it would be inconsistent to seek to explain the British anti-racist social movement of the late 1970s without recourse to its historical forebears. The ANL was a body built broadly along the lines of the United Front, as formulated by Leon Trotsky in the 1930s, which drew upon the historical precedents of the Left's struggle against fascism in the 1930s, particularly in Britain.

Whether the ANL actually approximated towards a United Front, and whether such a model was appropriate for 1970s Britain will be considered below, as will some of the most apposite of the many critiques of the strategy and tactics employed by the ANL. The main tenets of anti-racism proposed by the ANL were the self-activity of those opposed to racism and outright physical opposition to the NF and other fascist groups. Furthermore, mass propaganda was disseminated in an attempt to build groups away from the leaderships of political parties, trade unions etc. who were not all supportive of the tactics of the ANL.

Although there is no inevitable connection between

racism and fascism, nor a Chinese wall dividing them, the racism practised by fascist groups such as the NF was central to their political ideology. It is worth reiterating that the NF's major recruitment factor was its policy on 'race'. Similarly, sections of the opposition to the NF noted the popular racist vein which the NF tapped and were at pains to stop the NF being able to capitalise and more particularly mobilise upon popular racism and convert it into the basis for a potential fascist mass movement. This brings in to question the ways in which such a movement could be applied to a more amorphous ideology such as racism rather than the specifics of nascent fascism and brings into question the flexibility of the ANL model as an anti-racist social force operating outside of the state in its national or local forms.

1.8 Key Informants in Empirical Research

Many of the secondary sources were national and local newspapers, as well as journals and the publications of the major combatants - the ANL, the SWP, Communist Party and the Labour Party. Reference is also made to leaflets and less formal publications. Interviews were conducted with key informants in 3 separate areas. These involved individuals in the leadership and national organisation of the ANL and the SWP at the time (for a list of interviewees used see Notes). These people provided politically informed analyses and assessments of the movement and gave a more holistic viewpoint on the role of the movement. Where interviews were undertaken with ex-members of the ANL from local

branches, particularly in Sheffield, Birmingham and London, these helped to flesh out the picture of local organisation and structure, both in terms of the relationship between the various bodies comprising the ANL and the use of cultural politics, such as Rock Against Racism, as a unifying force. The third group of respondents were those in affiliated anfd interested organisations who held differing views about how to fight racism and the highly racist neo-fascism of the NF. These included the Labour Party, the Communist Party, and the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Each of these, whilst expressing their abhorrence of the NF, came into conflict with the group which was the largest anti-fascist force at the time, the ANL.

The technique used was straightforward - a fairly open-ended interview was adopted which consisted of leading the interviewees through the key events of the period so that their recollections had certain cognitive hooks to hang upon. This was then followed up with questions relating to a more general appraisal of the merits and demerits of the ANL, the political debates running through the movement and the possibility of a future mass movement taking on a similar type character in the future. In this way the particular facets of the movement were drawn out and thus the strengths and limits of this strategy. It further led to a process of ascertaining how good a fit the ANL was with either the classical United Front model or with the social movement models discussed in Chapter 2.

The intention of the study was to build up a picture of the period 1977-79 in which the NF, a small fascist party, was of

the opinion that it could grow substantially by the mobilisation of popular racism. Approaches were made to the NF and other individuals involved in the far-right for information but with little success. The one-sidedness of the primary sources is therefore acknowledged. The opposition, coalescing around the ANL, was able to set itself up as a pole of attraction for anti-racists opposed to the the NF but in the process of doing so attracted others. For the SWP, the question is raised as to the role of a leading body within the ANL, which wholly overestimated the *esprit de corps* and revolutionary potential of the anti-racist movement. The debate over the degree to which the NF was stopped by the ANL is aired, along wth the other possible reasons for the Front's demise. The concluding Chapter returns to the two main themes of the investigation of the ANL as an anti-racist social movement - the degree of its success and its application as a general anti-racist strategy.

In contrast, the focus for anti-racism in the early 1980s moved from the streets and mass mobilisations to the Town Halls and committee rooms of Left Labour councils and that provides the other strategy under consideration in this thesis. The comparison between the two strategies is also reflective of different epochs in British history. The ANL was formed towards the end of the last Labour Government and overlapped with the series of public sector disputes labelled the 'winter of discontent' when strikes and mass mobilisations were more commonplace and the ideas of self-activity outside the confines of the local state were more prevalent. By comparison, local authority anti-racism is almost

wholly a product of the Thatcher years and, as will be discussed in
Chapter 4, must be appraised both in terms of the Conservative
Government's relations with local government and the Labour Left's
perceptions of the failings of the Callaghan and Wilson
Governments.

Local Authority Anti-Racism in the 1980s.

1.9 Methodology employed - fieldwork for case studies

As with most other areas of study, research on the
problems of initiating and developing anti-racism policies within
local authorities can be undertaken in a number of ways. Both
operational and methodological factors precluded the choice of a
quantitative approach to the investigations. The two main factors
which shaped the style and content of this major section of the
thesis were both geographical and temporal. The political analyses
were enhanced during the course of research (1984-88) by the
collapse of much of what could be called 'municipal socialism' in
the face of fiscal and political crises.

To help build up a general picture a purely exploratory
pilot study was intiated within the W. Midlands area. This
consisted of contacting officers within local authorities in the
W. Midlands and discussing their policies and practices with key
informants in the area of 'race relations'. It soon became clear,
however, that there were more fruitful areas of study in other
parts of the country, most crucially London, which would provide

better and more relevant subjects for analysis. This should not be dismissed as anti- parochialism, although there may be elements of truth within that notion.[58] Rather it is an admission that what councils are struggling with in the W. Midlands at the moment in terms of anti-racist policy-making and implementation, even in a city the size of Birmingham, is at a lower level, is shaped by different traditions and is in many respects less sophisticated than that of many London Labour-controlled authorities. Given that London was where the greatest number of anti-racist activists were, and for the formulation of a strategy the presence of activists was important, it is perhaps unsurprising that the clearest example of the problems of municipal anti-racism occur there. The emphasis of the thesis was thus drawn to the metropolis, though not entirely.

One of the single most important features about the development of local authority strategies against racism is that they are in their infancy. It was in the 1976 Race Relations Act that the onus was first put upon local authorities to attempt to lessen racial discrimination and promote equality of opportunity. In the decade-plus since then the uptake of this responsibility has been varied from authority to authority and it has been to the alleged weaknesses of the Act that activists working within local government have sought to develop their own specific anti-racist policies. What it did provide for some local authorities for the first time was an implicit admission in law that institutional racism did exist and gave local councils a legislative peg on which to hang their policy frameworks.

Since the 1976 Act, though mostly since the early

1980s, there has been a steady growth in the number of councils adopting anti-racist policy statements, setting up 'race relations' units and appointing 'race relations' advisors, introducing contract compliance rules and instituting other policies aimed at the minimisation of racial discrimination. What this has led to in terms of research is the problem of investigating an area of policy making and implementation which in many respects is so recent that it is difficult to ascertain the degree of success of such policies. A way round this difficulty was found in what may be termed 'ambulance chasing' - to be more precise exploring those authorities where on specific issues, the 'race relations' policy was found to be lacking or the whole anti-racist procedure was in crisis. This may appear to over-dramatise the situations by choosing the scenarios where conflict was paramount but the fact that some of the contradictions, expectations and conflicts in local anti-racism are writ large in the case studies here does not invalidate them or deny their import.

To assess the relationships and conflicts within and around the local state anti-racist venture, it seemed to be most appropriate to look at those areas where the apparent concensus had broken down over the formulation or implementation of 'race relations' policies. This was where there was open conflict over the best way to fight instances of racism; where racism was coming from individuals or was part of the institution of the local authority itself; or where the people supposed to be carrying out the policies of a council were deemed not to be the best suited to the task. It was with these instances that certain structural

factors limiting anti-racist strategies as well as previously

unthought of factors came to light. The conclusions drawn from the

six case studies presented below may not always throw up better

'race relations' policies for local government but they contribute

to the debate over the 'Local State' concept and its efficacy for

anti-racist practice and 'municipal socialism' in general.

Hammerseley & Atkinson sum up the intentions of this research

method thus:

> Social events themselves may also stimulate research,
> providing an opportunity to explore some unusual
> occurrence or to test a theory. Notable here
> are...political crises that promise to reveal what
> happens when the limiting factors that normally
> constrain a particular element of social life are
> breached. At such times social phenomena that are
> otherwise taken-for-granted become visibly problematic
> for the participants themselves, and thus for the
> observer.[59]

As Hammerseley & Atkinson point out, most ethnographic

research has been concerned with developing theories rather than

merely testing existing hypotheses. The research undertaken here in

local authorities' strategies against racism was generated by a

variety of means. Primary approaches were made to the local

authorities themselves - to top and key influentials[60] within the

local council structure. That involved seeking senior officers for

interviews and information, broadening the sweep to junior officers

where necessary, though more than once a degree of 'economy with

the truth' was required to elicit responses from officers all too

wary of any potentially adverse publicity. The access accorded to a

researcher is at best irregular, despite the best efforts towards an organised and equitable representation in each of the case studies (for a list of interviewees used see Notes).

The overt political input had then to be taken into consideration both through the very direct influence of local councillors and the more distanced actions of trade unions and external pressure groups. In each of the case studies the amount of consideration given to the relevant groups is directly related to their relevance to the case in question. The methods of gleaning information were not always formal interviews, other methods adopted including attending political meetings, pickets and demonstrations and drawing on informal discussions in a variety of venues. Once again, as stated above, this involved a considerable degree of participation on my part in the political process. It could not have been otherwise.

In the conclusions to each case-study chapter reference will be made to the work of both Merton[61] and Offe[62] who have both attempted to come to terms with the ambivalent and contradictory positions occupied by those working within the state. Merton expresses through sociological ambivalence the processes through which structures generate the circumstances in which ambivalence is embedded in statuses and status-sets. In the application of the societal divisions of 'status-sets' and the implicit anti-Marxism, in Merton's analysis are problematic, his work does have its merits, not least in his stress on the centrality of conflicts of interests and values. Offe goes beyond Merton's approach and seeks to bring out the inherent contradictions in the capitalist system

which, he believes, are refracted in the relationship between legitimacy and efficiency in the demands of the state. The merit of both works is in restating the notions of ambivalence and contradiction which will be presented as characterising the positions of the local statists' attempts to combat racism.

The case studies show how serious problems have repeatedly come about as Labour councillors seek to implement radical programmes against hostile circumstances over which they do not have control. The importance of the case studies is not in their proscriptive ability, rather they attempt to show some of the inherent problems and failings of Left reformism as attempted most recently through the strategy of municipal socialism and in particular as a means of attacking the causes and effects of the ideology of racism. The local authority case studies comprise: an eviction of council tenants for racial harrassment in Newham; the CRE investigation into council housing in Hackney; the Islamia School's quest for voluntary aided status and the Maureen McGoldrick saga in Brent; the appointment of Sam Bond as the head of Liverpool's first Race Relations Unit and the strike over racial harassment in Islington's Housing Department.

1.10 Summary

The conclusion will have to confront the question which haunts all research which takes on case-work. Are the case studies indicative or merely illustrative of general themes? Do even six different case studies provide an accurate picture of municipal

anti-racism and can the Anti Nazi League or any other anti-racist movement be described as a *typical* anti-racist movement? Inevitably the degree of interpretation lies in the hands of the researcher. The themes reiterated below beyond the bounds of anti-racist strategy will be those which determine other political strategies, the relationship of politics to the state and the influence of ideology and its reproduction in modern Britain. It is an interactive process in which the strategies themselves can have an effect on the way 'race relations' are constructed. But it would be remiss to include too many tentative conclusions in what is supposed to be an introduction. The comparison, which takes anti-racism as its motif, is whether political change is best achieved through the organs of the state or separate from it.

CHAPTER 2

On the nature of Social Movements

2.1 Introduction

If, as was suggested in Chapter 1, the coalition of anti-racist forces which gathered in opposition to the National Front in the late 1970s, especially around the Anti Nazi League, constituted a social movement, how is this movement to be approached ? It can be viewed as an aberrance, a specific reaction to the specific political and social circumstances of the time. It can be typologised by attempting to probe the motivations of the individuals and groups which joined the movement via their social networks, the degree of organisation of the movement or the degree of social hostility developed by the movement. Another approach, the one which is seen as to be the most appropriate here, is to find precedents and comparative movements which the movement under consideration can be held up against. Thus, although the other views will be considered for their worth and the insight which they can project into a study of the anti-racist movement, it is the perspective, of the model of the Trotskyist United Front which has proven most illuminating.

At one time Marxists may have been annexed from other social theorists by their assertion of the centrality of the working class as the agency for fundamental social change. In the last 25 years, various American and European academics have held up social movements as new

social collectives which can prefigure a new historical epoch. For writers such as Andre Gorz, Alain Touraine in France, Alvin Gouldner in the U.S. and Jurgen Habermas in Germany, the new movements have gone beyond the problems of instigating workers' revolution and have entered social relations without the old parties and their constituents. As Aronovitz notes, 'Social movements became the euphemism for the "new" subject.'' Furthermore many of the demands of those movements for sexual liberation and racial equality have been taken up by those involved in the municipal socialism enterprises discussed below (see Chapter 4).

For many on the Left the social movement has become a new form of political expression unemcumbered by any reliance on what is usually termed the 'white, male' working class and has the added attraction of being apparently autonomous and infinitely more flexible. There has developed, particularly in America, a sociology of social movements which stresses the conflictual aspects of society thereby to some extent escaping the Parsonian web. However beyond the psychological and structuralist theories which still hold sway in the social movements debate, those writers approaching the subject from a supposedly Marxist standpoint, at least which includes an element of class society, offer a relatively uncritical appreciation of the new movements which belies the rigorous criticisms applied to Marxist theory.

At one level, a social movement is a group of people seeking to make their own history. That axiom will not, however, serve the purpose as a definition, precisely because whilst having some authenticity it is lacking in definition. Herbert Blumer experienced

the same problem in calling social movements 'collective enterprises to establish a new order of life'.[2] If this interpretation catches some of the flavour, it remains couched in ambiguities. At the same time the specifically political nature of social movements is such that it contains within it a resonance of the division of the economic and the political under capitalism. Heberle comes closer to the essence of social movements when he defines them as 'a specific kind of concerted-action groups; they last longer and are more integrated than mobs, masses and crowds, and yet are not organised like political clubs and organisations.'[3] This definition, though, has an essentially descriptive rather than explanatory usage.

Social movements in the post-war period have been considered in mainstream sociology as disruptive forces and channels for popular protest. Many Western, specifically American, observers focused on social movements as a category for investigation in the 1960s, a period of mass political upheaval and 'movementism'. Much of the research was aimed at movements as singular movements and the way in which their reform could lead to social integration (although the late 1970s on both sides of the Atlantic saw a neo-conservative tide undermining social movements and in some cases their disintegration). Some writers (Blumer, Toch & McLaughlin) have stressed the psychological aspects in which a social movement is 'an effort by a large number of people to solve collectively a problem they feel they have in common.'[4] For others (Cantril, King, Gusfield & Wilkinson), temporal and geographical factors emerge to explain 'a group venture extending beyond a local community or a single event and involving a systematic effort to inaugurate changes in thought, behaviour and social relationships.'[5]

A major factor in the problematic of isolating the essence of social movements is the diversity of groups under consideration. Within the ANL, for example, there was more than one Trotskyist grouping, the Communist Party, parts of the Labour Party, religious groups, black organisations and trade unions, as well as number of personalities from the arts and sport. Non-Marxist writers (especially those coming from the field of social psychology) have tried to ascribe equal weight to differing movements, from the religious to the secular, revolutionary to reactionary and co-operative to schismatic. Marxist writers, by bringing in a historical perspective and reiterating the fundamental contradictions inherent in class society, by and large do not see groups seeking to change the social order as 'deviant' nor do they equate a religious cult with a revolutionary movement, for example. This is not meant to suggest, it must be noted, that there is a collective opinion on the question, which at its heart, reflects the ability of the individual, through collective means, to have an influence upon society.

An important starting point is the work of Rudolf Heberle. In his 'Social Movements: An Introduction to Political Sociology', Heberle invokes the political element, using the *political* as the primary characteristic for a social movement, in that 'it aims to bring about fundamental changes in the social order, especially in those basic institutions of property and labour relationships.'[6] This includes workers' movements, anti-colonial movements, peasants' movements and, of course, fascist movements. Heberle excludes, however, religious movements because of what he sees as their inherent conservatism in accepting the basic social structure of society.[7]

He goes on to describe social movements as attempts to change power and order in relation to social trends and tendencies. These trends, he argues, are most frequently unplanned, 'the aggregate effect of many individual actors'. This is a notably voluntarist approach but Heberle makes a further key point on the composition of social movements. Roberts and Kloss give the best summary of his position:

> Movements are special kinds of social collectivity that is not organised but may have many members who belong to organised groups; therefore a movement is a social collective that has some element of planning or of goal orientation within it. Insofar as social movements that seek to change the power relationships of a society are political or pre-political there is planning within the movement.[8]

In the anti-racist movement of the 1970s, for example, which is examined in Chapter 3 below, there existed an amalgam of organised groups which brought about centralised political planning wihin the movement - whilst each group attempted to retain a degree of ideological autonomy. An account of such social movements has to take account of the different ideologies of the participants and participant bodies as they entered the movement.

Whilst Heberle is a useful beginning there are two other strands to be followed. One expressly tries to confront the nature of social movements and their joiners, particularly the latter. This comes from an interactionist perspective, rooted in social psychology. Smelser, Lofland[9] and others have attempted to explain why individuals join social movements and what are the natures of the movements' internal structures that may regulate this. The counter-current comes

from a Marxist direction and tries to put in some context the reasons

why individuals are spurred to action, given particular historical and

social instances, within a more generalised view of class relations

underpinning a capitalist society and all that encompasses. The

frameworks outlined below by the social psychologists have only limited

explanatory and critical worth in terms of their classifiction of

aspects, of factors of social movements. They are limited by their

overriding methodological individualism. From that perspective a social

movement is looked upon as a body which a free individual may or may

not join as they choose. What they do not attempt to explain is what

throws up a particular social movement or to contextualise a movement

historically or socially.

Inasmuch as they claim to eschew 'environmental factors'[10]

(Lofland's term) they are presented with profound problems when

attempting to get at the root of often nebulous social movements. As

Heberle outlined, there is a pitfall in treating social movements as

instances of collective behaviour (thereby avoiding a discussion of the

ideological constructs of the movement) 'because treating social

movements, like the worldwide labour movement, for example, on the same

level with forms of irrational mass behaviour clearly portrays a

political bias.'[11] Lofland has written that 'I may well have produced

as critics would have it "a mere catalogue of cryptic accounts"' based

upon an assortment of unrelated principles of classification. But even

so, there is a fundamental mission of generic rescue to be

performed.'[12] But what Lofland fails to admit is that that very process

of generic rescue is not value-free.

The Marxist apraisal of the merits of social movements

inevitably has to focus on the two of the linked points relating to the classification of social movements, namely the relationship of the movements to the working class and the relationship of the movements to the state. It is to the reformist or revolutionary character or *potential* of the movements within a given set of circumstances, the balance of class forces, economic and political factors etc which provide the determinants of aims, success or failure of the movements in question. It is there that the Trotskyist model of the United Front, which completes this Chapter has a greater merit. As Engels suggested, 'The condition of the working class is the real basis and point of departure of all social movements at present ... A knowledge of proletarian conditions is absolutely necessary to be able to provide solid ground for socialist theories ...'.[13] The anti-racist social movement should, therefore, be considered in the light of the condition of the working class in the late 1970s and not discussed in an ahistorical vacuum which dissects the 'movement', to the detriment of the 'social'.

2.2 The social movement as sophisticated collective behaviour.

Neil Smelser's 'Theories of Collective Behaviour' was a milestone in the sociological study of collective behaviour.[14] In it he gave a continuum of collective behaviour forms from the simplest, *panic*, to the most complex, *the social movement*. In the Smelserian plan there is an elaborate classification of determinants that must take place sequentially for a particular level of collective behaviour to occur.

There are six determinants[15]:

1. *Structural Conduciveness* – channels for discontent

2. *Structural Strain* – stress factors

3. *Growth of a generalised belief*

4. *Precipitating Factors* – flashpoints

5. *Mobilisation of participants* – outbreaks of hostility

6. *The operation of social control* – preventative/responsive

At one level, this classificatory method is useful for it allows one to enter certain interrelated factors into each of the six categories thereby giving a neat sequentiality to an event (and to some extent denying the input of human agency). To take an example – the clash between the National Front and the ANL in Southall in April 1979:

1. Underlying institutional racism, deprivation, discrimination and self-organisation against racial and police harassment.

2. The intention of the NF to march through the Southall area following a general election campaign which had seen numerous confrontations between the NF and groups opposed to it.

3. The generalised belief that the NF should not be allowed to march through such a sensitive area with apparent police protection and no protest from local residents.

4. The refusal of the Home Secretary to ban the march and the Council to deny the NF the use of its premises. The instigation of a peaceful protest march and a counter-demonstration.

5. The clashes between counter-demonstrators and the police before and during the meeting.

6. The immediate and long-term responses of the state, through the Police, Judiciary, Government etc in terms of greater

policing resources and and the labelling of both ANL and NF as 'extremists'.

What is striking is that the use of Smelser's typology compresses the ideology of racism and its effects into the initial category but then polarises to particular events and has to generalise to once again take in response of the state. At the same time the model is somewhat static and its analytical and explanatory values are problematic. There are as many questions thrown up by the typology as there are ways of categorising the action which fits into it and the relevant noteworthy criteria.

The all-encompassing nature of his work invites the criticism that he is merely stating the obvious. For if an anti-police demonstration can be worked into the same framework as a complex, developed social movement, then Smelser has offered an infinitely flexible but shapeless formation. The development and decline of the ANL could be put into the six categories listed by Smelser. But so could the events of one particular demonstration e.g. Southall in April 1979. Smelser has to stretch his theory, through his 'value added' method to cover the gamut of panic to social movement, claiming that all these phenomena emanate from a 'generalised belief'. As Heberle has argued, 'It seems, however, that there is a qualitative difference between the belief among a rioting crowd that "the police are acting brutally" and the belief in a better social order ... based upon a rational critique of the social order.'[16]

This effectively leads on to other criticisms of Smelser. Social movements exist in his writings as outbursts of irrational mass behaviour, or at least forms of action that are out of the ordinary. As

such he is expressing a bias towards an essentially conservative status quo. The emphasis he places is upon panics, riots and hostile outbursts to the point of dismissing the constituent ideas of a social movement which are often based, however vaguely, upon critiques of existing social relations. As a final note it is also worth commenting that his typology assumes the inevitability of social control which seemingly fails to account for successful social movements which modify or alter the means of social control.

Smelser's considerations were made some time ago and it might be more profitable to consider some of the more recent contributions to the sociology of social movements from the U.S. especially given the experiences of the 1960s and the growth of the womens' and civil rights movements. John Lofland, for example, has written on the nature of collective behaviour[17] and has also attempted to extend what he sees as individual propensities for collective behaviour to the more organised social movements[18]. As found with Smelser, the tenability of his explanation for individual involvement is greater for the most spontaneous examples of collective behaviour rather than for the more considered strategies pursued by a particular social movement.

Lofland sees collective behaviour as being founded upon three dominant 'primary emotions' - fear, hostility and joy, for according to Lofland, although there are 'several competing schemes of fundamental emotions ... [there is] virtually complete agreement that these three are among the most fundamental and even, moreover, trans-specific'.[19] In other words collective behaviour is collective psychodrama, in which individuals group together because of their

collective emotional instability. Lofland, however, is a social psychologist and cross-tabulates these inner conflicts with the organisational forms in which collective behaviour occurs. To this end Lofland distinguishes beteen the *crowd*, the *mass*, the *public* and the *social movement*. If there is one section of Lofland's work which might have some relevance for the study of racist and anti-racist social movements it is the notion of 'hostility'.

2.3 The Social Psychology of Collective Behaviour as social hostility

For Lofland collective hostility has three levels. Firstly there is the *symbolic* - speeches rallies and taunts. Secondly, there is *hostility towards property*. Here Lofland brings together such disparate activities as going on strike, organising boycotts, looting and firebombing. The third level involves *hostility towards other human beings*. Furthermore, there are three basic parties to collective behaviour - the individual (or agent thereof), a section of the citizenry, or the establishment. Of the nine possible combinations of parties, with either as aggressors or those victims of aggression, Lofland sees five as being the most relevant. These are:

Citizen vs. Individual - e.g. mob attacks

Citizen vs. Citizen - e.g. political clashes

Citizen vs. Establishment - e.g. protests and riots

Establishment vs. Individual - e.g. bourbon lynchings

Establishment vs. Citizen - e.g. official riots

Now if these categories are to be put to some use or have any analytical meaning, one might assume that there are delineating

factors which stop a blurring of the meanings of who is a citizen, an individual or a member of the establishment. Whilst the examples given by Lofland perform this task adequately, one only has to add some historical or more sophisticated elements to confound much of his categorisation. Lofland's snapshot view can deal with social relations on an epiphenomenal level and in stasis. His synchronic schema is difficult to use with some clarity and this is best explained by giving a further example.

To take the five year period (1975-80) in the growth of the racist and anti-racist movements in Britain in the period it can be argued that members of the same social movement would be constituted by Lofland as citizens (C), individuals (I) or establishment (E). Clashes occurred between racists and anti-racists (C vs. C) but the anti-racists also attacked the police (C vs. E) and conversely the police attacked back (E vs. C). At the same time individuals, particularly black youth, in the movement faced police harassment (E vs. I), anti-racists would harass racist individuals (C vs. I) and occasionally the Home Secretary would ban a National Front meeting or march (E vs. C). One can go on like this until all the combinations have been exhausted for both racist and anti-racist movements. It is now unclear what the schema really shows in explanatory terms. Lofland cannot show the difference between tacit support by some sections of the establishment for a social movement which other sections find reprehensible. Nor can he explain how an individual is constituted as a citizen, some of the time, or what boundaries are drawn by the term 'establishment'. It is easy to give examples of each category, as Lofland does, whilst ignoring the grey areas.

It can be argued that Lofland is discussing essentially crowd behaviour - an integral part of the anti-racist movement - but his categories do not allow for the variety of circumstances which came about without sacrificing analytical clarity, the differing nature of the clashes and the role of the state (especially the police), even under these situations which most clearly fit the crowd hostilities format. Specifically, Lofland has no real scope for understanding the actions of the state in what crowd behaviour will be tolerated and what will not. The defence of freedom of assembly and free speech were regularly invoked to allow the National Front to march and meet in areas with a high black population. The threat to public order, although stressed, was deemed to be a lesser menace. In such combatitive situations the police have resources that the crowd do not. Indeed the complexity of the situation with the police defending the NF from counter-demonstrators often led to, in the course of one demonstration :

C vs. C - Anti-NF groups rally against NF march

C vs. E - To get to the NF, anti-NF forces attack the police

E vs. C - The police attack back, whilst protecting the NF

C vs. I - Individuals thought likely targets are attacked by all

Once again a continuum of incidents can bring about any combination of Lofland's collective hostilities. Likewise the three levels of hostility can frequently spill over into one another such that any demarcations between them are purely subjective.

The key difficulty with Lofland's explanations lies in his usage of dominant emotion as a means of classifying forms of collective behaviour. Notwithstanding his avoidance of a consideration

of the relativity, if not volatility of emotions, he has perceived the motivation to action the wrong way round. Emotional experience and expression is essentially social[20] - just as mind and self, which are required for emotional experience to be possible, are social.[21] Accordingly it is 'life and society' which determine the nature of social movements and collective behaviour, not perceived emotions. If the emotions of the contributors to collective behaviour and social movements are not the paramount issue, perhaps it is in the psyche of the movement members that reasons can be found for their willingness to join together in collective action.

2.4   Who joins a social movement ?

In their 1981 article 'Collective Behaviour : Social Movements', Zurcher and Snow adopt a pluralist, relativist attitude to different social movements, claiming value-judgement immunity, indeed 'Dependant upon the goals of the movement and the values of the observer, and the degree of correspondence between the two, a movement can be heroic or despicable.'[22] These writers seek to examine the processes of participation in social movements, through recruitment, commitment-building and conversion processes. They are critical of existing psycho-social explanations of social movement recruitment in which 'the underlying assumption is that movement joiners differ from non-joiners in terms of personality characteristics and/or cognitive orientation'.[23] In the same way, the joiner is ascribed the traits of deviance, susceptibility and lack of personal identity. The shortcomings of this approach are stressed by Zurcher and Snow, i.e.

that alienation, deprivation and frustration have been linked with apathy as well as activity. If frustration and discontent fertilise the ground of movement participation, then, to quote Trotsky, 'the masses would always be in revolt'.[24]

To counter these psychological observations, the writers offer the concepts of (i) social networks and (ii) ideology. The role of pre-existing social networks is given the greater stress of the two, their functions being to aid 'the emergence and spread of radical or reformist collective phenomena'.[25] They then go on to give several examples where the majority of adherents of a social movement were recruited by members who were pre-existing friends, acquaintances or kin.[26] Their definition of ideology is somewhat non-specific claiming that, 'It provides both a picture of the world as it is and as it should be'.[27] This vagueness is compounded by Zurcher and Snow's belief in the mobilising capacity of ideology as a link between the prospective participants 'life situations' and the goals of the social movement.

For these social psychologists there is an interplay between ideology and social network which determines the spread of social movements. The tenets of movement ideology are systematically brought through to the prospective participant by intellectual and emotional ties in social networks. Before leading on to a less plausible burst of symbolic interactionism, they home in on a central theme. 'The key to understanding recruitment, conversion and commitment resides in the interaction between the participant and the movement.'[28] What Zurcher and Snow cannot explain is what constitutes the movement beyond its ideology or beyond the individual foibles of its members. They are

therefore at a loss to explain the success of a movement at a
particular time with an ideology which was seen as unsuccessful in
years previously. As with the ANL, the ethos of anti-racism and its
organised poltical forms became more apposite when the NF appeared to
be a growing racist force and when overt racial violence by an
organised electoralist group was regularly making headlines.

Even Heberle alleges that 'amongst the founders of militant
social movements, political as well as religious, we find a fair
proportion of abnormal personalities, especially of neurotic or
paranoic individuals. The same is true of early adherents of such
leaders, the first disciples or followers.'[29] The central point, the
raison d'etre of a social movement is its aims and intentions and the
economic and political power which it has to achieve them. These are
surely more clearly found within the concrete specifics of the
historical and geographical instances than in personality profiles.

Zurcher and Snow see society as composed of individuals up
to the point of them becoming movement members who then disappear to
their individual isolation afterwards. But this is not empirically
true, disregarding as it does, the complexity of the relations between
organisations within social movements. The anti-racist movement, for
example, drew on trade unions, political groups, religious groups etc.
which had vastly conflicting ideologies within the movement but still
held the general aims without being equally constituted individuals
before and after the life of the movement. Zurcher and Snow would
probably argue that this was covered by the theme of social networks,
but they still do not explain how groups or networks with diffuse
class and political interests can go on to coalesce in a social

movement. Before going on to draw together some general criticisms of this approach to social movement membership, there is one last level of analysis which Lofland has returned to in his more recent work and that is the internal organisation of the movement.

2.5 Levels of social movement organisation

In one of his most recent works, Lofland has chosen to focus upon social movement organisations as 'holistic organisational structures'[30] and particularly on the local level - the operating end of the movement. At this point the concept of the 'modal member' is introduced - the most frequent or dominant type of member within a social movement. Lofland then goes on to describe the levels of mobilisation of modal members within the local settings. In this case there are five levels:

1. Study groups with student members - discussion groups

2. Fellowship locals with adherent members - more formal and more organised

3. Congregational locals with parishioner members - many more activities, a place of assembly, membership loyalty expected

4. Sect locals with sectarian members - distinctive definition of the situation. Not very different from (3) except members have a high self-conception, totality of outlook and hostility to state and society. Sect locals push the boundaries of effort for volunteers.

5. Cell locals with conspirator members - 'terrorists', 'fifth columnists'.

What has to be noted firstly is the imprecision with which boundaries are again drawn.[31] If Lofland is prepared to draw up what at times look like arbitrary delineations, then surely there must be some clarity to his vision. The result is that while a group can be placed in an appropriate pigeon-hole Lofland does not explain how it moves to another level or what effect the 'outside world' has on any of these categories. For example, it may be said that at least for (1) to (3) above, the deciding factor is size. For a small grouping it may start off as a study group whilst in effect also being a sect (as the usage of the term sect usually implies a small political/religious grouping). For the purpose of this thesis at the point of its growth the National Front may have been a congregation but with sect members in it i.e. the party cadre. But if one broadens out into the whole neo-fascist movement there were also elements who were either purely in study groups and foreswore too much overt political activity[32] whilst at the same time others were solely involved in terrorist cells.[33] In which case, a variety of sub-groupings or factions under the umbrella of a movement fits awkwardly with Lofland's approach.

2.6   The sociologists of social movements

The question was posed above as to how much of the sociologists' descriptive and analytical themes could be adopted in providing a framework to analyse the ANL. Peppered throughout the writings are continual expectations of the free individuals who join social movements voluntarily. But social movements do not appear out of thin air, ready constituted. Rather, they are the sparks struck off by

conflicting social forces. The sociologists discussed above take the social movement as ready-formed and strongly-led, with established peripheries of people joining, being held or leaving. The behaviour of those involved is drawn under the wing of collective behaviour at times arbitrarily. The panic of a crowd situation is deemed as a suitable descriptive category for comparison with an organised social movement. The two categories, however, cannot then be said to be comparable on the same plain - one is related to an organisation, the other to a specific event.

The problematic remains as to whether the sociological conservatism of the writers considered above necessitates the avoidance of an enquiry into the role of the state in social movements (apart from Smelser's reference to a generalised 'social control'). Although the anti-racist social movement was anti-state, the conflictual strategies inevitably brought in the forces of the state, especially the Police. Smelser's work is too broad-based, too all encompassing and falls down because it is too easy to pick holes in the conflation of social movements into collective behaviour. Similar objections can be made to Lofland's writings on collective behaviour which appear more convincing and less problematic when applied to simple forms of the phenomenon. As soon as the cognitive aspect is brought in - via movement organisation, strategy and ideology - writers like Lofland and Smelser shy away from a detailed examination of their effects. Their examples tend to be uncomplicated Weberian ideal-types and have limited value in helping the understanding of the way contradictory and conflicting internal factions operate within the bounds of social movement (as in the ANL).

Whilst Zurcher and Snow acknowledged the importance of ideas and social network - which could very tenuously be translated in Marxist terms into ideology and class relationships, their imprecise usage of the terms tends to raise problems of the incisiveness necessary for analytical purposes. When, in the quest for an appropriate typology of social movements which can provide a clear model to hold up to the anti-racist movement, attention is drawn towards those writers claiming some form of Marxist influence on their work, other dilemmas come to the fore.

2.7 'Post-Marxist' writings on Social Movements - Touraine and Foss & Larkin

One writer to take cognisance of both Marxism and the Marxist revolutionary tradition in the study of social movements is Alain Touraine. Describing himself as a 'post-Marxist'[34], Touraine sees a social movement as 'the collective organised action through which a class actor battles for the social control of historicity in a given and identifiable historical context.'[35] The 'historicity' of which he talks is the work which society does upon itself, in terms of the invention of norms, institutions and practices guided by what Touraine calls 'the great cultural orientations' - patterns of knowledge, types of investment and cultural orientations. It is the struggle for control of this historicity which is, for Touraine, the key to the class struggle. In this respect, social movements are not marginal, epiphenomenal or abnormal but are, in Touraine's words, 'the central forces fighting one against the other to control the production of

society by itself and the action of classes for the shaping of

historicity.'[36]

As Touraine notes, in the development of social movements,

the character that they adopt, through the progression of time, can be

one in which they do not run to the necessary detriment of the process

of capitalist accumulation or undermine the role of the state etc.

Indeed both the U.S. black civil rights movement and women's movements

in the 1960s have succeeded in gaining some concessions from state and

capital bringing black and female faces into management and corporate

positions.[37] There is no hard and fast rule that social movements

should have a solely reformist or potentially revolutionary character,

for that depends both upon the composition of the movement and the hold

that revolutionary ideas (or those based on class struggle) have.

Unlike Lofland who argues that in the case of collective

behaviour, and by inference nascent social movements, 'only a modest

amount of reflection on social life is required to recognise that ...

emotions are especially entailed in collective behaviour',[38] Touraine

suggests that the state of emotional arousal of those involved may well

be very interesting but has little value in analysing the movement or

act of collective behaviour. If anger or hostility is a defining

variable then 'football hooliganism', 'inner city riots', fascist and

anti-fascist demonstrations and mass pickets are all to be

distinguished by their degree of emotional arousal rather than other

more salient criteria. As Touraine notes, 'social movements are always

defined by a social conflict, that is, by clearly defined opponents ...

A social movement cannot be defined by its intensity, its emotions or

its "volcanic" force'.[39]

Touraine believes that the concept of the social movement is most useful when it helps to rediscover social actors long lost by structural Marxists and structural functionalists although he rather lionises social movements as agents or catalysts for social change. There are problems with Touraine's analysis, not least in some of the arcane and obscurantist phraseology (occasionally in the style of Ernesto Laclau who also terms himself a post-Marxist[40]). He falls prey to a functional positivism in that while he rightly notes that 'it is still the logic of contradiction, and particularly the law of profit, which governs historical situations; no actor can escape from the position in which he is placed',[42] but in denying the role of human agency goes on to note fatalistically that, 'no *social movement* can transform society. Only history, i.e. progress, can explode the social order.'[43]

His arguments about the new forms of organisation and new ideologies for anti-nuclear and women's movements are a reflection of the post-Marxism of Touraine which ally him with the Eurocommunist current of political thought which asserts that 'male' and 'labourist' forms of political organisation are not universally applicable and that new methods have to be elicited to combat various 'forms' of oppression. In this respect he implicitly denies the centrality of the working class as the agency for social change or indeed the role of a revolutionary party.

Touraine admits as much when he argues that the idea of social movement is 'clearly anti-Leninist'. It is not clear why this should be so - although the Leninist conception of the revolutionary party supporting and generalising from class struggle and building a

revolutionary movement is not one which surrenders the primacy of the working class. The fact is that those parties claiming some genealogy from Lenin (and Trotsky's United Front) have involved themselves in social movements with the expressed intent of restating the primacy of the working class as agents of social change (usually countered against the perceived failings of 'reformism'). Indeed the anti-racist movement was motivated byt the actions of revolutionaries within the ANL which saw the social movement as a spur to self-activity and away from what they saw as the abstentionismn of conventional political activity.

