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## Witness seminar

Not just Peterloo, Remembering the Anti-Apartheid protest against the Springboks, Manchester, 26 November 1969

**3 October 2019, Working Class Movement Library, Salford**

*Lynette Cawthra:* This is going to be a fascinating event. It's fantastic to have this range of people. It's the last in our series, 'Not just Peterloo'. We've had three meetings on state violence over the year. Geoff has prompted us to think about an event fifty years ago. Geoff has got the witnesses together. Without further ado ...

*Geoff Brown:* First of all, welcome to everybody. I'm a retired union tutor, working as a historian; I was a student in 1969. I have to thank Kevin. Today's event was his idea. A few apologies: Janet Whelan, on holiday in the US, Paul Murphy, down with a cold, Pete Cockcroft, in Australia where it's after midnight. I welcome two other participants on the phone – Mike Luft [in France], and Bonnie Muirhead [in Chicago]. Also, we had a very nice email from Bob Dunbar, the secretary of the Manchester and District branch of the National Association of Retired Police Officers. He was a student at Manchester Poly at the time, he wasn't on the demonstration but remembers others saying that the demonstrators 'had not had a good time!!'.

I'm going to try to chair it so we get some background and context, what was happening in Manchester in November, 1969. People should feel free to come in with memories, and also other events which they weren't necessarily part of, which they think are significant. Then we'll go to the day itself and the immediate aftermath, people who were arrested. At the end I want us to reflect on the significance today. This week we've seen another enormous turnout in Hong Kong. Last week we had the Global Strike for Climate. Next week Extinction Rebellion are going occupy much of the centre of London. Popular protest is very much part of what's going on in the world. Two hundred years after Peterloo is a good moment to look at the history of popular protest, insisting on the right to protest.

For those unfamiliar with what was happening in the run up to the Manchester demonstration, there'd been a number of small protests against the South African cricket team and some direct action against a South

African rugby team in 1968. A well-known cricketer, Basil D'Oliveira had not been selected because of his colour.

*John Walker:* He was the leading non-white South African cricketer. He wasn't selected for the South African national team because of apartheid. He emigrated to Britain, was picked for the England team which led to the cancellation of that tour.

*Geoff Brown:* Despite this, the prospect was that the South Africans were going to tour again in 1970. It was an initiative of Peter Hain and a few others who organised the Stop the Seventy Tour [STST] campaign aiming to stop the cricket tour but, as people started to get involved, it became clear that the immediate target was the rugby matches. The South African Springbok team had a tour scheduled to run between November and the end of January, twenty-two matches covering England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. From the word go, there were local initiatives with STST contacting people they knew. The Anti-Apartheid Movement put its strength behind the campaign – it wasn't a huge organisation at the time.

The first match at Oxford University was cancelled, a quick win. The tour then moved to Wales where rugby is often described as a religion, a much tougher nut to crack. The moment where large numbers of people became aware of the tour was at Swansea because of the violence that took place. The club had recruited a large number of stewards, often students, who were officially partnered with the police to deal with the demonstrators. There was a lot of violence. This led up to Home Secretary James Callaghan calling a meeting of chief constables from all the areas where the tour was going, insisting that there should be a right to demonstrate and, at the same time, every match should take place. The Springboks came to Manchester three weeks after the tour started. The match was played at the White City Stadium, on the Chester Road, now a shopping mall.

*John Walker:* I was working shifts as a computer operator for the British Mail Order Corporation and I was an active member of the Manchester Anarchists group. Now, I'm a retired history lecturer and a member of RS 21. So still a revolutionary but a different sort.

*Geoff Brown:* Would someone else say what they were doing, what was going on and how did they get to hear about the demonstration? What was it that got you to go?

*Sue Arnall:* I want to jump in now because I'm such a bit part. I'd been a social worker for a year. Graham, my boyfriend at the time was a maths

teacher and he was teaching in Middleton and one of his colleagues had got free tickets to the Manchester Springboks match and they were taking kids to the game. And Graham thought that perhaps he should draw the headmaster's attention to the fact there might be a bit of bother. Apparently this hadn't struck the head teacher. Graham was against apartheid anyway, but it was a way to get the school to take a stand and the school said 'Sorry, we're not using your free tickets. It's not safe for children to go'. That was quite interesting because Graham and his pals weren't involved in organising against apartheid or anything. They were sports people. When I talked to Graham about that, he mentioned D'Oliveira. Did he play cricket for Middleton?

*Bill Gulam:* He played in Central Lancashire League before he got anywhere in county cricket. One of the big refuges for Black players was in Central Lancashire: Blackburn, Oldham, Rochdale. A lot of the West Indian and African players came up here, cut their teeth in Central Lancashire, going back to the 1920s. They all got picked up to play county cricket and D'Oliveira was one that came up here. I think he played for Middleton where he did a few years before he was picked up by County. And once you get into County stuff, the selectors would never look at Central Lancashire cricket because it was professional with coin collections for the players, once you got into County, you stood a chance of getting into the England side.

