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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

THE RSS AFFAIR

So great has been readers' reaction to the report 'Brent's Indian Fascists' carried in the last number of **London Labour Briefing** *that we have decided, in conjunction with Brent Indian Association, to produce a special supplement to the current issue. The Committee of Enquiry set up by the Brent Labour Parties into the activities of an allegedly fascist 'Hindu' group has finally published its findings. Paul Franklin, whose original charge following a tour of the Subcontinent last year, began the controversy, examines the report and assesses its implications for the Labour movement. In addition we publish the views of two leading local Labour politicians, Cllr Len Snow and Laurie Pavitt MP, whose support for the HSS has been strongly criticised. Alf Filer, author of the previous* **London Labour Briefing** *article, and Manibhai Patel, Chairman of the Brent Indian Association, reply.*

Party Enquiry proves Fascist connection

"There is no doubt that the HSS is closely allied to the RSS in India, the only question being whether the HSS can be described as a 'front' of the Indian organisation or whether it is the British Section of the RSS per se."

by Paul Franklin
(Brent East CLP)

So reads the long-awaited final report of the Brent Labour Party Committee of Enquiry into the nature and activities of a 'charity' group operating within the borough, the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS). The RSS, or Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (National Order of Volunteers) is India's principal fascist party.

Copies of the report are being circulated to all Party organisations with the request that they come forward with proposals on what policy the Council and the Labour Party should adopt towards the Indian group.

Brent Council have come in for increasingly vehement criticism from local Asian community leaders over the degree of patronage offered to the HSS. Allegations of HSS infiltration into at least one of the three Brent Labour Parties have deepened the controversy still further.

"This affair has ramifications going far beyond the boundaries of this borough," according to Mamibhai Patel, Chairman of the Brent Indian Association. "The entire relationship between the Labour movement and the immigrant, and particularly the Asian, community in this country is being called into question. In my opinion this is a development to be welcomed."

Welcome or not, Brent Labour Party is in for an upheaval.

IDENTICAL

The report itself leaves no doubt as to the links between the HSS and the Rss. A comparison of the constitutions of the two organisations shows them to be "very similar, and in certain respects, exactly identical." The titles of officers and competent committees are the same and their role and function are described identically, sometimes *word for word*, in the two documents.

The RSS and the HSS employ an identical financial system. According to the report, "there is strong reason to believe that funds are transferable from the HSS to the RSS in India." No proof of such a transfer has been uncovered although "the precise destination of monies collected by the HSS cannot as yet be ascertained from the organisation's financial records."

NAZIS

Internal documents reveal that two of the top fascists in the Indian parliament, Nanaji Deshmukh and S. S. Bhandari, have visited this country and toured branches of the HSS. Even more sinister activities are revealed in the report: "There is evidence that a variant of the RSS Officer Training Camp has been participated in by members of the HSS in the UK." (The RSS, with a membership of over one million swayamsevaks, has a combat-trained paramilitary hard core of hundreds of thousands.)

The report notes the findings of Judicial Commissions of Enquiry into the training of young people in the use of various kinds of weapons. It also describes how RSS leaders "have openly used the race policy of the Nazis."

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'Letter from Laurie'

From a newsletter by Laurie Pavitt, MP for Brent South

MY QUOTE OF THE MONTH:

Before we are in a position to face other world cultures, or co-operate with them, we must build up our own by the synthesis of the diverse elements that have come to India. . . . [I look for] a complete meeting of East and West in a common fellowship of learning and a common spiritual striving for the unity of the human race.

Rabindranath Tagore

The wisdom of Tagore is universal. His message to Indians applies equally to the citizens of Brent. It is now 21 years since I became a founder member of the first Community Relations Committee in the country, initiated by the leader of the then Willesden Council, Alderman Reg Freeson.

Integration is not just a question of building bridges between "us" and "them". It means knowledge and understanding of ourselves, our own purposes and the organisations we establish to achieve these aims, as well as an understanding, and a tolerance for our fellow citizens with differing cultures, traditions and religious beliefs.

Organisations each have within them their own internal spectrum. Organisations within the same broad groupings have their own differences and rivalries.

Where religions are concerned it does not help towards unity for outside bodies to intervene. As a socialist, I find it none of my responsibility to join sides in the Islamic argument between the Suni's and the Shi'ias; between the Catholic and the Protestant, the Liberal Synagogue and the others of different emphasis.