The title of Foss and Larkin's work, *Beyond Revolution*, should alert the reader as to the nature of the thesis, and its conflict-pluralist based 'post-Marxist' stance. For them a social movement 'is a developing collective action of a significant portion of the members of a major social category, involving at some point the use of physical force or violence against members of other social categories...'[43] By social categories they refer to one or more of the lines of cleavage they perceive as being of equal value in society - socialists, capitalists, castes, ethnic groups, sexualities etc.

Wary of charges that this should sound somewhat akin to old-fashioned pluralism, Foss and Larkin do submit that:

> There is no doubt that class relations, that is, relations of exploitation, underlie or heavily influence the course of all social movements and countermovements. However it is quite rare that the "appearances" of society, as embedded in the everyday relations of social reality, correspond with any precision to class relations.[44]

However, despite the fundamental, albeit hidden, nature of class
relations and class exploitation, the writers consider that it is best
if the expression 'class struggle' is 'avoided here because it lends
itself so readily to confusion and does not help us understand,
historically, the reproduction of social reality.'[45] Thus all history
should not be seen as the history of class struggle lest this confuses
the scrutiny of the plurality of social movements.

As Foss and Larkin journey selectively through the social
movements of the 1960s so they see a trend away from class politics to
the movements of 'dissident social categories' which 'although they may
or may not permanently alter social relations, they are one of the
prime mechanisms for doing so.'[46] In other words their starting point
is the primacy of the autonomy of these various social movements. This
is a long way from the way Marxists seek to generalise from class
relations to explain the role of women's oppression through the family
as the basic unit for reproduction of labour, the use of racism to
justify slavery and colonialism and to further divide the working
class, the nature of imperialism especially in relation to Vietnam,
Korea etc and the anti-nuclear movements.

Foss and Larkin see the new social movements as being
decidedly subversive for capitalism. They note, in some respects
echoing Lenin's claim that strikes were 'schools for socialism',

> each social movement at its most radical phase rendered the
> whole of bourgeois social relations questionable, including
> the sacrifice of the human subject to the discipline of
> reality principle. That is, the necessity of performing
> labor under the conditions of the capital/labor nexus was
> called into question...[47]

The question at issue avoided by both Foss and Larkin and Touraine is what actually takes the movement onwards. Despite reference to class politics and the capital/labour nexus, they do not see the revolutionary party as the way for the resolution, not only of the 'economic', but also of the other forms of oppression under capitalism. Rather the failings and failures of revolutionary parties are shown to be signs of their inherent datedness (i.e. revolution was suitable for early capitalism but late capitalism needs a post-Marxist movementism).

The interest they show in social movements is based on an assumption of a plurality of movements and causes exists, each of which has a right to make similar demands upon the state. Because they do not posit the working class as the prime force in bringing about the fundamental change in society and the demise of capitalism, their roots are in reformism. If there are difficulties with the approaches of these writers, in the orthodox texts of Marxism there are not necessarily straightforward answers to the questions raised by social movements but there is a method with which to consider them.

2.8 Marxism and social movements

The literature developed towards an explicitly Marxist explanation of the sociology of social movements is conspicuous by its absence. It appears that for much of the time social movements have been the realm of those who seek insight through the orientation of the joiner as much as the nature of the joined. As has been discussed above, the field is accordingly weighted with neo-psychological and social psychological explanations which have as their driving force the

free individual. This contrasts starkly with the Marxist conception of political change and, if there be one, of the nature of social movements as mediated by class society. In one respect Marxism (and especially Leninism) is all about the development of the workers' movement as *the* social movement - a movement with revolutionary aims.

It would be wrong to impose too distinct a class character on every social movement in terms of seeing it as pro-labour or pro-capital but a Marxist argument would hold that because capitalist relations have a distorting effect upon all forms of human activity, then the aims, composition and likelihood of success of social movements are inextricably linked with the forms of political expression falsely separated from 'the economic' under capitalism.[48] This especially holds true when one considers the revolutionary, reactionary or reformist aspirations of the movement, the balance of class forces at the time, the strength of the state etc. The key points are that the social movement may assume a reformist or a revolutionary manner although it is usually likely that it will be the former. The movement is generally expressed towards the state over a particular issue (albeit a broad one, perhaps) which the traditional reformist parties are seen as having failed to deal with. At the same time, when the movement does not have a predominant input by revolutionaries, the tendency will be to seek and work round reformist demands and eventual concessions to reformist political parties and groups.

For a Marxist analysis one must begin with the materialist conception of history in which the key to change in society is to be found in the way people produce their life in common. As Marx wrote in *The Holy Family*, 'History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit

of their ends.'[49] And yet men and women are not constituted (or to borrow Laclau's phrase 'interpellated'[50]) as free individuals but as members of economic classes with class struggle being the agent for change. That is the argument put crudely. As Marx wrote in Capital, offering the 'free' individual little primacy in human relations:

> individuals are dealt with here only in so far as they are the personifications of economic categories, the bearers of particular class relations and interests. My standpoint from which the economic formation of society is viewed as a process of natural history, can less than any other make the individual responsible for relations, whose creature he remains, socially speaking however much he may subjectively raise himself above them.[51]

Marx took a hard line against the economic liberals who would argue for the importance of the sovereign individual and the classical historians who would press the import of the individual sovereign. In terms of individual actors collectively developing into social movements, Marx concerned himself with political movements which he felt had a degree of historical inevitability (or immediacy). The movements of historical necessity were those which furthered the development of class-consciousness. Other demands and aspirations which were not revolutionary at some point either had to challenge the power of the state or succumb to it thus being accomodated.

2.9 A Marxist revolutionary social movement - The Russian Revolution

Lenin and Trotsky were both participants in a social, indeed revolutionary, movement which underwent many of the previous stages of

development outlined by Lofland above - from study group in exile to mass meetings (congregated parishioners) to party caucuses (sects and sectarians) and at one stage operating in cells to avoid the Tsarist secret police (cells and conspirators). They were then part of the leadership of a revolutionary movement that seized power within Russia with a mass movement of Russian workers.

The Leninist argument would note that any social movement aimed at a qualitative transformation of society cannot develop spontaneously - it needs outside organisation. Organisation, as an embodiment of beliefs (which Lofland and others of his ilk tend to ignore), plays a crucial role in channeling the potential responses into the correct line for advance. This degree of organisation is an important divider between the collective behaviour of riots and the stratified and more stable social movements. As Manuel Castells, a Marxist urban sociologist puts it, describing an urban social movement, 'Where there is no organisation, urban contradictions are expressed in either a refracted or in a wild way devoid of any structural horizon.'[52]

Trotsky, in his writings on the Russian Revolution, was to contrast the spontaneity of the February Revolution in 1917 with the October rising of the same year, which involved more planning and delay for the appropriate moment. He also wrestled with the problem of the personal elements as against the social coming to the conclusion that, 'The great moving forces of history are supra-personal in character but they operate through people.'[53] This again almost turns the individual participant into a cipher for class forces but Trotsky is quick to point out that in capitalist class society 'free individuals' are in

position to act freely and, pre-empting the social psychologists'

arguments, he wrote,:

> We do not pretend to deny the significance of the personal
> in the mechanics of the historical process. We only demand
> that a historical personality with all its peculiarities
> should not be taken as a bare list of psychological traits
> but as a living reality grown out of definite social
> conditions and reacting upon them.[54]

2.10 Contemporary Marxist writers and social movements

One writer who tried more than most to marry Marxism and

individualism was Jean-Paul Sartre, in attempting to re-assert humanism

within a Marxist framework. 'The dialectic', he wrote, 'which moves

through history is not merely deterministic : at every stage -

individual, serial, group - the free individual intervenes. If he

cannot control, he can at least be aware of the events that are

operating.'[55] With more specific reference to the concern of this

thesis with social movements, in *A Critique of Dialectical Reason*,

Sartre advanced the notion of the *series*, as a collection of

individuals which is defined by its passive, inert quality, which can

develop into a *fused group*. Fused groups arise when social actors

spontaneously recognise their common goals and arrive at a position of

mutual recognition and reciprocity. Sartre gives the example of the

storming of the Bastille which ties in with what Lofland sought to

explain, i.e. 'How does the impotent individual decide by himself to

become power.'[56]

Sartre argues that each individual's objective becomes the

common objective and that there is a process of unification through a common exigency - the notion of 'his/her danger is my danger'. The change from the individual as a passive, inert member of a series and an outsider who turns the series into an organised totality lies in action. Sartre argued that those involved in the storming of the Bastille,

> had performed as actors and had recognised this action with surprise as a moment of its own passive activity; it had been a group - and this group defined itself by a revolutionary action which made the process irreversible.[57]

But a *groupe en fusion* cannot carry the whole weight of comprehending the new form of social existence that it may bring into being. For this, Sartre claimed, what was needed was an organised group practice. Here again he is re-iterating the Leninist notion of the centrality of informed organisation - external to the spontaneous but active within it.

Sartre did and does have his critics, such as Levi-Strauss. The latter argued that whatever meaning and movement history displays, these are not given by the historical actors but by the prevailing rule systems. Levi-Strauss contended that 'Cultural systems with which historical action is performed are prior to and independent of the projects of the individual acts whose very subjectivity they constitute.'[58] This is the structuralist anti-humanism echoed by Stephen Lukes who contends that 'Structural constructs limit the agent's freedom or power to act otherwise by precluding (rather than putting a price tag on) such a possibility.'[59]

E.P. Thompson sought to break the Althusserian stranglehold on much Marxist theory and the structuralist perspective which reduced human agents to the status of supporters of social structures (*Trager*). In *the Poverty of Theory* he launches a polemical sideswipe against the rampant structuralism of the likes of Hindess and Hirst, yet remains careful not to fall into a 'great men or women of history' trap, as historians are wont to do. Thompson argues that 'The actors of historical acts are subject to shaping and directing pressures: human agents are both the makers of history and are made by it: they are the ever-baffled and ever-resurgent agents of un-mastered history.'[60]

He then goes on to make a point which leads back into the centrality of social movements. Essentially Thompson argues that as individuals share common conditions of existence, then the inference may be drawn that individuals will submit to a collective response to those conditions. The collective agents clash to produce historical outcomes. To a Marxist that most commonly leads to classes as *the* collective agents above all. To which the sociologists of social movements may counter, 'What about the other forms of association possible, apart from class relations ?'. Ted Benton counters this argument, much as Thompson would, when he writes,

> Unions, parties, firms and so on certainly operate as
> historical forces - they may be said to make decisions, act
> or not act upon them, form alliances [and social movements -
> MC] and so on. But the decisions and actions of these bodies
> are not the actions or decisions of their individual
> members, and are not generally reducible to such decisions.
> The eventual course of action may be one neither willed nor
> foreseen by any individual member. In many cases, actions
> and decisions of collective agents are ones which could not

be made by individuals ... but only by a collective actor, politically or legally constituted.[61]

One other major writer in the Marxist tradition has written on social movements, albeit early ones - Eric Hobsbawm. In one of his earlier studies, 'Primitive Rebels'[62] he examines the development of early religious and workers' movements in Britain during the rise of capitalism. Although much of the work is concerned with historical documentation, he does make some general points. One is that it is not always possible to read off the likely path or character of a social movement from its inception. Hobsbawm writes, 'In practice, every man in not a Dr. Pangloss and every social movement undergoes the pull of both reformism and revolutionism.'[63]

In that respect the internal workings of a social movement include a battle for the dominant ideas, which in turn are reflective of the dominant ideas outside the movement and the strategy and tactics adopted by the movement. To take two examples, the ANL was dominated by the Marxist left and the strategy and tactics went beyond those which would have been followed by the reformist left in opposing the National Front. Conversely, despite the direct action of the Greenham Women, the thrust of the mass of the anti-nuclear movement in the early 1980s was directed towards the changing of 'public opinion' and ensuring that the movement could effectively bring the Conservative Government to adopt an anti-nuclear stance or more realistically to keep the issue alive whilst awaiting the election of a unilateralist Labour government.

Hobsbawm is also quick to acknowledge the importance of identifying the reformist or revolutionary character of a social

movement for 'reformist and revolutionary movements will behave differently and to develop different organisation, strategy, tactics etc.'[84] For Hobsbawm the basis of the social movement lies in its class position rather than epiphenomenal features which are reified by social psychologists - ritual and symbolism - which he describes as the 'emotional furniture' of the movement although he realises the use of such factors is an important method of binding people to the movement.

What has been briefly considered above is the relationship between the individual and history which is in a sense a reply to the psychologists and individualist writers on social movements. At another level it is a reply to those quasi-Marxist writers who see themselves and indeed society as having gone beyond class struggle. For it is from the notion of the essentially free individual which is the starting point of these views, for only then can the individual be oppressed by a variety of categories each of which can throw up its own movement. This process of autonomisation does not lead to a new form of society but rather the old form of reformism. The counterpoint to the women's movement, the anti-racist movement, the gay liberation movement has been in the adoption by the Labour left of each cause as its own and its representation through the policies of municipal socialism.

The consideration of the accomplishment of local state anti-racism ventures will occupy the second half of this thesis and the more pressing problem of the appropriate model for the ANL remains unascertained. Those provided by the sociologists of social movements have proven too vague and ambiguous for adequately encapsulating the specificity of the movement. Those writers operating under the Marxist influence and writing on social movements have, in their desire to find

a new location for social movements, written in a way which emphasises

detail and form rather than essence and content. There remains one

model which is that proposed by those who were most instrumental in the

launch of the ANL, the Socialist Workers Party. They believed that the

movement was launched along the lines of the United Front as proposed

by Trotsky in the 1930s. The model may lack the universality of the

social movement categories provided by the social psychologists

discussed above or the abnegation of the primacy of class politics

inferred by the post-Marxists but it does provide the most appropriate

yardstick against which the ANL and its wider strategic importance as a

potential anti-racist force can be evaluated.

2.11 The United Front: Concept and Practice

> Within the proletariat several parties are active at the
> same time. Therefore, for the greater part of the historical
> journey, it remains split politically. The problem of the
> united front - which arises during periods most sharply -
> originates therein.[65]

Trotsky started from the uneven class consciousness of the

working class at any time. His arguments that both revolutionary and

reformist workers and their leaders could join together in a movement

against fascism stemmed from the way that the United Front was meant to

be a defence of immediate class interests. For fascism to succeed and

assume the mantle of state power, he suggested it needed to physically

smash the organisations of the working class both reformist and

revolutionary. In that respect even the leaders of the parties of

social democracy had actual interests in uniting with the communists.

Trotsky wrote, 'The programme of action must be strictly practical, strictly objective, to the point ... so that every Social Democratic worker can say to himself: what the Communists propose is completely indispensable for the struggle against fascism. On this basis, we must pull the Social Democratic workers along with us by example and criticise their leaders who will inevitably serve as a check and a brake.'[66]

For Trotsky, the United Front had to be practical, not merely theoretical and it have strict objectives. The United Front was to be united around its most active members. It acts not to save face with its most reactionary members but to continually push through propaganda and other tactics at the line of strongest resistance. At times this would involve physical confrontation with the fascists, a factor which is often missing from Trotsky's writings purely because he assumed it to be implicit. The United Front also had to be prepared to disseminate propaganda about the fascist movement and the threat it brings about just as it must be prepared to stop the fascists with force if necessary. In part this is fashioned by the tactics of the fascists themselves and the way they operate outside usual reformist channels of political discourse.

One danger for revolutionaries, Trotsky feared, was that they would be swamped within the mass of the United Front and lose the clarity of their politics and what Trotsky saw as their duty to criticise the mistakes of the reformists. Much of what happened in Spain in the 1930s, for example, is an exercise in the abandonment of the independence of revolutionary organisation in order to make a compromise for the sake of what became known as a 'broad democratic

alliance' - the Popular Front. The United Front, he argued, because of its precise focus could only be one area of work for the revolutionary party and should only be sustained for as long as it reaps concrete results against its target, one problem which beset the ANL.

As will hopefully be clear from the above brief outline of Trotsky's model of the United Front, many of the operational difficulties of reformists and revolutionaries working together in a mass movement could only be ironed out in practice, practice being the essence of the United Front, rather than lengthy ideological discussions before (see the discussion of the tactics of the ANL *vis a vis* the Joint Campaign Against Racism in Chapter 4 below). It is the specificity of the movement which is its strength, the clarity of its vision and aims which can can be fulfilled in the short-term rather than the long-term. As a social movement it has a specific character. It a vehicle for the overthrow of capitalism, rather it has a single, potentially realisable objective. It is a necessary alliance between those who wish to overthrow society and those who wish to reform the major problems within society.

Its necessity is decided by the objective conditions of the nation-state and the size of the fascist movement, not the psychological make-up of those who are active in it (as social movement writers such as Zurcher and Snow might have it). It may have certain degrees of organisation but this does not define whether it is a United Front or not (as Lofland might suggest). Finally, it is very clearly based on class politics, not post-Marxist, as Touraine or Gorz might have us believe all movements are, but is very clearly a strategy still applicable today, based on the works of Trotsky who himself was

inspired by the United Fronts thrown up in the course of the Russian Revolution.

This has only been a brief theoretical outline but should be enough to cast some light in the next Chapter on the discussions below on the actions of the British Communist Party against the BUF in the 1930s and of the ANL in the 1970s. It is therefore, a tactic to be used against a growing fascist movement, in the Italian model, or in that of the Germans, and the British NF in which racism played a major indeed critical part. For the British example, it was a tactic used to stop what was a movement based around racism and very little else taking on a mass fascist character. The last words have to be with Trotsky, for a further simple elucidation of the politics of the United Front:

> Without hiding or mitigating our opinion of Social Democratic leaders in the slightest, we may and we must say to the Social Democratic workers, 'Since ... you are willing to fight together with us and ... you are still unwilling to break with your leaders ... force your leaders to join us in a common struggle for such and such aims, in such and such manner; as for us, we Communists are ready.' Can anything be more plain, more palpable, more convincing.[67]

2.12 Summary

The problem faced by some of the writers discussed above in defining social movements is symptomatic of their conceptions of the society around them. By taking the social movement out of the class society which is the basis for it, by severing the main arteries, social movements are almost bound to appear disparate, diffuse and

lacking in a definable 'essence'. The answers cannot be located in individual or mob psychology, however sophisticated.

The studies of social movements provided by writers such as Lofland and Zurcher & Snow do not concern themselves, as they admit, with the wider social circumstances in which movements are spawned. their concerns, they claim, are with the joiners and the types of organisation thrown up. But the joiners are not equally constituted social actors (or freaks or misfits). They are members of classes, they have political allegiances, organisational links etc. exists within a set of circumstances not of their own making. Even writers such as Smelser and Banks, who work from assumptions of social rather than mental causes for social movements are often indeterminate in accounting for the appearance of movements and examples of collective behaviour within society. They do not locate what exactly it is within the social system which explains why social movements should arise or how their aims and objectives are to be measured.

As Raymond Williams has pointed out, the degree of incongruence between the Marxist conceptualisations of social change and those of the new movementists of such as Touraine, Gorz etc. has to be seen in the way the class interests of those involved in social movements have not always been brought out. Williams notes,

> All significant social movements of the last thirty years have started outside the organised class interests and institutions. The peace movement, the ecology movement, the women's movement...all have this character, that they sprang from needs and perceptions which the interest-based organisations had no room or time for, which they had simply failed to notice.[68]

This may lead the reader to assume that Williams was on the side of those who proclaim 'Farewell to the Working Class' and class struggle. However, he is quick to argue that 'there is not one of these issues which, followed through, fails to lead us into the central systems of the industrial-capitalist mode of production and among others into its system of classes.'[69]

Although Williams does not really take on the questions of the state and how social movements relate to it he is clear on the need for such movements, containing reformist and revolutionary elements within them, to come to the position of asserting the centrality of the working class at the expense of their reformist representatives, as in the United Front. Should the members of the movements fail to recognise or not wish to consider the primary orientation of the working class, they are likely to be marginalised or forced to subsume their interests of those of the most appropriate reformist party. As Williams notes, the issues which the social movements address themselves to are those which have been raised by the workers' movement - sexual liberation, anti-racism, anti-imperialism etc. He notes that it is,

> quite absurd to dismiss or underplay these movements as 'middle-class' issues. It is a consequence of the social order itself that these issues are qualified and refracted in these ways. It is similarly absurd to push the issues away as not relevant to the central interests of the working class... It is workers who are most exposed to dangerous industrial processes and environmental damage. It is working-class women who have most need of new women's rights ... Whatever movement there may be ... there is no possibility of it becoming fully effective unless there are serious and detailed alternatives at these everyday points where a central consciousness is generated.[70]

For racist and anti-racist social movements, the concern of this part
of the thesis suggests that racist movements, along with the ideology
of racism are not set up by ruling class diktat or the psychological
failings of their adherents but because the ideology of racism 'makes
sense' in the process of its reproduction.

Before moving on to a detailed account of the anti-racist
movement of the late 1970s in Britain it is worth once more reiterating
the centrality and reciprocality of class society and class struggle to
the study of social movements. As Ellen Wood proclaims,

> If working class movements still have much to learn about
> the full dimensions of human emancipation, and if they have
> yet to create forms of organisation adequate to their task,
> there has been no historically identifiable social force
> that has even come close to their record of emancipatory
> struggles, either in the breadth of their visions, the
> comprehensions of the liberation they have sought or in the
> degree of their success.[71]

Ellen Wood may overreach herself with her desire to redress the balance
against what she sees as atheoretical or unsystematic lionising of the
'new social movements'. Her merit is in her attempt to reconsider the
movements in a Marxist light which does not ignore the relationships
between these movements and the production relations in capitalist
society.

CHAPTER 3

The British anti-fascist movement of the late 1970s and anti-racism

3.1 Introduction

There are many possible scenarios in which a movement can
seek to win concessions from, put pressure upon or challenge the
dominance of the state¹ just as there are those where the momentum of
the movements have been defused precisely by those concessions. The
movement investigated below, the anti-fascist movement in Britain in
the late 1970s, was launched in somewhat different circumstances, in
that it was not aimed at state fascism or indeed state racism, but at
stopping the rise of a fascist movement based around the National Front
(NF). The movement became focused around one particular organisation,
the Anti-Nazi League (ANL), which mobilised many thousands of people in
marches, carnivals and counter-demonstrations against the NF, a feat
which no other anti-racist or anti-fascist grouping was able to do at
the time.

What the ANL specifically did was to challenge the NF on its
own terms and sought not only to win the propaganda battle about the
nature of the NF's politics² but also to physically stop it marching, a
step which many nti-racist groups were not prepared to take. To use the
words of the ANL itself, it did not seek merely to warn or disabuse
people of their notion of the NF as a respectable political party, it
wished to 'smash' it. The fact that it was the largest anti-fascist

body at the time, that it grew rapidly to involve many young people previously uncommitted to political activity and that, according to which interpretation is read, it had either an important or a definitive bearing on the subsequent demise of the NF, all make it central to this thesis, to be studied as a social movement against racism in British society. The reason behind putting the ANL at the centre is not only those mentioned above but also because its strategy and tactics were qualitatively different from those applied by other bodies. These tactics not only were the point of differentiation of the movement, they were the expressions of the wider political ideologies which motivated the leadership of the ANL.

The first area needing clarification is the focus of the movement. It was anti- something but the vexed question is whether it was primarily anti-racist or anti-fascist. The movement was specifically aimed against a party which was fascist in nature but which built on popular racism for its support. If the NF had not played 'the race card', there is no evidence of it gaining anywhere near the following it did, nor could the ANL ignore the racism which motivated the choice of areas in which the NF marched, whom the NF blamed the capitalist crisis on, or who the NF members attacked. That the ANL was opposing a fascist group leads to the criticism, made by Gilroy[3], that the ANL was only anti-fascist and did nothing to confront racism in the state or the more amorphous working class racism beyond the bounds of the organised fascists. As will be discussed below, one of the severe limitations of the ANL was that it could only confront racism within an organised racist movement.

The consideration could be extended to question why the

energies of those anti-racists in the ANL that were marshalled against

an extreme racist body could so easily dissipate into a more amorphous

anti-racist lobby in the 1980s. On the question of the ANL and the

degree to which it was prepared to confront working class racism, the

key must lie in the expressed aims of the movement. Undoubtedly there

were over-optimistic expectations within this movement as to its

potential for combating racism on the wider level and the greatest care

should be taken in the theoretical extension of the ANL model as an

anti-racist force.

Taking the Anti-Nazi League as the basis for the movement,

the complexity is compounded. It was not formed purely as a response to

the NF without any conception of how the movement was to function.

There were two main sources of inspiration to the strategy and tactics

of the ANL, the Trotskyist notion of the United Front discused above

and the experience of the struggle against fascism in Britain in the

1930s. The United Front was intended by Trotsky as a way of uniting the

forces of the revolutionary and reformist left against the growing

fascist threat, without either group compromising their political

principles. It was aimed as a tactic to be used in particular

circumstances and was to be based on activity - be it through the

dissemination of propaganda or physical opposition. Some of these

tactics were applied by the Communist Party (GB) and sections of the

Labour Left in opposing the British Union of Fascists (BUF) in Britain

in the 1930s, when the Labour Party nationally urged that the fascists

should be ignored in the hope they would go away. What the CP and its

cohorts did was not only to offer alternative views as to the cause of

the economic crisis but also to give practical support for workers in

getting unionised, dealing with landlords etc. whilst fighting pitched battles with the BUF when they attempted to rally or march (such as in the famous 'Battle of Cable St').

The ANL sought to build both a popular pole of attraction for people disaffected with the traditional political parties, particularly youth, who were seen as being prime recruitment fodder for the NF. At the same time, as was seen at Lewisham, Leicester and Southall and in many other smaller clashes, the ANL attempted to harass and drive the NF off the streets so that it could no longer march unmolested and unprotected. Six months prior to the formation of the ANL, the NF had polled 120,000 votes in the GLC Elections, however, following the disastrous results in the 1979 General Election the NF collapsed into factions, tendencies and new smaller parties from which it is yet to recover. The amount to which this is due to the actions of the ANL remains an area for much debate, as will be seen below. The starting point for an analysis of the ANL as an anti-fascist social movement with a dominant anti-racist component has to be in a brief discussion of the relationship between racism and fascism and anti-fascism in Britain in the 1930s, before going on to the object of the study, the anti-fascist movement, in essence the ANL, in the 1970s.

3.2 The relationship between racism and fascism

In an era in which there is a gradual proliferation of Holocaust denials[4], it is an act of historical record to remind all of the reality of the death camps and the slaughter of 6 million Jews, and millions of others, by the Nazis in Germany in the 1940s. The argument

then has to be taken on as to how much an integral, or crucial,

component of the general ideology of fascism the ideology of racism is

and how the specific fascist movement employs the prevailing notions of

'race' and 'nation' to effect. Whilst fascist ideology not only makes

use of, but finds congruence and coherence in racism and nationalism

which do not themselves determine the fundamental character of fascism.

For that we must turn to the development of social relations and

capitalist crises which provide the fascist movement with its class

base.

As Trotsky and others have argued[5], the basis for fascism is

the petty bourgeoisie, built in a period of defeats for the working

class and under the overall conditions of extensive social crises.

Crises alone cannot act as a sole explanation, for fascism implies a

further change in the internal social relations in the particular

nation-state, hence the description that is often given of fascism as

being 'counter-revolutionary'. Nationalism and racism can be very

important factors in mobilising the petty bourgeoisie and winning

backing for fascism from less class- conscious sections of the working

class. Whilst anti-semitism *per se* did not play a large part in fascist

ideology in Spain or Italy, the usage of nationalist themes was

prevalent.

Miles locates the two in concert inasmuch as, 'the

historical coincidence of the generation of the ideas of "nation" and

"race" as means of political mobilization in the nineteenth century

means that nationalism contains within it the potential of becoming

expressed by means of an explicit racism.'[6] Trotsky similarly

considered the *temps perdu* elements of nationalism in fascism. He

wrote, 'Hitler's nation is the mythological shadow of the petty bourgeoisie itself, a pathetic delirium of a thousand-year Reich. In order to raise it above history, the nation is given the support of the race. History is viewed as the emanation of race ... Rejecting "economic thought" as base, National Socialism descends a stage lower: from economic materialism it appeals to zoologic materialism.'[7].

With anti-semitism to the fore in the Nazi movement, it was applied cross-class, towards 'Jewish' elements in all classes. They were portrayed as alien competitors with the 'Aryan' German petty bourgeoisie, controlling not only national but international finance capital[8] and being influential in the Communist movement. More so than Marx inverting Hegel, the Nazis inverted the dialectic to argue that both Jewish capitalism and Jewish communism were heads of the same beast. The fascists who were involved in the National Front in England in the 1960s and 1970s were generally more or less overtly Nazi in relation to their standing in national popularity, which again was a reflection of the dominant factions prevailing in the NF at any one time.

When one turns to the NF and its views on 'race', much of the age-old Jewish conspiracy theory was adopted fairly intact. As Stan Taylor, probably the best chronicler of the NF, notes,

> The most remarkable feature of the NF's ideology was the extent to which it corresponded with the ideas presented in Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, written in the 1920s before Hitler, or the movement which he led, came to power in Germany ... Their analytical components had (1) a common base in the 'scientific racism' of nineteenth century thinkers such as De Gobineau and Chamberlain, (2) a shared perception of a Jewish (in the case of the NF, Zionist Jewish) conspiracy to destroy the dominant European nation-races through (3) their

> control of finance capital and associated ability to
> manipulate both capitalism and Communism ...[9]

In other words the anti-semitic tenor borrowed from National Socialism
remained as an integral, if more hidden, part of the fascist ideology
of the NF but it was not 'the Jewish question' which could be raised in
1960s and 1970s Britain as the the *prima facie* issue for racist
mobilisation and movement building. For that the NF sought to exploit
the failings of successive Labour and Conservative Governments to
attack racism with any of the zeal with which they introduced
immigration controls and the groundswell of popular racism which
certain incidents such as Powell's speeches or the expulsions of the
Malawi and Ugandan Asians aroused. At the same time, their persistent
electoral and respectable groundwork was seeking to establish the NF as
a voice for those who saw British capitalism as being increasingly
unable to improve bad housing, stem rising unemployment or undermine
the 'competition' element which came about whenever black migrants were
offered jobs or services.

As David Edgar, playwright and one of the leading members of
the ANL, has argued, much of the NF's viewpoint on black people has
been one as seeing them not as social actors but as essentially
objectified in negative terms - the mugger, the rapist etc. - such that
'modern British fascists, unlike the Nazis, cast their most public
victims in an ideologically symptomatic rather than a causative
role.'[10] The NF demanded that black people should be forcibly
repatriated to their 'country of origin', thereby removing not only
depleters of the Aryan stock but also removing unwitting dupes of the

'Zionist cospiracy'. Taylor explains how the plan would have been carried out.

> The NF would compulsorily repatriate coloured immigrants and their offspring; with those of mixed race the decision as to whether they could stay would be decided in each case on its merits; where there was a mixed marriage, the white partner would be expected to accompany his or her spouse to another country.[11]

The question for the NF and for those groups opposing it was how latent popular racism can be transformed into an active fascist mass movement. It is, of course, the issue which has transfixed those on the far-Right of British politics for many years. Its significant failure has been to get sections of the working class and the petty bougeoisie to make a break with the reformism of the major political parties and indulge in street politics, as well as electoral forays within an authoritarian fascist movement. Even though the NF has sought to exploit any national incidents which have swelled racist sentiments, only really in the period 1975-78 has it given the appearance of being in a period of sustained growth. Each time as it has sought to generalise its politics to assert itself as a national political party rather than a single issue protest group, so its fascist roots have been exposed and potential recruits frightened away.

To leave the argument at that would be only to tell part of the story. For the NF's exploitation of popular racism, setting aside whatever support hardline fascists might expect to get, has not been carried out in an ideological vacuum across the rest of the political spectrum. Miles and Phizacklea point out that, 'One of the most

important reasons ... [for the failure of the NF to build massively] in the 1970s was the role of the state in both practising and legitimising racism. As long as the state can retain the initiative in this matter, the opportunities for the neo-fascists will be limited.'[12] Both Conservative and Labour governments have sought to halt black immigration, have promoted the 'law and order' issues which have resulted in more oppressive policing of black people and have supported palliative Race Relations Acts. In these respects the state has given the lead such that it has undermined any possible right-wing pressure of any force which could drive people into the arms of the fascists.

In the period mid-1950s to mid-1970s the ideology of racism was refracted through the state through various forms of legislation, especially over immigration, such that popular racism was ebbing and flowing within boundaries manageable by the state and that the major political parties were none too excessively concerned by the possibility of a mass racist party in British politics. What began to change in the mid-1970s was the immediate failure of the 1974 Labour Government to offer solutions for dealing with the sustained crisis in British capitalism, save for attacks on the wages and conditions of its own voters allied to spending cuts. At the same time cases of racial attacks were on the increase, which were to give the NF greater confidence backed by, for them, some promising electoral results. For those seeking to stop what they saw as an emergent fascist threat building upon the recurrent themes of 'race' and 'immigration' the historical precedent of the struggle against fascism in Britain in the 1930s was noteworthy. As will be seen with the fuller discussion of the

ANL below, there were a number of parallels with both movements in the 1930s and 1970s, played down by the major commentators on the period.

3.3 The struggle against fascism in Britain in the 1930s

If there is one pivotal historical precedent which relates both the model of the United Front as espoused by Trotsky in the 1930s discussed in Chapter 2 and the strategy and tactics of the ANL, it is the anti-fascist movement of that era which stopped Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF) from growing into a mass fascist movement in pre-war Britain. It is central to this thesis that the application of United Front politics by the ANL, giving the pre-war anti-fascist movement a specific political character, was a repetition of the actions of the anti-fascist movement centring around sections of the Communist party, ILP and Jewish militants of that time. It is important to briefly restate the events and the actions of the time by the participants, not least because the Communist Party in the 1970s was to adopt a radically different line re mass opposition to fascism and racism than it had in the earlier period.

Just as the fascist movements came to power in Germany in 1933 and Austria in 1934 and in the same year a fascist coup in France was attempted so the British equivalent, the British Union of Fascists, was tried to build such a movement in Britain. Under the leadership of Sir Oswald Mosley, a political tourist,[13] who had been a Labour and Conservative MP at different times (as well as leader of the 'New Party') the BUF grew into the largest fascist political force ever seen in Britain. The BUF gathered together much of the diaspora of minor

fascist groups that had existed in the 1920s[14] and was launched on October 1st 1932 with the explicit tactic of mass rallies[15], marches and meetings while at the same time Mosley kept up his links with the British establishment. At the BUF HQ in Chelsea, the Black House, Mosley housed a full-time paid defence force armed with truncheons and replete with transport. The BUF grew to 40,000 in 1934 with a headquarters staff of 140. Lord Rothermere swung the might of his publishing empire behind the the BUF and, according to Baroness Ravendale[16], many leading Tories considered joining the fascists so much so that the Conservative leader Baldwin had to appeal to them not to break away. For a brief period a section of the British ruling class were offering some limited backing to the BUF.

However, as Robert Skidelsky[17] (who may be more accurately described as Mosley's hagiographer rather than biographer), has suggested, the actual membership of the party was of a different class composition. He wrote 'With the exception of the young of all classes, the early BUF was heavily middle class. Its following in the industrial areas was middle class ... the *Morning Post* dubbed the blackshirts "Boiled shirts". This is not what Mosley wanted, but it was what he got.'[18] The membership of the party therefore followed the classic pattern of early fascist development, with a substantially lower middle class leadership and a socially marginal membership. As Rosenberg notes, 'Taxi drivers and clerical workers also registered support, as well as small businessmen, whose trade journals were generally favourable to the BUF, reflecting the small man against the big trusts and monopolies.'[19]

As a galvanising event for the BUF held a great number of

public meetings. After Lord Rothermere's 'Hurrah for the Blackshirts' headline in the *Daily Mail*, membership peaked. In Birmingham the BUF's numbers rocketed from 200 in 1933 to 2000 in 1934, out of a total party membership of over 40,000.[20] The high point for Mosley was planned for three London rallies in 1934, one of which was at Olympia in June. The composition of Mosley's audience was strikingly different to previous ones and Skidelsky regards it as the big chance missed in which, 'For the first and only time in the BUF's history, Mosley was able to get into one of his halls a substantial percentage of Britain's establishment.'[21] Thousands of anti-fascists, mainly Jews and Communists, clashed with the police outside. The violence and brutality of the fascist stewards not only frightened many of Mosley's potential supporters away but also brought him into the same fold as the fascists of Italy and Germany. No longer could any observers fail to see where the movement was heading.[22] The opposition to Mosley began to coalesce just as his support dwindled.

The factors of objective conditions and economic recovery only partly explain how the BUF was stopped as a growing fascist movement. Brewer, who has written on the activities of the BUF in the Midlands, sums up the period as one in which, 'The interests of capital were guarded by the Conservatives, those of Labour by the unions. Neither did well but neither caused sufficient distress for a recourse to drastic measures.'[23] After mid-1934 Mosley chose to build a hard core of followers in the East End of London. By now the party was openly anti-semitic. As Piratin, a leading Communist party member and Communist MP for Mile End after 1945, recalls 'Jews were attacked every time they were outnumbered or in no position to defend themselves ...

Strife and tension characterised the atmosphere in East London in those year.'[24] Mosley's campaign was intensive, so much so that 300 police reinforcements were drafted into the East End to deal with the street disturbances. The major source of opposition to the BUF came from sections of the Labour Left, the ILP, the CP, and Jewish groups such as the Jewish People's Council and Jewish Ex-Serviceman's Association. The official leaderships of the TUC/Labour Party and the Board of Deputies of British Jews took a non-oppositional line arguing that fascists would be beaten by promotion of the good deeds of Jews and calling on what it saw as the British sense of fair play and tolerance.[25]

The major confrontation which broke Mosley's attempts to control the streets in Britain was what has gone down in labour movement history as the 'Battle of Cable Street'.

3.4   The Battle of Cable Street

Mosley announced his wish to march into the East End of London via the Jewish area in Stepney on 4th October 1936 as a prelude to the aforementioned 1937 London County Council elections. The Communist Party was torn between the leadership's attempts to minimise discord with the Labour/TUC leaders who argued for 'stay away' tactics and the demands of members in the East End who wished to build physical opposition to the fascists. On 31st September the CP issued a call for workers to avoid the fascists and rally at Trafalgar Square and march to the East End but by 2nd October the line had changed to one of a mass mobilisation in the East End to stop the fascists marching.