*Sue Arnall:* I was interested that people, who weren't particularly political, got involved because of loyalty to D'Oliveira or to rugby or whatever. They remember the Springboks tour far better than I do.

*Geoff Brown:* What got you onto the demo Sue?

*Sue Arnall:* I think it's because I've always been a bother-causer. Once I knew there was a demonstration going, I wanted to be part of it. Luckily, one of my comrades, one of my colleagues at work, was a Communist Party member and she also had friends who were in the trade union movement. So we went along with AEU [Amalgamated Engineering Union] shop stewards on the demonstration and I had no idea it wouldn't be more than walking in the park. I didn't go knowing there was going to be trouble. And the thing was, it was shocking.

*Lou Kushnick:* I was a lecturer in American studies at Manchester University. There was a great deal of ferment among the student population at the time, questions about power and democracy in the university, issues

about racism and so on. My wife and I and Bonnie and her then husband who was a colleague of mine, Michael Perman, we all went together. We wanted to be there, wanted to make a statement. I retired, but I'm still involved with the Ahmed Iqbal Ullah Race Relations Resource Centre.

*David Purdy:* In 1969, I was twenty-four, in my second year as an assistant lecturer in the economics department. As Lou has said, the university was a hotbed of radical politics at the time and although I was young, I was a veteran of demonstrations. In the earlier sixties, I used to go on the Aldermaston marches organised by CND. And then I sort of graduated from that into the demonstrations against the Vietnam war. I guess I got my baptism of fire in terms of violence at Grosvenor Square in March 1968 when there was a huge demonstration against the Vietnam war that went to the American embassy. I am now retired and I carry on doing the work that I used to get paid for.

*George Tapp:* I was an apprentice electrician at the time, active as an apprentice, not quite a full trade union member. We were really active within the trade union movement. You weren't allowed to become a full member of the union until you were twenty-one and had come out of your time. I joined the day I became twenty-one. I was an active sportsman at the time. A friend of mine played and captained the Northwest Counties, the team playing the Springboks. At the time we had some arguments over it but they weren't only the battle against racism. He was a Salford lad from a secondary school playing rugby union, which was quite 'high-brow'. To get anywhere he had to be from the right school. He was in line for an England cap and told that this game would be a selection for the England team. So he was in two minds whether he went along with his principles, but also whether to be one of the first lads from a secondary school to play for England, whether to pursue that. We went along to go on the march and then try to get into the ground and try to disrupt it in some way. We had flour bombs. There were more principles involved in actually playing than just the principles of racism. It was class as well.

*Mike Don:* In '69 I was a sort of student dropout, making a living street selling *International Times* and *Oz*, living in a sort of shed. I was a veteran of many demonstrations including Grosvenor Square and I was also writing occasionally for *Grass Eye*, which was the local underground paper that had just started. I quite enjoyed writing. I thought 'Yeah, this journalism lark is pretty good'. So when the demonstration came up I thought I'll combine pleasure with pleasure and go on it

to write a report for *Grass Eye*. Unfortunately, I don't remember too much about the demonstration, which is a great pity because I actually wrote quite a long article for *Grass Eye* and that issue of *Grass Eye* seems to have completely disappeared, so I can't even remind myself by reading it.

*Bonnie Muirhead:* I was newly arrived in England, the young wife of a colleague of Lou's in Manchester. I arrived on a ship from New York and an immigration official asked me how long I planned to stay and I answered very cavalierly, 'Oh, I don't know. Maybe a week or the rest of my life'. At that point they decided to investigate me and they went and got my husband. I tried to give all the detailed information about him, he was a British subject. Then he arrived on the ship, very middle class, he had rather a posh accent, and I was immediately given all the rights of a British subject. That was it. When I arrived in Manchester the next day, in the newspaper there was an article about a young woman who came over to join her fiancé from one of the Commonwealth countries with all her papers intact and she was incarcerated and hanged herself. So that was my first introduction to some of the difficulties, which were shocking to me, not that I wasn't very much involved in the United States with welfare rights movement, the civil rights movement and I had been on demonstrations. I was really well seasoned. When I decided to join the demonstration that day, I hadn't anticipated at all what was going to happen.

*Mike Luft:* I'm a lifelong anti-racist, anti-fascist campaigner. I've never retired from that. At the time I'd just come back to Manchester so I didn't have the same sort of contacts in the movement that I'd had when I'd left and it was complicated by the fact that I'd had my expulsion from the Communist Party 'reaffirmed'. So a number of comrades I'd have naturally involved, they weren't available. By an irony, I'd played for the Middleton cricket club, before D'Oliviera's time, Roy Jeffries was our professional then. So what I'd done was sort of reassemble contacts from the early sixties and some newer people particularly rugby league players because, people might not be aware, rugby league was not allowed to be played in apartheid South Africa and it was the same in Vichy France. And rugby union: I played rugby union and I knew what vicious people they were, even at sport. So we had some anti racist activists, some rugby league players. We'd got a group of people together because we'd seen the extreme violence down in Swansea and the word was, well, these are rugby union thugs going to deal with these lefties. Our position was if they wanted to behave in that sort of way, we have a team of people

together who would protect our people. And that's what we went down to the demonstration for.