Nowhere was this more apparent to me than in the three years I lived in the Punjab. In the 5,000 years of Indian civilisation it would have been an arrogant presumption to seek to influence Indian organisations and their relationships to the world outside—from a mere three years sojourn.

Naturally, I remain interested, even if I am loathe to make public judgements. The last five years saw the first setback for the Congress Party since Independence. One of the greatest statesmen I have had the privilege of meeting was the late Prime Minister Shastri. His untimely death was a loss not only to India, but to the world scene. Another statesman who carried a similar "calm inner centre" was the assissinated Martin Luther King. To meet these men was a privilege, as was my

Reprinted from Time Out

Indian 'Fascists' Infiltrate Labour?

An Indian allegedly fascist organisation, the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) is receiving money from many local authorities and has been supported by junior education minister Rhodes Boyson, Labour Mp Laurie Pavett and Commission for Racial Equality boss David Lane.

That the HSS is a fascist grouping is the contention of a Brent Labour Party Committee of Inquiry which published its findings at the beginning of May.

The Inquiry stemmed from claims published in the *Wembley Observer* last August by Brent teacher Paul Franklin. He charged that the HSS was linked with India's ultra-right Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). Wembley HSS press officer Arjunlal Sharma and president Jayantilal Patel promptly denied Franklin's allegations. So the Brent Indian Association (BIA) and Franklin suggested the Inquiry to the Labour Party.

The HSS is rich. Set up here as a charity in March 1974 'to advance the Hindu religion and to educate the public in the Hindu ideals and way of life' accounts by 1976 indicated the HSS' assets at £30,625. They are now believ- to run into hundreds of thousands sing. Ar from



Jayantilal Patel

Jews . . .' He went on to advocate the complete subordination of the non-Hindu people of India.

So where does this leave the HSS over here?

HSS General Secretary M C Satyanarayana maintains that the RSS has never been *proved* to be a violent organisation. The HSS' 1,000 members are divided into 12 branches and are linked with other organisations. Many youths from Indian backgrounds have been drawn into the movement through al education and self-defence 979 the HSS

DE

'...we in the Labour P

DEAR COMRADE,

No one has bothered to tell me about **London Labour Briefing** and so I was unaware of an unexpected and unprovoked attack on me by Alf Filer in your May issue under the heading "Brent Indian Fascists", that is, until a friend showed me a copy. I hope you will allow me to correct some of the incorrect statements which were made in that article and to deal with some of the quotations which were wrenched out of context.

(1) As the question of the HSS is under review by the Brent Local Government Committee, it would have been better if we all refrained from making public comments until the report of that committee's Commity of Enquiry had been considered by the Brent Labour Parties.

(2) I think we in the Labour Party should be wary of getting involved in Indian politics just as we should avoid West Indian affairs, Israeli politics or those of any other foreign country.

(3) I have not yet studied the Report of the Enquiry and since it was not avail-

relationship with the late Jaya Prakash Narayan who left high office in politics in order to follow the path through the villages of India, paths trodden by Mahatma Gandhi and Vinobha Bhave.

In Brent I am proud to be able to feel close personal relationships with folk like Raj Bajwa, Manibhai Patel, Arjun Sharma, Subhash Patel, N. T. Pandya and many many more. I am quite certain that my friends do not necessarily agree with each other, but I am sure that they, and I and Brent Labour Party are absolutely united in opposing the detestable immigration rules and other Tory policies, which divide families and communities. On this matter, unity and solidarity will be obvious to all.

In the face of the worst Tory government for 50 years: maximum internal unity in the fight against Thatcherism. I refuse to divide my comrades into "left-wing", "right-wing", or any other label—Socialism Means Unity In Diversity.

Issue is political

Reply by Manibhai Patel, Chairman, Brent Indian Association

I was privileged to have a sight of "Letter from Laurie" No 4. I do not feel comfortable when my name is in any way connected with people who are directly or indirectly involved in fascist activities. I take it as a personal insult when Laurie Pavitt quotes my name and that of Arjun Sharma in the same breath. It would be advisable for Laurie to find out just how many in the Asian community at large would share my feelings on that score.

With all due respect to Laurie's contribution in Brent, I would disagree with the liberal ideas projected in his letter, and particularly with the implication that the current debate in the Brent Labour Party is concerned with the question of religion rather than that of politics.

The HSS no more represent Hinduism either in Brent or in India than does the Spanish fascist 'Warriors of Christ the King' represent Christians. The RSS and its British counterpart are nothing if not political.