By contrast the Labour Party, the TUC, the Board of Deputies

and the *Daily Herald*, the largest Left newspaper, all appealed to

people to stay away. Despite police protection of over 6000, Mosley and

his marchers were met by a crowd of over 150,000 anti-fascists and he

was unable to march as barricades had been set up in Cable St and

Jamaica St which were defended. After several hours of fighting the

police could still not force through a wedge for Mosley. Mosley's

attempted power-base of street domination was eroded not only by his

loss of this battle but also by the actions of the Communist Party.

The Communist Party then went into the East End to campaign

around housing, unemployment and unionisation of workers thereby

filling much of the political vacuum that the BUF had hoped to exploit.

As Chanie Rosenberg notes:

> It became difficult for the fascists to operate as they had
> not been able to build a sufficient base ... particularly
> since every time they did appear, anti-fascists were in
> force ... The fascists' activity and support thus dwindled,
> until they were formally disbanded in 1940. This was not
> thanks to the Labour Party and trade union leaderships. It
> was due to the hundreds of thousands of workers, led by the
> Communist Party and Independent Labour Party, who fought.[26]

The demise of the BUF was further aided by the objective

conditions in the British economy and the recovery made by British

capital during the period, compared with Germany, for example. At the

same time it is impossible to predict how large the fascist movement in

Britain would have grown had not the active opposition been led by the

Communist Party. The history of the NF and its demise is further

evidence on the effects of human agency on objective social and

economic conditions, as well as the attempted application of the model
of the Trotskyist United Front in Britain. One of the important
questions to be addressed is the amount to which one movement can stop
another movement and how much it is reliant on other factors, such as
the media, the actions of government and the role of the state in
general.

3.5 The growth and roots of the National Front (NF) in the 1960s

The migration of workers into Britain to alleviate labour
shortages is not merely a post-war phenomenon but in that period the
majority of people who have arrived have been established as members of
different 'races' and immigration control became established as a
method of improving 'race relations'. Miles and Phizacklea[27] catalogue
the growing political campaigns against immigrants in the 1950s from
within the Conservative Party and in late 1958, following attacks on
West Indians, ever-louder calls were made in Parliament for a ban on
black immigration. The 1959 General Election returned many more
Conservative MPs who lobbied for greater immigration controls and in
1960 the Birmingham Immigration Control Association was formed to
provide a regional impetus to the campaign. The pressures led to the
Commonwealth Immigration Act (1962) which set physical characterisatics
as an entry criteria for migrants to Britain (there were no actual
restrictions on migrants from the predominantly white Ireland).

The roots of the NF lay deep within the various splinter
organisations of the British fascist cadre in the early 1960s. In 1962
the National Socialist Movement (NSM) had been created by John Tyndall,

Martin Webster and Colin Jordan and was officially launched on 20th

April 1963 (Hitler's birthday). When such small organisations as these

are unable to build, the introversion which inevitably occurs seems to

drive them to self-destruction and so it was with the NSM.[28] By August

1964 Tyndall and Webster formed the Greater Britain Movement (an

organisation of never more than 140 members). At this time Tyndall

courted A.K. Chesterton who was involved with the League of Empire

Loyalists (LEL) and had been a prominent member of the BUF.[29]

At this time electoral forays brought limited though

significant results. The General Election of 1964 was the first when

issues of racism and immigration control became major electoral

factors, and John Bean, leader of the British National Party and

candidate in Southall, polled 9.1% of the vote in the area. The larger

scenario was played out in Smethwick which pushed the Parliamentary

Labour Party into setting up the Race Relations Board and dropping its

earlier qualms on immigration control.[30] The small groupings around the

GBM and the BNP continued to mill about without any apparent growth.

The 1966 General Election, where 'race' was much less of an issue, saw

various parties of the far-right poll between 4 and 7% in selected

target areas but for those who had hopes of building a mass movement of

racist feeling there was little comfort. The resurgence of support for

the Labour Party, despite Rhodesia's declaration of UDI, led Chesterton

to conclude on the need for unity of the groups on the far-Right.

Towards the end of 1966 negotiations between the leaderships

of the LEL and BNP drew the two parties closer together as a merger

beckoned. Walker and Taylor, both biographers of the NF albeit in

different styles, note that the respective memberships had little to

say in the talks.[31] The combined membership, despite a claim of 2500, was nearer 1500. It further had to be decided whether or not to allow John Tyndall, given his unashamed Nazism, and the rest of the GBM to join.[32] Finally, misgivings about the traits of National Socialism were put down to the high spirits of youth and the prospects of extra members, funds and a unity on the far-Right were an important spur. In October 1967 the GBM dissolved itself into the ranks of what had been launched on 7th February 1967 as the National Front (NF).

A.K. Chesterton was named as the Chairman of the NF though his air of disaffection with the more open street politics of Tyndall and Webster soon saw him out of step with the activities of the membership. In 1968 with the expulsion of the Kenyan Asians and Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech and subsequent expulsion from the Shadow Cabinet, the question of immigration and 'race' was once again newsworthy.[33] The Wilson Government was in crisis with wage freezes and a major balance of payments deficit and there was a rapid loss of support for the Labour Party in key local authorities such as Glasgow and Sheffield. The Powellite movement came to the fore *after* the Labour Government's 1968 Immigration Act and it may be that pandering to racism, as the Immigration Act did, gave confidence to the racist supporters of Powell rather than assuage their thirst for a tougher line on immigration.

The NF became a haven for disaffected Conservative elements and for those whose support for Powell, after his sacking by Edward Heath, took them outside the established political parties although others chose the Monday Club. Through the holding of meetings and rallies, membership drives and recruitment policies, there seemed to be

a solid growth in the party's fortunes, percentage improvements in the

local authority elections of 1969 amplified the encouraging signs, so

much so that in the 1970 General Election, the NF targeted 16 seats in

which to stand candidates. Once again, optimism pre-empted a debacle.

The highest percentage gained was 5.6% in Islington North where the

fairly respectable NF candidate the Rev. Brian Green had hardly fared

better than the openly fascist British Movement (a subaltern of the

NSM). Tomorrow was still a long way from belonging to them.

The strategy around the late 1960s and early 1970s for the

NF was to win a following on a simple racist ticket. This may explain

why they were unsuccessful in the 1970 General Election when the

Conservative leadership, despite the sidelining of Powell, had promised

further immigration controls. These were duly introduced in the 1971

Immigration Act. The period was not one in which the NF could grow,

especially with the upturn in class struggle tending to ally workers to

the ideas of the Left. As Taylor accurately describes,

> In early 1972, the NF leadership cannot have been sanguine
> about the prospects of 'breaking out' from the 'fringes' of
> British politics. Although there was some evidence that the
> loyalties of the electorate to the major parties were, for
> various reasons, under strain, there was no reason to
> suppose that support would accrue to the NF.[34]

The major issue which brought the NF some political strength was the

expulsion of the Ugandan Asians in 1972 (the first year the Police

compiled 'mugging' statistics) by General Idi Amin. The NF was able to

capitalise on the expulsions on three fronts, that of backing their

claims for black 'unfitness' to rule in the African state; the

opposition to black immigration into Britain - with the media initially

estimating up to 75,000 expelees coming to Britain; and the

exploitation of what it saw as the weakness of the Heath Government.[35]

The apparent *volte face* by the Government dispirited both Conservative

Party members and supporters and Nugent has estimated that the

membership of the NF exploded from around 2,000 to 13,000 in the

following six months.[36] Walker suggests that 'Nor was it simply a

matter of numbers; the calibre of the new recruits was markedly higher

than in the past. Monday Clubbers with experience of political

organisation were beginning to join.'[37]

On a speech to 43 party organisers John Tyndall stressed the

importance building a cadre within the organisation from which newer

recruits could learn street politics. Tyndall began to set out the

strategy the NF was to take. He asked 'What is it that touches off a

chord in the instincts of the people to whom we seek to appeal ?' and

answered it thus:

> it may be a marching column; it may be the sound of a drum;
> it may be a banner or it may just be the impression of the
> crowd. None of these things contain in themselves one single
> argument ... This is why at certain intervals of the year we
> concentrate our forces together by transporting members
> hundreds of miles by coach. We have got to show our strength
> to the public and to our own people.[38]

In February 1974, the 'Who Governs Britain' General Election

saw Edward Heath defeated in the face of industrial action on a variety

of fronts. At the election the NF fielded 54 candidates, 4 over the

qualifying target for a Party Political Broadcast. As a whole the party

won on average 3.1% of the vote in the 54 seats contested, down on the

the level of support in 1973. Despite considerable efforts the NF had

failed to extend its appeal. The row generated over the Ugandan Asians

had died down and a power struggle was developing within the NF as new

members who adopted a more electoralist, populist stance tried to wrest

power from the more hard-line (ex-)Nazis such as Tyndall and Webster,

though the latter showed himself remarkably adept at drifting with

whatever was the main current in the party.[39]

It was at this time that sections of the Left, particularly

the revolutionary Left began to take more cognisance of the activities

of the NF. Taylor notes:

> The emergence of the NF did not initially alarm the leaders
> of established political parties and social institutions
> such as the unions or the churches, probably because in some
> way they considered it trivial compared to the major
> conflicts over industrial relations legislation and pay
> policy which were shaping in late 1973 and early 1974.[40]

The two main parties of the revolutionary Left at the time, the

International Socialists (IS) (membership c.2500) which was relaunched

as the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) and the International Marxist

Group (IMG) (membership c.1000) made organisational moves against the

NF and sought to institute mass mobilisations in direct opposition to

the NF. The IS issued a pamphlet by Roger Rosewell[41] which argued for

'physical action against the fascists' whereas the IMG which had a

periphery with influence in the student movement won a motion at the

April 1974 NUS Conference for the policy of 'No platform for fascists'

in student unions.

In 1974, small local groups were beginning to protest

against the growing NF activities in terms of marches and assemblies.
For example, Tower Hamlets Movement against Racism and Fascism was
formed as a broad-based organisation to combat racist and fascist
influence in the area.[42] Local demonstrations were held including a
picket of the Railway Arms in Bow which operated a colour bar and
meetings were held on the 40th anniversary of Cable St. It was in June
of that year that the initial major confrontation between the NF and
the anti-fascists first hit the headlines - the first major street
confrontation against fascists in Britain for nearly 40 years.

3.6 The March on Red Lion Square

On Sunday June 13th, the NF called a march through the West
End of London under he slogan 'Send them back'. Their march was to
culminate at Conway Hall in Red Lion Square. The London Area Council of
Liberation called a counter-demonstraton which was to end with an
outdoor meeting at Red Lion Square. The two marches were kept apart by
the police and trade union and church leaders on the anti-fascist march
attempted to stop the rest of the march confronting the National Front
and the police protecting them. As the IS and IMG contingents attempted
to win round sections of the march into conflict with the NF so
fighting with the police ensued in which a student from Bristol
University, Kevin Gateley, was fatally injured. The events led to a
public inquiry chaired by Lord Scarman and further set the tone for the
next five years of oppositions and confrontations between the NF and
anti-NF groups.

The NF marched and met in Conway Hall. To clear the streets

for the NF the police charged the anti-NF demonstration using SPG reinforcements and mounted officers to force them into the Square. The Scarman Inquiry heard from 'witnesses who were reporters from the national daily newspapers. One after another they declared that the police had over-reacted. they said that the majority of the marchers were peaceful. They saw many examples of police brutality.'[43] Tony Gilbert, the author of 'Only one died', an investigation into the behaviour of the police that day, argued that the confrontational strategy of the anti-fascists was 'manna from heaven' for the police, in that the attitude of the Left was used to justify the behaviour of the police.[44]

Alex Callinicos, author of an article entitled 'In Defence of Violence' and an IS/SWP member, countered by arguing that physical opposition rather than turning the other cheek was part of the strategy to stop the NF. He argued:

> By marching unhindered ... the NF leaders hope to create a sense of aggressive self-confidence among their supporters and fear and intimidation among black people. In this atmosphere, attacks on black people will be multiplied, and new members attracted to the National Front and turned into hardened Nazis ... To stop the Nazis, therefore, we must stop their marches. No more than in the 1930s will the willingness to take a lead in the physical struggle necessarily isolate the anti-fascists ...[45]

These were rehearsals of the arguments that were to be made for and against the actions of the ANL and repeats of those which the Communist Party had come up against when its members had fought with Mosley's Blackshirts in the 1930s.

By October 1974 the minority Labour Government was forced to

go to the country for the second General Election in the same year.

Labour's victory brought them a working majority. The NF's membership

had trebled in the preceeding three years and the party was able to

field 90 candidates. The results were none too exceptional (only a 0.3%

increase in support, in total 113,625 votes) with 90 lost deposits. The

key region where the NF's position was strengthening was in Greater

London. Out of 36 candidates, six won more than 7% of the vote and a

further three won more than 5%. Taylor sees the success, such as it is

was coming about

> largely because it was able to mobilise an existing
> potential among white voters for support related to the size
> of the coloured populations and additionally capitalise upon
> a political tradition of support for parties of the extreme
> right in the East End of London and in parts of the East and
> North of London where ex-Eastenders had settled.[46]

Once again, as has often happened after a major incursion

into electoralism, the NF fell into disarray with factional infighting

and disputes on ideological and political practice. The Populist wing

rose to the head of the NF's Directorate, with people like Roy Painter

and Kingsley Read coming to the fore, attempting to move away from too

openly a Nazi-type organisation. They successfully organised a

leadership coup against John Tyndall and had him demoted to the post of

Deputy Chairman, with Read taking over as Chairman. The Populist

faction hoped that by increasing their free hand from just the 'race'

card and embracing a wider number of social and political issues, they

could also gain more currency with the electorate. Walker sums up the

period as one in which, 'The misfortunes of the party had begun to

assume the pace and scale of a Greek tragedy. Membership and

recruitment had begun to stagnate.'[47]

3.7 The growth of the NF in 1976 and the start of a movement

Two events coalesced in early 1976 to give the NF the spur

it required to lift itself out of the doldrums. One cannot really be

described as an 'event' for it was the period of crisis of British

capitalism assuming the specific form of a massive balance of payments

crisis. In 1976 the International Monetary Fund intervened to save the

Pound from collapsing. The terms of the settlement with the Labour

Government were such that wholesale cuts in Government expenditure were

demanded by the IMF. Funds to both the NHS and the education services

were cut, as were the levels of support for local government.

Unemployment rose from 600,000, through the symbolic 1,000,000 barrier

to 1,600,000 by 1977 while wages fell and for the first time since the

Second World War there was a decline in the real standard of living.

There was a growing sense of working class disillusionment with the

Labour Government which had replaced the unpopular Heath Government in

1974. Although this was not a massive trend, there were numbers of

people beginning to seek an alternative solution to the drift into

crisis which both the Conservatives and Labour had failed to reverse.

In April and early May 1976, Malawi Asians were expelled by

the country's President Banda and came to Britain. Once more the press

hysteria mounted again. When the West Sussex Council temporarily housed

some of the new arrivals in a racketeering hotel, *The Sun* of May 4th

raged 'Scandal of £600 a week immigrants', the *Daily Mirror* warned of

'A new flood of Asians into Britain', the *Daily Telegraph* noted of an

'Invasion of Asians forces borough to call for help' and even the

Guardian claimed that 'Asians riled neighbours'. The message was

clearly put that large numbers of Asians were coming into the country

and being put up in four-star hotels on their arrival. The results were

soon to be seen within the local elections occuring at that time.

Leicester was one of the growing power bases of the NF in the Midlands.

In one ward in Leicester the NF gained over 20% of the vote

and fought all sixteen wards contested taking an average 16.6% of the

vote, eliciting the response of the Labour Leader in Leicester, the

Rev. Kenneth Middleton, that he was surprised at the extent to which

the NF had taken votes from them. He hoped it would be a 'passing

phase' and that whilst some members of the Labour Party thought that

the NF should be given a firm response, he didn't think that such

actions would have much effect on an apathetic electorate. *Searchlight*

journal responded at the time, 'With all due respect to the Reverend,

if that's the sort of leadership the Labour party of Leicester is

offering in the face of a fascist advance - no wonder they are not

interested in their brand of politics.'[48]

The growing confidence of the NF was buoyed further by the

result of the Deptford By-Election in June 1976 in which the NF and the

National Party got a combined vote of 44%. The successful Labour

candidate gained 1% less to win the seat. Taylor tends to be wary of

implying from these results that the NF was on the move and building a

substantial base and cadre from which to rapidly expand.[49] Rightly he

points to the regional aspects of the NF's vote, especially in the West

Midlands and the way in which the Malawi Asians scare shored up the NF

vote but the results cannot be ignored, nor more importantly can the increased number of rallies, marches and general increase in confidence of the members themselves. They may not have grown massively in mobilising existing electoral support but the results which he admits made the NF 'jubilant' were only part of the party's tactics.

Enoch Powell returned to the immigration theme on 24th May in which he compared the possible 'racial carnage' on the streets of mainland Britain with the situation in Belfast. In the same year the Government's Race Relations Bill was working its way through Parliament which, though not a draconian piece of legislation, made incitement to racial hatred a criminal offence. The NF and other groups organised around the Bill, claiming it restricted their freedom. The *cause celebre* of the extreme-right was Robert Relf who shot to fame as a 'race rebel' when, as a member of the British Movement he put a notice outside his Leamington Spa home advertising it for sale to an English family only, or more precisely a white English family. He was prosecuted under the 1968 Race Relations Act, was sent to prison for contempt of court and drew publicity to his case by going on hunger strike. After seven weeks in prison with a welter of court appearances Relf was released. Walker notes, 'He had been allowed to justify the Race Relations Act and the court and he and his supporters were jubilant'.[50]

In early June (the same week as the Communist Party called for a non-racist, humane immigration policy and the Labour Party committed itself to a campaign against racsim and fascism) the NF had attempted to hold a rally in Birmingham in support of Relf, at which

they were outnumbered 8 to 1 by counter-demonstrators. As Sheila

McGregor, present on that demonstration remembers,

> At that demonstration we had a broad section of people there
> - from the Trades Council, various black groups, different
> groups on the left but there was a network of people who
> could be called on to help build for events like this, that
> was taken on into the ANL. On the day there were only a
> couple of hundred NF and the main problem of the day was the
> attacks by the police on our side.[51]

Three weeks later, however, the NF was able to mobilise 1500 supporters

in Stafford. The march was attended by the Mayor of Stafford, Cllr.

Tongue, who congratulated the marchers for their peaceful behaviour and

even took an NF membership card which he promised to think about

completing. This was followed by a handshake ceremony in which the

Chief Constable of Staffordshire thanked Martin Webster, the NF's

National Activities Organiser, for ensuring a peaceful day. This little

example shows the growing respectability of the NF as a political

force. Not only could it win nearly 50% (with the National Party) in a

by-election, it could receive favourable press for people such as

Robert Relf as a 'race martyr' and it could gain the backing of a Mayor

and a Chief Constable for its marches.

3.8 The summer of 1976 and the growth of opposition to the NF

Apart from the work the NF was able to do around the May

local elections and the case of Robert Relf, racist violence was on the

increase. On May 21st 1976 two overseas students from Queen Mary

College in London, living in Mile End in the East End, were murdered.

The police admitted it was a racially-motivated crime. From this attack the IWA called a national organising conference against racist and fascist attacks. It was set for Southall on 6th June. Two days before the conference, Gurdip Singh Chaggar from Southall was stabbed to death outside a public house, prompting Kingsley Read of the National Party to make his infamous 'One down - a million to go' comment at a meeting in Newham two nights later.[52] The IWA meeting was addressed by Darcus Howe, Trevor Huddleston and Dan Jones (Bethnal Green and Stepney Trades Council), amongst others.

At this point, a large section of Asian youth, particularly in Southall, were becoming increasingly militant and held a meeting that evening to show their disaffection with the IWA which they argued had shied away from the notion of self-defence and put too much faith in the police. The call for 'multiracial', disciplined self-defence groups was rejected both by the Labour Party and by the Communist Party. This meeting laid the basis for the foundation of the Southall Youth Movement. A march was held through Southall on the Saturday after Gurdip Singh Chaggar's death which attracted over 7000 Asian protestors supported by hundreds of black and white trade unionists and others.

In the years 1976 and 1977 several *ad hoc* Committees Against Racism and Fascism were formed in most English towns with a substantial black population of any size.[53] The Labour Party leadership, however, pre-empted any calls for tolerance and opposition to racism with a reminder to all concerned of its unwavering support of immigration controls. Bob Mellish, Labour Chief Whip, reminded MPs of the position on 18 May 1976 when he argued that:

> This nation has done all that it should have done. Its
> record is one of great humour and integrity, but I say
> "enough is enough".[54]

At the same time of these calls for tight control of immigration the
Labour Party launched a nationwide anti-racist campaign which, as Miles
and Phizacklea commented, 'followed an internal report on the [NF's]
growing electoral success in local elections'[55], especially in Labour
party strongholds. In the same month the TUC's General Council issued a
statement of its support for racial equality and condemning the extreme
right, with further action at the 1976 Congress aimed at further
organising a national campaign against racism and fascism. Miles and
Phizacklea seemed quite optimistic about this, in that the question of
racism was brought to the fore and that the threat of fascism stirred
even the TUC into calls for some form of action.[56]

It is important, therefore, to see exactly what form of
action was being proposed. The Labour Party Conference in 1976 adopted
a resolution which appeared impressive but as has been seen before,
Labour Governments can well ignore the decisions of their party
conference. The resolution called for the repeal of the 1968 and 1971
Immigration Acts (which it chose not to do), called for a conference on
racialism, support for the black community in defending itself (as long
as it didn't break the law) and organising of meetings and
leaflettings. The summation of this campaign is given by Taylor who
writes 'The campaign itself did not amount to a great deal. Leaflets
were produced and a march was held ...'[57]

With the proliferation of groups organising against racism
and fascism, the picture was one of activists and non-activists coming

together with a sense of being anti-racist and anti-National Front but

not wholly sure as to how to combat the NF. The leaderships of the

Labour Party and the TUC both saw the National Front as a force that

could be beaten by greater information and campaigning to expose its

true nature, whilst groups such the IS/SWP and the IMG argued that the

fascist movement actually had to be stopped, or more to use the

phraseology of the times, 'strangled at birth'. So it was that Colin

Sparks of the IS noted acerbically:

> The country is dotted with jolly class-collaborationist
> anti-racialist committees stuffed full of reformist trade
> union bureaucrats, jolly liberal clergymen and other riff-
> raff. We should not ignore these bodies but have to
> recognise very clearly that they cannot and will not lead
> the physical struggle against fascism.[58]

There is a tendency amongst chroniclers of the period to focus purely

on the electoral ups and downs of the NF as a guage of its wider

support. Given the emphasis on marches and rallies it is worth noting

the strength of the marches. At the end of 1975 the NF mobilised 1200

people into an 'anti-mugging' march in Hackney. In Bradford in March

1976 over 1000 NF members marched.

In the lead up to 1977, the Labour Party (with the CP in

support), and the TUC were beginning to express an organised opposition

to racism by campaigning and leafletting, with the occasional symbolic

march. At the same time the smaller groups of the far-left were taking

it upon themselves to attempt to stop the NF marching whilst at the

same time contributing to the bigger but more passive Labour/TUC

campaigns, with some success. On the part of the NF it entered 1977

with a good set of local election results behind it, the issue of

'race' getting constant media attention (1976 also saw major clashes of

black people and police at the Notting Hill Carnival) and a higher than

ever political profile for an organisation that had survived a damaging

internal split. The NF could not be described as a party on the

threshold of building a mass movement but it was in a position of

gaining a greater support and indeed the hostility it generated from

the Left was both a reaction to, and a reflection of, the apparent

upturn in the NF's popularity.

3.9 The NF arrives as an electoral force - 1977 and the GLC elections

The first major event, following a mid-winter lull in the

marching season was the NF's annual march on St George's Day, April

23rd, in Wood Green in North London. An alliance of Left and black

groups agreed to march in protest against the NF demonstration. Within

that group, however, there were disputes as to how the NF should be

opposed. The leaderships of the local Labour Party and Communist Party

branches as well as some of the black organisations wanted the march

banned with a protest rally to be held away from the NF march. The SWP,

by contrast, argued that direct action should be undertaken. Andy

Strouthous, at that point the President of North London Polytechnic and

now a leading member of the SWP, recalls the day:

> We had the line of direct opposition to the Front and we
> stuck to it. The problem was to win enough people over to it
> from the groups and individuals who were prepared to
> demonstrate against the NF. Fortunately enough people
> ignored the bureaucracy and followed our lead to make a

difference. I'd argue that it goes back to leading by example.[59]

The result was to be a common one when the officialdom of the anti-fascist march sought to organise a peaceful demonstration while at the same time there was a group of people who wished to directly confront the NF. As David Widgery, a leading organiser of Rock Against Racism, wrote of the revolutionary Left's opinion of the demonstration:

> So while the local worthies addressed a rather small audience in a local park, the Front and their police protectors were faced with much more numerous, better organised and determined opposition ... Not only were the NF marchers reduced to an ill-organised and bedraggled queue but there was extensive evidence of local dislike for the unwanted march and the trouble it brought.'[60]

The next immediate challenge for the NF was the local elections in London in May 1977. The NF chose to contest 9 of the 92 seats being fought (the only exception being Croydon NE). The result was a major success for the NF, proving to be the highpoint of their electoral forays. They were able to capture 120,000 votes, which was over double the total gained by the party in the whole of Britain in 1974. By psephological analysis, Taylor comes to the conclusion that the result can be put down to demographic, turnout and 'protest' factors rather than to any absolute growth in organised racism or in NF support in the city.[61] It is noteworthy that Taylor does not really explain why the NF got a higher vote than 1974, when in 1977 more people were presumably more aware of its racist and Nazi connotations.

Nor does he adequately consider the effects of having 120,000 people

voting for the National Front in Britain's capital city, allied to the

NF's bases in the West and East Midlands and in industrial Lancashire

and Yorkshire. He does not really assess the rising extent of racial

attacks, the growing confidence of the NF in planning more and more

marches and it must be noted, the increasing fascination of academics

such as himself in the phenomenon.

Certainly the NF leadership drew succour from the results[62]

as the Left became keener to oppose it now that it was an established

political force in London. 'At that point' recalls Tariq Ali, in 1977 a

leading member of the IMG, 'a shiver ran through the black community

and the Left. If the fascists could call on an admittedly passive

support of over 100,000 people in London, then they were beginning to

be a twin threat — they could start claiming electoral credibility

while continuing racial attacks. Nationally the Labour Government was

floundering, the movement had to come from the bottom.'[63] The events of

early 1977 thus gave the parties concerned reasons for believing the NF

was undergoing a metamorphosis from a mobiliser of racist opinion to a

fascist movement. Paul Holborrow, one of the three founders of the ANL

also argued,

> The figures speak for themselves. Over 119,000 votes in the
> GLC elections. In 33 out of 85 wards the Liberals were
> knocked into fourth place. If proportional representation
> had existed and a general election had been held we would
> have been talking about 25 NF MPs. All of this by a group
> consisting of leaders with a Nazi past covered in the veneer
> of electoral respectability. The Labour Government was
> attacking the conditions of the working class which was
> likely to drive more people into the arms of the NF. That
> was why they had to be stopped.[64]

The last large scale confrontation in 1976 and the one in which battle lines were drawn between the state (particularly the police), the fascists and the various groups opposed to them, was in Lewisham.

3.10 The Lewisham Demonstration

The National Front entered the immediate period after the GLC elections with the assumption not only that it had a reasonable base of support in London but that marches and rallies were important in attracting public attention. The first of the NF's programme of marches was at Lewisham on Saturday, 13 August. The march was planned under the banner of a campaign against 'muggers', to go from New Cross to Lewisham Town Hall. A counter-demonstration was organised by the All-London Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (ALCARF) - comprising the local Labour Party hierarchy, the Communist Party[68] and trade union bureaucracies and church leaders. Despite calls for the march to be banned, the Commissioner for the Metropolitan Police, David McNee allowed the march to go ahead and ALCARF's counter-demonstration headed, as Paul Holborrow bemoaned, 'five miles in the opposite direction to the National Front march', under the leadership of the three main political parties and Mayor Godsiff of Lewisham and the Bishop of Southwark, Mervyn Stockwood. David Widgery recalls, what were by now familiar arguments,

> The opponents of confrontation (such as the Communist Party) possessed only one argument; organised action by the committed was no substitute for understanding by the multitude. Our reply was that popular support had to be won,

> somehow wrenched away ... by the direct action of an
> initially small nucleus of organised individuals.[66]

By mid-day, following the end of the formal march, over 5000 opponents
to the NF had gathered in the centre of Lewisham, failing to adhere to
the requests of their leaders. The demonstrators (including a local
proportion of local black residents) attacked the NF march with
missiles and the police attacked back, with the police lines being
twice broken. Following the eventual end of the NF march, battles raged
between anti-fascists and the police for some time, with total arrests
numbering 214.

The Communist Party leadership was not in favour of direct
action. The day before the march the *Morning Star* accused the SWP of
preparing itself 'for the definitive game of cowboys and indians'. The
day after the demonstration the SWP was accused by the *Morning Star* of
'staging ritual confrontations and street fights'. This was in marked
contrast to the thinly disguised relish which Piratin shows in his
stories of how the Communist Party fought the BUF in London in the
1930s. The reaction of Sid Bidwell, MP for Southall, was condemnatory.

> I have no time for hooligans [the NF] ... and for those
> crackpot adventurers who have yet to take their part in
> responsibility in the real Labour movement. We cannot
> counter them by a strategy of trying to out-thug the thugs
> of the National Front, because we have the strength to do it
> otherwise.[67]

The SWP was quick to defend its tactics. *Socialist Worker* (20 August
1977) argued:

> What would have happened if the confrontation had not taken
> place if the Socialist Workers Party had not organised
> people to fight the Front? The Nazis would have been free to
> swagger through Lewisham, lording it over the local
> population ... A peaceful march two miles away would not
> have worried them, or their friends in the local police.

The SWP was also quick to condemn the Communist Party for its 'stay-

away' attitude and inability to distance itself as a *Communist Party*

from Bishops and supportive Conservatives. Despite the fact that the

SWP regarded the Lewisham demonstration as a success, it drew two

conclusions from it. One, that the running battles between SWP members

and NF members were ineffectual in bringing in wider anti-racist

opinion and that a larger but equally active movement was needed to

oppose the NF. Secondly, the number of non-aligned people, particularly

young black people, who had been prepared to fight the NF and the

police at Lewisham gradually convinced the leadership of the SWP that

such a movement could be built.

3.11 The Birth of the Anti-Nazi League (ANL)

The ANL was a direct result of the clashes at Lewisham. It

was felt among leading figures in the SWP that the lack of co-

ordination of the forces against the National Front was hampering the

anti-NF campaign. As Paul Holborow, Organising Secretary of the ANL put

it,

> They (the NF) were well on their way to emerging as a
> "respectable" political force ...The BBC covered the NF
> conference and portrayed Nazi thugs such as Webster and

Tyndall as "respectable politicians" ... the argument
against the Front was going by default at a mass level.[68]

Two weeks prior to that demonstration the National Secretary of the
SWP, Jim Nichol, had mooted the idea and informal soundings were taken
from non-SWP members as to the likelihood of groups joining in some
thing which may wll be seen as a 'front' for the revolutionary Left.
Doug Quilby, a Quaker Labour Party member and magistrate, was broadly
supportive, as was Tassaduq Ahmed, a Bangaldeshi with many contacts in
the East End Bengali community. Michael Seifert, a lawyer and Communist
Party member was quizzed because of his links with left-union leaders
such as Ken Gill (TASS) and Alan Sapper (ACTT). The disagreements with
the CP over the tactics of Lewisham were reflected in Seifert's
response, as Jim Nichol recalls, 'I said, "Mike, this is only really
going to work if it gets the support of the CP and the left TU leaders.
What do you think ?" Mike said, "I think it's a bloody great idea. But
I'm sorry, the CP won't, they'll crucify you. So I'll not mention it to
anyone."'[69]

The attitude of some members of the National Committee of
the SWP was equally unconvinced as to the merit of the task.[70] The
possibility of the launch of a United Front against fascism was greatly
increased when Jim Nichol enlisted the help of Paul Holborow. Holborow,
a leading member of the SWP, had worked extensively in the East End in
organising anti-NF demonstrations and general opposition to the NF took
over the main organisational tasks of canvassing support. He also saw
Lewisham as central to the possibility of building a movement, rather

than the limited forces of the revolutionary Left having to mobilise at

every occasion. He recalls,

> Many people had physically attacked the Nazis but Lewisham
> put an alternative way of fighting the Nazis on the map. No
> longer was it a handful of anti-fascists seeking to stop the
> NF but there was a mass vein of support to be tapped. The
> real question was how to drive home the advantage. The ANL
> came out of that. It was intended as a United Front but you
> don't keep referring back to Trotsky to see if you've got
> the line right. You go by experience.[71]

The SWP members most active in the launch of the ANL also

recognised that it was the *anti-* characteristic which was going to be

both a unifier and a mobiliser. As Dave Widgery explains, 'The title

Anti-Nazi League was deliberately chosen to be as broad as possible. It

should be open to people who were pro-immigration control but were

prepared to demonstrate against the Nazis. It was to be an anti-

movement because a pro-movement would waste too much time arguing about

rival utopias.'[72] Holborow did follow the 'blueprint' for the United

Front in approaching key influentials on the Labour Left and in the

trade union movement. He contacted Peter Hain, who already had an

established anti-racist record with his organisation against the South

African Rugby tours[73] and was a vocal figure on the Labour Left, and

Ernie Roberts, Labour MP for Hackney[74], a veteran of the AUEW who was a

bridge to the Left trade union leadership.

Ernie Roberts was enthusiastic about the possibilities of

the ANL and at the 1977 Labour Party Conference was able to amass the

signatures of over 40 MPs in backing the initial founding statement of

the ANL (See - Appendix 1). When it was clear that there was enough

momentum to guarantee some success to the movement, it was officially

launched on 9th November 1977 at the House of Commons. At the launch

meeting Ernie Roberts stated:

> We are especially looking to the trade union and political
> organisation of the labour movement. Where anti-racist and
> anti-fascist committees already exist, we would want to work
> alongside them ... Where such committees do not yet exist,
> we would like to assist in bringing people together who want
> to be involved in the campaign against the Nazis. Whatever
> organisational form, our most important task is to convince
> local people to work with us against the Nazis.[75]

The founding document stressed two points to the campaign, the need to

expose the Nazi nature of the NF and the need for mobilisation of mass

opposition to it, once again echoing the twin themes, action and

propaganda, of the United Front. The standing Committee of the ANL

reflected the importance with which the left viewed the rise of the NF.

The Committee consisted of Holborow, Hain and Roberts, Labour Tribune

Group MPs Martin Flannery, Audrey Wise, Arthur Latham and Neil

Kinnock[76], Maurice Ludmer (editor of *Searchlight*), Bill Dunce (CP

member and trade unionist), actress Miriam Karlin, playwright David

Edgar[77], Simon Hebditch (like Hain an ex-Liberal) and Nigel Harris

(economist and member of the SWP).[78]

3.12 The organisation and running of the ANL

The style of the ANL was modelled upon, to a certain extent,

CND, which Ernie Roberts had played a major role in, and the 'Stop the

Seventies' Tour' against the Springbok Rugby Tourists which Peter Hain

supervised. One part of the propaganda arm was the co-option of 'personalities' from the arts, sport, academia etc. who could add to the high profile of the movement. Thus by December 1977 the ANL had the support of Brian Clough and Jack Charlton from football, Arnold Wesker and Ted Willis from the theatre and a host of musicians via 'Rock Against Racism'[79]. In part the intention was to give credibility to the ANL as an organisation which could attract 'opinion leaders' or 'positive reference groups' but the high profile placed on music and football was also a reflection of the successes the NF was having in its recruitment drives and leaflettings around concerts, football matches and even in schools. In other words, one of the prime targets was youth.

The network of groups and organisations which had an input to the ANL were complex and in different areas were mirror-images of the local political structures, although the activist nature of the ANL brought to the fore those prepared to lead by example. More than one ANL branch shared a great many of its initial activists with the local Trades Council and Left milieu. At the national level, despite the presence of a variety of shades of left opinion on the National Steering Committee, Taylor accurately sums up the position when he notes 'The day-to-day running of the movement was the responsibility of the one man on the Steering Committee who could commit his organisation to the ANL's cause, Paul Holborow, who later became a full-time paid official of the ANL. Thus, although the IS/SWP was in a small minority on the Steering Committee, it supplied most of the activists and organisation at national and local level for the ANL.'[80]

There was a powerful organisational factor which increased

the role of the SWP which lay in the nature of the organisation itself. The activities of the ANL such as leafleting, flyposting, organising meetings, and the larger confrontations against the National Front - be they NF paper sellers, meetings, marches or rallies - all demanded people prepared to devote time and energy. This had always been more of a realm of the Labour left and the revolutionary left than the right of the Labour Party. So it was with the ANL. The SWP (and the IMG) had been mobilising against the NF since the beginning of its period of growth in the early 1970s and in that respect, knew the ropes, whereas the Labour Party nationally was more concerned with affairs of government. The party had therefore developed the strategic and organisational links with local black organisations and through the local Trades Councils, shop stewards committees etc. Although the same could be said of the local Labour Parties, indeed on a larger scale, it was the activism and number of local branches of the SWP with weekly meetings which pushed its smaller membership to the fore. Simon Ogden, Sheffield Organiser for the ANL, explained how the local group worked:

> We had two SWP branches in the city which meant immediately there were 70 or so SWP/ANL members to organise activities. Through fighting deportation campaigns and others around police harassment and so on we had some links with Sheffield's black communities. Sheffield's got a strong labour history which can be bit of a drawback because its so traditional but it also meant that the Trades Council did have some clout in the city and by raising the ANL there we could get some support, often only token, but everybody wants to appear to be anti-fascist.
> Finally I ran a disco which helped in that we could get schoolkids along and often they were of more use than the people who had all the right politics but none of the energy or imagination. So we leafleted, flyposted, demonstrated, marched, pulled off stunts when we could, as well as enjoyed ourselves, anything to keep the momentum going. And all the time, to those kids and to a wider audience we were getting the message across locally that even though the fascists

have never been big in Sheffield they couldn't try to build

here without a fight.[31]

The local branches were given considerable local autonomy from the ANL

nationally with separate collections made from members for local and

national subscriptions., Any money made from local events was kept by

the branches. Recruitment was a fairly casual process with the accent

on getting individuals and groups involved in activities rather than

going through a period of political instruction.