*Alan Manning:* I was at school at the time. We bunked off in the afternoon to join the demonstration. I was a member of the Young Communist League which is how I'd heard about the demonstration and I'd been involved in the Vietnam demonstrations as well.

*Lucy Backett:* I was nineteen. I was a student in Nottingham. I can't remember much more. Obviously there was a coach from Nottingham. It was probably my first big demo. Anyway, '68 was happening, Grosvenor Square. Everything was happening.

*John Hanson:* I was a student at Salford Tech. I was nineteen. I'd previously been to the LSE occupation. Been to Grosvenor Square. I didn't have any clear politics. When I was in London I attached myself to the anarchists because it seemed a lot more fun. For the demonstration, I've really come here today because my memory has got a bit hazy so I want to be reminded.

*Andy Cole:* I'd just started my second year in the university. It was my first big demonstration. I remember crash helmets. I didn't get to the end of the march because I had to get somewhere else. I did a good part of it. It was huge. I'd never seen anything like it. It started me off with politics really. I was against racism, absolutely against the apartheid regime.

*Geoff Brown:* Dave Wynn, a Communist Party member and Manchester Student Union president was in charge of organising the demonstration. Sadly, he died a couple of years ago. I'm certain that he did speak to the police. There was an agreed route. This photograph is taken in Manchester cathedral the day before the demonstration. It shows the first public event organised by a Black Power organisation in Manchester, the Universal Coloured People's Association, later the Black Unity and Freedom Party, six black Panthers, three men, three women marched into the cathedral. They stopped a service of racial harmony, which has been organised by the dean of the cathedral, Alfred Jowett. They make the point that they will be on the demonstration the next day, but they insist that the church recognises that there is racism in Manchester, discrimination in housing, jobs, education, health, not just in South Africa.

This 7,000 strong demonstration, mainly students, is the largest against the Springboks in Britain. Only the protest in Dublin is larger. There is an understanding of colonialism in Ireland which gives extra strength to

the Dublin demonstration. Lucy talks about coming on a coach from Nottingham. There were 200 at a meeting with Peter Hain in Liverpool a few days before the demonstration with, I think, ten coaches coming from Liverpool. The weekend before, the National Union of Students had its conference which voted to support the protest. It had just moved to the left with a new president who talked very left, Jack Straw. This was a kind of catch-up as I see it by students in Britain aware that American [and French] students were ahead. Bonnie was in Chicago in 'August '68 and saw the students standing up at the Democratic convention. This was a global movement of students and Manchester students were determined to be part of it.

*John Walker:* There was this sense of people wanting to fight against this atmosphere of racism. Obviously there was quite a bit of racism about, things like the '64 general election where Peter Griffiths, the Tory won the Smethwick seat, a traditional Labour stronghold in Birmingham on a racist campaign. Then, in '68 the Powell speech. So there was this sense of people wanting to do something about it. The other thing was about the Stop the 70s Tour. I remember the preliminary stuff being done by Peter Hain about stopping the cricket the following summer and then it was realized almost incidentally that the rugby was going on. Peter Hain was a cricket fan, so he knew all about that. He wasn't a rugby fan, so he hadn't cottoned on that they were coming, so it was all done very much at the last minute.

*Geoff Brown:* That's exactly right. The Manchester match is 26 November, the first match was three weeks earlier. So the whole thing is organised in short order. Can I ask people now to say something about their memories of the day?

*George Tapp:* I've been on many demonstrations in my life time. It's the only demonstration I've ever seen in my life when the police attacked the demonstrators. The violence was unbelievable. Whether it was the police tactic or whether it was the year of slip-on shoes, I've never seen as many shoes left in the road, unclaimed, after the demonstration. The road was littered with people's shoes. Now, whether the police were pulling them off if they got you down, I think this is a demonstration, whether they were pulling these shoes off as part of 'You're not going to run away' ... but there was loads of shoes left behind.

*Lou Kushnick:* What we found was they were developing this strategy of kettling. So we were walking down. And then we were being encouraged

down streets, two up, two down [terraces], little gardens with brickwork in front and then we were being pushed out and suddenly the police were at the head of the street and the horses come down and you were caught between. So people were jumping over, being forced over the brick walls onto the side because they were being pushed and pushed. People were panicking because those damn horses were behind and the police were blocking up front. Palfrey, the chief constable in charge, was clearly developing the strategy. Also, the police wearing slickers [raincoats] which covered up their numbers. This was obviously a tactic. The police lashing out, there was no accountability because all the numbers were under the slickers.

*Bill Gulam:* Yes. I think I'm here as a token rugby player. As everybody's mentioned, the level of violence was very, very high. You've got to remember that there was a great affinity between all police forces and rugby clubs. Every police force would have its own rugby club, the Lancashire police, the Manchester police and so forth. And these would be the elite within the force. They'd be given time off and they'd be well looked after by the chief constable, given the best of duties et cetera. George was talking about his mate who was playing for North West Counties. If you looked at its core, especially the pack, the forwards who take the brunt of the assault, the muscle, would come from six-foot-three, sixteen-stone policemen.