It is ironic that Laurie chooses to quote Rabindranath Tagore, one of India's most famous revolutionary poets, especially in view of the RSS's attitude to the question of caste. Is he not aware that Tagore himself was ostracised from his own Brahmin caste for the 'crime' of smelling of pillaw, thus giving coin to the expression 'Pillaw Brahmins'.

Laurie refers to his three years residence in the Punjab. He is no doubt aware, therefore, of the tens of thousands of innocent men, women and children who died in the RSS inspired bloodbath which greeted the partition of that country. So much for British so-called 'non-intenvention' at that time!

Politicians who, wittingly or not, patronise organisations such as the HSS should realise just how much they *are* intervening in the political life of the Asian community. As for getting the maximum unity in the fight against Thatcher, would we be regarded as 'splitters' if we demanded the expulsion of the National Front should they be caught infiltrating the Labour Party?

If Laurie really wants the active support of Asians then he will stand with them against *all* their enemies, be they Tories, racists or fascists!

BATE

Party should be wary of getting involved...'

able when Comrade Filer wrote his article, neither could he have read it. The EC of the Local Government Committee set up the Enquiry Committee last February and not eight months ago as stated.

(4) The remarks concerning the HSS attributed to me in the press and repeated by Comrade Filer, were made when some comrades in Brent East CLP first raised the issue a year ago when no one else knew anything else about the RSS connection. So far as the Wembley Branch of the HSS is concerned, those words were quite true since we in Brent South know something about this organisation and members of Brent East did not. To accuse me of "building up their respectability" when I was Mayor (1976/7) is to accuse me retrospectively since, *at that time* no one was criticising the HSS to my certain knowledge. I need to study the evidence presented about the activities of the Wembley HSS before I can make any further judgement. I wish Brent East members would do the same.

(5) I have issued no threats against Party members "thinly veiled" or otherwise—what is the evidence for this statement?

(6) The membership of the Committee of Enquiry was chosen by the EC of the Local Government Committee (not known as a right-wing body) and it was they who proposed Mrs Snow who is a member of the EC. It originally also included the principal accuser, Paul Franklin and Mr A Sharma of the HSS. The full Local Government Committee endorsed the three-member Committee of Enquiry from the EC but decided to exclude Messrs Franklin and Sharma.

(7) It is complete nonsense to present this as a "right/left" battle. Both my wife and I are on the left of the Party, she more so than I am.

(8) To describe the Wembley HSS as "Brent's Indian Fascists" is highly prejudicial, smacks of guilt by association (a totalitarian ploy worthy of Senator McCarthy) and not borne out by the facts.

I trust you will have the courtesy to print this response in the next issue of your journal and be kind enough to send me a copy—you never know, I might become a subscriber.

Yours fraternally,

Cllr LEN SNOW
Chairman, Brent South CLP

Patronage resented

by Alf Filer, Brent East CLP

Cllr Snow objects to the description of the Wembley HSS as 'Brent's Indian Fascists' which, he claims, is not borne out by the facts. Now that the final report of the Committee of Enquiry has been published, perhaps he will revise his judgement. I would like, however, to take up some of the other points raised in his letters.

He is being somewhat less than honest when he castigates those who have made public comments on this issue. His protestations of innocence on the question

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of threats issued to Party members also bears examination. I leave it to readers' own judgement who is being 'prejudicial' in this connection.

These are some of Cllr Snow's own public pronouncements:

"They are the kindest, most gentle of people." (Wembley Observer, 10.8.79)

"In my experience the HSS has done marvellous work in the community and I just don't believe there is anything untoward about them. If there is a connection between them and this group in India, it is so tenuous as not to make any difference locally." (Wembley and Brent Times, 17.8.79)

"If there is going to be a row in the Labour Party, those who are trying to stir up mud are going to get mud on their fingers." (Willesden and Brent Chronicle, 31.8.79)

If Cllr Snow is so anxious that we should await the outcome of the Enquiry, perhaps he can explain why his own ward Labour Party has sent a resolution to Brent South GMC condemning those who have raised the issue, and this while the Enquiry was still sitting.!

On the composition of the Committee of Enquiry, it is misleading to say that the LGC decided to exclude Comrade Franklin and Mr Sharma. It was Comrade Franklin himself who insisted upon his own exclusion in a resolution from Brent East CLP so that Mr Sharma of the HSS might also be debarred. After all, it was an Enquiry into the HSS! And it is precisely this sort of right-wing manoeuvering which delayed the establishment of the Enquiry until February, despite the fact that this was requested by Brent East CLP last September.