By late November 1977 the ANL had built up a list of over

150 sponsors and was undergoing a period of sustained growth. The

Labour Party nationally began to show greater concern over the apparent

rise of the NF and took the unprecedented step of devoting a party

political broadcast on 8th December 1977 to the NF and was aimed

directly at showing the NF as an outlet for street violence which had

sinister Nazi roots. In many respects the Labour Party was seeking to

provide the same public information approach that it had against the

Blackshirts in the 1930s. The broadcast and the Labour/TUC campaigns

were aimed at showing up the Nazi past of the NF leadership and

cautioning against blaming Britain's black population for the country's

economic and social ills.

In late December 1977, the Joint Campaign Against Racism

(JCAR) was announced by Labour rightwinger Joan Lestor who wished to

form a broad-based organisation which could marshal broader anti-racist

feelings than those expressed by the ANL and bodies which were wary of

being lined up with the revolutionary Left. These included the National

Union of Students, the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the British

Council of Churches, The Indian Workers' Association, the West Indian

Standing Conference and the Supreme Council of Sikhs. This grouping

included those who who disliked the activist, street politics, which

were to be the major part of the ANL's activities (and of course had

pre-empted the ANL with the Lewisham demonstration). The JCAR acted in

contrast to the activism of the ANL and took over 6 months to get its

first leaflet out.[92] As Taylor notes, the JCAR had the problem that' it

was difficult to find am appropriate form of words upon which the

various constituent organisations could agree.'[93] This was to be rather

symptomatic of its adopted strategy which was a spur to inactivity.

3.13 1978 and the initial confrontations between the NF and ANL

In 1977 the NF established the Young National Front (YNF)

and the ANL sought to utilise music as a focus for political

organisation of young people whereas the NF was able to focus on the

football terraces to some effect. The YNF launched a leaflet *How to*

spot a Red Teacher (250,000) and a pamphlet *How to Combat a Red Teacher*

both of which were aimed at schoolchildren. As a response to this the

ANL initiated a sub-campaign of School Kids Against the Nazis (SKAN)

and its own fanzine also entitled *SKAN.* One of the leading members was

Steve Marsh (SWP), who with Hardy Desai (IMG) were also the leadership

of the National Union of School Students. He recounted the way the

movement organised amongst schoolchildren.

> Punk rock was going on at the time and we had discos in the
> city centres run by the ANL or RAR. At those we didn't go on
> too much about the politics apart from to get kids into
> leafleting or putting posters up or painting graffiti out.

> You could get 200-300 to a disco on Friday night and about
> 20 to leaflet a football ground the day after when the Front
> might turn up. But gradually we got more kids involved
> through getting the paper *SKAN* into the schools and if the
> NF were going to march or if a carnival was organised with a
> coach going from the ANL, we could get a few people along.
> The other side was that we isolated the kids who were
> around the NF. They couldn't get their stuff into the
> schools without us fighting back and we'd stop NF
> leafletting at school gates.[83]

Taylor reports that *SKAN* was the prime reason for many of the

'personalities' resigning from the ANL, because of the language and the

politics of the publication. The ANL was unable to keep all of its

sponsors when the confrontations with the NF began in earnest and the

movement had developed a momentum of its own, through the local

activities and branches, which could generate its own publicity and

activities. Most importantly for the ANL, it was beginning to win over

sections of black organisations, and building an anti-fascist hegemony.

In early 1978, it was Margaret Thatcher, leader of the

Conservative opposition, rather than any members of the NF or the ANL

who brought the immigration debate to the fore again. When asked her

views, for a *World in Action* programme broadcast on 30 January 1978,

she replied:

> If we went on as we are, then by the end of the century
> there would be four million people of the New Commonwealth
> or Pakistan here. Now that is an awful lot and I think it
> means that people are really rather afraid that this country
> might be swamped by people with a different culture. And ...
> if there is a fear that it might be swamped, people are
> going to react and be rather hostile to those coming in.[84]

On the rise of the NF she noted that, whilst not agreeing with the objectives of the NF 'at least they are talking about some of the problems'[85]. The interview implied that not only that the Conservative Party would take on board some of the concerns of NF supporters but in some respects that these fears were real. It is this interview and the reaction fuelled by the press which contributed to the decline of the NF vote, in that those people worried about 'race' or 'immigration' could feel confident in the intentions of Mrs Thatcher. The response of the ANL was given by Steering Committee member Martin Flannery MP who commented 'There is now an unholy alliance between Mr Powell, Mrs Thatcher and the National Front which is catering for the lowest elements in our society.'[86]

The importance of the Thatcher speech has to be seen not only in the possibility of the Conservatives apparently winning over waverers to the NF but also that the comments could add to the veneer of respectability of the politics of the NF and shift the political debate around 'race' to the Right. Taylor rightly points out that it did not require a great political *volte face* by Margaret Thatcher to take a tough line on immigration control. He then goes on to note that it is quite another matter to assume that the comments were deliberately directed at undermining NF support because the Conservative leadership saw it as an electoral threat.[87] It is more likely that with an election still a possible 18 months away, she was setting down a marker for potential NF supporters from either Labour or Conservative voters. It is only with the benefit of hindsight that we know how the NF was decimated in the 1979 General Election. In 1978 the situation was still unclear as to how big a movement the NF could build

and what the opposition could muster.

The first opportunity for the the ANL to confront the NF in a major way was the Ilford S. by-election, which was held on 3 March 1978. Following on from the incidents at Lewisham the Metropolitan Police Commissioner David McNee imposed a blanket ban on demonstrations in the capital for two months, thereby covering the potential disturbances in the up-coming by-election in Lambeth Central (taking in part of Brixton).** The ban was partially circumvented by the ANL which held a rally, and the NF which held a mass canvass but a large police presence ensured there was little in the way of clashes. The NF's share of the vote improved by nearly 50% from 3.2% in the same area for the GLC elections in 1977 to 4.7%. The NF itself was not displeased with the result and hoped for better things at Lambeth. There the ANL mounted a counter-demonstration to a Front meeting on 15th April in which 35 people were arrested. The NF polled only 1% more than in the GLC elections and realised it had failed to make a significant leap.** On the same date as the Lambeth poll, by-elections in Wycombe and Epsom both saw the vote stabilising.

3.14 The first ANL Carnival

The anti-fascist movement, based around the ANL, was not only concerned with opposition to the NF when it marched and met. As a United Front it had a propaganda side. It also sought to mobilise people, particularly young people, around positive aspects of the movement. So it was, that in conjunction with Rock Against Racism, the ANL organised a *Carnival Against the Nazis* to be held in Victoria Park

in the East End of London on April 30th 1978. The timing was such that it occurred just before the May local authority elections and after the London-wide ban on marches was lifted. Tens of thousands marched from Trafalgar Square to the Park, thereby combining opening political speeches with music later in the day.

The attendance at the Carnival far exceeded the expectations of even the organisers with some 100,000 people attending. As Taylor concurs, 'the ANL was given the credit for organising one of the largest demonstrations of the post-war period in which many thousands of the supposedly apathetic young had participated peacefully ... The apparent drawing power of the ANL led to a mushrooming of groups affiliating to it ...'[90]. Paul Holborow, along with other speakers, toured the country addressing ANL meetings to help in the organisation for the Carnival. Local ANL organisers had little trouble in filling coaches, such was the enthusiasm for the event. Forty-two coaches went from Glasgow, fifteen from Sheffield and a train was chartered from Manchester. As Paul Holborow recounts 'The involvement of Rock Against Racism meant that the Carnival had a quality dimension. But during the day 75-80,000 people marched all the way from Trafalgar Square to Victoria Park. It wasn't just a case of people going along for the music.'

The Carnival was used not only as a propaganda tool in the battle of the ANL against the NF, it also sought to unify and build the confidence of a movement. The event provided the final spur for the Communist Party, which had come closer to supporting the line of the ANL, to approach the SWP to join the ANL and a member of the CP was later appointed to the Steering Committee. By the end of the summer an

estimated half a million people had rocked against racism in various

carnivals in different parts of the country.[31]

The success of the Carnival for the ANL was in marked

contrast with the string of worsening local election results which

greeted the NF on 5th May 1978. Whilst the results are not easily

directly comparable with the 1977 election results, they did show a

fall in NF support in the provinces and a reduction in the party's

fortunes in London. Not only did the general averages of the NF's share

of the vote fall but the party was also having difficulties in finding

candidates for many boroughs.[32] The bad results further extended the

ill-feeling betwen National Activities Organiser Martin Webster and

Leader John Tyndall such that the internal feuding was set to tear

apart the NF unless it could bring about some electoral successes. The

East End of London was the only part of the country in which the NF's

vote had held up and as in the days of Mosley's BUF some forty years

previously (described above in this chapter) it was to the East End

that the NF turned its attention.

The ANL held its first working conference on 8th July 1978

in London. A total of 820 delegates attended from ANL branches which by

this time were nearing 300. The meetings were addressed by people such

as Arthur Scargill (President - Yorkshire Miners), David Edgar (ANL

Steering Committee) and Alok Biswas of the Hackney Asian Association.

The conference, which probably had a majority of SWP members amongst

the delegates, voted overwhelmingly against immigration controls but in

the interest of unity and because of the specificity of the anti-Nazi

campaign it was decided not to make agreement on this point binding on

ANL members. Paul Holborow summed up the view of the League, arguing

for 'Unity in action. Don't avoid debating what divides us, but fight around what unites us.'

The local structure of the ANL was left organisationally loose, with a large degree of local autonomy for the local groups to initiate their own campaigns, call their own demonstrations etc. albeit with liaison with the the ANL National Office in Little Newport St, London. The fears over the appearance of the ANL appearing to be the SWP's campaign were in part allayed by the formation of a 'Working Council of ANL Activists' to be elected by members regionally, which would work under the direction of the original Steering Committee. A suggestion that the ANL's branches should have more of a role to play in the directing of the movement, rather than the Steering Committee was rejected amidst fears that this would give the SWP too much local control.

As well as the pressures on the SWP not to be seen as running the ANL, so the party's members were aware of the continual pressures from the Labour Party MPs and trade union leaders. To put it in the terms of the United Front discussed above, the revolutionaries felt pressed by the Labour Party to move towards a Popular Front. As Trotsky wrote on the United Front, 'an agreement can be concluded even with the devil himself ... On one condition, not to bind ones hands.'[93] The organisers were continually divided between those seeking to build the movement from the local bases and those still seeking 'celebrities' to add to the list of sponsors. As Paul Holborow recalls:

> The ANL was an organisation of activity. Its power and growth was determined by the work of the most active and the most keenly involved. Whilst we wanted prominent people to sign up, the intention was that you could use this to

help mobilise at the rank and file level. There always had
to be a refusal on our part to liquidate our politics. Neil
Kinnock would continually come in and say something like
'Great news. Malcolm Rifkind,' or some other wet Tory, 'has
signed up.' And I'd have to say, 'Thanks Neil' and lose the
name in my back pocket for several months.[94]

The tensions between parts of the ANL were to assume greater prominance

in 1978 and in the 1979 General Election campaign.

3.15 The NF and grass roots opposition in the East End in 1978

A near state of siege was an everyday occurrence for many

black families in the East End. Widgery describes the position in 1978

as being particularly serious. He writes:

It had become impossible for anyone living or working in the
E1 area not to have witnessed the provocations ... and the
threatening atmosphere around certain estates and tube
stations whch produced a de facto curfew. One cannot
accurately judge the degree to which these attacks were
organised and co-ordinated. Some clearly were ...[95]

On 20 April, Kenneth Singh, a ten-year-old boy was found murdered by

multiple stab wounds in Tower Hamlets. Two weeks later, on the night of

the local elections Altab Ali was stabbed to death on his way home from

work in Whitechapel. In the elections the NF was challenging Labour in

43 of the 50 possible seats when they would normally have fought only 8

or 9. The concentration of effort in the East End was unmissable,

although the votes polled were poor returns for the Front. Despite the

weak vote for the NF, the number of candidates they put up and the

noise of fascist loudspeaker vans touring the streets added to the

tension of the occasion. The three teenagers eventually found guilty of the murder of Altab Ali admitted they had no other reason to kill him except that he was 'a Paki'.[96] This was the turning point for many Asian people in the East End and saw the rapid rise of militant, co-ordinated black action against the racial violence in the East End.

The first group to form was an Action Committee Against Racist Attacks which joined up with Tower Hamlets CARF and the local Trades Council ANL. Ten days after Altab Ali's death 7000 people marched from the spot where he died to Hyde Park both to mourn and to protest. The attacks continued. On 27th June, Ishaque Ali was choked to death in Lower Clapton, Hackney after three white men attacked him and his brother, strangling Ishaque with a bootlace. A group of Asian brewery workers in Bow were attacked on 6th July by 30 white men who threw bricks and bottles at them. Eight were hospitalised although the police insisted that the attack was not racist in nature. One of the key areas for fascist attention was around Brick Lane in Hackney.

The area was a regular sales point for NF paper-sellers. On 11th June, after a local NF meeting, 150 white youths charged through the area smashing shop windows, car windscreens and attacking individual Bengalis with bricks, bottles and sticks. One witness of the scene, Rahmin Ali, noted that it was only the rapid gathering of Asian youths to defend the area that the racists were faced down. 'The racist thugs were taken by surprise. They thought that the Asians were cowed ... They were wrong. Asian youths knew well how to defend themselves.'[97] The importance of events like this and others in the East End is that Asian youths had begun to organise for self-defence. The self-organisation of black people was an integral part in bringing

them together in joint activity with the ANL.

The following week the Asian groups joined with the ANL to ensure that it had a large presence in Brick Lane as did the NF. The large police cordon around the NF did little to assuage the feeling of the Asian community that the police were happy to protect fascist but did little about racist attacks. Furthermore, the attempts at self-defence were viewed by the police as unnecessary and indeed illegal, if it meant carrying weapons etc. As Taylor concludes, 'In this atmosphere, calls from politicians of the major parties for more police in the East End to combat racial violence were regarded as, at best, irrelevant, at worst, inflammatory.'[98]

On 15th July, faced with what appeared to be a worsening situation, the leadership of the three largest Asian organisations, the Indian Workers' Association, the Standing Conference of Pakistani Organizations and the Federation of Bangladeshi Associations called both for the formation of self-defence groups because of their lack of faith in the police and that members of these associations should become active in the Anti-Nazi League. This represented a qualitative shift by groups which had initially sided with the more restrained JCAR. Part of the statement read:

> We now believe that the time has come when we must urge our people to look to their own defence. The leading ethnic minority groups in Britain should be supporting each other in a practical and effective sense, in the mounting of such measures as are needed for the physical defence of various peoples.
> In addition we are urging all Asians to join the Anti Nazi League, which we regard as the best anti Nazi movement in Britain so far.
> Just as the National Front is being privately supported by what we believe to be a large section of so-called respectable commercial interests, we think that our own

businessmen should support financially the Anti Nazi League
and young Asians to enable them to form self-defence
groups.[99]

So it was that the anti-fascist movement took on a more
comprehensive character, formalised in a private meeting between the
above organisations, the ANL and Board of Deputies of British Jews on
29th July. Meanwhile in Brick Lane, the Hackney and Tower Hamlets
Defence Committee called for a Black Solidarity day on Monday 17th
July. The stay-at-home strike involved more than 8000 people which
closed shops, businesses and schools throughout East London. As Taylor
reports, 'At one point, Bengali youths took control of Brick Lane, and
refused to allow anyone apart fron IS/SWP and ANL representatives in
the area. *Rapprochement* was sealed with the decision of the Asian
organisations and the ANL to organize a joint march through Brick Lane
on 20 August.'[100]

Somewhat belatedly Brick Lane was visited by Len Murray, the
TUC's General Secretary, and Bill Keys, leader of SOGAT and on 11th
October the unions initiated a campaign in the East End for the
recruitment of black workers to fight racism at the workplace. The ANL,
by mid-April, had the affiliation of 30 AUEW branches, 25 trades
councils, 11 NUM areas and lodges, and between six and ten branches of
the TGWU, CPSA, TASS, NUJ, NUT, and NUPE.[101] The ANL also took its
campaign into workplaces such as Longbridge, where 200 assembly line
workers refused to work with a NF supporter. A school NUT sent an NF
member to Coventry, forcing his resignation, and CPSA members won a
fight to wear ANL badges and have a racist disciplined by trade union
action. In the International Harvesters factory a National Front member

was strung upside down. The movement was thus beginning to have an

effect in the organisations of the working class, at their workplaces,

as well as winning over the support of black groups. There were,

however, internal contradictions and factions within the ANL which

tested the unity of the movement.

3.16 The struggles within the ANL

Towards the end of 1978 three major rows broke out within

the ANL. One involved a particular tactic, one was a dispute with one

of the constituent organisations and the final one related to the most

commonly recurring question, the role of the SWP in the movement. The

first concerned the amount of publicity the NF should be afforded

within the broadcast media. By mid-1978 the interest in this was

heightened by speculation that a general election call was imminent.

Although Taylor locates the start of this section of the campaign in

the launch of a 'No Plugs for Nazi Thugs' public meeting attended by

Alan Sapper (TASS) and addressed by Johnathan Dimbleby on 12 September,

the idea was originally mooted at the July ANL conference. At that

event David Edgar, the author and playwright noted:

> The BBC union ABS has given its support to members who won't
> work on programmes with the Front. The ACTT Freelance branch
> has told its members not to touch NF material. The ANL
> should call on the two TV unions to stop their members
> working on NF broadcasts and should support all media
> workers who refuse to work on NF broadcasts.
> Those in favour ? Passed unanimously ![102]

The September meeting called upon the BBC and IBA to ban all NF

broadcasts on the ground that the party went beyond the bounds of

legitimate political and parliamentary activity. The SWP's line, and by

inference the line of the 'banners' was to attempt to get the unions to

refuse to handle the NF broadcasts because of the effect they believed

that the broadcasting of NF propaganda could bring about. In *Socialist

Worker* 29/4/78 it was argued:

> We don't want people to shut up because we disagree with
> them ... But *no one* believes in free speech in every case
> ... the murder of Gurdip Singh Chagger in the autumn of 1976
> was a direct consequence of Enoch Powell's rantings about
> more repatriation of black people ... Should people be free
> to attack black people and fire-bomb their homes ? No, they
> should not. Free speech which leads to fire-bombs should not
> be free either.'

The campaign was unsuccessful and alienated some supporters of the ANL

who were fearful of calls for bans on 'free speech'. One of the groups

who felt most uneasy about this was the Board of Deputies of British

Jews (BoD).

The BoD, formed in 1760, has emerged over the centuries as

the formal representative of Anglo-Jewry although, as David Rosenberg

suggests, 'Its representation of the community has been limited, for it

has always been predominantly synagogue-based and has therefore

represented Jews almost exclusively as a religious minority.'[103] It may

best be seen as the governing body of the Jewish establishment. The BoD

was caught in the position of watching the ANL as a growing movement

which was gathering opposition to the NF whilst having fundamental

differences with the socialist activists involved. The Board objected

to what it saw as undue SWP influence and refused to meet with Peter

Hain of the ANL because of his support for the PLO and the Palestinian

cause.[104] The violence of the confrontations with the NF was a further

cause of distress to the BoD. Dr Sokolic of the BoD noted,

> There was a danger that the forces of anti-fascism would be
> dragged down to the level of the fascists. If the result is
> street fighting, you get the chaos caused that the fascists
> want. There was no evidence that any great number of people
> wanted to join the NF. What we needed to do was to inform
> the public about the Nazi nature of the NF. In that respect
> we agreed with the aims of the ANL but too much of their
> behaviour was directed into attacks upon the police, which
> we couldn't countenance. Lawlessness helps the fascists.[105]

As David Rosenberg has shown in his study of the actions of

the BoD and other Jewish groups in the 1930s, it is clear that the role

played by the BoD then was comparable with that which it and other

'representative' bodies for the targets of the fascists had in the late

1970s. The initial views expressed by the communal leaders was that

calls to ban or stop the fascists marching would be anathema to and

possibly alienating to, the British public. It was pressure from the

rank and file of the communities which forced the leaderships into a

position of taking a more active lead against the fascists.

In the 1930s the Jewish People's Council was formed to lead

the opposition to the fascists in alliance with the Communist Party. In

the late 1970s it was the Jewish Socialists' Group which was criticised

by the BoD on the grounds that it should not work with other groups

because of their stance on the Middle East. As Michael Heiser of the

JSG noted, 'The Jewish Socialists' Group was proud as an organisation

and through individuals to play its part in the Anti-Nazi League along

with other left groups, Labour Party people, unaffiliated people, women and gay people ... We said that we disagreed with their position on the Middle-East, and would argue with them on it, but the most important thing was that we were all there to fight racism here and now.'[106]

The key area of disagreement which alienated some of the supporters of the ANL, especially some of the celebrities was the degree of dominance of the SWP in the movement. The BoD claimed it had in its possession documents which showed that the ANL was little more than an SWP recruitment exercise. Dr Sokolic of the BoD has claimed, 'No-one should doubt, after the last War, our total abhorrence of fascism. But that does not mean the the Board should subsume its principles to people whose general political positions we do not agree with. An anti-fascist alliance is one thing. It is quite another to be seen as supporters of the Socialist Workers Party.'[107] The Federation of Conservative Students withdrew its support as did popular figures such as Brian Clough and Jack Charlton, Michael Parkinson and Dave Allen, partly because of the content of *SKAN*. Pete Alexander, for some time ANL organiser, put the role of the celebrities or 'notables' into context. 'These "notables" (none of them Tories) were never allowed to determine the policies of the ANL, and some of them subsequently withdrew, but they did boost he ANL's credibility and made it possible to mobilise tens of thousands of young people and trade unionists.'[108]

The actual degree to which the ANL could be seen as an SWP front will be discussed below. The organisational dominance of the SWP was to some degree governed not only by the nature of the organisation but also the tactics it sought to employ to combat the NF. It is also rather unsophisticated of any political/religious groups within a

movement to assume that other groups will not try to win others over to their political standpoint as it is to ignore the specific aims of the movement and its temporary nature. That was why more vaguely defined anti-racist bodies such as JCAR had to make such slow progress because of their primary concern with reaching agreement with all concerned parties and thereby keeping policy at the level of the least radical component. The specificity of the aim of the ANL was part of its success. One of the points of failure, which continually raised by critics of the ANL[109] is the problems which came about during the second ANL London carnival on 24th September 1978.

3.17 Carnival 2 and the build-up to the 1979 General Election

Carnival 2 was held in Brockwell Park in Brixton, only five months after Carnival 1, but was much more professionally organised, at least musically. Again the Carnival started with a march from Hyde Park and attracted an equal number of people, at some estimates nearer 150,000. Carnival itself was a success for both RAR and the ANL, which by this time had an individual membership of over 30,000. *The Guardian* which on Friday 22nd had commented at length of the problems in the ANL's ranks and by Monday 25th begged the forgiveness of the ANL claiming 'such misgivings seem beside the point'.

What was more problematic was the response of the ANL to the actions of the NF on the day. With two weeks notice the NF called a march in Brick Lane for the same day as the Carnival. As Paul Holborow recalls:

> We couldn't cancel the Carnival because that would have
> meant giving in to the fascists, never mind all the effort
> that people had put into what was going to be a massive
> event. At the same time we had a plan which didn't work out.
> It was our intention to divert a large section of the march
> to Brick Lane and we had a comrade positioned near to the
> Dorchester to direct people off. In the end we collectively
> bungled. It shows how incredibly inexperienced we were at
> the time. But we admitted that in the following week's
> *Socialist Worker*. We didn't shy away from the blame.[110]

The result was that a police presence of some 8000 officers

enabled 250 NF members to march through Brick Lane, a contested area

for many months previously. The 1500 anti-fascists who were joined too

late by 3000 ANL supporters had no effect on the march. This led to

allegations by other left groups and some Bengali organisations that

the ANL had let them down for the Carnival's greater publicity

purposes. The response of the SWP was that to have broken the unity of

the Carnival march could have been exactly what the NF had wanted and

would not necessarily have stopped the NF march, given the large police

presence.

The NF's AGM for 1978 was held over until 1979 because of

the possibility of a late General Election in October 1978. At the

meeting the principal aim was to plan the NF's campaign for the General

Election. The party was in the position of having prospective

candidates for 270 seats, just short of the 300 seat target set by the

NF itself. The other main area for the the NF to organise around in

early 1979 was the return to the headlines of 'race rebel' Robert Relf.

Having been sentenced to fifteen months in prison after publishing

material likely to incite racial hatred, Relf went on hunger strike in

Winchester Prison. The already-waning strength of the NF to pull large

crowds was evident in their brief campaign over Relf. On Saturday 10th

March 800 NF members marched in support of him although 2000 ANL

members and supporters stopped the march nearing the prison. After a

smaller march the following week Relf gave his hunger strike up and

returned to relative anonymity. On 28th March the Callaghan Government,

following the demise of the Lib-Lab pact, could hold on no longer and

lost a vote of no confidence in Parliament. The General Election date

was set for May 3rd.

3.18 The General Election Campaign of 1979

As was the nature of the movement, the ANL and groups around

it responded to the tactics followed by the NF to its electioneering.

The NF was finally able to field 303 candidates, in part by using

relatives of senior members of the party.[111] The focus of the NF's

attention was directed towards mass rallies and meetings[112], this being

in part due to the weak forces on the ground that the Front had (by

this time its membership did not number over 10,000) and a reflection

of the tactics of confrontation which Martin Webster still preferred.

The first large-scale rally held to launch the NF's campaign was held

in Leicester on April 21st. Leicester had been the the city where the

NF had first grown as a political force and at the peak of the NF's

popularity had a branch membership of over three hundred.

Calls to ban the NF's march were made by both the major

political parties and black groups to no avail. Leicester's Chief

Constable Goodson allowed the march to go ahead arguing 'We fought two

wars to preserve the right to free speech.'[113] The police also invoked

an 1848 by-law which made it an offence to pursue any activity which

might lead to to a blockage of the City's sewage system to stop the

ANL's mass leafletting. The NF marchers (350 [*Socialist Worker*] or 800

[Taylor]) were met by some 5000 counter-demonstrators who attacked the

march after it had progressed only 100 yards. The march was only able

to continue along its planned route for 8 minutes before the ANL

supporters forced the police into hurrying the march along a shorter

route into an area where the NF marchers could be better protected.

There were several arrests and the police pursued ANL

supporters and local black youths across the campus of Leicester

University. Press condemnation on the following day, Sunday 22nd, was

quick to criticise the policies of the NF and the actions of the ANL in

equal parts. What the leader writers did not realise was that the

clashes at Leicester were only to be a rehearsal for the major

confrontation of the 1979 General Election campaign, on April 23rd, in

Southall.

3.19 The Confrontation in Southall

At Southall the propagandist part of the the armoury of the

the ANL was not so much in evidence as the other part of the movement's

strategy, that of direct physical opposition to the NF. Southall had a

long-standing Asian community, with a well-organised Indian Workers'

Association (Southall) independent of either section of the IWA

nationally.[114] The unofficial enquiry into the events of April 23rd,

produced by the NCCL, argued that, 'Southall has an excellent record

for race relations ... This is not to say that members of the ethnic

minorities living in Southall inhabit a haven on which racial prejudice never impinges.'[115] The NF had no established base or branch in the area and the election meeting it planned to hold in Southall Town Hall on April 23rd was clearly provocative. The date of the meeting was St George's Day and the local Conservative-controlled council, Ealing, flew the Union Jack, the banner adopted by the NF, from the top of the Town Hall. As Martin Webster, the NF's National Activities Organiser, told Thames Television News on April 24th, 'The National Front is facing councils banning the National Front from having halls. And so when the council at Ealing said we could have that hall we jumped at the chance.'[116]

The Council did not inform the local black organisations of the planned meeting and it was only by chance that Vishnu Sharma, Communist Party member and President of the IWA (Southall), discovered of the meeting on 7th April at a chance meeting with Chief Inspector Gosse, the local Police Liaison Officer. The IWA (Southall) Executive decided to initially petition the Council for the meeting to be banned and failing that, to demonstrate on the day before the march, to close all businesses restaurants and shops etc on the afternoon of the meeting itself and ignore the NF meeting.

When the various anti-racist, community and religious organisations met on 11th April it was clear that the support for the local IWA position, of ignoring the NF, was minimal. Both the ANL and the Southall Asian Youth Movement, the latter having boycotted this meeting, let it be known that they intended to oppose the NF meeting by whatever means necessary. In deference to the unanimous feeling that the NF should not be allowed to hold its meeting in Southall, the IWA

(Southall) agreed to a sit-down protest as a gesture of non-violent civil disobedience. The March for Unity and Peace went ahead on Sunday April 22nd, led by Vishnu Sharma, Sid Bidwell MP (Southall) and Rev. Jim Parkinson with little incident, indeed the *Morning Star* was the only national newspaper to see fit to report the march.

The ANL presence started early on the day of the NF meeting, delivering placards, badges etc. to 6 Park View Rd, a premises occupied by a local community group *Peoples Unite*. At the same time the Special Patrol Group (SPG) had gathered to keep an eye on crowd developments in the area. The Southall Youth Movement picketed the Town Hall from 1pm onwards, by which time nearly all the shops and businesses in the surrounding area had closed, swelling the number of protestors. The Metropolitan Police sought to ensure that no more than a token presence of pickets was allowed near the Town Hall and the NCCL Report contains numerous allegations of racism and brutality by the police. The Report is a litany of serious and minor acts against members of the public by the police in general and more particularly the SPG, concluding that, on a number of occasions, the evidence shows that police officers used their truncheons, not for self-protection but as instruments of arbitrary, violent and unlawful punishment. Blair Peach, an ANL member, was killed by a blow from a police officer of the Special Patrol Group, dying from head injuries.

Only 50 NF members attended the meeting, all from outside the area (as was the Parliamentary Candidate) and the clashes involved approximately equal numbers of police and anti-fascists (5000 of each). The NCCL Report gives a full account of the events of the day and it would be needlessly expansive to repeat it here. The day was peppered

with clashes between demonstrators and the police and numerous, apparently random, police charges in which there many arrests and injuries sustained. The arrests totalled 345, with 97 police officers injured and 64 members of the public receiving injuries for which they wished hospital treatment.

The *Daily Mail* (24th April) described the ANL as 'a clandestine anti-police league ... whose main aim now is to sabotage the peace of our cities and to savage policemen struggling to do their duty.' The implication was that 'ordinary' locals of Southall would have no interest in violently opposing a National Front meeting on their neighbourhood. As Southall Rights, a local rights and advice group, noted in their report of the events of the day, 'It is as stupid as it is condescending to think that Southall's population needed to be provoked by malevolent outsiders before they would show their outrage at the Front meeting and the police protection of it.'[117] The conclusion reached by the NCCL Enquiry was that the police tactics of the day, in constantly separating and moving on the demonstrators, effectively blocked the ability of any group to control any large section of demonstrators.

The ANL was not contrite about its actions on the day and argued 'We will go on fighting'.[118] It also sought to point out that the people of Southall who had demonstrated were happy for non-locals to attend the demonstration. Balwinder Singh and Peter Alexander, who had been Chief and Acting-Chief Stewards on the day wrote 'They [the police] want to suggest that it is wrong for people living outside Southall to come and support us ... They attack "outsiders" because they want us to be divided from our brothers and sisters in Leicester

and Lewisham.'''[119] The issue of the violence and policing at Southall, and the apparent cover-up as to the identity of the killer of Blair Peach continued until polling day. The ANL held a march on 28th April which passed off without incident and the NF finally showed its electoral broadcast on Monday April 30th. The results of polling day, May 3rd, were to show the decimation of the National Front as an electoral force.

From winning 3.1% of the electorate's vote in the previous General Election of October 1974, the NF was only able to win 1.3%. The party failed to poll an average vote above 2% in any of the regions except London and was only able to gain over 2% in West Bromwich, Leicester and Wolverhampton. Its only large area of support was in the East and North-East of London where vestigial fascist backing remained. The effects on the NF were typical of those on a political party in the wake of a disastrous result, its anger was internalised. Whereas with the major reformist parties the result may have been a new leader, or a new party, the question that was fiercely debated within the NF was that of the whole strategy of electoralism and 'respectability'.

The alliance between Webster and Tyndall broke with the latter leaving to form first the New National Front and then resurrecting the name British National Party. In a further internal coup in 1983 Webster was ousted from the party. The group which removed Webster in 1983 was itself forced out in 1984 by a faction with terming itself 'political soldiers', which sought to build on two fronts, infiltration of community organisations and clandestine paramilitary and survivalist training.[120] The NF has never fought shy of political violence but the influence of particularly Italian fascists, added to

the electoral failures and non-activity of the 1980s make the drift

towards more sensational incidents - armed struggle in effect - more

likely. By early 1988 the NF's membership totalled approximately 2000,

the BNP's 1000 and the National Front Support Group's 2000. More

tellingly, in the June 1987 General Election the NF decided to stand no

candidates and to concentrate on the community aspects of their

politics and intervening in local disputes such as the Dewsbury Schools

campaign.[121]

From the *debacle* of the 1979 General Election is that the

NF has split continually in that period thereby making any sustained

growth or major intervention unlikely. The political dominance of the

Thatcher Government on the Right of politics, added to the lack of any

major immigration 'issues' has ensured that the NF could not even

capitalise noticeably on either the riots of 1981/1985 or the Falklands

War. The lack of overt political activity, particularly electioneering,

does not, however, mean that the NF and other groups of the far-Right

are inactive. The number of convictions for racial attacks, arms

offences etc by NF members is a testament to their continued threat on

a day to day basis for many black people, especially in areas where the

NF has some strength (See Newham case study in Chapter 5 below).

3.20   The achievements, impact and decline of the ANL

The Anti Nazi League was a short lived phenomenon, its most

active period being only 21 months, culminating in the General Election

of May 1979. It was specifically aimed at the perceived growth of

organised fascism in the shape of the NF not at more generalised racism

in society. It faced criticism from a number of groups - for its

domination by the revolutionary left; for its emphasis on the NF to the

detriment of state racism (as in the row over the ANL's policy on

immigration controls); for its willingness to avoid the rule of law and

launch assaults on the police and for its implied intolerance to anti-

racist opinion not in accord with that of the far-left. Against those

admonitions have to be counterposed the achievements and impact of the

ANL and its effect on the NF's ability to establish itself as a

credible political force.

One of the achievements of the ANL was that it was able to

briefly act as an umbrella for such disparate organisations as the

Board of Deputies of British Jews, the International Marxist Group and

the Federation of Conservative Students. The Sartrean notion of the

fused group, where social actors through reason of their common goals

arrive at a position of reciprocity, seems partially appropriate. The

fusion of organisations and individuals within the ANL was

qualitatively different to that of the JCAR in that it was based on the

self-activity rather than the passivity of its constituent members.

Sartre suggested that it was action that turned isolated individuals

into an organised totality and the variety of exploits which the ANL

undertook cemented this process.

Apart from the organisational form and type of movement

which the ANL represented (discussed below), the emphasis on music and

other aspects of youth culture - with the symbiotic relationship with

RAR - enabled the ANL to get conventional anti-racist messages over to

a wider pop audience, to organise two massive anti-racist carnivals and

a myriad of smaller events. Assessments of the impact of these events

and the brief establishment of what may be termed an anti-racist

counter-culture have to be tempered with realism. Despite the optimism

of Holborow (above) and of Widgery (in his study of RAR), just as there

were those whose extent of political involvement was to visit a concert

or wear a badge, so those more active within the movement did not

necessarily continue their anti-racist efforts following the demise of

the ANL. That, in part, is the nature of incandescent social movements.

As Zurcher and Snow noted in Chapter 2 above, the key to

understanding recruitment, conversion and commitment lies in the

interaction between the participant and the movement. The use of

personalities and music were crucial to winning over recruits, many of

whom were flirting with the NF at the same time. The propaganda side of

the ANL - its leaflettings, flypostings, concerts, stunts and events -

may appear mundane but were an important cohesive factor for

maintaining the momentum of the movement. As Simon Ogden, Sheffield

Organiser noted,

> You had to keep people busy to keep them interested. A lot
> of the people involved were kids on the dole or on holiday
> from school. So we organised things like the painting out of
> NF slogans, the designing and printing of leaflets and
> posters etc. At the weekends we'd do mass leaflettings,
> football grounds, held pickets and gigs and discos. We kept
> everyone continually agitating against, fighting against or
> rocking against racism.[122]

Another factor which was to separate the ANL from other

groups expressing concern about racism was the strategy of direct

confrontation with the NF on the streets. The achievement of the ANL

was in substantially reducing the numbers of people who had the

confidence to openly meet and march with the NF. In the months

following the inception of the ANL, the NF no longer felt able to march

relatively unhindered through the streets of Britain. The price paid

for such actions was the loss of support from sections of the movement

who could not countenance the inevitable violence. Conversely, Bengali

groups, round Brick Lane, for example, felt better able to support the

ANL when it had been shown to be an organisation that was prepared to

use 'any means necessary' to stop the NF. The impact of the direct

action approach was to gain publicity for the ANL, an adverse reaction

to both sets of 'extremists' and a driving underground of sections of

the NF's support. The death of Blair Peach only served to reinforce the

seriousness of the clashes.

Some of the post-Marxist sociologists' analyses of the

demise of class politics seem inappropriate when considering the ANL.

If the 'new movements' are to lead to a new form of non-class political

discourse as has been claimed by Touraine and Foss & Larkin, then they

must explain how it was the networks of the organisations of the

working class that provided the bases for the organisation of the ANL

branches. Even more striking is that the movement was to a greater

extent led not by a new social grouping or formation, but a group which

openly espoused Marxist class politics and saw itself in the tradition

of Lenin and Trotsky. It is because of the lack of fit with the picture

of social movements proposed by these writers that the United Front

remains the best model for understanding the ANL, as an anti-movement

movement.

For Trotsky the United Front had to be built around its most

active members and disseminate propaganda whilst offering physical

resistance to the fascists. As stated above, it was the activism which

held the attention of the overwhelmingly young membership of the ANL.