*Mike Luft:* The rugby union playing police were brought into demonstrations specifically to intimidate and assist in snatching people. They operated independently of the police and one of the things we tried to do was when these rugby union policemen came for our people was to get in between them so the comrades they were going for they didn't get hold of them. We did have some success. Because our lads were working class lads who weren't afraid of mixing it with anyone, when the police came against us their attitude was slightly different. If you like, they were terribly worried because they thought students were easy meat. When they came up against something that was a bit tougher, they retreated to some extent although not quite intact. That didn't worry us at all. The important thing we were there to protect whoever we saw at risk. To our credit we were able to facilitate two people escaping police arrest. This is how we functioned, supporting the demonstration, although there were only twenty of us, when we were put to the test we gave a reasonable account of ourselves.

*Bonnie Muirhead:* My recollection is of a very pleasant day, marching along. We were in a very narrow street with brick walls on either side of



us which made me a little uncomfortable but not nearly as uncomfortable as I became. Suddenly in the distance were the police horses. They were coming towards the crowd in a V shape, dispersing people to either side and there was nowhere to go. At that point it got pretty chaotic. People were panicking obviously and I was watching with my then husband and two police officers came over and grabbed him, punched him in the groin, he got us over, I ran to him and asked them 'What are you doing? We were just marching forward'. They dragged him off and arrested him. One of the police officers picked me up literally and threw me on the ground and the rest of the time I spent trying to find out where they had taken him. There was some group, I assume they were marshals. I went to them and asked where people were being held, and one of them sort of made enquiries and said 'We don't have a Bill of Rights here, love'. And later on the Kushnick family helped me locate the prison where he was held and we were here until about ten o'clock at night with a young cop who kept telling me to f\*\*\* off and shut up or he was going to arrest me. He was young, looked about seventeen or eighteen from St Helens and later on in the evening when they released my husband, ostensibly because he was referred to as Dr Perman which he was not. The assumption was that he was a medical doctor. The cop from St Helens then came out and apologised to me for telling me to f\*\*\* off all the time, my husband would be out and he was really sorry but he thought I came from Ireland. It was a memorable day.

*David Purdy:* I was on the demonstration with my partner and with some friends. Got separated from them down these side streets, being pursued down these streets. I saw a policeman hurl a young woman to the ground in one of these gardens, which incidentally were getting pretty destroyed, getting trampled. And I protested about this, what I saw as unjustified violence and was immediately picked up by him and then another policeman came along and in those very side streets they had waiting, vans, colloquially known as Black Marias, and we were very quickly hustled into these vans and driven to Stretford police station.

We were held in the underground car park, which was where these vans would normally be garaged and I was one of – I can't remember the numbers – but it seemed to me at the time, hundreds. Maybe it wasn't as many as that, but certainly, the place was full, absolutely full and it was pretty hard to get to the toilet, for example. We were held there for quite a long time, certainly three or four hours, and then some senior police officer got on a table or some kind of pedestal, and addressed the assembled throng who were mostly men, there were a few women, but mostly they were men, and he said, 'Well lads, you've got a choice. You can either

spend the night in the cells or you can have your photograph taken for our records’.

No one opted to spend the night in the cells; we’d already been there several hours. So then we got out eventually about nine or ten at night. When I got home, I rang up a lawyer I knew, Rhys Vaughan. I said, ‘Are the police allowed to take your photograph if they arrest you but don’t charge you?’ He said, ‘No, absolutely not’. So the next day, I wrote a letter to *The Guardian* which was published the following day and that, I thought, was the end of it. I’d made my protest in the press. But about a month later I got a letter from the chief constable, Palfrey, and it apologised for the breach of procedure and returned my photograph. I looked for it, couldn’t find it, I must’ve lost it.

I’m sure that wasn’t the only copy (laughter). In those days, police in plain clothes regularly took photographs of demonstrations or even filmed demonstrations so that you were bound to be on their records. It’s true that before the days of computers, they couldn’t as easily collate them and compare them and so on. But they could do the best they could with the technology of the time. So that was a little sort of moral victory, which I was pretty pleased about, didn’t expect.

*John Walker:* Similarly I got arrested. Incidentally, I got my photograph returned as well. People say, ‘Oh they probably took a copy’, but in fact it was taken with a Polaroid camera and certainly the copy I got, it had my name and address written on the back, and it was the one I dictated to the copper.

At that time I was working shifts, I came off the night shift, had a bit of a kip at the Manchester University Students’ Union and then went on the demonstration. I was due to go onto the night shift that night, which sort of weakened my resolve when it came to the photographing business.

On the demonstration, once it got to the bit where the violence happened, it really was awful and they were arresting people on all kinds of excuse. A couple I know, the man, he got arrested and dragged off by the police. His girlfriend got upset about this and started hitting the copper with her handbag. So she was arrested for possessing an offensive weapon (laughter).