Are we to take Cllr Snow seriously on his point about not getting involved in 'foreign' politics? Does not the leadership of the Labour Party get involved? What about the Labour government's disgraceful bipartisan policy on Ireland? What about his own involvement in Indian politics? Asian members of our Party are seething with resentment about his patronage of the HSS. Building them up as somehow representative of the Asian community in the eyes of the Labour movement in Brent—is that not 'involvement'?

Finally, perhaps I should welcome Cllr Snow's 'conversion' to the Left of the Party. Others in Brent will find this amusing, if not astonishing. Space does not permit a full catalogue of his views (and actions) concerning Labour Party democracy. Suffice it to say that as recently as April this year Brent East CLP found it necessary to condemn Cllr Snow for his 'underhandedness' in trying to annul a Local Government Committee amendment to its constitution providing for greater accountability of the Labour Group.

I will, however, make one retraction from my article. Clearly I have done an injustice to Mrs Joan Snow and I am prepared to apologise publicly for this. Her revelation in the pages of *Time Out* that Hindu women had complained to her that they were treated as second class citizens by HSS men is most pertinent. There seems to be a difference of opinion over just how 'kind and gentle' the HSS are.

Party Enquiry proves Fascist connection

(Continued from page I)

The Committee of Enquiry states quite honestly that "it does not consider itself competent to give a precise sociological definition of the RSS." Where it then proceeds to try and do so, the report appears to get somewhat confused, and on this score it has been criticised by the BIA.

"Where it deals with the RSS itself, the report is a bit of a whitewash. A lot of the most damning evidence submitted by us is not referred to at all, and some material seems to have been lost ," says Manibhai Patel. "Still, that is not too important. What we have wanted to show has been proved beyond all doubt, and that is that the HSS *is* the RSS in this country. We'll take it from there."

The evidence Patel refers to includes reports of a number of Commissions of Enquiry which show clearly the *direct* involvement of the RSS in vicious pogroms against non-Hindu minorities in India. Communal riots, especially against Moslems, the widespread massacres of 'untouchable' communities, including horrific accounts of whole villages being put to the torch—these are glossed over in the report, although in answer to the question 'Is the RSS a right-wing fascist organisation responsible for terrorism?' the report gives "a qualified yes". (sic)

For those who would still defend the HSS the report is a major blow. On at least four separate occasions local HSS chiefs Jayantilal Patel and Arjunlal Sharma have publicly denied any link 'whatever' with the RSS, and so stand now as proven liars. This would seem justification enough to question the Council's attitude towards the group. But it goes much deeper than that.

There is considerable bitterness about the amount of support given to the Indian groups in recent years. Quite apart from mayoral patronage, the HSS seems definitely to have come in for preferential treatment. Having authority-appointed members on the governing bodies of at least five Brent schools, the HSS (with a membership in the borough of no more than 80) is grossly over-represented compared with any other organisation, immigrant or otherwise.

A recent controversy over the Council's letting of premises to caste-based organisations, allegedly in preference to mixed groups, is also blamed on this patronage.

"The Labour Council will remain ignorant of the real needs of the Asian community so long as it continues to imagine that the HSS represent anything more than themselves. Past policy has only served to perpetuate the myth that they do," is the view of one Muslim community leader.

Manibhai Patel is quite straightforward about what needs to be done: "Brent Council has an honourable policy of denying its premises to racialist and fascist organisations. Indeed, they have gone further than most in banning the National Front—even at election times. The HSS are no different. They deserve to be banned just the same. Any other attitude would be pure hypocrisy; it would be nothing less than racist. School governors? The HSS are proven liars. What example are they to the children of this borough?"

The RSS affair is something of a watershed in the relation between Labour and the Asian community in Brent and has extremely important implications for the wider movement. It has always been the duty of socialists to defend without reservation the rights of oppressed national minorities against the attacks of racists and fascists, whatever their class or political inclination. In this the Labour movement in Brent has a creditable record.

In a sense, we are beginning to reap the fruits of a principled policy. If Asians in this country, or parts of it at least, now feel strong enough to take up the question of Indian fascism, then they deserve our fullest support. The benefit in terms of really active mass participation of Asians in the Labour movement cannot be overstated. That this will be proved in Brent there is no doubt—indeed the process has already begun.

A ban on the RSS by Brent Council and by the Labour Party will represent a significant step towards establishing a truly internationalist unity with our black brothers and sisters in this country. We must not flinch from this duty.