It was the achievement of the ANL that its propaganda successfully

linked the NF with its leaders' Nazi past. The very act of physical

confrontation raised questions as to the real nature of the NF in the

media leading up to the 1979 General Election. Trotsky was keen to

stress the tactical specificity of the United Front and argued that the

threat of fascism was what could bring about the fragile transitory

unity of reformist and revolutionary groups opposed to it. As David

Widgery notes of the ANL, 'The alliance between the SWP, a Marxist

party of a few thousand members and the Labour Party, a reformist party

with 8 million voters, was less incongruous than it sounded because a

clear cut goal had been set.'[123]

Other questions remain. Was the ANL simply a cover for

greater publicity for the SWP? Holborow claims it was not:

> The United Front is not an attempt to pull the wool over the
> eyes of the Labour Party or anybody else. It was clearly
> launched to deal with a perceived and a real problem. I
> would argue that rather than the SWP using the movement to
> recruit it was sign of the weakness of the SWP that we
> confused ANL principles with SWP principles. We weren't
> clear that it was a tiny percentage that was possible to
> recruit and thought we could pull thousands over to us. That
> just didn't happen.[124]

If it was the intention of the SWP to woo people to the party, then

others equally thought there were gains to made from the movement. As

Neil Kinnock stated, 'As far as I'm concerned the ANL performs a very

important function for the Labour Party.'[125] In effect the question of

who dominated the movement has to be put in the context of the

remaining issues about the impact of the movement and the reasons for its decline.

Stan Taylor concludes that there are several demographic factors which can account for the defeat of the NF at the 1979 polls without recourse to the ANL. He notes the degree of local support which the NF could get which was not translated into national votes, the lack of 'race' issues, the Thatcher comments on immigration and the drift away from minor parties as a whole in the General Election. The changing polling patterns have to be taken into consideration but the Thatcher effect is more noteworthy. It is difficult to make comparisons but recent events in France have shown that a viable racist electoral alternative can result in a haemorrhaging of votes from the reformist Right, for example of Raymond Barre, to the fascist Right of Jean-Marie Le Pen. In what is an otherwise excellent analysis, Taylor tends to put too much weight on the numbers of votes cast for the NF without noting the number of active members or indeed their actions. Parties such as the NF, who do not simply operate within the bounds of electoralism, can appear to be a political force which belies their small size. The rise in racial attacks in the mid-1970s, the 'long hot summer' of 1976, the increased confidence of the NF on the streets of Britain, were then all apparently backed up by the GLC results in 1977. It was to put a brake on that momentum that the ANL was formed.

The decline of the ANL was not as clear-cut an affair as some of the leadership would suggest. The inner tensions which were coming more and more to the fore as the General Election approached, threatened to split the movement, has not the NF vote collapsed so dramatically. For a whole layer of activists within the ANL, the NF was

seen as beaten and thus the ANL lacked a reason to a watching brief on

the far-right. As late as 1982-3 the network of activists within

individual ANL branches was still being utilised to mobilise numbers of

people for events with an anti-racist/anti-fascist tenor. In terms of

the organised political groupings within the ANL, for whom anti-racism

was only a part of their overall political strategy, the temptation to

move on to other issues was powerful. Not only had the 1979 General

Election see the loss of the NF's electoral status but the Labour

Government had been replaced by the Conservatives. So it was that the

SWP shifted its attention back to workplace and industrial issues (such

as the legislation relating to trade unons) and the Labour and

Communist Parties planned their responses to the Thatcher Government.

For the Labour Party the rise of a revitalised left around Tony Benn

was mirrored in the CP by the shift towards Eurocommunism and the

splits in the party.

Whilst the anti-racist activists within these parties saw

this as a natural progression, there were groups in the anti-racist

movement, such as the Asian Youth Movements, who saw this as evidence

of the opportunism of the left. Elaine Mein, secretary of Sheffield ANL

believes that:

> The left was quick to try and get black people involved in
> their battles against the fascists but when the NF was
> beaten they said join us and fight Thatcher because that's
> the only way you'll get rid of racism. Effectively that
> meant dumping racism as an issue in favour of trade union
> and strike activity. That attitude was too much for some
> people and they tended to drop out of politics altogether or
> devote themselves to campaigns rather than organised
> political activity within the confines of a party.'¹²⁶

Despite the specificity of the ANL the criticisms remain
that those groups most centrally involved in it threw all their
energies into the ANL and then withdrew all their efforts after 1979.
What provided a powerful pole of attraction for those who wanted to
continue fighting racism but were disillusioned with the revolutionary
left was the resurgent Labour left. Not only did the Labour left raise
anti-racism as an issue of paramount importance, beyond the boundaries
of street battles with fascists, but also offered a strategy by which
some of the effects of racism could be countered and its causes
attacked. This was by utilising the power-base of local authorities to
combat racism in both employment amnd public services where evidence of
the depth of racism was gradually amassing. It is to the phenomena,
which can be gathered together under the title of 'municipal anti-
racism' that the second half of the thesis addresses itself. Before
looking at that in some depth it is worth finally summarising the key
factors which shaped the ANL and which limit its use as an anti-racist
strategy.

3.21 Summary

It was Malcolm X, railing against what he saw as the Uncle
Tom-ism of sections of the civil rights movement, who argued that 'We
need a movement that the man downtown don't like'. The anti-fascist
movement, when following the action proposed by the Anti-Nazi League
was in much the same position. The policy of confrontation, of ignoring
warnings to stay away from NF meetings, the regular clashes with the
police and National Front members, in effect the whole ANL policy of

seeking to sweep the NF off the streets were the results of the

autonomy of the movement and the lack of incorporation of the movement

in the state and reflected the hostility to the capitalist state of

some of its constituent organisations..

The ANL took upon itself not only the mass opposition

towards the NF but also the dissemination of large amounts of

propaganda about the Nazi-following past of the NF leadership and the

fascist links of a party which at the time was attempting to mix

electoralism with the building of a mass racist movement. It is worth

repeating words of Martin Webster, the NF's National Activities

Organiser, on the effect of the National Front, as Peter Hain recalls,:

> The picture he [Webster] gave, and he clearly believed it,
> was that prior to 1977, the NF was unstoppable and he was
> well on the way to becoming prime minister. Then suddenly
> the ANL was everywhere and knocked hell out of them. It
> obviously still hurt. He said that the sheer presence of the
> ANL had made it impossible to get NF members onto the
> streets, had dashed recruitment and cut away at their vote.
> It wasn't just the physical opposition to the marches, they
> had lost the propaganda war too.[127]

Paul Holborow was similarly in no doubt as to the effectiveness of the

ANL.

> We drove a cart and horses through the carefully worked out
> strategy of the NF. For the first time a revolutionary
> organisation, having instigated a United Front, had changed
> the mood of national politics. In the summer of 1977 the SWP
> was put to a very severe test and rose magnificently to the
> occasion. The ANL was a testament to the politics of Leon
> Trotsky.[128]

The quote from Ellen Wood at the end of Chapter 2 above talks of working class movements having to create new forms of organisation adequate to the tasks in hand. The ANL was the application of a form of organisation, the United Front, which had a very specific use. As a strategy against racism it had strict, self-imposed limits. The movement was launched to stop the apparent rise of a neo-fascist party which both sought electoral responsibility and street dominance. The amount to which the NF could transform everyday racists into active fascists had much to do with the prevailing material conditions at any time. It also had a lot to do with the degree and form of opposition in which the ANl was able to present a counter-culture which could attract young potential recruits away from the NF.

The ANL was an anti-racist movement inasmuch as it was opposed to growing fascist movement which used racism as its predominant recruitment factor and prevailing ideology. The tactics and indeed the model of the United Front were developed by the left to combat a fascist movement not to eradicate racism. As a strategy against racism, therefore, it has an extremely restricted and partial application. As the limitations of such an approach were shown up, so the Labour left's inroads into local politics and 'municipal socialism' in the early 1980s became a more attractive strategy for those seeking to undermine racism in a wider sense, not the actions of a racist, fascist movement but of racism in housing, education, employment and other fields. To deal with the engrained, institutional racism which lay embedded in such areas the local authority seemed to some to be a natural base for action. It is to investigate the strategy of municipal anti-racism that the second half of the thesis is concerned.

CHAPTER 4

The local state and the development of 'race relations' policies

4.1 Introduction

The early 1980s saw the renaissance of the concept of municipal socialism as one which could be applied to local authorities in the major cities in Britain. The emergence of Left Labour Councils has once again acted as a magnet for Labour Party activists and as some have argued, as forums for developing new forms of socialist alliance and organisation. For many of those involved, the use of the local authority as a legitimate sector for socialist advance is theorised through the conception of the 'local state', whereby the local arm of the capitalist state is held to be in some way relatively autonomous from the national state and all its capitalist mores. The local government realm, because of this qualified separation from the nation state, has thus been seen by some writers as a contested terrain over which socialists should fight for control. For some the local state was a new terrain for changing society in a new way – post-revolutionary and post-labourist. For others it was the natural home for a reborn Labour Left.

One facet of the municipal socialist venture has been to embrace the promotion of 'equal opportunities' and anti-racism as a natural part of the ideology of local statism. Those seeking to fight racism within and though their own local councils have implicitly taken

to heart the view of the CRE which, in its 1983 Annual Report stressed
the importance of local authorities in combating racism thus:

> Not only are they generally the largest employers and major
> suppliers of services in any area, they also provide the
> framework for political activity, can strongly influence
> public opinion and are the main financiers of the voluntary
> sector. In addition, they have particular duties placed upon
> them by Section 71 of the Race Relations Act.'

Section 71 of the Race Relations Act (1976), despite the optimism
expressed by the CRE, is not that specific and has effectively meant
that local authorities can do as much or as little as they wish in
developing 'race relations' policies in their own areas. The actual
wording of the section makes it,

> ... the duty of every local authority to make appropriate
> arrangements with a view to securing that their various
> functions are carried out with due regard to the need -
> (a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, and
> (b) to promote equality of opportunity and good
> relations, between persons of different racial groups.²

For some local authorities the review of their employment
procedures and services provision in the light of Section 71 has been
minimal but some Labour-led local councils in the 1980s have attempted
to seriously address the widespread levels of discrimination and racism
suffered by black people in their own localities. The two parts to
Section 71 - the elimination of unlawful discrimination and the
promotion of equality of opportunity - may well appear to be
unproblematic but it is in the attempts of local authorities to alter
policies and procedures in the area of 'race relations' that much of

the 'loony left' image has come about.[3] As will be seen in the six case

studies below in the fields of housing (Chapter 5), education (Chapter

6) and employment (Chapter 7), there are a great number of problems in

the development and implementation of anti-racist policies by councils.

These difficulties are not merely ones which are reflective of the

teething troubles of new policy making[4] but further bring into question

the appropriateness of local councils as vehicles for both anti-racist

and socialist advance.

Questions as to the nature and role of local government

within a state in an advanced capitalist nation such as Britain

inevitably throw up further questions as to the nature of the

capitalist state and the degree, or not, of autonomy which the local

sectors have. The political initiative of municipal socialism has

attracted the attention of much of the Left precisely because it is

assumed that the Marxist/Leninist notion of the necessity of smashing

the capitalist state is no longer credible. Paul Corrigan, writing in

Marxism Today before its glossy relaunch, argued that the local state

'provides the opportunity for organising pressure and change in a local

area of struggle, at all times recognising the influence of central

government and the power of the multinationals in the struggle but

underlining that the consciouness of the great mass of working people

is around local issues.'[5]

The general thrust of Corrigan's piece, more of an apologia

for the municipal socialists than the work of Cynthia Cockburn[6] for

example, is that the class politics of state structures need a response

from the Left and the workers' movement which takes account of and

works within local politics. In this way, Corrigan argues,

socialists could extend and strengthen 'local possibilities', whatever

they may be. Following lengthy tenancy of several major councils in the

1980s, there is not overwhelming evidence of either extended or

strengthened democratic possibilities and it is a better description of

their position to say that much of it is in crisis.

What follows in this Chapter and the three following

Chapters is an exploration and a critique of the conception of the

local state as a theoretical and an analytical tool and thus municipal

socialism as a channel for socialist advance. More specifically, in the

interests of the thesis, it is an examination of the particular

strategies followed by local councils against racism within their own

spheres of influence, attempting to gradually hone down the rough

racist edges of the local state until it can act not only in an anti-

racist way but can aid in the creation a local ethos of anti-racism.

The case studies show up particular concrete examples of the inherent

contradictions of municipal anti-racism and are thus specific examples

of, and reflections upon, the prime area of anti-racist policy-making

in Britain in the 1980s. This chapter, whilst informed by the results

of consulting primary sources is based on secondary sources. The Case

Studies which follow draw more heavily on primary data from

participants in the 'race relations' network of each locale under

scrutiny.

Before moving on to those particular case studies in the

next chapters, the whole concept of the local state and its relative

autonomy, providing the political basis for socialist intervention,

must be more closely examined. It is this conceptualisation which

informed and was altered by, the political moves by the Labour Left in

local government and is vital in an attempt to assess the general potential of the venture and in particular, the use of municipal socialism in the 1980s as a carrier of a strategy against racism. There may be no one authority which represents the heterogeneity of influences which can be termed 'municipal socialism' or even 'municipal anti-racism'. What they all have in common is some stated aim by the proponents of using a local authority as a vehicle for social change, however faulty and it is the continual draw to the machinations of electoralism and controlling the bureaucracy which typify it.

4.2   The theory of the Local State

In the late 1970s, at the same time as there was developing a downturn in working class struggle, there began a resurgence in the interest of both theorists and activists in the nature of local government. Certainly writers such as Castells and Lefebvre[7] have written on urban politics and urban alienation as grounds for conflict prior to the most recent moves of the Labour Left into local government but that current has brought about a wealth of works on municipal socialism by writers including Dunleavy, Saunders, Boddy & Fudge and Gyford.[8] The temporal point of congruence between the actual Labour domination of key local authorities and the writings of theorists of local socialism provides a good test of the applicability of the model.

What is worth stressing at the outset is the position of the writers on the reform/revolution question in relation to socialist theory and practice. With the possible exception of Cockburn (whose *The Local State* has suffered some misrepresentation) the writers on the

local state are looking upon it as an acceptable vehicle for socialist

reform. This includes writers such as Corrigan who takes great

liberties with the work of Lenin in an attempt use him to back the

local state argument.[9] The theorisations then have to take account of a

capitalist state which they readily admit is not neutral in class terms

but can be contrasted with a local state which can not only be fought

over but won in the struggle for socialism. Nigel Harris, a critic of

the viability of municipal socialism, suggests that the local state

strategy involves 'no confrontation, but slow subversion through

fragments, communities, a tide of "advancing social control". After

all, the tiger is to be skinned claw by claw.'[10]

Although writings such as Ralph Milliband's *The State in

Capitalist Society* and those of Poulantzas and Wright[11] opened up new

discussions on the Left as to the role of the capitalist state, it was

Cynthia Cockburn's *The Local State* which sought to address the nature

of local government as part of the modern capitalist state. Cockburn

started from Marxist premises on the nature of the state – the

specificity of the state to the dominant mode of production; the state

as an instrument of class domination by the bourgeoisie; and the

repression function of the state through the judiciary, army and police

force added to the less coercive functions which it fulfills. Although

she takes on board some of the arguments raised in support of the

relative autonomy of the state she does not argue for a relative

autonomy of the local state from the national. As she writes, of her

case study in London, 'When I refer to Lambeth Borough Council as

"local state" it is to say neither that it is something distinct from

"national state", nor that it alone represents the state locally. It is

to indicate that it is part of a whole.'[12]

The local state is represented by Cockburn as the localised sector of the capitalist state which serves to reproduce the conditions in which capitalist accumulation can take place, through the running of housing, education, local health etc. The services by which the working class is reproduced are also, though, services which the working class has fought for. The fact that the working class needs these services does not nullify the fact that capitalism needs a reproduction of its labour force just as the financial need for people to work does not invalidate the fact that labour power is exploited under capitalism. Hence an apparently democratic, responsive and concerned local authority is at the same time an arm of the state and therefore, at one remove of the interests of the ruling class. Cockburn's work is to a large part aimed at demythologising the ideas of local democracy and the assumptions that a local authority is simply a reflection of the wishes of the local people. In this respect it is her conclusions which bear closest examination.

Cockburn argues that the chosen terrain of the revolutionary parties of the Left, the industrial stuggle, is unnecessarily narrowly focused in its viewpoint and does not give due attention to the possibility of collective activity around service delivery by the state (echoes of Castells 'urban social movements'). Such groups as housing action groups, claimants' unions, PTAs, health groups are all approved of inasmuch as they relate not only to people who may not actually be workers but that they help in the building of links between state 'workers' and state 'clients'. Cockburn seeks to extend the class struggle beyond the point of production but is wary of the development

of such strategies as 'corporate management' and 'community development' which she sees as a necessary concomitant to the development of increasingly more sophisticated managerial practices rather than an enhancement of working class demands.

What is most interesting for the subject of this thesis is Cockburn's views on the role of elected members within the local state. She argues that there is often a false dichotomy presented between council officers and council bureaucrats noting, 'it is far from evident that all elected members are politically distinct from senior officers in the bureaucracy'.[13] The increased application of corporate management to local government, it is argued, further alienates the ordinary, backbench councillor and ties the higher levels of local elected representatives to the professionals within the organisation.[14] The political conclusions reached are that any militant Left-wing councillors should not be expected to attain high office or having attained it, that they cannot hold on to office unless they modify their former political stance. Cockburn warns against people putting their trust in Labour councillors, for this 'increases the tendency to believe that someone else, specifically someone in authority, alone can solve the problems of a situation that in reality is a reflection of an entire mode of production and balance of class power.'[15]

It is worth remembering these arguments made by Cockburn are cited as one of the forerunners of the municipal socialist venture although her book precisely points out the contradictions and problems in such a project. Whilst she did suggest that there were new possibilities in socialist advance in organisations outside the workplace, she did not assume that the local state could be won over

and guided in a socialist direction by the election of the appropriate

Left Labour councillors and was clear on the function and nature of the

capitalist state, of which local government was a part. As Cochrane

remarks,

> However flawed Cockburn's analysis finally was, some of the
> key issues it identified seem to have been forgotten in the
> left's gadarene rush to become cheerleaders for the new
> "municipal socialism" ... She highlights the extent to which
> local government can *appear* to offer new openings while
> effectively closing them down. Her warnings are now
> discounted.[16]

Another recent writer on the local state has been Peter

Saunders[17] who has used some of the American community power studies,

such those by Clark and Laumann and Pappi[18], in alliance with an

analysis of local power elites and urban managerialism to develop a

form of dual state thesis to be applied to central/local state

relations in Britain. Although Boddy and Dunleavy[19] both flatter him by

suggesting he starts from an initially Marxist framework, which is then

integrated with a neo-Weberian persepective, it is better to put

Saunders, as does Gottdeiner,[20] clearly in the camp of Weber. What

Saunders has attempted to do is to construct a typology of local state

functions which show a more pluralist, open and democratic structure

which can be contrasted with the central state which is more

corporatist, reflective of class society and closed to democratic

advance. He writes, 'local government in Britain cannot be seen simply

as an inconsequential appendage of a monolithic capitalist state. Local

political processes have their own specific character ... Local

politics are essentially consumption politics ... and cannot be treated

as part of a much grander class struggle for socialism ...'[21]

Whilst it may be that in his work Saunders points out some
of the limits of local government, certainly in contrast to those who
take the view that the takeover of Town Halls by socialists necessarily
acts as a spur to the class struggle, there are problems with his
analysis. His Weberian outlook and acknowledged pluralism drew him to
the conclusion that there is much room for pressure group and community
organisation activity in and around the local state precisely because
he denies the centrality of class struggle as the prime mode of liberal
democratic advance. He argues that 'people's material interests as
consumers are no less "fundamental" than their interests as workers and
employers and cannot simply be "transcended"'.[22] What we have here is a
reification of the 'consumer', a traditional cipher for middle-class
interests, counterposed as a third force between capital and labour.

The division between forms of state expenditure made by
Saunders, between the centrally organised *social investment* which has a
direct input into the capitalist accumulation process and *social
consumption* which is geared at the provision of services, locally is
set up as an ideal type and therefore is not always too applicable
empirically. Education spending, for example, can be looked upon both
as a social investment in human capital and a type of collective
consumption. In contemporary Britain it is more proper to note that the
integration of local government functions spread across the expenditure
on social investment and consumption and that the political domination
of an area such as education by Government spending limits, as well as
policy initiatives, wholly limit the partial autonomy of local
government which Saunders argues for. While representatives of

organised Labour and Capital meet at a national level and pressure

groups can have an influence on local politics, as Cochrane notes,

'none of this justifies a more universal division of the sort Saunders

proposes and which is eagerly taken up by many on the academic left to

justify an uncritical adherence to the local democracy bandwagon.'[23]

 It would be repetitive to list quote after quote of the

municipal socialists/local statists but it is worth briefly considering

some of the excessively optimistic views on the prospects for municipal

socialism not only as a bulwark against 'Thatcherism' but as a new

arena for radical advance. Stuart Hall, for example, writing in *New

Socialist* (September 1984) suggested that the GLC was in the process of

'the building of a new historic bloc in the politics of socialism'

(until its was abolished two years later). Bassett, at the time a

Labour Councillor in Bristol and Geography lecturer, commenting on how

the capitalist state could be transformed to a socialist end noted in

1980, 'It seems evident from history that such a transformation cannot

be carried out successfully by relying upon a reforming elite of state

managers but must involve democratic control, active involvement and

self-management from below. Control at a local scale would seem to be a

vital element in this.'[24]

 Some writers have sought to identify a new social force of

sections of society entering into politics from which they had been

previously excluded. Gyford[25], in introducing the notion of the New

Urban Left, seeks to show how a new layer of activists have been drawn

into local politics motivated in part by the desire to increase local

democracy and accountability. Boddy and Fudge also took up the theme

arguing that, 'Women's committees, race relations committees and to

some extent new-style employment committees have been created, to bring

forward previously suppressed interests into the formal political arena

... Decentralisation and the co-option on to council committees of non-

elected members, and greater commitment to a more consultative style of

policy debate ... have opened up new forms of communication between the

town hall and groups, individuals and activists outside.'[26] In this way

a variety of people including the 'victims' of sexism and racism, as

well as councillors, local authority managers and members of the

'traditional working class' can work together for the good of 'the

community'. The municipal socialists, it appears, can run the local

system better and more efficiently than others, if only because of

their greater democracy.

As Harris argues, much of this vision of socialism rests

upon an assumption that the slow subversion of the local state via

fragments, communities and oppressed groups will bring about the

supremacy of local authorities as the zenith of 'advancing social

control'. As with the local pluralism presented by Saunders above, the

municipal socialists venture is seen as 'a virtue in its own right –

Small (and Local) is beautiful ... a new conception of socialist

activity where "doing your own thing", linked to local power, can

result in steady advance. Unfortunately, "doing your own thing"

permits, in conditions of defeat (acknowledged or not), a steady shift

to the right.'[27] In such a situation and faced with a world economic

system this section of the Left has retreated into the small local

environment, where questions of ownership and control can be evaded in

the pursuance of the interests of 'the community'.

The interest in theoretical musings about the nature of the

local state did not occur in an ideological vacuum and it was in part

because of the political rebirth of the Labour Left especially around

the figure of Tony Benn that there was a practical base for the local

state thesis to be built upon. The highpoint of the municipal socialist

venture was the period 1979-85 when optimism in the possibilities for

socialist advance through the takeover of the local authority was

greatest. At the start of the period the local Labour Left was growing

rapidly and by the end the efforts of Conservative Government

legislation (especially ratecapping) had effectively blocked the

material changes that the councils had hoped to make. The only real

hope left for many was the election of a Labour Government in 1987, to

bail out what was left of municipal socialism. This did not come about

and since then the debate has shifted away from the gains that could be

made by Labour domination of local authorities and on to what form the

cuts will take and the number of job losses and services to disappear.

One of the major points to be stressed in the Introduction

to this thesis was the material factor in the reproduction of the

ideology of racism. For a municipal strategy aimed at fighting racism,

it must be able to have some effect on the conditions of the people

living in its locality if has any hope in reducing some of the spurs to

racism. What has happened in the 1980s is that local government has

been continually starved of funds by central government through the

general measures catalogued below. The links between municipal anti-

racism and local authority spending problems are not always too clearly

drawn. Before investigating the way in which anti-racism has been

presented as an appropriate strategy for local authorities to follow it

is worth briefly considering the nature of municipal socialism as a whole and the politics of the local state.

4.3 The politics of the local state

As Gyford has shown, the Labour Party has at many points in its history touched on municipal socialism as a form of democratic organisation which could aid local control and accountability.[28] As a party wedded to the capitalist state and the electoral process as a method of bringing about socialism it would be surprising if it were not. As with the intervention of the Labour Party in national politics, the fundamental assumption made was that the state was not an unreformable capitalist tool and that the work done by socialists inside it could could bring substantial benefits for the working class. The Fabians encouraged the ILP in the late nineteenth century to capture 'municipal government' and run it in a socialist manner and were active themselves as early as 1896. In the 1920s the Webbs' 'Constitution for a Socialist Commonwealth' argued that the majority of industry would be dealt administered and controlled not at a national but at a local level. It was also in the 1920s that the Left Labour Council in Poplar in the East End of London refused to cut payments to the unemployed or fund them by raising the rates, coming into direct conflict with the Government. As a result, 30 Councillors, five of them women, were jailed, with crowds of thousands of local workers supporting them. After 6 weeks in prison they were released having refused to make any concessions, having broken the law and having got away with it.[29]

It is interesting to note the view of Herbert Morrison[30],
one of the founding fathers of municipal socialism, who saw Poplar as a
dangerous precedent, in that it might frighten off voters who would see
Labour as 'irresponsible' and not as a natural party of government.
Morrison viewed the efficient Labour authority as one which should be
run as 'an efficient machine for a high moral purpose', acting
constitutionally and dedicated to progressive reform through
incremental municipal control. This again was part of the basic Labour
Party premise that the state could be looked upon relatively
uncritically. There were also further echoes of Morrison in the
attitude of Neil Kinnock, not only to the actions of Militant in
Liverpool, but also in boroughs such as Brent, Lambeth and Haringey.

Following World War 2 and the Attlee government, Labour
took control over localised state functions in an expanding national
economy, a period characterised by Gyford as municipal labourism.
Edmund Dell, writing in 1960, argued that the Labour Party was rather
lacking in a coherent philosophy towards local government and only
supported it inasmuch as it enacted the plans of the central
administration.[31] The local state sector assumed greater
responsibilities through house building, increased social services, the
running of local health authorities, education etc. The obverse of this
was a gradual exposure of some of the cosy relationships which had
grown up between local Labour council leaders and contractors for
council services. The events in Newcastle in the late 1960s and early
1970s, in which John Poulson (an architect and consultant to Bovis)
paid T. Dan Smith (leader of Newcastle Council 1966-74) £155,000 over a
period of eight years for lucrative building contracts, were only the

tip of an iceberg which resulted in the conviction of numerous local

Labour Town Hall bosses on corruption-related offences.[32]

One lone element of rebellion in that period was in Clay Cross

in Derbyshire where the local Labour council, led by David Skinner,

the brother of Dennis Skinner MP, opposed the Conservative Government's

1972 Housing Finance Act. The Labour Party leadership refused to give

any backing for opponents of the Act acting outside the law and the TUC

similarly offered only paper support. Thirty-two local authorities

delayed implementation of the Act in 1972 but only thirteen continued

into 1973 with the number of rebel councils finally reaching three. Of

these, Bedwas, Machen, and Clay Cross (all Labour), the latter became

the *cause celebre*, although all were removed as local authorities in

the 1970s local government reorganisation. In 1975 the Labour

Government passed the Housing Finance (Special Provisions) Act which

was intended to indemnify councillors fined for failing to put up

Council rents as required by the 1972 Act but a rebellion of the Labour

Right in the Commons ensured that the legislation did not protect the

Clay Cross Councillors. As Bassett notes, 'The surcharging and

bankruptcy of the Clay Cross councillors has served as an awful warning

to Labour councils ever since of the dangers of being left high and dry

by a divided labour movement.'[33]

4.4 The rise and fall of municipal socialism (1979-85)

Between the defeat at the May 1979 General Election and the

1981 Annual Conference, the Labour Party underwent the biggest swing to

the Left it had experienced for at least a generation, certainly since

the Bevanites of the 1950s. The basis for this move to the Left was the

record of the Wilson/Callaghan Government from 1974-9 and in particular

the cuts packages in public services which Jim Callaghan and his

Chancellor Denis Healey had put through in the last two years of the

Labour Government. In 1979 the Labour Left was unanimously of the

belief that the next Labour Government must not be a re-run of the

Wilson and Callaghan years. To ensure that this did not happen, the

Labour Left sought to win through a number of changes in the party

constitution which would give local constituencies more control of

their MPs and that an electoral college of representatives of all the

party would choose the Leader and the Deputy Leader. The one figure

around whom the Labour Left coalesced at the time was Tony Benn.

As an apparent supporter for extraparliamentary activity, an

open critic of the lack of democracy and neutrality in the British

State and apparently moving to the Left, Benn was a major pole of

attraction. At the 1979 May Day Rally at Birmingham he argued that 'The

time has come for the whole labour movement to face the harsh

realities, take up the challenge and reorganise its own role, party

structure and organisation'.[34] His rallies and meetings pulled large

and enthusiastic audiences to Labour Party gatherings for the first

time in 20 years. After a continual decline in membership since the

1950s the Labour Party finally experienced a brief period of increasing

individual membership in the period following the 1979 General Election

debacle.

The layer of new recruits to the Labour Party included a

large number of activists, some of whom had been active around the

revolutionary left and others who had worked in campaigns such as the

ANL. Not only did they contribute numbers and enthusiasm but they also

added greatly to the Left-wing tenor of the party wards and General

Management Committees. New members were typically students or white-

collar and professional workers, working in the state sector, who saw

themselves as radicals in a way separate to the traditional Labour

left. They were committed to some forms of extraparliamentary action as

a method of building the Left and were active in the various

'movements' of the time. As Sue Cockerill notes 'These politics,

combined with the relative ease with which activists came to dominate

many local parties, made a crack at taking over the Town Hall, a

natural development for the newly-emerging Labour Left.'[35]

The disaffection with which many of the radical community

activists had felt with the established local Labour Party machine in

the late 1960s and early 1970s was also being gradually eroded with the

renaissance of the Labour Left in the late 1970s. So much so that by

September 1980 *Community Action* journal recommended that activists

should move 'from focusing on tenants and community groups to the range

of organisations in the labour movement ... Building strength and unity

in the labour movement has to be the basis of the fightback.' More

converts were thus provided for the local Labour wards, awoken from

their moribund state by the input of New Left blood. Groups such as the

Labour Co-ordinating Committee, of which Peter Hain, a founder of the

ANL, was a leading figure and journals and newspapers such as *London

Labour Briefing* provided outlets for the New Left and were effective

mouthpieces in the party for leading municipal socialists such as Ken

Livingstone of the GLC, David Blunkett of Sheffield Council and Ted

Knight of Lambeth. As Ken Livingstone claimed in the November 1981

issue of *Marxism Today*, 'The influx of people that have given the GLC

this great reputation in the gutter press for being the end of

civilisation as we know it, is in fact the post-1968 generation in

politics.'

It was the election of the Labour majority on the GLC in

1981 and the choice of Ken Livingstone as Leader that was the first

major fillip to the municipal socialists. The optimism on the Left at

the time was notable, not only in the pages of *Time Out* which compared

the GLC's budget favourably with the GNP of small countries. By 1982,

allowing for the different timings of elections, the Left was in a

dominant position in the GLC, ILEA, metropolitan counties such as

Merseyside and South Yorkshire (christened the 'Socialist Republic')

major cities such as Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield and several

boroughs in London. The first major test for any unity of the Left

Labour Councils came in their opposition to the Conservative

Government's 1980 Local Government, Planning and Land Act. (For a

summary of the local government expenditure legislation enacted by the

Conservatives since 1979 see Appendix 2)

Despite calls from many Left Labour Council leaders the

Labour Party NEC was quick to distance itself from any actions

contemplated by the Councils which might involve them acting illegally

or unconstitutionally. Roy Hattersley, at the time the Labour Party's

front bench Environment spokesman, argued that no policy of opposition

to the Act should be imposed upon the Labour Councils and that 'The

policy of this party is for freedom and autonomy in local government.

Local councils acting honourably as Socialist councillors can make

their own decisions about what is right for the area they represent.'[36]

Some of the Council leaders, such as Ted Knight of Lambeth, saw this as

a 'sell-out' and pressed for the need for unity of the Parliamentary

and local government sections of the Labour Party against what they saw

as politically motivated attacks on council spending. However, Neil

Kinnock, another NEC member at the time was to stress the 'autonomy' of

Labour Councils, an autonomy which was none too evident when he

launched an investigation into the activities of Militant in Liverpool

in 1985, backed by his deputy, Roy Hattersley.[37] The Local Government,

Planning and Land Act (1980) was carried through without serious

opposition.

In May 1981 over 900,000 Londoners had voted for the Labour

Party in the GLC elections (the NF vote by comparison fell to 2.1% from

its high point in 1977 of 5.3%) and the new Left GLC set about to

implement its election promises. By far and away the one policy which

would have the effect on the greatest number of Londoners was its Fares

Fair policy to cut London Transport's fares by 25% and fund the deficit

by setting a supplementary rate. The result was an immediate rise in

demand for bus and tube services and the appointment of 600 extra

staff. An apparent but fleeting success for municipal socialism.

Environment Secretary Michael Heseltine was less supportive and imposed

a £111 million penalty on the GLC Block Grant for overspending and

threatened to cut the subsidy to British Rail if it accepted the GLC's

offer of £20 million to reduce its London fares.

The Conservative-run Bromley Council then took legal action

against the GLC in an attempt to have the Fares Fair policy declared

illegal on the grounds that it broke the 1969 Transport Act's demands

that a transport service had to be efficient, integrated and economic.

The case eventually went to the Law Lords who decided by a majority interpretation that London Transport should be run without a subsidy. This was a little too supportive of the Government's line, London Transport having been subsidised for years, and Norman Fowler, Transport Minister announced that despite the Law Lords' ruling, subsidies could continue but not at the Fares Fair level of 46%. The GLC launched a campaign of opposition around the slogan 'Can't Pay: Won't Pay'.

The campaign attempted to build up popular support for the policy in an attempt to win the Government over to changing the law on funding for public transport and despite considerable success was not able to direct the focus of the campaign in any realisable direction, providing an all too stern test for the assumptions of some of the local statists. Transport workers were not called upon as workers to oppose the Law Lords' decision or the eventual takeover of the running of London Transport by a Goverment appointed body and by 1984 the policy lay in ruins. The autonomy of municipal socialism was shown to be not only relative but *very* relative in that even popular policies such as Fares Fair were undermined and undone by the Conservative Government and the judiciary. The re-elected 1983 Conservative Government was to go further than halting the GLC's policies and decided instead for its abolition.

The 1983 Conservative General Election manifesto called the GLC and metropolitan counties 'a wasteful and unnecessary tier of government' although Norman Tebbit was more forthright about his Party's reason for seeking their abolition when he argued 'The GLC is typical of this new, modern divisive version of socialism. It must be

defeated. So we shall abolish the GLC.'³⁸ The GLC once again sought to

build on the popularity of Ken Livingstone and mounted a formidable and

expensive publicity campaign against abolition, mainly arguing that it

was an affront to local democracy. The GLC was able to point to the

considerable support for its retention and the legislative passage of

the Abolition Bill was at times rocky for the Government, especially in

the House of Lords where some concessions were forced through,

including the retention of ILEA (though this turned out to be only a

temporary measure).

The comfortable Parliamentary majority held by the

Conservatives and the possibility of removing Ken Livingstone as a

political figure from centre stage ensured the final passage of the

Bill. On April 1st 1986 the Act was implemented and the GLC and

metropolitan councils were history. What was of more consequence was

the campaign waged against ratecapping by the Left Labour councils

which effectively saw the end of the expansionist phase of municipal

socialism and the onset of the financial crises which have dogged the

Labour authorities ever since.

4.5   The ratecapping campaign

The Rates Act became law in March 1984. The intention of the

Act was straightforward - to allow the government to designate certain

local authorities which it deemed to have acted irresponsibly either by

high spending or setting high rate levels. These councils would be told

by the Government what their levels of spending would be for 1985/6 and

the maximum rates that they could set by law. In other words, they

would be ratecapped. The rate level would allow councils to balance

their books as long as they spent the amount designated by the

Government and no more. As David Blunkett, at that time leader of

Sheffield City Council and now Labour MP for Sheffield Brightside,

notes, ratecapping did not affect the amount of grants given by central

to local government but was intended 'to challenge the political

independence of local authorities, based on their right to raise a

local tax.'[39] In total 18 local authorities were designated for

ratecapping for 1985/6 in the Rates Limitation Report presented to the

House of Commons on 24th July 1984[40], the same month in which the

Liverpool Councillors settled with Patrick Jenkin over the 1984/5

Council budget (See Liverpool case study in Chapter 7 below).

At the Labour Party Conference in September 1984, 32

resolutions and 14 amendments were submitted on local government, the

largest number on any one subject. A resolution supporting the actions

of Liverpool City Council was carried despite the opposition of the

NEC. By November the councils facing ratecapping had solidified their

united stand against the Government around the plan of not setting a

rate, thereby forcing the Government's hand. The problem with this

approach was, however, twofold. The strategy of waiting for the money

to run out would first hit councils such as Camden and Islington, who

had no rate support grant, and would upset the momentum of the movement

by waiting for the various councils to go bankrupt at different times.