As for the crash helmets, the police were going along telling people, ‘Anyone wearing a crash helmet will be arrested for carrying an offensive weapon’. A story I was told was, they were slightly prepared for it, a medical team had been assembled, one member of that, a medical student from the uni, apparently she was seeing to somebody who had been injured – this is the middle of the fighting, trying to help him. A copper came to try and grab her. So she said to him, ‘Fuck off’. She got arrested for use of violent language.

David talked about us being in the underground car park. There were people who were refusing to be photographed. I remember somebody being put up against the wall and he just stood and faced the wall. 'You can photograph the back of my head but not my face'. I didn't want to be held overnight because I was due to be at work at midnight. They put us against the wall and there was a pipe along the wall and I thought they're going to be able to use that on the photograph to judge height. So I bent my knees thinking I might get told to stand up but I wasn't. So, when afterwards I was interviewed as part of the police inquiry into what happened – which was a complete farce because basically it was them telling me what they thought had happened. But one of the things was that their excuse was they ... Because there were so many people, in order to identify which copper had arrested who, they were actually showing them the photographs so that they could do that. I think adjusting my height might have helped me not be recognised. But it was 'Well, will you withdraw your complaint if we give you your photographs back?' So I thought nothing's going to happen if I say no. So I said yes and that was that.

*Lucy Backett:* I remember the shoes. Somehow, I got right into the front row, right against the policemen, and I was just being pushed and I was kind of lifted up. People treading, they were crushed. People behind. That's how you lost your shoes. But it taught me about police on demos and how they behave, similar to Grunwick a couple of years later.

*Sue Arnall:* My memories are simple like that. I suppose the more of us who can say it the more strong the witness is. So I was just there, not knowing what to expect. And what I do remember is these low garden walls and we were all trying to escape, jumping over the walls. People were losing their glasses. That was my memory: somebody crying because his glasses were on the floor and smashed and you'd just come on a peaceful demonstration. It stayed with me that. The fact that we were forced to escape really. It was escaping from violence; do you know what I mean?

*Geoff Brown:* The first I heard about this demonstration was you telling me a few years ago. I'd asked you about John Tocher and you told me that you knew this leading Communist and engineering official through this demonstration.

*Sue Arnall:* I went with my colleague from work. She was a Communist Party member, so we joined a contingent of trade unionists, one was Bernard Panter and one was John Tocher, and I suppose at the beginning you felt fairly protected, because they were big blokes. But actually they

didn't protect us at all (laughter). You've got to defend yourself, haven't you?

*Alan Manning:* In my recollection, being with a group of people fairly close to the stadium and we were met by ranks of police and I can remember initially it was just a pushing game. Then it got more and more aggressive. I can remember being conscious of hand-to-hand fighting. It really kind of disintegrated. My strongest recollections, however, are after all that. It got quite entertaining as we were walking back into town. The demonstration was broken up into small groups. Once you got away from the immediate front line, you were just wandering about on your own. There were about twenty of us walking back into Manchester. Not a copper in sight. So we walked down the middle of the road shouting pro North Vietnamese slogans, all that kind of thing, stopping the traffic. My recollection is that being quite an entertaining part of the day. Quite a contrast to what had gone on before.

*Lou Kushnick:* David wrote to *The Guardian*. It brought fear to Palfrey and the establishment. I went further. I wrote to the Home Secretary (laughter) and I got a reply. In fact, I got a visit by a Chief Inspector from the Liverpool and Bootle Constabulary who comes into my office, full of books and rubbish. I had posters, Che Guevara, Palestinians, anti-Vietnam. He was clocking all this. But being very rational, he decided the tactic would be, 'We were adults together. The students were the troublemakers'. So he's describing how he goes to Anfield – you were saying rugby was a religion. Well, football is a religion – and he says if people came to disrupt the Liverpool match, he'd join in and punch them. So they had to protect the people demonstrating against the ire of the religious rugby types, 'We were overwhelmed, we didn't expect this number of people'. I said, 'You had all the cameras ready but when people wanted to make a phone call, you didn't have any phones'. Somehow or other, they were organised enough to get the photographers but they forgot about the telephones.

*George Tapp:* We sheltered from part of the demonstration, the ex-servicemen bit at the back. When it quietened down – we had rugby club blazers on, three of us. We had duffel bags with flour bombs in. Then we walked into the hierarchy with all the pips on. We said, 'Just keep walking'. We walked straight past them because we had rugby club blazers on (laughter) without being challenged.

You mentioned the snobbery between police and the rugby clubs. That was Rugby Union clubs. If you played rugby league, you couldn't be a police officer. You can now.

*Bill Gulam:* Yes, it was just Rugby Union that was well in with the establishment, especially with the police force. Still is to an extent.

*Geoff Brown:* I should add I have apologies from Jon Snow, the Channel 4 presenter. He's got to work today. He was arrested and charged. A police officer claimed curiously he had kneed Jon Snow in the groin. In court Snow said to the judge, 'Can we just get him to demonstrate this?' The police officer was so short he couldn't do this and Snow was acquitted (laughter).

*John Walker:* As with Lou, I was told by the police officer interviewing me that it was all about the students. When he discovered I wasn't a student, it was, 'Oh, you're a working man. It's not your fault, it's all their fault'.

*Geoff Brown:* Okay. And can we move on now and look at sort of the aftermath in terms of what happened, what are people go on and do people have mentioned here on a number of occasions, Lucy and others about this was an education this day in a very direct, powerful way. But is there anybody who wanted to take the story on? I mean, I might ask you Mike and Bonnie, to start this time. Would you want to make a comment on sort of the aftermath of the demonstration, you know, what happens in the city and what happened to you politically after, after the 26th of November? Mike?

*Mike Luft:* My misfortune was that, apart from the group that I took to the demonstration, I was quite politically isolated at the time. Apart from the actual day, I was a minor participant. Among the people who went with me there were some in the UCPA (Universal Coloured People's Association). That enabled me to cement a relationship with them because we'd been together on the front line and they had some confidence and, in terms of building a more united anti-fascist movement in a later period, this was a political capital that we'd all built up together. That was my re-initiation into Manchester politics, directly related to the demonstration itself.

*Geoff Brown:* The biggest student occupation in the country, when the Warwick university files issue blew and it became clear that university managements were spying on their students and informing on them to local factory managers where those students were leafleting. E.P. Thompson wrote a book, *Warwick University Ltd*, but in terms of action across the country, Manchester has the biggest of the university occupations.

*Andy Coles:* I was there in the Whitworth Hall for a week or so, on the floor in a sleeping bag and it was great. They had agit-prop theatre and music and so on. It was a real eye-opener, amazing. It politicised me.

*George Tapp:* On the after-effects of these demonstrations, I had the pleasure of spending a weekend with Nelson Mandela and he was saying that after these demonstrations he was allowed four letters. He said suddenly got three bags of mail in front of him and he was allowed to pick three or four letters. He said 'I put my hand in one and pulled it out without taking a letter, so I'd put my hand in another one, pulled it out without taking a letter. Put my hand in another one, pulled one letter out. Keeping doing this', he said, 'enabled me to smuggle messages into the bags (laughter) and we'd arranged for all these letters to be picked up that weren't read'. He said, 'Just to see the bags of mail coming in was tremendous encouragement to carry on'.

*Bill Gulam:* Within the rugby club fraternity there was a kernel of politicisation. For example, I know that players I used to play with would refuse to play if there was a policeman in the side. Also, we managed to build on this and bring people into the Anti Nazi League et cetera, sell papers, so on. [Rugby] Union was always university based, so there would be a basis on which to build an argument. Many players in some clubs became quite politicised. Up till then, I think, the apex of rugby was South Africa. Even the Polynesians and the Maoris who played for New Zealand, would accept honorary white status to play against the South Africans. After these demos, as the politicisation went on, even at lesser levels, at the clubs I've played with, people would say 'Well, I'm not playing in a club fifteen [team] if there's a policeman in it'. So, it did have an effect.

*Alan Manning:* This was a trade unionist demonstration just as much as a student demonstration. It seems to me that the anti-Springbok campaign and the Stop the Tour campaign, were part of that growing realisation of the nature of the South African regime and the strengthening of the participation of the trade union movement in Anti-Apartheid.

*Lucy Backett:* I just want to remember one thing political at the time was the Republican struggle in Ireland because that was just kicking off too.

*Lou Kushnick:* One the things that followed on was trade unions boycotting Chilean material after with the overthrow of Allende and we were involved in 'Don't Eat Grapes', the campaign of Cesar Chavez and others. Strikes couldn't work because they could bring in an unlimited

number of even poorer people from Mexico. So the only other thing was international support. People were boycotting. Nixon had the Department of Defense buy enormous quantities of table grapes for the troops. I think you've all got security clearance so I can say it, the reason the Americans lost in Vietnam was the troops were actually forced to eat all those grapes and farting and so on (laughter). They couldn't fight. So you got marches in Manchester and other places, the docks were refusing to unload the grapes. So the solidarities were spreading, South Africa and other places.

*David Purdy:* A different point, which occurred to me on the day and at the time, which was that the demonstration was unusual in that it brought together groups of people, political groups, 'groupuscules' the French used to call them, grouplets who hated each other most of the time, fought like cats and dogs. Well, they were brought together on this demonstration because the cause was so obvious, a moral and ethical cause, and also I think people thought that Britain had a special responsibility because South Africa had been a British colony, it became a dominion and then it was expelled from the Commonwealth in 1961. But there was still the legacy of Empire and this takes me onto a more general point. You can see it in a longer historical perspective, that the occasions when the Left, broadly defined, has come together have been the Boer War, the First World War, the antifascist struggles of the 1930s, the United Front and the Popular Front campaigns. And later on, after the Second World War, the campaign for unilateral nuclear disarmament. I think the demonstration to stop the Springboks tour takes its place within that larger context where, underlying all of this was British imperialism. The Left has been fragmented in Britain forever and still is today – let's not get into Brexit – but the one thing that did bring it together was imperialism and its ramifications.