The other difficulty with this tactic was that it needed no movement

building behind it. The 'no-rate' plan could be left in the hands of

the councillors and would not, for example, need industrial action by

council workers. The councillors assumed that their control of the

local state machinery would be enough. On the rare occasion when the workers were called upon to support the actions of the councillors, there was a large response.[41]

The intention of the ratecapped councils (and Liverpool) was to synchronise their budget meetings on 7th and 8th March 1985 as a united climax at which they could refuse to set a rate. However, as Blunkett recalls, 'As March approached, council leaders could no longer disguise the difficulty they would have in obtaining majorities for alleged illegal action, bringing the threat of surcharge and disqualification.'[42] At ILEA's budget meeting on 7th March dissident Labour members joined with the Conservatives and the SDP to force through a legal rate. Ken Livingstone and John McDonnell, Leader and Deputy Leader of the GLC split over the necessity of the no rate strategy and despite Livingstone eventually voting with his deputy for deferral, the Labour group on the GLC voted 24 to 18 to set a rate, after 4 days of debate. Tony Mulhearn, who was to be surcharged as a Liverpool Councillor argued, 'Livingstone typified the "fun revolutionaries" who, when the chips are down, prefer their parliamentary careers to going down the road of illegality in defence of workers rights and conditions ... *Ipso facto* he adopted the arguments of Neil Kinnock - the policy of the "dented shield".'[43]

Of the 15 local authorities who originally deferred setting a rate, 12 came through the psychological barrier of April 1st but started to drift one by one into setting rates. In Lewisham a rate was set in the middle of the night on April 3rd when the Labour members were out of the Council chamber. Hackney Council faced a High Court order forcing it to set a rate by 16h April but held out until mid-May

when right-wing Labour Councillors voted left-wingers off key

committees as a prelude to putting through a cuts budget. The 'no

rates' policy was fraying at the edges rapidly. Sheffield Council set a

rate on 7th May when once again the Right of the Labour Group sided

with the opposition parties. By the end of May there were six councils

still refusing to set a rate, though by 8th June Southwark, Islington,

Camden and Greenwich had all capitulated.

Lambeth Council held out longest, until 3rd July when the

resignation of a Labour member led to a majority of 32 to 31 in favour

of setting a rate. By this time Lambeth was isolated. The District

Auditor surcharged and disqualified 31 Lambeth Councillors on 2nd April

1986 for not setting a legal rate on time. Liverpool Council was not

ratecapped but part of the campaign and had refused to set a rate until

14th June when a 9% rate increase was passed, in line with inflation,

in effect a deficit budget. On September 8th, 49 councillors were

surcharged £106,000 for their delay in setting a rate and despite going

to the Law Lords in defence of their mandate the Councillors were

finally disqualified from office on 12 March 1987.

Some of the prime participants in the municipal socialist

venture were beginning to disassociate themselves from what others

thought could be achieved in the local state. Two for whom the elected

membership of the national state fortuitously beckoned were David

Blunkett and Ken Livingstone. The former argued that the ratecapping

campaign 'failed to achieve its stated objectives through its chosen

method, and the realities of power were demonstrated ... The limits

power available to local politics were well and truly exposed'.[44]

For Ken Livingstone, the possibility of controlling

socialist islands in a capitalist sea was no longer a tenable one,

although the quest for this had been at the centre of his energies for

the previous five years, as leader of the GLC. He notes, 'We did always

maintain that we would use the GLC as a shield to protect people from

the worst effects of this government and do the best we could to

improve conditions, but what can be achieved is always marginal without

a shift in the balance of power between central and local

government.'[45] As part of the whole process of local statism, many on

the Left began to seek to implement policies which would take more

account of the black populations of the boroughs in which they resided

and who had suffered discrimination for many years in the provision of

services that local authorities offered. Although the 1976 Race

Relations Act had set vague criteria for local authorities seeking to

combat racism in their own areas, the concensus drawn from the writers

discussed below is of an ad hoc approach which at times is flattered by

the title 'strategy'.

4.6 Anti-racism in local government (1979-85)

      The first two local authorities to launch major initiatives

around 'race equality' were Haringey and Camden, in 1978, closely

followed by ILEA and Lambeth. Soon afterwards the London Boroughs of

Brent, Hackney and Newham (all considered in the case studies below)

began to develop schemes of their own to lessen the effects of racism

within their own spheres of influence. Several reasons have been

offered for the particular uptake of 'race relations' policy

initiatives and Ouseley suggests four - the increasingly vocal black

electorate; the pressure of local CRCs; the 1980 and 1981 riots and the
desire to avoid of the repetition of such occurences; and last but not
least, political expediency. One may also add that municipal
managerialist anti-racism fitted in very neatly with the ideological
precepts of municipal socialism, by which the socialist councillors
could bring about improvements for the black people living in their
locality by a mixture of good policy-making and 'consultation'. Ouseley
notes, 'Local government in those areas where blacks predominantly
reside - the inner, depressed parts of the major conurbations - is
largely controlled by the middle classes, who see themselves as running
a service for the poor and deprived.'[46]

For most local authorities the implementation of policies on
'race relations' included some or all of the following:

- the adoption of a statement proclaiming the council's commitment to
    equal opportunities;
- the establishment of a race relations committee for councillor
    involvement;
- the appointment of specialist officers and advisers for race
    relations work;
- the production of codes of practice for personnel matters;
- the implementation of racism awareness training courses for staff
    training procedures;
- the introduction of ethnic monitoring for areas of service delivery
    and employment opportunities;
- the development of arrangements for consultation with external

agencies and the dissemination of information and publicity to influence local public opinion.

What these practices were aimed at was the gradual bringing about of an anti-racist ethos in the locale through the changing of policies and procedures within the local authority. The assumption was that the appropriate guidelines and commands, backed up by suitable sanctions, would be best way of informing people about the racism that existed and the ways for getting rid of it. If an ideal type of the anti-racist strategy could be provided it would probably run thus.

After full consultation with black community groups and representatives, the duly elected councillors would put forward policy plans which could then be enacted upon by supportive senior officers who would ensure the day to day implementation of the policies. These would make local state employees act in an anti-racist manner by both reducing their opportunities for acting in a racist way and at the same time showing them the evils of racism. One of the first major authorities to put some of the above ideas into practice was the GLC. Some of the efforts of the GLC point out to the problems which were to confront the local authorities considered in the Case Studies below.

4.7   The GLC and anti-racism

The significance with which the Labour Group viewed the development of anti-racism as a core part of the GLC's policy framework is notable by the fact that the first chair of the Ethnic Minorities Committee was Ken Livingstone himself. In 1982/3 the Committee had a

grants budget of £850,000 which by the following year had risen to £2.5 million. The Council declared London 'an anti-racist zone' and the high point of its activity was the declaration of 1984 as 'Anti-Racist Year'.

Much of the GLC's activity around 'Anti-Racist Year' was in the realm of public awareness and propaganda. Gilroy gives a useful discussion and critique of much of the imagery used in the campaign and questions its effectiveness, given the variety of unintended interpretations that could be made of some of it.[47] Two of the central factors to the anti-racist work of the GLC were to be repeated by the councils studied below. One was the assumption that anti-racism was what the GLC defined it as being, as Gilroy suggests, by allowing the concept of racism 'to ascend to the rarified heights where, like a lost balloon, it becomes impossible to retrieve'.[48] Thus the GLC could claim its way of fighting racism was the relevant one for the people of London. Or as Gilroy further notes, this led to 'the allocation of a pre-eminent if not monopolistic role in the defeat of racism to the council's own agencies and activities.'[49]

Apart from the council's own definition of anti-racism becoming the only one, the very process of doing so becomes a denial of wider self-activity. Within various councils this threw up the situation where racism was seen as what individuals did and anti-racism was what councils, though not other collectives did. Unlike the ANL, for example, which built on the basis of self-activity and involvement, municipal anti-racism, through the operation of schemes such as Racism Awareness Training (RAT) has attempted to individualise out racism and decontextualise the ideology of racism from its material base.

The logical conclusion would be that fighting racism does not call for a collective response but rather individual educative courses backed up by weighty sanctions for miscreants. This was precisely the case in Islington (See Chapter 7) in which committed racists were first admonished by the council and then sent on RAT courses to undermine a lifetime's racism within them. Racism can thus be presented as a block to both effiency and good management practice and the basis for municipal anti-racism as effective management policies and the improvement of the reconstructed individual. Before considering how this has worked out in practice in the key areas of employment, housing and education it is of some importance that the relationships between the various groups and their key and top influentials acting upon and in the local state are discussed, in relation to the development and implementation of 'race relations' policies.

4.8 Structures and hierarchy

The endemic ideology for much of local government management is one of superficial neutrality and technical rationality. One of the admissions of the New Left Councillors interviewed in the course of this thesis was that many key officers appointed would not claim neutrality in their work but that their supportiveness of council initiatives could give an anti-racist policy an initial impetus which may then be less easily dissipated in other sections of the bureaucracy. The good or bad will of junior officers could be outweighed to a large extent by the agglomeration of power in the

higher echelons of the local authority. As Herman Ouseley argued over

the setting up of a Race Relations Unit in Lambeth Council,

> Management structure, especially those concentrated within
> such large bureaucracies as in local authorities, ensures
> that power is invested in the inner circle of chief
> officers, professional caucuses, supervisory cliques and
> bands of high-fliers.[50]

As Ouseley contends, professionalism (allied to such management

strategies as corporate management) has ranked high in the structures

of the local state in ordering and codifying the services provided,

ensuring, to put it in Marxist terms, that dominant class interests as

expressed through the bureaucracy appear neutral and classless. Under

the development of corporate management, the restrictive practices

gathered around the old professions have gradually been diminished.

This does not necessarily suggest a permanant loss of the

professionalised position but is rather a part of the normal process of

the division of labour. Despite the aims of the municipal socialists to

open up local government, as Cockburn has noted, 'What in fact are new

specialisms (corporate management and community work will most likely

become professionalised in coming years) appears first in the guise of

generalisms.'[51] The development of Race Relations Units and committee

structures within Left Labour Councils has done little to stop the new

professionalism of the higher posts in such authorities and indeed the

importance of being suitable qualified for a top 'race relations' post

can bring serious problems (See Liverpool Case Study in Chapter 7

below).

The permanance of higher officers within the council

structures, in alliance with their positions, enable processes of political manipulation to become commonplace. Tosh Flynn catalogues stratagems such as 'tactics of delay, reporting disguised as action, excuses and all kinds of political sabotage in defence of their professional judgement against political whim.'[52] There is a danger in applying an elite theory, as Flynn does, to this whole process which cannot explain the concentration of power or the generation of power. It must be noted that assertions of the conservative nature of management can point out the ways resistance by the bureaucracy can limit political leads from elected members, especially those on the Left. What they cannot do is show how resistance is possible, is brought about and how it can be surmounted.

Flynn suggests the use of a more comprehensive and detailed manifesto to counter the acts of individual officers as a corrective to the accumulation of power within the bureaucracy of local authority. He argues that a proposal which has been worked out without reference to the bureaucracy has at least the merits of thwarting, 'an ambitious officer [who] has to work closely with the party in control whilst maintaining links and credibility with the opposition.'[53] Flynn is seeking a corrective to what he sees as the failings of individual officers who are 'log-jams' to effective policy-making. Whilst looking upon the local state as a structured body which maintains effective power over decision-making at the top of the stucture, his suggestions for altering the situation rest in rather vague assumptions about the transformative power of 'pressure from below' or the replacement of unsupportive officers with more compliant ones.

Robinson in his study of the development of 'race relations'

structures in Inner London Boroughs[54] suggests the making of critical

decisions were the realm of the elected member but that council

officers acted as a considerable counterweight in their day-to-day

practices. Policy implementation could be hindered by what one

councillor termed 'a negative power of organised inertia' so much so

that 'you've got to have available the instrument by which you can by-

pass them.'[55] In Lambeth, for example, the Race Relations Unit Officers

chose to report directly to relevant Committee Chairs without seeking

recourse either to the Chief Executive or the various directorate heads

first. The obverse argument to this is that to influence decision-

makers, the protective wing of the Chief Executive's Office can give

weight to a fledgling Race Relations Unit, as happened in Newham (See

Newham Case Study in Chapter 5 below). This latter approach has also

been adopted in certain councils outside London where the Left Labour

groups and black organisations are less prominent and the external

pressure on the bureaucracy is subsequently less co-ordinated.

Ouseley is more in favour of an 'enlightened management'

approach which, because of the deep rooting of power in the management

team, he sees as the only hope for improvements in the removal of

racist policies. As he baldly asserts:

> If you are not part of the Managerial team you are
> powerless. If you have no decision-making role you are
> powerless ... *You cannot beat it [the system] because those
> who control it look after and protect themselves first and
> foremost*; they strive ruthlessly to maintain the status quo;
> they build ... little empires which don't necessarily
> represent the bureaucracy's search for greater efficiency
> and further perpetuate the range of effective discriminatory
> practices.[56]   (my emphasis)

In general terms, the 'broad alliance' policy is chosen by Flynn and Ouseley as the most effective method of altering racist policies and moving recalcitrant management. They see a process of reform as occuring through the established channels of change, albeit with a wider involvement of the 'community', having previously shown how the prospects for change are minimal despite the best efforts of well-meaning councillors, community groups and supportive officers. What this has led to will become clear from the case studies below.

4.9 The role of elected members

The exponents of local statism, for all their claims to open up local government and bring in oppressed groups, are still immersed in the notion of representation and the abrogation of self-activity to electoral efficacy. Writers such as Flynn recognise the problem but do not find fault in the whole representative form but rather in the failings of individual councillors. He believes that 'the problem is that councillors need to maintain their contact with the working class that they represent, but spend enough time and energy to take that experience to transform the political and bureaucratic machine into something which is actually working for the class.'[57] As shown above, in the collapse of the campaign over ratecapping, there is always the problem of not having enough committed Left-wing councillors to risk breaking the law.

The links with the working class that the councillors are supposed to have are further qualified, not only by their own failings but also by part of the ideology of the New Left which equates the

working class and its organisations with women's groups, gay and lesbian groups and black organisations. The question then has to be put 'What happens if the interests of these various groups conflict ?'. In the case of the Islamia Muslim Infant School in Brent, for example, (See the Case Study in Chapter 6 below) the Labour Councillors (19 black, 16 women) had to balance what were presented as the legitimate autonomous interests of black parents against the inherent sexism in the religious schooling and the perceived needs of the majority of working class children in the area. Ann Rogers, a Marxist critic of municipal socialism, may be nearer the truth when she argues that 'However well intentioned a Labour Councillor may be, they do not engage in class politics at the day to day level ... But the nature of capitalism is such that if you are not prepared to fight it tooth and nail, then you will be sucked into it.'[58]

One pointer which may seem to add to the 'autonomy' argument of local statists is the lack of direction given by the political parties nationally and as Robinson has noted 'national political influence on local authority structures generally appears to be slight and guidance by national parties to local authorities on race relations has been almost non-existent.'[59] The Conservative Party has to date offered no specific instructions to their local divisions on the development of 'race relations' policy and the Labour Party, whilst accepting its shortcomings, is still vague.

In a letter written in 1980 to all Labour Party Constituency Secretaries, Ron Hayward, the Party's General secretary noted 'I am concerned that in spite of our commitment to racial equality we are not yet a truly multiracial party'[60] and the Labour

Party NEC in the same year only gave general advice that 'Where in power, race relations units should be set up in local authorities. It is only in these ways that the effects of prejudice will be understood by party members and changes made in the interests of Britain's ethnic minorities.'[61] This apparent devolution from central party influences has at times brought the actions of local parties into conflict with the Labour Party nationally but by and large local Labour groups have been left to do their own thing. But what exactly is their own thing ?

If there is one key area of importance for the elected member it is in the involvement in setting up of 'race relations' structures and in policy development. This does not assume by inference that policy implementation is unproblematic or that the problems of policy-making lie within the domain of the council chamber and the bureaucracy. The work of Robinson, the Joint Government/Local Authority Association Working Group Report,[62] and others come to the conclusion that the success of a 'race relations' policy or unit in establishing itself depends specifically upon the political will of those in power. Robinson and Ouseley suggest that a small group of political heavyweights are better at getting policies through than one key figure. What will be shown in the case studies below is that the position of councillors is qualified by the actions of council officers and external groups but more critically by national factors such as financial constraints and changes in legislation over education, for example.

The split between the leadership and back-benchers is explored by Flynn who notes, in agreement with Cockburn, that 'Many back-benchers feel that in the procedures of committee and council

meetings they are simply there to vote with the party.'[63] The policy-
makers may thus be better defined, following Young and Connelly[64], as
'policy entrepreneurs', those most involved in pushing for and
initiating policy. If such people are in key positions then there is
the possibility for the control of committees, control of agendas and
for patronage in getting the policy through. Such a position is a long
way from the aims of the municipal socialists in involving more of the
ever amorphous 'black community' in 'race relations' policy making,
when the reality of local government is that the limited power
available to elected members rests in the hands of a very few and
dependant on the response of those people the force of a 'race
relations' policy can be heightened or lessened.

Writers such as Flynn and Ouseley fall foul of attempting to
draw a distinction between the ward politicians, who are viewed as the
'real' representatives and the distanced, ossified bureaucracy. Flynn's
argument is that by decentralisation and the use of oppositional
tactics and alternative forums it is possible to bring about socialist
transformation at the local level. What is neglected is that many
council workers identify with Left and trade union traditions
themselves, including fighting racism in the workplace and have
themselves been involved in what they see as the struggle for
socialism.

As Boddy and Fudge note, 'the new urban left and middle-
class activists claim to represent the demands of the working class and
ordinary people but in terms of class, lifestyle and personal and
sexual politics, they are often very different.'[65] So whilst Flynn
argues for a move away from the power base of the higher levels of the

public sector, it should be noted that this is the social base that

much of the new urban left are indeed drawn from. In the case of anti-

racist policy implementation this contradiction becomes clear in the

Islington Case Study below (Chapter 7) where the Council trade unions,

dismissed by some local statists as reflective of white male opinion,

were more keen than their employers the Left Labour Councillors to

attack racism within the workplace. The nature of so-called

'alternative forums' for fighting racism is called into question when

the leadership of a Left Labour council are shown up by the rather old

forum of trade union activity.

In pure terms it is difficult to assess how much power local

councillors have locally, given the very limited power that they can

exert as a part of the state. At times they seem to be easily

circumvented by council officers (a theme running through the whole of

Ouseley's book and the Hackney Case Study). In other cases, such as the

anti-ratecapping campaign led by Lambeth and Liverpool Councils, a high

degree of brinkmanship can be brought about by elected members,

although their fates were decided by the unelected District Auditors.

Once again, the use of such a term as 'relative autonomy' begs the

questions, 'How much autonomy and for how long ?' What has been

proposed by some observers as a key to the implementation of more

comprehensive and definitive 'race relations' policies, which breaks

the councillor/officer dichotomy is the development of corporate

management structures within the local state bureaucracy.

Cockburn offers a useful political analysis of the effects

of corporate management on the local government set-up and Elcock[66]

provides a critique of the nature of corporate management. Whereas

previously local authorities have been organised into semi-autonomous

departments or services, the corporate approach pushes for greater

integration, through the related devices of 'horizontal' co-ordination

and 'vertical' hierarchy. The effect has been to reassert strong

control from the top in a new form. As Dearlove[87] has argued, one of

the aims of introducing corporate management in local authorities is to

depoliticize issues in local government by further concealing the true

state of affairs that local authorities govern in the interest of some

groups in society and against the interests of others.

It is this very development that Robinson saw as the

foundation for the effective introduction of 'race relations'

structures. Having established a correlation between boroughs with more

centralised procedures and apparently with more sophisticated anti-

racist strategies, he felt able to conclude:

> The evidence is that race structures are more likely to find
> a home in authorities where corporate decision-making
> processes are already familiar and where a high status is
> given to central units for planning and analysis.[88]

Robinson adopts a managerialist perspective for which a properly

structured approach is critical. The proceduralisation of appropriate

channels through which anti-racist and equal opportunities programmes

can be guided becomes central in providing the basis within which

individual actors and groups are expected to operate. In such a way

anti-racism is depoliticized by coming less under the realm of self-

activity and becoming more integrated into the apparatus of the local

state.

The 1983 Joint Government/Local Authorities Association

Working Group came to a similar conclusion as Robinson when it noted

that few local authorities had special arrangements for 'race

relations' policy making at elected member level with the main

councillor involvement being through the local CRCs and other groups.

For the Working Group:

> The importance of integrating race relations initiatives
> within council-wide practices and policies was stressed in
> the Introduction but the Working Group appreciated the
> organisational dilemma this poses for authorities which do
> not have strong co-ordination.'[69]

Young and Connelly's study in 1981 conversely pointed out that 'a

management structure, however well elaborated, can achieve little in so

sensitive an area if the political commitment is not forthcoming'[70].

Connelly similarly noted in her solo study of social services

departments with corporate structures 'None of them seemed to have

influenced social services department policy and practice.'[71] It may

well be that the presentations offered to the Joint Government/Local

Authority Association Working Group tended to be over-optimistic.

Ouseley's study still remains the most in-depth report on

one council's attempt to set up and run a Race Relations Unit, and has

a strong voluntarist element to it rather than the very integrated

managerialism favoured above. He sees the impetus behind the setting up

of the Unit as being when 'the Labour administration gave race a prime

focus, it became a political issue'[72], utilising the best efforts of

'sympathetic white officers, non-sexist males and susceptible but

politically aware black staff'[73] although, in the final analysis,

'effective changes were very dependent upon the goodwill of

management.'[74] Ouseley saw the basic block to effective anti-racist

policy-making being the inflexibility of management and the best way of

circumventing it through alliances between the Race Relations Unit,

trade unions, sympathetic staff and external community agencies. The

role of the latter, especially the CRE and local CRCs is less central

than that of the officers and councillors but they remain the prime

sources for external pressure on local authorities to carry through

their 'race relations' policies.

External and 'community' groups influential in the formation of 'race relations' policies

4.10 The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE)

One result of the 1976 Race Relations Act was the formation

of the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) from the Community

Relations Commission and the Race Relations Board. Although it has a

number of local offices, the CRE is more concerned in co-ordinating

work with senior local politicians and chief officers of authorities as

a whole. For example, the CRE'S 1983 Annual Report describes the

Commission's efforts as attempting 'to work alongside the innovators as

partners, and to direct our promotional efforts at those who might be

described as learners and waverers.'[75] The CRE's work has thus involved

bringing together advisers, directing working groups and attending

meetings. In 1984 it was involved in setting up the Local Authorities

Race Relations Information Exchange (LARRIE) to provide information on

structures, policies and practices among local authorities to assist

others to develop by example.

One of the key roles ascribed to the CRE was that of

undertaking investigations into alleged racist behaviour in

organisations, companies and local government. One of the CRE's first

major investigations in local government was the formal investigation

into the allocation of council housing in Hackney (See Hackney Case

Study Chapter 5) which took over four years to complete.[76] However,

because of court rulings against it, the Commission is now unable to

carry out formal investigations unless it already has evidence that

discrimination is taking place and its power to conduct such

investigations has become so cumbersome that an unco-operative

respondent could delay enquiries for years.[77] The evidence from the

Hackney Case Study is that the CRE was quite capable itself of taking

an inordinate amount of time to complete a formal investigation.

At a local level the CRE is often dismissed because of its

quango status, whereby it lacks the power which it could accrue from

being more closely wedded to the Home Office, for example, or a more

critical edge which it could adopt were it more independent from

government, as the Runnymede Trust has. Young and Connelly discovered

that 'In a sense then, we were unable to make an appreciation of the

potential role of the CRE as in most authorities the Commission's

authority was not recognised'[78] What in effect the CRE is attempting to

do is to push certain demands of black people in such a way as to get

them settled without the need for any greater change in the structures

of society and in tying them into the structures of the local and

central state. Its role is not only in seeking to be the mode for the

expression of anti-racist discontent but also in setting up its

structures as the body for the promotion of equality amongst 'the

races'. In the 1980s the CRE represents one of the last bastions of a

liberal discipline wholly wedded to a process of incremental change

which can only home in on individual acts of discrimination or certain

instances of institutional discrimination with numerous constraints in

attendance.

4.11 The Community Relations Councils (CRCs)

At the local level the Community Relations Councils (CRCs)

have sought to run a number of educational and welfare schemes

involving members of 'ethnic minorities'. The work of the CRCs falls

into four main categories, policy development; community development;

public education and community service. The CRE often has to help

financially with the running of CRCs when there is inadequate funding

from the local authority. Robinson sees their most important role as

acting as a liaison group between the local authority and the local

'black community' developing somewhat on the line of the local Councils

for Voluntary Services. 'The most obvious examples,' Robinson notes,

'of CRCs influence are their structural suggestions which are then

implemented by the authorities.'[79] He cites examples such as Lambeth

and Lewisham where the CRCs have been instrumental compared with

Islington and Hackney[80] where the various political factions and

interest groups have brought about the near demise of the CRCs, as was

done in the case of Birmingham CRC.

Ben-Tovim, Gabriel et al, who pride themselves on their

political involvement in the research process, state somewhat oddly

that 'they [CRCs] have created a forum where the politics of race can

be the struggle for racial equality rather than a nest of sectarian

wrangling and self-interest'[91]. Not only does his veer towards the

common assumption that all sufferers of racism have an overriding

interest above such factors as class (the 'race'/class dichotomy), it

also paints a false picture of the power struggles that go on in CRCs,

as in any other other similar body, over access to funding and control

of the organisation. Gabriel and Ben-Tovim have further argued that the

division between those who look upon the CRCs as useful means for

reform and those who view them as mere Governmental apparatuses, can be

transcended. Like other local statists they claim that this is because

'the attack on racial inequality is conducted through the

democratisation of the local state apparatus with respect to the black

community'[92].

Other writers have suggested that CRCs are more

realistically seen as buffer institutions which are used to head off a

direct assault by black groups on the state. It is one of the processes

by which anti-racisn is converted into ethnicity, thereby blunting the

edge of the black working class struggle, as Sivanandan might term it.

The argument goes further in claiming that the aspirations of the black

middle class can be directed through such bodies whilst at the same

time appearing to give credence to community pressures and demands (see

Katznelson and Dummett & Dummett[93]). As Tom Rees notes, it is none too

easy to point out concrete successes for the local Community Relations

Councils beyond those which could well have come about through other

channels. He writes,

> The greatest achievement of the local CRC has probably been
> to educate some of the local social and political elite,
> both from the majority and the minorities ... with rare
> exceptions their input ... appears to have been trivial and
> their successes may well, like the Urban Programme, have
> provided the alibi for the absence of any serious effort at
> the local level to change local government policies and
> practices.[84]

4.12 Community Organisations

If the terms 'local state' and 'municipal socialism' cover a variety of political attitudes, then the phrase 'community organisations' is equally if not more amorphous. Short[85] gives a typology of three forms of community group: grass roots, public participation and middle-up. The former are held to be the purer, more radical working class based organisations which bring together some of the elements of the politics of the workplace and a form of socialist consciousness to their actions. Examples in anti-racism might include the local groups campaigning against the 'Sus' laws in the 1970s, campaigns over deportations or as has been happening since the mid-1970s, black self-defence organisations. The Newham Monitoring Project (See the Newham Case Study in Chapter 5) is another example, a community group which monitors the levels of racist attacks and the police and local authority responses in the borough.

The public participation organisations are those which are involved in attempts by the state to incorporate community action to avoid confrontation, minimise political errors and legitimise existing and future action. Sivanandan whilst lapsing into customary rhetoric notes that in the early 1970s there was a proliferation of 'ethnic

Office's Urban Aid Programme. Government monies for pluralist ploys -

the development of a parallel power structure for black people'.[86]

The middle-up group approach is simply what Short sees as

the growth of middle-class initiatives (they have always been there) in

and around residency and amenity issues. The factors which Short sees

as being central to the development of these groups have been

occupational and educational. The rise of the black middle class has

been that much more recent and that much smaller, focusing on

individual entrepreneurship and some advances in the academic sphere as

well as local government. The campaign for Black Sections in the Labour

Party is not only a call for greater black influence in the Party but a

reflection of the fact that sections of the black middle class are

seeking representation denied to them because of the racism within the

party. Sivanandan takes his example from the media. 'Look at "Black on

Black" and "Eastern Eye" in particular ... we have the idea of letting

blacks get places so that they can teach their young that they don't

have to take on the system when they can become part of it'.[87]

The input of black community organisations is as complex as

any other group of voluntary organisations and it is perhaps most

useful to consider their political outlook and relationship to the

state and class society rather than attempting to endlessly typologise

them. Both Robinson and Connelly found little evidence of much

community group input into local authority decision-making although it

is difficult to know how much influence a group expects to have on any

part of the local state. The Newham Case Study (Chapter 5) shows how a

well organised community group has been able to pressurise both police

and local authority to take a harder line against the perpetrators of

racial harassment but which still recognises the weaknesses and

limitations of its own position and continues to argue for self-

activity. At the same time the Liverpool Case Study (Chapter 7) shows

how the combination of nearly all of Liverpool's 'ethnic' community

organisations could not dislodge the Council's chosen Principal Race

Relations Adviser, Sam Bond. Not only did the groups consider him to be

wholly unsuited for the job but they even had their own better

qualified candidates ready for the post.

Much of the above would be acceptable if society was

organised along a plurality of community interests which are balanced

by a neutral state. That, however, is not the case in class society.

Community action is fought on the terrain chosen by the state and the

proliferation of community workers (and community police officers) have

extended state influence and control turning the management of protest

and discontent into the efforts of the devolved state employee.

Community group activity does not offer a class-based critique of the

role of the state but aims more as a pressure group for influence and

funding within the system. Cockburn quotes Selma James[28] who suggests

the position for community workers and community activists is one in

which 'we have inherited a distorted and a reformist concept of capital

itself as a series of things which we struggle to plan, control or

manage, rather than as a social relation which we struggle to

destroy.'[29]

Community organisation and action is essentially a populist

formation and is defined around a locale or an organisation or an

individual, in which an overt class dimension is specifically excluded.

This can all too quickly lead to groups with common interests being

forced to compete for the ever-decreasing resources proffered by the local state. For some political parties, the Liberals in the 1970s and Militant in the Labour Party in the late 1970s, their work around 'community' issues aided them in building strong electoral bases. Once again the questions of incorporation for those acting against the state are raised by their close involvement with the reformist political parties. In line with the discussion above of the necessity for a class dimension in fighting racism in a class society it is important to consider the actions of the organisations of the working class at the workplace, namely the trade unions.

4.13 The role of trade unions and workplace organisation in fighting racism

One of the most quoted of Marx's statements is 'The emancipation of the working class is the act of the working class' and this element of self-activity is one which is noticeable by its absence in a number of studies of the development of strategies against racism in local government. What many on the New Left attempting to control the local state's excesses suffer from is a great weakness in assuming that aspects of state behaviour can be detached from the role the state plays in in a capitalist society as a whole. Racist practices and instances of institutionalised racism are thus looked upon as the product of an autonomous self-sustaining development within the state hierarchy and not that it is the state's interests which are wholly tied up with those of capital. The necessity of racism for the capitalist system is not as straightforward as some Marxist writers

would suggest but if the ideology of racism is inextricably linked with
both the state and the furthering of divisions within the working class
then perhaps it is within the ranks of organised labour that the
potential for change lies.

Firstly, it has to be appreciated that racist beliefs are
commonly and widely articulated within the working class irrespective
of any related political organisation's attempts to build upon those
beliefs.[90] The material reproduction of working class racism has been
clearly shown by these studies and should not understated. What is less
obvious in the process of the generation of anti-racist ideas and
activities generally, and more specifically within the workforces of
the local state. Stories such as Ouseley's apocryphal tale are much
more in evidence. Here, he describes the arrival of the Principal Race
Relations Adviser at a Lambeth Council manual workers shop stewards
meeting:

> Their instant view of the Race Relations Unit and the Equal
> Opportunities Policy was encapsulated in a statement made by
> one of the stewards : 'We know what you're up to. If you
> think you're going to turn up here with a truck load of
> niggers on a Monday morning and tell us we have to take them
> on, you've got another think coming.'[91]

It was attitudes like this which fitted perfectly with
vision of the municipal socialists of trade unions as dominated by
white males and therefore fatally flawed. Far better to have the battle
against racism led by the more ideologically circumspect Councillors
and senior officers. Municipal anti-racism, it must be remembered, for
all its consultative guises, is a management strategy and in no

respects a bottom-up force. A corrective to this attitude was provided

by the results of the 1984 PSI survey which noted the higher proportion

of black workers that were trade union members compared with their

white counterparts.[92] Without drawing too much from this result it does

seem to suggest that not all black workers are as despondent towards

trade unionism as some of those who profess themselves to be municipal

socialists. Indeed the Islington Case Study (Chapter 7 below) points

out the contradictions of self-professed socialists attempting to run

the local state machine and having to attack their own workers for

attempting to stop racism within the workplace. Self-activity does not

fit too easily with the local statist plan all the time.

The Joint Government/Local Authority Working Group's report,

which admittedly would not profess a trade union bias, included only 2

paragraphs dedicated to the discussion of the role of trade unions in

the development of 'race relations' policies. At this level the

prevailing attitude to trade unions in fighting racism is one of

accomodation and gradual education. Any active role of the unions is

discounted as a bonus but no more, despite the high concentration of

black workers in the unionised sectors of local government. Similarly

Robinson hardly makes a mention of trade union activities which may be

a reflection of the amount of anti-racist work the unions were doing at

the time but does point to the overriding managerialism of the

development of anti-racism policies.

If there is a general point to be made at this stage, which

will be illuminated by several of the Case Studies below, it is that

the way the involvement of trade unions in local authority anti-racist

policy-making is minimalised can be seen as a further example of the

separation of the economic and the political struggles in British

labour history. In this area the battles for equality are more

generally seen as the responsibility of the local politicians and not

the immediate cause for workers' self-activity. This leads on to the

problem faced by even the most Left-wing of councillors - that of their

dual role as representatives of the working class and at the same time

partial management of frequently the largest workforce in the borough.

Whilst the councillor may be an advocate for the working

class population of the borough as voters it is very much less likely

that a councillor will immediately identify with and develop solidarity

with the council worker. This rings most evidently true when a trade

union takes action against a policy pursued by a Left Labour Council

and the union is then portrayed as the enemy of socialism. More

recently the policy of the 'dented shield' has brought even more Labour

Councils into conflict with their own trade unionists as they attempt

to push through cuts and redundancy measures in the face of Government

expenditure limitation and the privatisation of key local authority

services. Once again the relative autonomy of the local state is called

into question and whether the act of a Labour council cutting services

and making workers redundant is some new form of socialist advance or

even socialist retreat. One suspects it was not what Marx had in mind.

What had to some optimists appeared to be the dawning of a brave new

world of local independendce and community spirit rapidly became the

old world of a local state unable to deliver the promises of the

elected politicians because of its total cohesion with the the central

state. Relative autonomy, to all intents and purposes, has become an

unrealistic term to use to describe local government, in the hands of any political party.

4.14 Summary

It has been the intention of the above Chapter to consider some of the theoretical and practical difficulties in assuming that the 'local state' can be looked upon as an autonomous or semi-autonomous body in relation to the capitalist state and with regard to anti-racism in particular. The theoretical problems faced by the 'local statists' who hold on to some quasi-Marxist view of society as a whole are those of showing how exactly the local state can be extracted from the morass of capitalist domination of the national state and used as the basis for either socialist or greater democratic advance. Any conceptions of municipal autonomy away from the national state have had to be very qualified by the capacity of the Conservative Governments in the 1980s to ratecap and cut grant support to Labour authorities.

The amount of control which Left Labour councillors have been able to exert has been extremely limited, not simply because the Conservative Government has been particularly hostile to them but also reflect the position of local government within the the state with ties over all areas of service provision as well as expenditure. In the Case Studies considered below, in the areas of housing and education, the implications of national state involvement are clearly shown. There is the issue of the role of the police in monitoring and acting upon instances of racial harassment (Newham Case Study); the government controls on new house building by local authorities and the paucity of

available good quality council housing (Hackney Case Study); the

opting-out proposals for schools and the semi-independence of voluntary

aided status for religious schools (Brent Case Study 1); and the

ability of the Secretary of State for Education to intervene in

disputes where there has been a total breakdown between a local

education authority and its teachers (Brent Case Study 2).

The rebirth of the concept of municipal socialism in Britain

in the late 1970s and early 1980s brought with it the raising of

demands for fuller and wider implementation of the provisions of

section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976. As with any other local

authority policies and initiatives, the 'race relations' policy

provision has seen an uneven uptake nationally. For some authorities

the processes of implementation have been hampered by the lack of

political will from councillors or officers, for others the input of

external groups have 'steadied the hand' of wavering councils. This all

goes on within the internal policies and structures of the local state,

where Left councillors can have some effect on discriminatory

procedures or practices. When the councils go beyond what is attainable

internally it comes up against the problems thrown up by the lack of

real power which the councillors have. Even when it is the council's

own employment procedures, the wrong appointment can result in a mass

boycott of the council's Race Relations Unit (Liverpool Case Study) or

when a council appears to be backsliding over its own strong anti-

racism code, so much so that the council's own workers took independent

action against the racists (Islington Case Study).

In the broadest terms, one has to return to the question of

the production and reproduction of the ideology of racism. If racism

was simply a bad idea or group of wrong facts then it could simply be removed by a process of information and education. If, however, it is expressive of a relationship between Labour and Capital, mediated by the class struggle between the two and reproduced through the material experiences of the working class than a local state anti-racism has to be able to produce material change to undermine the basis for racism. The fiscal crisis of the Left Labour Councils in the 1980s has meant that they were wholly unable to take a proactive role beyond policy and procedural changes and the setting up of a myriad of local 'race relations' committees and units, strengthening the bureaucracy certainly but not necessarily affecting the mass of the population of the boroughs.

The following case studies under each chapter heading, be it employment, education or housing may not at times provide crystal-clear comparisons between local authorities investigated. When they do not, what are provided are reflections of the differing notions of what constitutes anti-racist strategy under municipal socialism. The reader may consider that direct comparisons are at times limited but the opportunity which presenting two case studies under each area of local authority practice provides is for a fuller, more rounded picture than would be given by one case study alone. It also enables wider consideration of problems faced in anti-racist policy-making and implementation adds further weight to the evidence for and against the municipal socialism argument.

CHAPTER 5

Housing Case Studies - Newham and Hackney

5.1 Introduction

The task of summing up the history of public housing
provision in Britain, reflecting the importance of housing within the
conditions of reproduction of the labour force for capital and then
adding the key dimension of the ideology of racism - which finds its
own reproduction very clearly in the 'competition' for the limited
resource of council housing is quite a task. The introduction to this
Chapter can only touch on the first two themes, refer the reader to
more erudite and expansive sources and concentrate on the latter
question, that of racism and the provision of council housing.[1] The
themes developed within that appraisal are ones which will reappear in
the two case studies which follow.

The first is that of racial harassment. As will be shown,
despite all the existing 'Race Relations' legislation, levels of abuse,
assault, threatening behaviour with a racist motive (usually covered by
the term 'racial harassment'), have not been lessened. With the
preponderance of attacks being directed towards migrants, from the
Indian sub-continent from 'Paki-bashing'[2] onwards, the apparent
indifference of the police authorities to the seriousness of such
attacks and the racism displayed therein has led to the growth of self-
defence groups and calls upon all sections of the state, particularly

the police, to take the issue of harassment more seriously. One

reflection of this was in the inclusion in the anti-racist policies of

some Left Labour Authorities of methods to prevent black council

tenants from being racially harassed and by logical extension, to stop

other council tenants from committing that harassment. Most commonly

this has been done by improving security and monitoring arrangements,

initiating consultative procedures on council estates to locate

instances and patterns of harassment, the setting up of 'hot-lines' for

victims of harassment to contact and involving the police with black

groups to impress upon the former the seriousness of the issue.

One further approach, the subject of this case study, is

the course of action undertaken by the London Borough of Newham – the

first local authority to evict a family from council housing for

persistent racial harassment. The case study seeks to show some of the

depth and history of racial harassment, the problems with the labelling

of 'victims', the success of self-defence groups and police attitudes

to them, and the problems faced by Newham Council in obtaining the

eviction. In wider terms it is an expression of the success of pressure

group influence upon the local authority, with the pressure group still

seeking to retain its independence from being swallowed up in the local

state structure, by maintaining the primacy of self-activity.

If one area which has received little attention is the

incidence of racial harassment, then by comparison instances of racism

in the allocation procedure of local authority housing departments have

been extensively catalogued. The work of Rex and Moore[3] is still

probably the most famous, despite being 21 years old, and has been

followed by numerous studies which have shown both incidences of the

influence individual racists can have on the allocations procedure for

council housing and the way various criteria for letting operate a *de*

facto segregatory and discriminatory policy. This has been a rich mine

for academic investigation and most recently the Commission for Racial

Equality (CRE) has been involved in conducting investigations to assess

levels of discrimination.

One such case was in the London Borough of Hackney, which

constitutes the second case study in this chapter. The CRE began a four

year investigation into Hackney's housing policies in 1978 resulting in

the *Race and Council Housing in Hackney : Report of a Formal*

Investigation. Following extensive work the CRE concluded that much of

the discrimination must have taken place by the allocating officers and

was not necessarily embedded in the Council's procedures.[4] The Council

co-operated throughout and was issued with a non-discrimination notice

by the CRE in 1983 with the Council making certain policy changes in

the light of the Report. This case study seeks to examine the CRE

investigation and its conclusions, the interplay of what are termed

'individual' and 'institutional' contributions to discrimination and

the immediate aftermath of the production of the report. The nature and

role of the CRE and the actions of councillors and council officers

during and after the investigation are also considered and this is then

placed in the wider context of the general role of the CRE, a quango,

and its influence on the implementation of anti-racist policies within

local authority housing departments. The contrast between these two

case studies is in the source of the racist activity. In Newham it

emanated from outside the local authority and the Council sought to

lessen the effects on its tenants. By contrast, the Hackney case study

is very internalised, focusing upon the minutiae of housing policy
within a poor borough which had a large black population seeking
council housing that was being actively discriminated against.

What both case studies show is that the ideology of racism
is actively reinforced and reproduced through the scarcity of public
housing provision and the assumptions of black housing need, although
the roots behind the racist ideas and the material needs run much
deeper than prejudice or planning. The points of comparison are
limited, indeed it is the contrasts between the two which initially
stand out. But both point out the effects of external bodies on housing
departments and the way in which the councils have responded to and
incorporated the demands of the Newham Monitoring Project and the CRE
respectively, without necessarily being able to adequately solve their
complaints. From the time racialised groups have sought access to
housing in Britain up until the present day, the links between racism
and housing have not been substantially weakened and the present
central state blocks on council house building allied to the high
incidence of unemployment offer little hope for radical change.[5]

5.2   The provision of Council Housing in Britain

Engels wrote that, 'In reality the bourgeoisie has only one
method of settling the housing question after *its* fashion – that is to
say, of settling it in such a way that the solution continually poses
the question anew.'[6] That appraisal of the class nature of the public
provision of housing in capitalist society is a theme which has been
followed up by the Urban Sociologists in the 1960s. Marx, who himself

knew more than a little of the urban, stated the principal function to be borne in mind in relation to public housing is its benefits for capitalists. In 'Capital', he wrote:

> Every unprejudiced observer sees that the greater the centralisation of the means of production, the greater is the corresponding concentration of workers within a given space; and therefore the more quickly capitalist accumulation takes place, the more miserable the housing situation of the working class.[7]

Writers in urban sociology such as Saunders, Castells and Harloe[8] have, in their exploration of the urban, noted upon the centrality of the collective means of consumption for the reproduction of the labour force and, as an example, the struggles waged over housing.

As Lojkine[9] has suggested, since the 1860s, class struggle and the needs of capital has forced the British State into a massive programme of house building for the working class. The increase in the supply of labour power in the mid-nineteenth century enabled employers to keep wages to a minimum whereas urban landlords developed housing of relatively high quality and density. In Liverpool, in 1869, the Council was the first to build dwellings for rent but as Balchin shows, it was not until the end of World War 1 that council house building really 'took off'.[10] Taking a fifty year leap he also notes that although 503,000 dwellings were built under the 1923 and 1924 Housing Acts (under the first Labour Government), it 'was doubtful however whether the needs of poorest working class families had been met.'[11]

With the end of World War 2, Aneurin Bevan's Housing Acts of 1946 and 1949 ensured that council house building dominated the period

1945-51. He held the view that council housing should be improved in
quality and in house size whilst at the same time being made available
not only to workers but to the middle class in each locality.[12] In 1944
Bevan estimated that a minimum of four million new houses were needed
just to return to pre-war standards - in the event the post-war Labour
Government built only one million.[13] In 1946 Bevan attacked the
squatters' movement with mass evictions being carried out.[14] This
situation was played out again when in 1988 Left-dominated Hackney
Council sent in the Special Patrol Group to remove squatters from
previously derelict Council premises.[15].

The period of Conservative Government rule, post-1951, saw
the end of a major thrust towards mass local authority council house
building. As Balchin sums up, 'Bevan's philosophy of classless and high
quality council housing had been reversed within five years...public
sector activities diminished as the Conservative Government placed its
emphasis on owner occupation.'[16] Throughout the 1950-80s the issue of
council housing allocation has been given a whole new tenor with the
demands made upon local authorities by black migrants. It is important
therefore to follow through the development of the twin themes of
racism and housing provision in tandem in the period 1950s to the
present day and to explore the way that the contest over a limited
resource such as housing has reproduced the ideology of racism. As
Miles notes :

> In most of the major English conurbations there are areas of
> declining capitalist production which are also characterised
> by poor housing conditions... These are also areas ...chosen
> by migrant labourers and their families as areas of
> residential settlement. The coincidence of their settlement
> with material decline combined with their demand for access

to resources (especially housing) which are in short supply
has, in the context of the racist legacy of colonialism,
served as a direct stimulus to the articulation and
reproduction of racism within the working class resident in
such areas.[17]

5.3 Racism and the allocation of housing in post-war Britain - an overview of the research.

The concentration of black workers in the 1950s and 60s in lodging houses and then slum quality housing was reflected in the style of research undertaken at the time. Ward has suggested that the focus in that period was upon the housing conditions of the migrants and structures of settlement.[18] Both Foot and Patterson[19] suggest that the lack of direction given by central and local government was reflected in the considerable variation in the help offered to the black migrants both by private and public landlords. At this time, of course, private landlords could legally refuse a property to a prospective tenant on the grounds of skin colour[20] and as the bulk of immigrant's problems fell upon the shoulders of local authorities, problems which were beyond their limited resources, as Foot affirms, 'the general rule [was] muddle through without fuss and without success'[21]. Patterson broadened the debate by arguing that the most immediate factor in conditioning migrant-host relationships in the field of housing was the tremendous and long standing housing shortage since World War 2 (pre-empting the comments of Miles above). As Jacobs stresses, in the political sphere the perception became generalised whereby 'it was the black presence, and not the squalid conditions that they were forced to endure, that was seen as the problem.'[22].

As the demands made upon the state by black workers and
their families grew for better long-term housing, frequently council
housing, so the degree of discrimination in the allocation procedure
became more apparent. Writers such as Smith and Whalley[23] dismiss a
conspiracy theory as such by local authorities but seek recourse in
another problematic concept, that of 'racial disadvantage'. Rex and
Moore's *Race Community and Conflict* put the point that for local
authorities, in their case Birmingham, 'it is quite possible under the
present arrangements to discriminate without a policy of discrimination
ever being publicly admitted.'[24] Rex and Moore also espoused the
concept of 'housing class' in their study, as an analytical tool which
gained some academic currency.[25]

The Race Relations Act of 1968, following the results of the
PEPRS survey[26] which established that substantial discrimination was
being practised in housing, attempted to redress the problem by
enlarging the scope of anti-discrimination in legislation to include
housing. It is worth remembering that 1968 was the year of an
Immigration Act and Enoch Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech.[27] Daniel's
Racial Discrimination in England, built upon the PEPRS report,
concluded:

> the main point about local authorities and coloured
> immigrants' housing...is not any discrimination against
> individuals that may exist at present, but the fact that the
> criteria applied in selecting the people who are to be
> allocated council housing are such that few coloured
> immigrants have as yet been housed by local authorities.[28]

One concept was the notion of racial disadvantage. Its exponents sought to explain racism in the housing market by reference to rules, 'unrelated to race which affect racial minorities disproportionately ... Disadvantage is seen as something that normally arises from the process of allocation normally adopted by housing departments'.[29] This led the argument away from the centrality of the ideology of racism and its affects on the housing situation. Instead it attributed the poor housing of black people to the fact that they were more prevalent in certain housing categories which were historically less favoured by the allocations system (a claim which was to resurface in the Hackney investigation below). In this respect the blame was shifted away from those in housing departments and the state in general. Jacobs, suggests that the:

> racial disadvantage argument, dealing in symptoms rather
> than causes, ignores the ideological context in which
> housing departments function. It provides an ahistorical,
> classless and hence statically descriptive account, serving
> to confuse and exonerate rather than expose and condemn.[30]

Van den Berghe has more succinctly called it 'the convenient obfuscation of the source of inequality'[31].

In the 1970s, with stabilisation of black demand for housing, research centred upon residential distribution, often explained through 'choice' and conflict' and the work of local authority housing departments in the field (see Richmond and Smith & Whalley).[32] It was in this period that the general shift in housing policy moved from slum clearance and demolition towards urban renewal. Economic crisis and government expenditure cuts reduced the public

housing programme substantially[33] and a path was opened up for black

families to obtain housing through the growth of housing co-operatives

and housing associations.[34] The inception of the CRE in 1976-7 saw the

promotion of a body which could carry out limited investigations of

cases of racism and the latter half of the decade saw the growth in the

body of literature showing the degree of discrimination in local

authority housing departments (e.g. Clark, Power and Flett).[35]

At the same time as academic exploration of the levels of

discrimination proliferated, so black people who had found common cause

in the 1960s against a racism that denied their basic needs in housing,

education etc. moved into open conflict with the state in the 1970s.

Sivanandan writes of the time that:

> Already, Afro-Caribbean youth were being brutalised by the
> police and criminalised by the 'Sus' law; now, the Asians
> were suspected of being illegals and so open to arrest in
> their workplaces or homes. And on the streets, the sport of
> Paki-bashing had grown, with police indifference (or
> connivance), into more generalised and organised racial
> violence.[36]

The anger of black youth erupted into running battles with the police

the climax being the Notting Hill Carnival of 1976. At the same time

the National Front, gaining in strength, became more confident in its

attacks on black people, mainly the Asian communities. Asian self-

defence groups sprang up and it was the lasting influence of these

groups that in the 1980s saw local authorities beginning to take a

stand against racial harassment on council estates.

From interpretations of the 1981 Census[37] black families are

more likely to live in overcrowded accomodation, are disproportionately

represented amongst the homeless and amongst those experiencing the

greatest delays on council waiting lists. At the same time they are

victims of harassment and abuse. It is these two themes which are

discussed in the case studies below. The Newham Council case shows how

activities from pressure groups in the borough forced the Council into

taking action against a white family of council house tenants who were

found guilty of persistent racial harassment. The other case study

explores the CRE investigation of the Housing Department of Hackney

Council which declared that the inequality of council housing between

black and white council tenants was due primarily not to the policies

and practices of the Council but rather to direct racial

discrimination.

The comparison of the two case studies is, therefore, of

internal and external mechanisms. One is the result of an external

local pressure group, the Newham Monitoring Project, bringing instances

of racial violence and harassment to the attention of the local

authority. The other case study explores the response of a local

authority to a national investigative body, the CRE, which sought to

assess the reasons for the persistence of racism in the allocation of

council housing. One point to be remembered throughout this Chapter is

that the centrality of racism in the area of housing should not obscure

the fact that discrimination occurs over a small, dilapidated housing

stock and that racial violence is set against a general background of

unemployment, urban decay and overcrowding. There is no justification

for racial harassment and violence but the truth is that many of the

harassers live in the same appalling conditions as their victims. As

Miles and Phizacklea note, 'Working class racism is less an aberration than a likely response in the current circumstances.'[38]

THE NEWHAM COUNCIL CASE STUDY

5.4 Housing and Newham's Migrant Communities

Newham is an outer London borough sitting just north of the Thames. It is part of the traditional East End of London which also comprises Hackney and Tower Hamlets. Together these three authorities make up the most extensive area of urban deprivation in the country. Although Newham is officially an Outer London Borough, the 1981 census showed Newham to have the second highest level of urban deprivation (after Hackney) in the country. Unemployment in 1981 was a third higher than the national average. It has been made worse by the closure of the Trebor's sweet factory, the streamlining of the Tate and Lyle plant in Plaistow and a general loss of manufacturing industry. While 8.5% of the borough's households are officially overcrowded, the proportion rises for black immigrant households.[39] Poor housing is one of the most pressing sources of discontent in the borough.

The area's major growth started in the late nineteenth century around the docks and expanding industry. The old County Boroughs of East Ham and West Ham were joined to form Newham in 1965. Most of Newham's private housing was built at the turn of the last century by small builders for private landlords. Much of this was poor quality and has since been demolished by the local authority. A quarter of the homes in the borough were also lost during the heavy bombing of

the East End in the Second World War. House building since then has almost exclusively been undertaken by the Council, but the need to provide a large amount of housing quickly has led to the building of high density, high-rise estates with their attendant pitfalls. The redevelopment of the Docklands area was originally mooted as solving many of the problems of the area. A third of the land in Newham falls within the Docklands area but this redevelopment is largely controlled by the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) and the land intended for new housing for rent has mainly been taken for speculative private house building which has done little to relieve housing stress for most existing Newham residents. It was not until 1987 that Newham Council halted its policy of non-cooperation with the LDDC.

The Housing Department manages nearly 33,000 units of accomodation, the majority of the stock consisting of maisonettes and flats, with over 1000 units having been lost due to the evacuation of Ronan Point and another 8 Taylor Woodrow Anglia (system built) Blocks because of their structural insecurity. Newham Council houses 38% of households in the borough and in addition housing associations provide homes for a further 4%. In 1985/6, 303 new homes were completed by the Council but despite this, the already overcrowded and dilapidated stock had been diminished mainly through tenants exercising their 'Right to Buy'. The Council rehouses over 2000 households each year and encourages the maintenance and rehabilitation of the private sector stock through the provision of Housing Renovation Grants.

The ethnic composition of Newham's population was determined by Newham Council in 1984 and was extrapolated from data gleaned from the 1981 Census. Households of Indian Sub-continent origin make up

nearly 16% of Newham's population and thus form the borough's largest
non-white group. About 9% of Newham's population are of Afro-Caribbean
origin. In 10 years Newham's NCWP origin population nearly doubled,
from 28,330 in 1971 to 55,334 in 1981, an increase of over 27,000. This
was the second largest increase in London. The borough's black
population is concentrated in the north around the wards of Upton,
Kensington and Monega, over 50% of the people in these wards being of
NCWP origin. South of the Barking Rd., Canning Town and Plaistow are
seen as 'no-go' areas for black people and Newham Council has been
besieged with transfer requests to the area seen as safe for black
residents - around High St. North.

Nearly 80% of households originating from the Indian Sub-
continent are owner occupiers. Only 1 in 8 find their accomodation in
the public rented sector and about 1 in 10 in other rented
accomodation. Households whose members originate from the Caribbean are
56% owner occupiers amd nearly 40% rent from the local authority.
Extrapolating from the figures in Newham, this gives approximate
figures of 850 households from the Indian Sub-Continent in Council
Housing and 200 from the Caribbean.

5.5 Race Relations policies in Newham Council

In 1978 Newham Council's Policy Committee set up a Race
Relations Sub-Committee 'to review and formulate proposals for
consideration by Policy Committee in relation to the Council's
arrangements -

(i) to avoid racial discrimination within its services;

(ii) to support the improvement of race relations generally.'[39]

The Policy Committee agreed with the Sub-Committee's proposals that a

Race Relations Unit be located within the Chief Executives Office.

Two years later the Council, through its Policy and

Resources Committee formed a Community Relations Sub-Committee to

review the policies of the Council and to consider arrangements for

monitoring policy implementation and promoting good race relations in

the borough. In December 1982 the Council along with Newham Council for

Racial Equality and the CRE decided to set up the Newham Race Relations

Association in order to facilitate the re-emergence of a properly

constituted and 'representative' Community Relations Council (CRC). As

Ms Vernica Crooks, an officer in the Race Relation Unit noted, 'the CRC

was not really established in any sense of the word, it had collapsed

through infighting.'[40] With the establishment of this Association, its

staff 'relieved the Community Liaison Officer [appointed in 1982 - MC]

of some of the "traditional" community relations work'[41] and enabled

the Council to press ahead with the formation of the proposed Race

Relations Unit.

The moves by the Council were framed within the terms of

reference of Section 71 of the 1976 Race Relations Act both to promote

equality of opportunity and to eliminate unlawful discrimination within

the employment and services offered by the local authority. As the Race

Relations Sub-Committee noted, 'There was a growing need for a succinct

statement of objectives...[which] could act as a yardstick against

which progress on implementing the Council's race equality and equal

opportunities policies can be measured.'[42] In late 1983, Bhag Jassal

came from Walsall Council to take over the position of Principal Race

Relations Officer (PRRO). It was not until February 1985 that the

Policy and Resources Committee finally agreed to the establishment of

the Race Relations Unit headed bu the PRRO and with four other posts

created wihtinb the unit.

5.6 Newham Council and Racial Harassment

A report to the Policy and Resources Committee of the

Council in January 1982 investigated the incidence of racial harassment

in Newham, where the bulk of available council housing is in the South

of the Borough, in Silvertown and Canning Town. The report noted:

> The reputation of areas such as Canning Town, Customs House
> and to a certain extent Stratford for racial intimidation
> leads families to opt for overcrowding in private properties
> with poor amenities in Upton Park and East Ham rather than
> to accept a much needed council flat in these areas.[49]

As a result of this, in June 1982, Newham's Housing Committee agreed a

policy to deal with incidents of racial harassment on and around

Council housing estates. The Director of Housing made a statement, in

June 1983, on the ten point Departmental Race Relations Strategy. Point

(x) of which noted:

> That an effective policy and a set of procedures and
> practices will be developed and implemented to tackle racial
> harassment in Council housing estates in the Borough and
> that racist graffiti will be removed from Council property
> as a matter of priority.

In spite of these declared policy aims, the GLC (1984)
report *Racial Harassment in London* noted that Asian families were still
being moved into Canning Town, an area notorious for racial attacks and
National Front activity and that Lettings Officers for the area, E16,
claimed that there were no recorded incidents of racial harassment in
Canning Town.[44] In September 1984 the Housing Committee endorsed the
ten point strategy to eliminate racial discrimination and disadvantage
from its Housing Services. One of the major influences upon Newham
Council was the uptake by the Council of the recommendations of the
Joint Government/Local Authority Association Working Group report *Local
Authorities and Racial Disadvantage*In this report, it was noted that
'it is also difficult to obtain evictions of those guilty when it is
considered an appropriate solution'[45] but recommends that 'Positive
action by a local authority in co-ordinating the response of other
public agencies to this problem, together with a clear statement of
opposition to racial harassment and encouragement for other
organisations to take a similar stand, would be seen as providing real
support in a practical way.'[46] One of the, if not the, major
organisation(s) in the Borough fighting racial harassment and violence
is the Newham Monitoring Project which comes from the larger tradition
of black self-defence in the Borough.

5.7 Racist attacks and black self-defence in Newham

Newham has both a large black population and a history of
racist attacks and fascist activity. The first recorded victims of
racial attack in Newham in recent times are said to be two Bengali

workers stabbed to death in 1965.[47] The first incident to claim

national attention was the case of the four Indian Virk brothers in

April 1977, who defended themselves from an attack outside their house

but found they, not their attackers, were tried and convicted of

grievous bodily harm. The campaign around their case threw up the

Newham Defence Committee, which went on to monitor and publicise racial

attacks and police responses, as a forerunner of the Newham Monitoring

Project. The incidence of attacks in Newham increased in the late

1970s, when Newham Housing Department carried out a policy of dispersal

of black families onto white housing estates in the South of the

Borough. As has been shown in Chapter 3 above, this period was one of

both numerical growth and street activity for the parties of the far-

right with little apparent police interest and no police policy. West

Ham's football ground, Upton Park, in the centre of the borough became

a focus of activity for both the National Front and British Movement.[48]

In 1980, Akhtar Ali Baig, an accountant, was stabbed to

death in a busy shopping street in broad daylight. Two marches were

held in the area, each over 3000 strong, to protest against what were

seen as the twin evils - the level of racial attacks and the degree of

state indifference. As the Newham Monitoring Project noted, the case

was exceptional in the Borough in that the assailants were brought to

court.[49] Since the mid-1970s, Asian Youth Movements have been formed in

response to the need to defend communities against racist attacks. In

Southall, after the murder of Gurdip Singh Chaggar in 1976, the

Southall Youth Movement came into being;[50] in Bradford, when the NF

tried to march through the Manningham area of the city, the Bradford

Asian Youth Movement coalesced to oppose it; in East London, the

murders of Altab Ali[51], Ishaque Ali and Michael Ferreira brought about

the formation of various local black movements concentrating on the

issue of self-defence. In what was possibly the most important black

political trial of 1983, a case known as the 'Newham 8' showed the way

independent community organisations were acting outside the auspices of

the local authority.

5.8   The Newham 8 Campaign

In September 1981, there were a string of racist attacks by

gangs of white youths on Asian children at the Little Ilford School in

Newham. There had also been considerable organised racist activity in

the area and on Friday September 24th, on learning, they claim, of yet

another planned attack on the school, a group of Asian youths waited

outside the school gates. No white gangs appeared and the youths claim

they were checking the surrounding area when a car drew up containing

several white men (who were, in fact, plain clothes policeman). A fight

ensued in which one boy was hospitalised and another lost his front

teeth.[52] A police van arrived and the Asians were arrested and taken to

Forest Gate Police Station. The youths were charged with offences

ranging from threatening behaviour and affray to conspiracy to cause

injury to persons unknown[53] and became known as the Newham 8.

Immediately a major campaign was initiated for the charges

to be dropped and to build support for the Newham 8. As Wilson notes,

it:

> was the decision of the Newham police to charge the eight
> youths with 'conspiracy to assault persons unknown' that did

most to increase fear and anger in the East End Asian
Community; if they tried to defend themselves that same
police force would bring serious criminal charges against
them. [54]

On November 5th, when the youths appeared at Newham magistrates court,

a boycott of schools was supported by 80% of Asian children in the

area. The trial ended in late December 1983 with four of the eight

defendants found guilty of affray and one of a minor assault. The case

was summed up by the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* which concluded

that:

the prosecution's decision not to proceed with the
conspiracy charges, and their failure to secure a single
conviction on the charges of possession of offensive weapons
and assaults occasioning actual bodily harm, vindicate the
defendants' assertion that their right to go on to the
streets, armed if necessary, in defence of their community,
and their right to defend themselves if attacked. [55]

As with prior case of the Bradford 12, [56] the right to self-

defence was established. The perception of the necessity for black

self-help against racial harassment prompted the formation of the

Newham Monitoring Project, which has sought to monitor the levels of

racist activity, the response of the police and Newham Council and to

help and advise the victims of racist attacks.

5.9   The Newham Monitoring Project

The Newham Monitoring Project was formed in 1980 after the

murder of Akhtar Ali Baig and an increasing number of attacks on black

people and their property in the area. As Unmesh Desai, a full-time
worker with the Project described: 'Some people from the law centre,
Newham Rights, some black groups and other community workers went to
the local MP to inform him of the situation, and he said he wanted hard
evidence. In less than three months they had documented 80 cases of
racial assault. The Newham Monitoring Project was set up. It has always
managed to attract wide support especially from the Asian community.'[57]
A regular bulletin, the *Newham Monitor*, was launched and financed by
the Labour Party, local churches and trade unions. On the involvement
of the latter, Unmesh Desai claimed, in 1982, 'we have only had token
commitment from the unions so far ... We would like to see anti-racist
work within the unions, especially in the NUT and the social services
unions, such as Nalgo'.[58]

The problem facing the group, but which at the same time
gives it a certain autonomy to act, is its degree of separation from
the local authority. With no statutory powers to act when asked to
rehouse people, the Project can only put pressure on individual
councillors and make representations to officers. Unmesh Desai summed
up the role of the Project as:

> a core of people who meet regularly and give practical
> guidance and help to self-defence groups. The whole purpose
> of monitoring racial harassment is not just to provide
> statistical documentation, but to use this towards the
> organisation of community groups and towards responding to
> this threat. It is also vital to assess the response of the
> police and the local authority.[59]

Elton Lewis works as an outreach worker for the Project and
it is his job to go into the community, liaise with various

organisations and individuals and take on case work with those facing

violence and harassment. He puts the cause of racial harassment down

'very much to a white ethnocentric type view that anybody from outside

the East End, be they black or white, shouldn't be allowed, and it

comes to a head when you have black people moving into the area'.[60] It

is here that the Project seeks a dialogue with the Council as Elton

Lewis explained,

> This is where we work with the Housing Office to try and
> prevent this type of situation developing and hardening. So
> we have a system, or the Housing Office has a system,
> whereby they do what they call targetting which is moving in
> groups of black people to live in that area. Quite often
> though, this doesn't work because people are not there for
> many months before they are forced to leave because
> harassment is happening to them on a daily basis.[61]

The project has 110 individuals and 40 organisations

affiliated. It runs a 24-hour 'Hotline' for victims of attack to call

for assistance and immediate protection. In 1987 the project received a

grant, in line with the Council's responsibilities following the

disbanding of the GLC, of £81,000. Although Newham Council has brought

in some procedures to prevent and be responsive to incidents of racial

harassment, the Newham Monitoring Project feels the Council is still

bureaucratically inflexible in terms of rapid response to attacks. As

Elton Lewis argued,:

> people put up with a lot of harassment... when they come
> forward [to the Council - MC], they expect not only to be
> supported, but if they want to be, to be moved. This is when
> they find that it's very difficult because there's a lot of
> people that need to be housed in an area like Newham and
> people, even when they claim of racial harassment, are
> allocated points on a unified points scheme. The result is

> that people who aren't being racially harassed but have
> easily more than the points allocation, whose life and limb
> aren't in danger have more of a right than these victims.[62]

Whilst working with and funded by Newham Council, the

Monitoring Project critical of what it sees as a lack of political will

on behalf of the Council. In calling for more serious treatment by the

police force of racial attacks the Project believes that without the

the local state taking a more interventionist position, community self-

defence is of paramount importance. Elton Lewis suggests:

> the best thing that could happen is if the local authority,
> the Housing Department, started to put some money where its
> mouth is and started to prosecute more people who
> perpetrated attacks on black people. It's no good asking us
> to have faith in their policies and rules if they don't take
> people into court and prosecute them successfully because
> quite often this hasn't happened properly.[63]

Unmesh Desai made a more graphic comment to the *Guardian* of July 11

1985 in which he simply noted, 'Anyone who talks about 20 years of

racial harmony in Newham is talking bullshit'.

5.10 Policing and racial harassment

Much has been written about the lacklustre responses of the

police to racial harassment and the problems of standard police

practices in dealing with racial attacks. Paul Gordon[64] cites five

problems faced by black people in the reporting of racial violence to

the police:

(i)   Delays in response;

(ii)   Denial of racial motive;

(iii) Unwillingness to prosecute attackers;

(iv)   Mistreatment of victims;

(v)   Marginalisation of 'special measures' to combat racial

       violence.

Both the present Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, Peter Imbert, and his predecessor Kenneth Newman expressed concern about the levels of racial attacks[65] and sought to prioritise them as an issue (given the Met's perception of the problem) but there is little evidence that this has filtered down to beat officers. Unmesh Desai of the Newham Monitoring Project suggests that, 'rank and file police thinking is different from the highly educated, highly articulate and increasingly media conscious flannel of senior officers...policing in terms of racist attacks has not improved one bit where it counts, out on the streets'.[66]

In broader terms, local authority and community group influences on the police are still minimal despite the much vaunted police committees of some of the Left Labour local authorities. In 'K' Division in Newham, the police write out racial incidents on separate forms and notes attached to the form instruct officers 'to make special efforts to adopt a sympathetic and understanding approach to victims' Despite these policies and apart from the statistical problem of the collation of racial harassment statistics being up to individual police officers, the Newham Monitoring Project argues that the whole structure of reporting racial incidents separately tends to marginalise the crimes. As Unmesh Desai notes, 'what we say is that if racial harassment is to be counted just like any other crime then its got to

be part and parcel of everyday policing'.[67]

In 1985 moves were afoot to put a Racial Harassment Bill through Parliament which would identify the crimes involved and would define it as a greater issue for active police attention. The Bill failed and in one respect, those who argued against its necessity were correct - there is no need for new legislation for dealing with the criminal actions which make the totality of racial harassment. Breaking a window is 'criminal damage' and spitting against somebody is 'threatening behaviour'. As Vernica Crooks of Newham Race Relations Unit argued, 'with the police its a question of political will. A more serious attitude in individual officers would make the job of the Council that much more easy. The reticence of victims to go to the police because of their past record makes everything a self-fulfilling prophesy'.[68] And as Gordon concludes:

> The policing of racial violence and harassment does not require any special policing qualities as demands for special measures imply. They only require the diligent application of standard police techniques and, above all, an understanding of the phenomenon of racism which underlies such attacks. It is precisely these which have been lacking.[69]

5.11 The eviction of the McDonnell family

CRE, on the housing policy of Hackney Council provides a notable case

for comparison.

THE HACKNEY CASE STUDY

5.17 Introduction

The inner London Borough of Hackney is situated at the

north-east centre of the city and was formed through the amalgamation

of the three Metropolitan Boroughs of Hackney, Shoreditch and Stoke

Newington. It is one of the poorest and most economically deprived

areas in the whole of the United Kingdom. Hackney has one of the

highest unemployment rates in London (consistently between 15 and 20%

in the 1980s) and its working population, on average, earn the lowest

wages in London. The Borough's housing statistics accurately reflect

the degree of deprivation and decline in the borough, especially in the

Council's housing estates, the quality of which determine the physical

character of some 60% of Hackney. Figures available from 1986[111] put

the number of people on the Council waiting list at 15,580, with the

Council managing 45,730 dwellings out of a total of 76,800 dwellings in

the borough. The number of homeless in Hackney has risen by 219% from

728 in the five year period 1980/81 to 1985/86.

The 1981 Census assessed that nearly 10% of the Hackney's

population live in overcrowded accommodation; that 11.9% of its

households lacked the exclusive use of a bath and an inside toilet; and

that the borough contained proportionally the largest number of single-

parent families in the country (10.6%). The GLC was responsible for the

running of 40% of the public housing stock in the borough, Hackney

Council administering the rest, until 1981, when the GLC's policy of

handing over housing to the relevant boroughs was followed through,

thereby putting a large amount of poor quality housing, some of the

worst in the borough, in the lap of Hackney Council. At the beginning

of the 1980s, 80% of the Council's housing stock was flats - 1,000 of

which (pre-war type) needed renovation or demolition, a further 9,000

requiring comprehensive repairs or improvements.

For the sake of this case study, the important fact is the

large amount of poor quality, run-down housing which the Council has to

house people in. Any degree of racial discrimination in council housing

allocation in the borough will, therefore, put many black families in

living conditions of advanced urban decay. They will not be alone, for

good quality desirable council housing is at a premium in Hackney, but

the fears expressed by the CRE, in investigating the allocations

procedure in Hackney Council, were that black people had little or no

chance of obtaining that rarity because of racism operating within the

Housing Directorate.

5.18   Housing and Hackney's Migrant Population

Over many years, migrant workers have settled in working

class areas such as Hackney - Huegenot weavers in Shoreditch, Irish

labourers for the docks and Jewish refugees from the pogroms in the

late 19th century. The foreign-born population of Hackney in 1951 was

overwhelmingly European and was estimated at 6.5% of the total

population. Certain demographic factors made Hackney a pole of

attraction for migrant black workers in the 1950s - available work, a surfeit of accomodation at low rents and one further reason, offered by Harrison, in his study of the area,[112] that 'Hackney was one of the few places where discrimination against black tenants was less pronounced. The mainly Jewish landlords were not concerned about the colour of their tenants.'[113] The 1971 Census estimated the black population of the London Borough of Hackney as being 11.5%.

The central factor affecting the percentage of the population of Hackney was the exodus of the white population during the 1970s which accounted for the drop in total population in the Borough of 40,000. As Harrison comments 'the inner city was becoming a racial semi-ghetto as well as a social ghetto.'[114] Black and other ethnic minority groups in Hackney now form over 25% of the borough's population with West Indians, Africans and Asians constituting 19%. The largest single non-white group within the borough is of West Indian origin, indeed Hackney has the largest number of people of West Indian origin for any London Borough.

Hackney's black population does not live uniformly in all parts of the Borough. The greatest concentration of black residents live in the centre of Hackney in an area consisting of poor quality and decaying Victorian housing and the worst of the council housing estates. As ever, the quality of housing available to anybody is to a greater extent related to their ability to pay. The result of racism in the labour market in the 1960s was the concentration of black workers in the quality of housing which they could afford, mainly the rented sector in the inner city. This was precisely the case in Hackney. As the black migrants to Hackney became more settled and thus fitted the

criteria of the Housing Department for council housing, so a fresh set
of circumstances were there for discrimination to occur.

There are now similar proportions of West Indians and whites
in council housing, about 60% of each group. The 1977 National Housing
and Dwelling Survey, which at the time of the CRE investigation was
practically the sole source of data on the housing conditions of ethnic
minorities in Hackney, found that black tenants lived in older
properties, in more crowded conditions and on higher levels than their
white counterparts. It is fair, however, to draw the general conclusion
that at the time of the NHDS survey, West Indian tenants were living in
poorer conditions in the public sector in Hackney than white tenants.
The GLC allocation survey 'Colour and the Allocation of GLC Housing'[115]
found that whites were three times more likely to be allocated a house,
as opposed to a flat, than black people and that blacks were more than
twice as likely than whites to be living on the eleventh floor and
above. Four times as many whites than blacks were in the best quality
housing (on an index measuring the age, type and floor space of the
property) and three times as many blacks as whites were in the worst
quality of housing.

Although some of the conclusions of the NHDS and GLC
surveys have to be treated with some caution, because of the small
sample size used, the results do at least highlight trends in housing
in Hackney which were used as evidence of the necessity for the CRE
investigation of the council housing allocation procedure in the
borough. The poor conditions of housing, into which black people were
being positioned in such a way as to keep them in the worst sectors
were under the nominal local control of the local Labour Council

and it was only with greater black influence in local politics that issues such as racism in housing allocation were aired.

5.19 The political make-up of the borough

Continually dominated by a ruling Labour Group, Hackney Council underwent a political shift to the Left in the local elections of 1982. Prior to that the Labour Group was predominantly working class and in common with many other local authorities, a degree of colour-blindness operated within the Council's political leadership. The Labour leader John Kotz and his predecessor Martin Ottalangui had both held positions in the housing department of Newham Council. Both tended to be representative of the 'old guard' Labour of the 1970s which was rapidly being replaced by the New Left in the early 1980s.

After the 1982 election, at the first meeting of the new Labour Group John Kotz was deposed and Tony Kendall, a polytechnic teacher, assumed the leadership. The *Hackney Gazette* of 6 June 1982 noted that the 'Hackney old guard of Labour right-wingers has been completely humiliated in the Council's Committee elections. The anticipated power struggle became a battle between the so-called soft left and the more radical hard-left'. During the ratecapping crisis of April 1984 the hard left of the Council took over with Hilda Kean becoming Labour leader. The results of the surcharging of several councillors over the ratecapping campaign led to the election of Tony Millward who was more prepared to co-operate with the spending limits set by the government. Following the next local elections, Millward was replaced by Andrew Puddephatt - deputy to Hilda Kean in 1984.

The development of race relations policies in the borough has run along parallel lines with the political tenor of the Labour leadership of the Council. The influence of the New Left Councillors' is reflected in the changes made from 1978 when, until the appointment of Alan McFarlane as Senior Housing Adviser (Race Relations), there were no black people at senior officer level in the Council and no officers at policy making level taking responsibility for 'race relations', to the present position of there being over 60 officers attached to the Race Relations Unit alone. As McFarlane remembers of those early days, 'In a place with a 40% non-white population, to have one non-white person at a policy level is outrageous, but it shows how bad things were that is wasn't thought of as outrageous...It meant that at every meeting you went to, you would be the only person who might even be thought to have the view of one-third of the population'.[116]

The nature of the development of race relations strategies in Hackney from 1978 onwards, is tied in with both the ongoing CRE investigation and with the Council's own investigation into the running of Hackney Council for Racial Equality (HCRE) so it is appropriate before discussing the CRE study to first examine the web of relationships between councillors, council officers and HCRE in the borough, some of which were to become acrimonious during the Council investigation of HCRE.

5.20 Hackney Council and the development of 'Race Relations' policy

As long ago as 1965, the year of the first Race Relations Act, Hackney Council set up the Hackney Liaison Council to work with

black migrants to Britain. In 1967, in common with other similar bodies in London and elsewhere, it took the name Hackney Community Relations Council later becoming Hackney Council for Racial Equality (HCRE). In the early years, the Council continued to have a major involvement in the running of HCRE and has continued to fund various posts linked with the promotion of good 'race relations' gradually expanding to the position whereby the Council continues to fund the major part of HCRE's activities by meeting the cost of many of its posts and the cost of accomodation.