*Geoff Brown:* I'd like to use this as a pivoting moment, from what David's said, to get people to look at today. Most of us in the room are involved; some of us were out on Sunday outside the Tory party conference. I want to ask people who were not there on the day to say something about what brings you here. What you think is the significance of looking back fifty years? Why do we do this? Is it something we should do?

*George Dawes:* In the 1969 season, I was a member of Lancashire Cricket Club and Salford and that was the year that Salford last played at Wembley. I'm interested in the philosophy of policing. When I went down there on the train, the police were there in a herd and they wouldn't let us off the station concourse until half an hour before the game. That's six months

before that demonstration; they herded us on the concourse and wouldn't let us into Central London.

*Geoff Brown:* There was an attitude. They felt they could do that to you. That was the point.

*Don Taylor:* I was not present in Manchester at that time; I was a student at Cambridge. I want to reflect on what David's just said. The origin of my political consciousness was the Sharpeville massacre, which I think is the reason why South Africa was thrown out of the Commonwealth. I got involved in anti-apartheid issues and struggles, not so much in demonstrations until this time (1968-69) when I was a member of the Cambridge University Labour Club. We took part in the Grosvenor Square demonstration and the Stop the Seventy Tour demonstrations in London but not up here in Manchester. It since led on to me to working in Botswana in Southern Africa when, of course, I had no choice but to travel through South Africa. I couldn't boycott South African produce. A lot of our food came from South Africa.

*Andy Coles:* A bit more about police violence. I was on the demonstration after the death of Stephen Lawrence. There was a big demonstration to close down the bookshop that was the British National Party headquarters and we marched in Welling, East London, to get it closed down. I saw the tactics of the police. We wanted to get to the 'bookshop'. They wouldn't let us. What they did was they let a load of people go down the street. Then the cops on horseback came and closed it off. So we were all trapped. Then they went in with their batons. It was the most violent thing I've ever seen.

*Geoff Brown:* It takes different forms at different times, but it's always a deliberate plan.

*Lucy Backett:* It's what they did at Grunwick.

*Tony Scott-Norman:* I was a founding member of an anti-apartheid group in Harrow, much later than this, in the 1980s. I'm very interested in what David was saying about the growing unity of parts of the left because during the '80s we had a big problem of factionalism in the anti-apartheid movement. We overcame that, but it was very unfortunate that we had what I call a splinter group, which was the City of London anti-apartheid group. And all they would do is concentrate on the South African embassy. I went to a very unfortunate AGM where the two parts, the



mainstream anti-apartheid group and the City of London anti-apartheid group, for its own factional political reasons, were at loggerheads. It was very unfortunate, but locally, we did well with boycotts, campaigns on produce et cetera, et cetera. The funniest thing I remember is we were outside Lord's Cricket Ground, trying to stop the cricket tours with Gating and Emburey. We were all shouting, 'Gating and Emburey, apartheid mercenaries!' Unknown to me, a colleague, left all of us, got through the gates, onto the pitch, and he got away with it. It never got into the papers, but it was absolutely amazing times. And when it came to 1990, weren't we all delirious when Mandela walked through those gates? And we disbanded!

*Shirin Hirsch:* I've never been part of a kind of reminiscence session like this. It completely changes the way of doing history, this kind of collective form of history. It's brilliant. We should be doing way more of these. I think it's really excellent. I'm trying to think of connections with what I've been involved in. So the first protest I remember was walking out of secondary school when our government was attacking Iraq, that being an amazing process, a kind of collective protest. And later on, at university, a student in the anti-war movement. And connecting to that point, we felt our government were involved and with that had a responsibility, just as in apartheid, that legacy. As British people we had to stand up against apartheid. And then I was thinking about, well how does that connect to where we are now? And now, when you think about who's the most active people on protests today, it's school students, the climate strike on the 20th of September. I've never been on a demonstration with so many school students, people who were on their first demonstration. I guess the first rule of it is the very global struggle of these three movements. The climate strike on the 20th of September was part of a global struggle of school students. What's actually lacking now in the climate strike is the university students. The school students are leading the way. So connecting with the university students and wider trade union issues is going to be key.

*John Catterall:* When this was happening, I was somewhere else and by the time I'd called Jim Arnison, people were coming back from the march. So I missed the main thrust. A few weeks earlier I'd been sacked from a job at Lloyds packing warehouse because I had blown the gaff on what was then Rhodesia. They were exporting stuff in oil drums with packs inside of children's and women's clothes. And I'd blown the gaff and Liverpool dockers refused to load the drums onto the ship, Lloyds Packing and the shipping agent were waiting until the moment the hatches were due to

be fastened down and it would be a last minute rush to get the drums onboard and so on. That of course never actually took place as the dockers stopped the load at the docks. Well, that's another story (laughter). Just after that I joined the Communist Party and my mentor was Jim Arnison and it was Jim that signed me up to join the Communist Party. I'll bring it forward now. Last Sunday we were on the march, the anti-Tory demo. I protested a few weeks earlier about the route of the march. They kettled us in a way to take us well away, so they (the Tories) couldn't hear us. We finished up with the march petering out at the cathedral. So the police are still at it: Orgreave, Grunwick, what's happening at PNR [Preston New Road, the fracking site].