In the mid-1970s, Hackney was attracting the attention of external bodies concerned with 'race relations' nationally and the Chair of the Community Relations Commission (CRC), Mark Bonham-Carter, requested a meeting with Hackney Council to discuss the quality of accomodation being allocated to black people in the borough. The stimulus to this request had originated in a Runnymede Trust Report (based on the 1971 Census statistics) which showed that Hackney had the greatest number of families of New Commonwealth origin in older properties than any other London borough. Officers of the Council met Bonham-Carter in January 1976 at which point the CRC suggested that research should be undertaken into the whole housing experience of black people in Hackney - this request being withdrawn when it became clear that the Chair of the Race Relations Board (RRB) would be seeking a full investigation of the Council under Section 17 of the Race Relations Act (1968).

The RRB made an approach in May 1976 to Hackney Council and the Council Leader met officials of the RRB on 29 July 1976 at which time it was made clear to the RRB that the Council would not allow the

Board to inspect tenants' files (because of the Council's

confidentiality rules). The Council also contended that a survey of the

ethnic origin of council tenants in Hackney would not be 'appropriate'

at that time. Any intention of either body to initiate investigations

was temporarily forestalled by their merging (under the terms of the

1976 Race Relations Act) into the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE).

The formal investigation into Hackney Council was finally announced by

the CRE in May 1978 following local speculation.

Martin Ottolangui, Council Leader, welcomed the study,

noting the assertion made by the CRE that the Hackney investigation was

not so much of Hackney but rather of a local authority housing

department, and claimed that 'we have absolutely nothing to hide.'[117]

This was refuted at the Day Conference organised to discuss the CRE

report (on 11 Feb 1984) when it was pointed out that the Council, both

elected members and employees, had strongly denied the existence of

racial discrimination in Hackney's housing allocations. Furthermore, as

a report of the conference noted, 'they objected to any investigation,

and argued that such an enquiry would be a slur of the Council's good

name. Indeed, it was reported that the then Leadership of the Council

at one point wanted to go to the Courts to prevent the

investigation'.[118]Patrick Kodikara, of HCRC, also applauded the CRE's

investigation, seeing it as long overdue. Hackney United Tenants

Association accused the Council of using slum estates as dumping

grounds for black people. A leaflet issued by the Association claimed

that 'Black families tend to be in low paid jobs and councils keep them

in slum flats so that they can screw the maximum rent on their 'good'

estates from those who can afford full rent.'[119]

In what may be considered a shrewd policy move, Hackney
Council established in 1978 a Housing and Race Relations Monitoring
Unit. It was staffed by two officers, the Senior Officer being Alan
McFarlane, whose major responsibility it was to 'monitor and review
continuously all policies and programmes of the housing service ... in
order to ensure that no racial discrimination occurs and that equality
of opportunity and good race relations are promoted.'[120] In 1981 the
Officer Review Team, looking into the workings of HCRE noted that 'this
Unit (is)...an excellent example of a Unit working exclusively on race
relations issues'.[121] Whilst keeping up on developments in the field of
ethnic monitoring and surveying the progress of other housing authority
directorates, the Unit was unable to circumvent the Council's lack of
appropriate monitoring machinery.

The Unit worked to build up policies from a low base in the
Housing Directorate in Hackney and concentrated on other issues in
housing such as racial harrassment and the need to make housing
services information available in all languages spoken by the residents
of the borough. The two specialist race relations officers, appointed
as a consequence of the CRE's decision to undertake the investigation,
did little work in the area of allocations in the five years after
their appointment (although reports had been submitted to the Housing
Services Committee on the establishment of a monitoring system in June
1981).

The Race Relations Sub-Committee was set up by the Council
in 1982. It is a Sub-Committee of the Policy and Resources Comittee and
is chaired by the Council Leader. Its terms of reference included the
usual duties to stimulate policies and programmes in the context of

Section 71 of the Race Relations Act 1976 and included a particular reference to 'consider and advise the council on the implications of new legislation, Government reports, papers issued by the Commission for Racial Equality and other material coming before the authority insofar as they affect race relations.'[122] There are four co-opted members on the Race Relations Sub-Committee; two nominated by the HCRE and two by Hackney Ethnic Minority Association (HEMA).

In October 1980, Hackney Council was considering increasing its funding to HCRE and because of criticisms which had been voiced about the running and political direction of HCRE decided to undertake a detailed review of its activities.[123] The review amounted to only a rap on the knuckles for HCRE and served as a way of exploring Hackney's own Race Relations policies and recommendations were made by the Panel to both set up a Race Relations Sub-Committee to promote policy development in Hackney and to set up a Race Relations Unit within the Council. The Race Relations Unit came into being in 1983 with the appointment of Dan Thea from Lambeth as Principal Race Relations Adviser leadership with the implanting of Race Relations Advisers in each Directorate as there had been in Housing since 1978. The Unit now has a staff of over 60, including officers following Thea from Lambeth.

Hackney Council had thus, during the period in which it was being investigated by the CRE, itself investigated HCRE, and had proposed the setting up of the Race Relations Unit and the Race Relations Sub-Committee. In some respects these developments mirrored the work being undertaken by many of the Left-Labour Authorities, with the added dimension of the Council being the focus of attention of an external body. The degree of involvement of the Councillors in the

actual investigation itself was minimal and indeed officers tended to work through informal meetings and responses to the requests of the investigators. Following publication of the report, *Race and Housing in Hackney : Report of a formal investigation* in January 1984, both the Council and the CRE sought to make capital out of it - the CRE for the prestige attached to the Report and for the controversy it stirred up throughout local authorities and Hackney Council for the chance to show its commitment to tackling racism head on in one of its own Directorates.

5.21   The CRE investigation

The CRE was formed in 1976 out of a synthesis of the Race Relations Board and the Community Relations Commission and decided at an early stage that, because of the wide discrimination occurring against black people in all sectors of the housing market, it would initiate a comprehensive investigation of the causes of racial discrimination in the provision of public housing in one particular area. Hackney, an inner London borough which has a large black population, was considered to be a suitable subject, especially, as has been mentioned above, both parents of the CRE had attempted to probe the housing system in Hackney for possible racial discrimination.

The CRE contacted the Council and in the general process of discussions with Councillors and officers, an alternative *internal* investigation was suggested by the Council allied to the setting up of a monitoring unit within the Council to work co-operatively with the CRE (rather than Hackney Housing Department being made the subject of a

formal investigation). The CRE welcomed the willingness of the Council

to look into its allocations policies but argued that the investigation

should proceed not only because of the thoroughness and clarity an

external organisation could apply to the study but also because of the

importance of the case in the formulation of race relations policy in

local authority housing departments up and down the country. The CRE

Report noted that it was :

> our view that if we found unlawful discrimination, the
> results of this type of exhaustive study of one boroughs's
> housing allocations could subsequently be used as a basis
> for persuading other local authority housing departments
> throughout the country to develop their own effective equal
> opportunity programme.[124]

The national dimension and the reaction of other local authorities to

the applicability of the Hackney Case will be returned to in the

general conclusions below.

The CRE embarked on its formal investigation of the

allocation of council housing in the London Borough of Hackney in May

1978. The two key investigators were Mary Hunt (later to advise London

Regional Transport) and Colin Hann who took control of the

investigation at the half-way stage and sat in on Council committees

after the presentation of the report. The terms of reference, drawn up

under Section 49(3) of the Race Relations Act (1976) were as follows:

> To inquire into the allocation, disposal and management of
> local authority housing accomodation and the provision of
> housing services and facilities by the London Borough of
> Hackney by themselves, their servants or agents to the
> residents of the Borough with particular reference:
> (a) to the elimination of unlawful discrimination within the
> meaning of the Race Relations Act 1976;

(b) to the promotion of opportunity between persons of
different racial groups within the meaning of the said Act;
and
(c) to the arrangements made by the Borough pursuant to the
duty imposed by Section 71 of the said Act.[125]

The investigation was primarily concerned with three areas
of study. Firstly, in the period 1978/9 the allocation procedures - via
the waiting list, homeless, decant (rehousing because a property is
being modernised, improved or demolished) and transfer cases - were
reviewed to assess the impact of such procedures on black applicants
and tenants. Secondly, the CRE focused upon two particular housing
estates in the borough which had both a large black population and
poor-quality housing stock in an attempt to locate causal factors in
specific instances. Thirdly, the role of the GLC (which has diminished
since 1983) in rehousing a sample of homeless cases from Hackney over
the same period. In total, the CRE was investigating the impact of
racial discrimination on seven distinct housing populations. The
results are laid out in these categories below.

A key issue in the investigation was the degree to which
council officers could, in the everyday course of their work, ascertain
the ethnic origin of the persons involved, particularly if they had not
met the person or talked to them on the telephone. This was in part
fuelled by the argument which the CRE had come up against before, that
discriminaton could not occur in a particular council's housing
department because there was no way in which the officers responsible
could know the ethnic origin of the applicants/tenants. This was the
main area of contention when the results were published, for the
effects were catalogued adequately but the next step, the attribution

of causality, was more problematic and inferential. As will be seen
below, the lack of other explanations were held by the CRE to point to
individual discrimination as a major problem in allocation policy.

5.22   Results of the investigation

The CRE investigation looked at a sample of 1,292 Hackney
Council tenants and the main channels of access into council housing
over a two year period. The Commission also focused on two run-down
estates, the Holly St. Estate and the Stonebridge Estate, to determine
how disproportionately large numbers of black and other ethnic minority
families had come to be given accomodation on them. The picture was to
a degree clouded by the the effect of the GLC in rehousing Hackney's
homeless cases over the two-year period in question. The Report itself
carries all the relevant statistical information and within the
confines of this case study, although some of the data is used, the
figures are taken as read within the likely statistical variations
accepted by the producers of the Report. It is the political and
strategic implications of the study rather than the total accuracy of
its figures which are under consideration.

Housing Applications

White applicants were found to have received better quality
properties compared with black applicants. They were more likely to be
offered houses, as opposed to flats; more likely to receive new
properties, whereas black people tended to be allocated to a particular

group of inter-war properties that had been modernised to a relatively low standard. White homeless applicants were more likely to be offered houses as opposed to flats and when offered flats were more likely than black applicants to be offered premises below the fifth floor. White tenants received better quality accomodation in that they were more likely to receive new property than black tenants. In relation to flats nearly half of white tenants were allocated new property but only 4% of black tenants in similar situations. This was the only area where no significant difference was found between white and black cases and the quality of property allocated in tranfers.

The Stonebridge and Holly Street estates and the role of the GLC

In *Stonebridge* a picture emerged of a relatively large numbers of white residents leaving the borough to be replaced by a disproportionately large amount of black residents. A high proportion of those white tenants allocated to the estate were those defined by Hackney Council as being 'poor' tenants (because of prior evictions or arrears) whereas there was no such pattern in black applicants allocated housing on what was generally held to be a very poor quality estate. The CRE decided that ethnic origin was a causal factor in the allocation of black tenants to the estate. The increase in the proportion of black tenants in *Holly Street* occurred in the period 1977-80 and black tenants were over-represented in this period to what again was held to be an undesirable estate. As the CRE could find no factors in the types of families given housing in that estate, it was again contended that ethnic factors were at play in the allocation of

black families there.

Nominations to the GLC were included in the study because a relatively large proportion of Hackney's homeless cases had been rehoused through this channel. Ethnic minorities were found to have been allocated in much larger proportions by the GLC to pre-war properties than white homeless cases. As Hackney had taken over GLC housing in the Borough in 1980 the CRE saw fit to include allocations to these properties in the general conclusions.

5.23 Conclusions of the investigation

There was some concern shown over the length of time taking to produce the report and indeed as Alan McFarlane remembers, 'Everyone had forgotten about the investigation's existence. No-one was interested, neither members nor officers, except that these people would turn up occasionally and ask for a few files. It should have been an intensive one year investigation but there were ages when we saw and heard nothing.'[126] When after three years and the Senior Housing Adviser (Race Relations) had not received any results from the CRE he drafted a letter for Charles Clarke, the Housing Chair, to send to his personal friend Sir David Lane to find out what was happening. Lane replied promptly but there were no actual figures or conclusions provided until Peter Newsam took over at the CRE and a further letter to him brought forth the provisional conclusions of the CRE investigators.

It was in November 1982 that the CRE reached a provisional conclusion that between June 1977 and December 1981, Hackney Council

had unlawfully discriminated against various persons of West Indian,

African or Asian Origin (black people) who were rehoused from the

Council's waiting list, rehoused as homeless cases, or rehoused as a

result of being decanted from their existing accomodation. The

Commissioners noted that in over 60% of cases, the investigators were

able to correctly ascertain the ethnic origin of housing applicants

purely from the information available on the Housing Directorate's

files — thereby allowing for individual acts of discrimination. It is

noteworthy that the CRE'S findings were based upon their inability to

find any other salient factors to explain the unequal distribution of

black people in poor quality accomodation — there were no actual acts

or instances of racism which were pointed out, rather that the

procedural machinery and discretionary role of officers allowed the

possibility for racism to percolate the system.

Peter Newsam finally replied on 17 December 1982 with a

letter suggesting some provisional findings of the investigation.

Whilst claiming that there was evidence of racial discrimination in the

Housing Directorate which contravened the 1976 Race Relations Act,

Newsam did offer the proviso that any conclusions were by no means of

importance only to Hackney. He wrote,:

> The Commission did not start this investigation because they
> believed that Hackney was unique. On the contrary, in the
> light of all the research which has been conducted, whose
> findings have since been verified, they were convinced
> discrimination in Hackney is widespread. They chose Hackney
> because they wanted to find out in detail what was happening
> in one particular housing authority and then use this to
> illustrate, and thereafter remedy, what is happening
> elsewhere.procedural machinery and discretionary role of
> officers allowed the possibility for racism to percolate the
> system. [127]

On the night that the Newsam letter was received, the Chair of the
Housing Services Commitee, Charles Clarke, (now an advisor to Neil
Kinnock) stated to the Council that the Housing Directorate accepted
the criticisms made by the CRE and went on to praise the work of the
CRE claiming that:

> it is setting out on a determined course to establish the
> secure legal basis which is necessary to fight the racial
> discrimination that exists in instituations throughout
> Britain...I believe that the Council should accept the
> report fully, should implement its recommendations and
> should continue to support to the fullest extent the efforts
> of the CRE.[128]

The report of the provisional findings of the CRE team was passed on to
the Director of Housing Tony Shoults who noted to the Housing Services
Committee on 5 January 1983 that 'the accuracy of the results of the
study are hardly in doubt and the findings can hardly be
questioned'.[129] This was in marked contrast to the assumptions made by
Councillors at the inception of the investigation some four years
earlier. It was also decided that four of the recommendations made in
the provisional findings of the CRE be followed up immediately -

(i)   that ethnic monitoring of new allocations be initiated;

(ii)   that a review of lettings procedures be undertaken;

(iii) that training of officers be undertaken to make them aware of the
        possible ways that discrimination may take place and the
        importance of working to ensure that it does not and that Alan
        McFarlane should be appointed as a Senior Officer to oversee
        these policy changes and additions.

A non-discrimination notice was issued by the CRE to Hackney Council by the CRE on 9 May 1983, the notice becoming final on 20 June 1983. Non-discrimination notices were first introduced by the Sex Discrimination Act (1975) and were a somewhat novel conception, in that they permitted a body other than a local authority or government department in practice to establish, by merely issuing and serving such a notice, that a breach of that Act had taken place.[130] The Race Relations Act (1976) Section 58 (2) allowed the CRE to issue a non-discrimination notice only when a formal investigation had taken place. Had the Council failed to comply with the non-discrimination notice, the CRE would have been able to apply to the Courts for an order to enforce compliance. Failure by the Council to do that could lead either to a fine or an injunction restraining the Council from so operating. (For the non-discrimination notice in full see Appendix 4)

5.24 The response of the Council following the publication of the full report (in January 1984)

The One-Day Conference[131]

One of the first things the Council did following publication of the full report of the CRE investigation was to hold a day conference at Hackney Town Hall on 11 Feb 1984 to inform Hackney people of the Council's response to the report and to consult them as to the way forward. In the end the conference provided a number of groups with an opportunity to criticise the conduct of Hackney Council. Questions were raised as to whether the CRE had been given full access

or whether certain documents had been removed first. The general answer

given was that only confidential documents were removed and that these

had had no bearing on the conclusions. Again and again speakers

returned to the fact that the Council did nothing to amend allocations

procedures between the announcement of the investigation in 1978 and

the publishing of the report in January 1984. The CRE itself was

severely criticised for taking more than five years to report. The

CRE's representative Colin Hann did not speak, but it was pointed out

that there had been foot-dragging and only lukewarm co-operation by the

Council at the start of the investigation and that the CRE wanted a

well researched report that was fair to the Council, hence the delay.

It was also noted that there had been no effort to change or

discipline any senior officers, including those most closely associated

with the housing allocations procedure. Indeed the Council, wary of

possible claims for unfair dismissal, announced that Council employees

would only be punished if clear evidence of direct discrimination was

available. Speakers from the floor of the conference asked how the

Council could hope to turn over a new leaf when the same management was

in place. There were suggestions that either an independent Councillor-

level body should be made available to monitor complaints whereas

others wanted a group outside the Council i.e. composed of community

representatives to monitor housing allocations in the Council. Once

again with the whiff of possible funding, many community groups came to

argue their case for representation and to support the monitoring of

the Council's response to the CRE non-discrimination notice and report.

There were two key reports which catalogued Hackney's

developments in housing policy to satisfy the requirements laid down by

the CRE. One was the report of the Allocations Working Party (9 March 1984) which examined the findings of the CRE report with regard to the changes already being made by the Council to the allocations procedure. The other report was the submission made by the Council in September 1984 outlining the progress made to date in meeting the requirements of the non-discrimination notice (which had then been in force for over a year). These are discussed below.

A number of changes in the allocation process were introduced by Hackney Council before the final report was published. Other more long-term changes in systems , procedures and record-keeping were set in motion following the final report. Ethnic monitoring was introduced from September 1983 for all new allocations. A new Target Allocations policy was proposed to replace the then, rather vague, 'priority' system - thereby setting an annual target for all types of tenants to receive offers of all types of property. Staff training was to be extended to cover both racism awareness and non-discriminatory practices. Amendments had already been made to visit report forms so that questions allowing discrimination no longer appeared.

Residential qualifications which previously applied to waiting list applicants were abolished in April 1983. The 10 Year Rule enabling tenants with 10 or more years residence to qualify for transfer would cease to apply and waiting time points would be awarded only as a percentage of a broader 'needs scheme'. Each of these 'gate' criteria were noted by the CRE as having possibly contributed to keeping ethnic minority families out of good quality housing. The CRE also criticised the informal and often haphazard procedures followed by

officers and the lack of information available to the public. Written guidelines, if they existed at all, were often unclear and contradictory. The Allocations Working Party recommended that a manual of policies and procedures be produced and formal guidelines be drawn up to cover allocations. The report concluded 'The Council has made considerable progress in introducing changes in policies and procedures which, in the past, have left the door open to discrimination... the combined effect of all these proposals is to ensure greater fairness in the assessment and allocation of property which, it is hoped, will go some of the way to meeting the criticisms of the CRE report'.

In response to the CRE's non-discrimination notice Hackney Council issued a submission which covered broader areas than the specific remit of the above Allocations Working Party. A Housing (Race Relations) Sub-Committee was set up in October 1983 charged with the responsibility of producing the submission. Ethnic monitoring commenced in September 1983 but proper monitoring of monthly figures did not start until January 1984 and figures were not available until March 1984. A timetable was also set for a target date of September 1985 for gathering the information about racial origin of all rehousing applicants to provide a general picture of housing needs of transfers, decants, homeless etc. The Council also embarked on a massive survey to classify all its property (over 40,000 houses) in five categories of housing quality, this being completed in late 1984.

In terms of the requirements to deal with racism, in the Housing Directorate it was recognised that there had to be a common understanding of all policy procedures and practices which allowed at

the same time for flexibility in style and operation by management. The report therefore stressed the dual approach of developing a statement of policy to ensure equality of treatment to all groups whilst putting more emphasis upon training of frontline staff in the needs of ethnic minorities and in racism awareness and non-discrimination. A Senior Officer was appointed in January 1984, one year after Alan McFarlane had been nominated for the post by Charles Clarke, Chair of Housing. McFarlane was effectively blocked by Dan Thea who sought someone more in line with the politics of the Council leadership in the post.

The Council periodically reported to the CRE on the progress of the various strategies employed to accede to the the demands of the non-discrimination notice even allowing Colin Hann of the investigation team to sit in meetings of the Housing (Race Relations) Sub-Committee. The Council also suggested certain long-term measures which, if implemented, would contribute to the improvement and promotion of race relations work in Housing and the Borough as a whole. These included racial harassment which the CRE had not raised as a possibility for some Council estates with small black populations living on them. Also included were monitoring of rent arrears cases, where a very high degree of officer discretion had previously been applied; staffing, where the workforce was to be targeted to have a similar ethnic composition to the Borough population in general, and a complaints procedure to investigate allegations made against the housing service of racial discrimination. The report concluded, 'The proposals ... represent an approach to make race relations work an integral part of the area base level of the Housing Service and if adopted would

indicate the seriousness with which the Council proposes to deal with the issue of racism in the area of Housing'.

5.25 External opinion on the report

Not surprisingly the claim in the CRE Report (para 15.10) that it regarded Hackney as being representative of most housing authorities was hotly contested by those local authorities tarred with the same brush. In an article in the May 1984 edition of *Housing* magazine, David Radford, Assistant Director of Housing at Wolverhampton District Council, argued that the political messages behind the CRE report, about the need for ethnic monitoring and the removal of subjective discretion from allocation procedures, were delivered 'about three years too late for most innovaters in the field.'[132] Not only did Radford suggest that the CRE Report had little new to offer but that a deeper methodological question was raised in the report. Radford's legitimate point was that the CRE, in demonstrating that two or three non-racial explanations did not account for unfair housing allocation, could not then go on to conclude that the explanation must be one of racial discrimination *per se*.

The accusation made by Radford is that much of the CRE report, having started with a demonstration of the manifest inequalities in the provision of letting, then took a major inferential leap in laying the blame at the door of individual officers. Not only were there problems with the CRE report, according to Radford, it had also caused his department some problems. Following the conclusions of individual officer discrimination by the report, Wolverhampton's own

housing study, which found no evidence of racial discrimination, was considered by local black groups to be a whitewash. Radford noted, 'It will take some time to repair the damage caused to local communications both by this and by the customary inaccuracies in local press coverage of the Hackney report.' This opinion is in contrast with Ben-Tovim et al's experience of Wolverhampton Council's Race Relations Strategy, of which they write, 'It is almost as if a number of the initiatives have been conceded to grudgingly and maintained in order to spite political opponents rather than out of any underlying commitment to the principle of positive action.'[133]

Coincidentally, Gabriel et al cite the neighbouring Conservative-controlled Dudley Council as having a position on race relations not dissimilar to many Labour-controlled local authorities and it was the Dudley Housing Chairman, John Watteson, who was the lone delegate to claim 'I believe there is no racial discrimination in my area'[134] at the conference organised by the Institute of Housing and the CRE to discuss the lessons of Hackney (on 17 April 1984). The CRE report was used by local authorities as a justification for the inception of individualist schemes such as RAT to remove elements of racism from those particular officers who, as in the Hackney case, had exerted undue control in the allocations procedure - the assumption being that the collective curing of individuals would cure the collective problem. At the IOH/CRE Conference Arthur Oscroft, Director of Housing in Nottingham, noting the implications of the CRE report, argued that 'the main aim was to persuade people to question their own attitudes'[135] and was glad to have stirred up a hornet's nest in one of

his DLO's. A similar point was made by Alan McFarlane about what he
saw as the importance of the report. He noted:

> it was a propaganda exercise but it was a valuable
> propaganda exercise. I'm sure it made everyone more
> conscious of the problem. All the other housing departments
> who followed the suggestions of the report, their
> consciousness that the result would probably have been the
> same in their place is going to change their behaviour.[136]

5.26 Summary

It is noticeable that the publication of the final report,
and this was implicit in the report itself, produced a variety of
interpretations which were then used to promote a variety of solutions.
It clearly demonstrated what Hackney was doing but not so absolutely
how. The CRE had failed to find straightforward procedural
discriminatory practices and rather pointed out areas where officer
discretion could take a decisive role in the allocations procedure. The
recommendations of the report were couched very much in terms of
tightening of policy and procedures rather than blaming individuals or
finding fault with the Council itself.

The publication of the final CRE report in January 1984
prompted the following statement from the Leader of Hackney Council,
Anthony Kendall :

> I do not dispute their findings though it has taken so long
> for the report to be published that we have already started
> dealing with most of the problems. For over a year now we
> have been taking measures to combat the sort of
> discrimination it describes. *The important thing is that it
> shows how institutionalised racism occurs* in the housing

department and provides clues about how to deal with it.[137]
(my emphasis)

No heads rolled as a result of the investigation and the Council
politicians were quick to frame the response to the CRE report in terms
of the changes in allocations procedure, monitoring of applications and
allocations and RAT for individual officers. Certainly the CRE found
evidence of discrimination but was unable to pinpoint why, despite
years of research. If it is the fault of the system, they should have
said so too but they didn't'. In fact, in an article in *Housing* (April
1984) Sir Peter Newsam, Chair of the CRE hedged his bets somewhat. He
rightly noted 'The report showed widespread patterns of discrimination'
and went on to suggest that the report highlights the way in which
discrimination operates:

> On the one hand there are *rules and procedures*, such as very
> restrictive residential qualifications, which may operate to
> the detriment of ethnic minorities *and* are therefore
> directly discriminatory. Once identified, these rules can be
> re-drawn ... On the other hand there is the discrimination
> that occurs because of *the way individuals make decisions*
> about housing allocations or employment matters.[138]
> (my emphasis)

The CRE itself made much of the report, organising a
Conference of senior housing officials and black groups to promote the
applicability of the Report's recommendations to many local authorities
up and down the country (at RIBA HQ on 17th April 1984). In this way it
made a political intervention, given that it was facing a degree of
hostility from the Conservative government, that the 1981 riots had
provoked the development of more initiatives to combat racism through

local initiatives. It may be too strong to talk of the CRE seeking to establish its hegemony by moral suasion in this way by setting its report up as the Bible for anti-racists in housing but it came very close. The report itself claimed that it was 'a significant milestone on the long road toward eliminating racial discrimination.'[139]

Hackney Councillors were also keen to deflect too much criticism aimed at itself by stressing how well the report was likely to travel. It further limited the damage of the report by accepting the findings in full and undertaking immediate policy changes to take account of the non-discrimination notice. The delays in producing the report (one year after the findings had been forwarded to the Council and five years after the investigation had started) helped Hackney off the hook by allowing them time to bring in policy changes, and to get the Race Relations Unit established and headed by Dan Thea before the non-discrimination notice was even issued. The only senior officer and key influential who was moved following the publication of the report was Alan McFarlane, one of the least radical people working in race relations in local government. At a meeting attended by Peter Newsam, the Chair and Deputy Chair of Housing, and the Senior Housing Adviser (Race Relations) prior to publication of the report the Director of Housing, Tony Shoults's first question was 'What will this do to my position'. The answer was very little and he survived the publication of the report relatively unscathed.

The Race Relations Sub-Committee summed up the position of the Council to the CRE report in their own report produced in June 1983. In it they attempted to allay the disquiet amongst black organisations by contending that policy adjustments were the

appropriate strategy to remove elements of discrimination from the
housing allocation process. It is worth reproducing the Sub-Committee
report at length because it accurately represents Hackney Council's
whole approach to Race Relations Policy which was also shown in the
growing Unit headed by Dan Thea. The Sub-Committee noted:

> We accept the comment of the Director of Housing that none
> of the council's basic policies and procedures had been
> found at fault. However, the implementation of these
> procedures had still resulted in worse housing being
> allocated to black people than to white people. Bearing this
> in mind, some apprehension was expressed by co-opted members
> and advisory representatives from Black organisations on our
> Sub-Committee that the measures proposed by the CRE would
> deal with the problem and they felt that there was rather a
> need to initiate action against any individual responsible
> for implementing the council's policies in a racist manner.
> We reject this approach and believe that the organisational
> arrangements outlined in the reports will ensure fair
> implementation of the council's policy.[140]

This case study was concerned primarily with the
circumstances leading up to the CRE investigation and the immediate
aftermath, particularly the response of Hackney Council. Following the
implementation of the immediate procedural changes listed above in
1983-4, the battle with the Government moved into full swing over
funding cuts and ratecapping. Several Councillors who refused in effect
to set a legal budget were surcharged and the Council acceded to the
requirements of the Government. Although black groups and housing
groups had sought to point out the racism in the allocations procedure,
it was the central body covering many of these organisations, the HCRE
which found itself under investigation for its racism, before the
advent of the new Left Council. As the statement of the Race Relations

Sub-Committee report cited above notes, the Council did not find any officers that should be disciplined and preferred to take on board the recommendations in terms of policy and procedural amendments which the non-discrimination notice proposed.

The role of key influentials in the investigation was a deflected one to a certain extent. The old Council leadership was unable to stop the CRE investigation and the degree of isolation in which its officers worked strictly limited the intervention of the Senior Housing Officer (Race Relations), Alan McFarlane. In the period up until the election of the New Labour Left in the Council in May 1982 he was the key influential in the Housing Directorate and the criticisms of the Housing Directorate made by the CRE, allied to the political gulf which had emerged between McFarlane on one side, and Dan Thea and the Council leadership as top influentials on the other, made his position unworkable.

Undoubtedly the CRE made major political capital out of its report. The fact that the investigation, originally planned for two years, took nearly six years in all to produce added to the weight given the report. But there is still a perception that the CRE investigators did not really get to the heart of the matter and whilst finding considerable evidence of discrimination were unable to name names or highlight actual faults in the machinery. It tended rather to fall back upon certain standard factors which have been shown to obviously discriminate against black people, such as time factors, and a call for greater monitoring and staff training.

Paul Harrison[141] summed up the essential weakness of the CRE investigation when he wrote that the 'new study certainly provides

strong evidence of pronounced racial difference in the quality of
housing being allocated. But it is not so successful in *proving* - at
any rate to the standards a court might require - that racial
discrimination (rather than class or other socio-economic factors) is
the main causes of these differences'.[142] As Harrison notes, the
receptiveness of Hackney Council to the recommendations made by the CRE
were in its favour. Had the Council investigated been *openly* hostile
and challenged the grounds of the non-discrimination notice through the
courts, the judges may have been in some difficulty finding for the
CRE, when it had failed to eliminate all other possible variables. The
extent of racial discrimination in the Hackney Housing Directorate was
not questioned by those involved in the investigation but could only be
gauged when these other factors were removed from the equation. He
concludes, 'dealing with racial inequalities in isolation from other
inequalities is no guarantee that even black people with additional
social or economic disadvantages will get a better deal.'

In that one sentence Harrison encapsulates the problem of
the whole investigation. The CRE is the Commission for Racial Equality,
not homeless, unemployed or single parents' equality. Although Hann has
attempted to justify the exclusion of other factors[143], claiming they
were not in the CRE'S remit, it is impossible to take the issue of
racism in council housing out of its wider social and class context.
The availability of council housing is strictly limited. Because of
this, the best monitoring policies cannot bring substantial improvement
in the living conditions of working people in the borough without the
necessary funds. The CRE's recommendations could only then result in a

more equal distribution of black and white residents in the borough's poor housing stock. Jacobs perhaps sweepingly argues that 'the CRE's prescriptions are, at best, irrelevant, likely to help no more than a handful of black applicants and then, only at the expense of equally badly housed whites.'[144]

The development of anti-racist policies in the Left Labour Councils has mirrored and frequently gone beyond the policy recommendations made by the CRE. The role of the CRE, however, is little more beyond that of an advisory body which can occasionally undertake investigations into cases of formal racial discimination, usually on a smaller scale than the Hackney investigation. It cannot extend an analysis of the racist allocation procedures of run-down council housing in Hackney to a critique of why working class council housing has never had a particularly golden age and it cannot take a holistic approach. Rather, to use the words of Jacobs, it has to 'tinker' with the policies by the one group which would accept its recommendations wholesale, Hackney Council.

5.27 Chapter Summary

Housing, especially good quality council housing, is a limited commodity and increasingly so. In neither of these case studies is the phenomenon under observation unrelated to the other. There is racial harassment in Hackney which acts as a deterrent to black people choosing certain areas of housing. In Newham, despite the lack of the formal investigation accorded to Hackney, the likelihood is that racism operates within the allocations procedure of council housing to

unfairly deposit black families in the poorest quality housing. Having made that general point there are more telling points of congruence in the 2 studies.

The first area which begs comparison is the role of external organisations in both case studies. To the casual eye the links between the CRE, the national body discharged by Parliament with the duty of promoting good race relations, and the Newham Monitoring Project, a small local pressure group offering practical help to victims of racial harassment, seems tenuous. Looked at in isolation their differing roles appear predominant. But when the practical relationships they have with the respective local authorities are considered there is more substance to a clear relationship.

The CRE's initial interest in the housing policies of Hackney was unwanted as was the early dealings of Newham Council with the Newham Monitoring Project. Both groups acted because they saw the failings in the local authorities' duties to its black council tenants. In Hackney it was discrimination in allocation, in Newham failure to adequately protect black tenants. Following that initial hostility presented by both local authorities to the external pressure and the realisation by key influentials that the CRE and racial harassment were not going to go away, the question was how to accomodate them within the environs of the local state. For Hackney their position was aided by the number of procedural changes they were able to make in inordinate time it took the CRE to reach its conclusions. The Council could thus draw the teeth of many of the CRE's recommendations by pointing out the improvements already made. The internal political situation had altered during the course of the investigation such that

from a position in 1978 where much of the Labour Group was reticent to confront racism within the locale the Council shifted via the appointment of Dan Thea and the influx of the New Left to enable it to be critical of the CRE for not being a radical enough body.

In Newham the process was that much more reflective of the pressure group/local authority relationship discussed above in Chapter 4. Using Short's model of grass roots political organisation, this seems most appropriate when considering the Newham Monitoring Project in the the grass roots group is reliant on a socialist/collectivist activist form of organisation. The Newham Monitoring Project was born out of Asian self-organisation against racial attacks but as a result of its own success and growth has commanded greater attention and funding from Newham Council and the GLC. With the demise of the latter body the bulk of its funding now comes from Newham. The Newham Monitoring Project is not more involved in the Council's decision-making processes but its opinion and supported has been courted more effectively. It now treads the line between maintaining some form of critical autonomy from the Council and greater involvement within the local state. As such its growing affinity with the Housing Department may lead to greater incorporation and its use for legitimation of existing and future council action.

Similarly, were not the CRE investigators incorporated into the concensus of the local state perception of how to eliminate racial discrimination within a housing department by attentiveness to policy and procedural issues leaving the onus for these alterations very firmly within the hands of senior officers? The CRE could not locate racist individuals nor actual evidence of racist individuals, only by

inference. The Newham Monitoring Project, on pressing for the evictions of racial harassers can only rely on those evictions being supported by top influentials within the housing department. In a further respect, by being incorporated both external bodies have actually helped the local authorities the criticised.

In Newham the Newham Monitoring Project had to exert a considerable degree of pressure to secure the McDonnell eviction. It is now called in at an early stage in cases of racial harassment reported to the Council and has more involvement in the collection of information, finding witnesses, giving victims the confidence to complain etc. and thereby doing much of the Council's job for it. In its keenness to secure justice for the victims it has given the Council the opportunity to combat racial harassment with the Newham Monitoring Project doing much of the spade work. That should not be seen as an argument against any effort to combat racial harassment but returns to the point that it is the terms of reference set by the local state, and not by the pressure group, that determine strategy.

In the case of Hackney, the internal and external considerations were handled by the local authority to shape anti-racism into its own proceduralist strategy. As stated above, the action undertaken by the Council reflected its efforts to pre-empt some of the recommendations of the CRE report. The actions of the CRE , in attempting to widen the implications of he the report allowed Hackney to suggest that the problems faced there would be replicated within many other local authorities up and down the country. The public meeting held by the CRE sought to present the results of Hackney in a form applicable to other councils in the assumption that they would

take similar action to Hackney. Internally, the Housing Directorate was able to implement its policy changes and seek the opinion of pressure groups in the area whilst holding the possibility of funding out for those bodies more amenable to the Council's aims. The remit of the CRE could not, and did not, take account of the wider housing issues which emanate from the Hackney and indeed the Newham case studies.

One is the question of the agglomeration or dispersal of black residents. The former had been effectively done, putting the majority of black tenants into the worst council housing by the actions of housing officers in Hackney, so the CRE found. The policy of dispersal as followed by Newham put black families into an isolated position where they could be forced out by racial harassers as happened in Clements Ave. The fact that both policies resulted in a qualitatively worse situation for black residents in the boroughs suggests that the more underpinning issues of general housing quality and racial violence are not solvable by local authorities despite their profound effect on the areas under consideration here.

Offe suggests that 'wherever the state expands services and infrastructures, they become the focus of conflicts'[145]. The problems thrown up by services in contraction, such as housing, are that much more complex. Offe's writings tend to offer succour to the municipal socialists, projecting the state as a contested terrain for radical intervention[146] but the fiscal crisis which has totally enshrouded local government since the defeat of the rebellion in 1984 over ratecapping in Britain acts as an undertow to the overoptimism of the premise. The contradiction offered by Offe between legitimation and efficiency within the welfare state is now resolved in the Left local

State by recourse to the policy of the 'dented shield'.The central state constraints upon Newham and Hackney Councils which prevent them from building substantial numbers of council houses to improve the material living conditions of their residents have tended to force them into resorting to 'efficient' methods of shuffling black people around the borough until they are located in a fairly safe environment.

It may be suggested that for black people there are two key factors in their housing need. One is fair access to the best quality council housing available, the other the fullest available protection from racial violence accorded to them as tenants especially from other council tenants. In Hackney black residents were clustered within the poorest housing because of direct discrimination within the Housing Directorate to which the CRE sought indirect solutions. For the Newham black residents isolation provided a greater risk, that of physical and mental harm which both police and local authority have failed to adequately deal with. For both boroughs the respective case studies were 'firsts' in race relations and housing in Britain - the first CRE investigation, the first local eviction. What they show is that the limited and selective commodity of public sector housing to working class people are given a dimension only now being faced by local authorities because of racism amnd its internal and external effects.