*Kevin Morgan:* I only have a question. I agree with Shirin, absolutely fascinating. We ought to do more things like this at the library. The one question I have, trying to get my sense, as obviously not having been there, of what this demo was like and it sounds like mainly young people. We were talking about YCL, students, the after-effect was an occupation at the university. I'd be interested to know more about the rest of the labour movement, the links with the trade unions. You mentioned Bernard Panter and John Tocher. Was that a presence on there?

*Sue Arnall:* You had loads of trade unionists. Well, I want to say this. Where's the music now? If you think of all these demonstrations and songs we're talking about, there was always music. Nelson Mandela, the concerts. Tracy Chapman. Do you remember? We were all blown away by her singing at the Free Nelson Mandela concert. Where's the music? Because that's what we need to encourage us so we can sing ...

*George Tapp:* The campaign was so successful that the right had to react, and they started a campaign, Keep Politics out of Sport. All the rugby clubs got posters sent them. It was a way of controlling sportsmen not to become political, and it's important that we get involved in sport, get the trade unions more involved in sport.

*Paula Moorhouse:* I would just like to draw in the apartheid which is still existing, Israel against Palestine, and what is happening in Oldham, Elbit, which has had some quite good successes this past month. They were up on the roof with the giant 'Stop arming Israel' banner hanging down for quite some time. There was action last week in the centre of Oldham. There was a vigil organised about three to four o'clock and they sent the workers home at lunch time, which is a bit of a success. We mustn't forget the BDS movement.

*Judy Paskell:* It's quite unusual for me to be in a meeting which is so much more male-dominated and that is not because of the sexism of those setting it up but largely because of how things were at that time. About the policing of protest, lately we've seen very different relationships between police and demonstrators. One, which John mentioned, is the more traditional one as far as most of us are concerned. At Barton Moss when they were trying to frack, there was extreme, violent policing. Ewa and I, as older women, were just lifted out of the demonstration. Of course, we ran round and joined in again but there was at least one man, probably a similar age to us, who was thrown in a ditch and had his hip broken. They've certainly seen a lot of hostile, violent policing at Preston New Road. Now we have Extinction Rebellion, whose view is, horror, horror, police are human and what we should really do is try and to talk to them and explain to them what we're all doing and what climate change is about and maybe they may even end up sympathising, they've got kids and grandkids as well. And that's not something we could have a big discussion on now, but it's something we need to think about, especially with the second big occupation in London coming up next week. Finally, I want to say that climate change can and must become one of those examples where the left unites, particularly Extinction Rebellion. Others would say it must go way beyond that. Friends of the Earth are busy writing to Tory MPs right now, but it has to be like that. I will just leave you with the thought that Sunday's demonstration was pretty good against the Tories as far as I could tell in the rain. But the one on the Friday a few days earlier, the climate one, was also fantastic, but it was quite a different group of people on the whole. Of course, there's overlap, some of the usual suspects were there for both, but despite there having been calls for trade unionists to support on the 20th of September, there were a lot more trade unionists with their banners on the demonstration against the Tories last Sunday than there were on the climate one and I think we need to get the big battalions out, we need to get everybody out. Otherwise there's no future for any of us.

*Bill Gulam:* Protest against the Springboks was fairly instrumental in the ending of apartheid because they were actually expelled from the International Rugby Union and rugby is a religion among the Boers, who were the ruling classes in South Africa and with the banning of the Springboks, they started to think 'We've now got to start ending apartheid'. I would argue perhaps sixty to seventy per cent of the reason that apartheid ended because they weren't allowed to play rugby with the rest of the world. Secondly, the real irony, the Springboks today are captained and vice captained by loose forwards that are black.

*Mike Luft:* We shouldn't underestimate the importance of the demonstration in stimulating the much wider consciousness of what apartheid in South Africa meant. I'd been a member of Anti-Apartheid since 1960 and it was very much a marginal group. We didn't get a lot of publicity. We weren't able to make huge interventions. After the demonstration a whole new scenario was opened up to us. I think that is the enormous heritage of that demonstration. The people who were on it can be extremely proud of the role that they played in helping bring apartheid to an end. That's what we were doing, making a moral protest against something absolutely abhorrent. We accomplished this in the end, something that David alluded to, because of the enormous unity and goodwill created on that demonstration. That was almost unique at that time, given the problems with all the groupuscules, the small groups that thought they had the solutions to the world's problems. We found there that in unity we can defeat reaction. I think the next challenge, other speakers have mentioned it, is climate change. If we can create that sort of unity that we did in Manchester, we can win.

*Bonnie Muirhead:* On the impact of the demonstration, or in general, such demonstrations are essential for people to collectively take up these issues of extraordinary importance. My reaction, as I recall, was to become much more active there, particularly in my neighbourhood, Moss side in Manchester, and work with women there and their young children. There were connections that I made through the demonstration. I believe that we set up children's daycare in a centre that was liberated by Kath Locke and her sister Coca Clarke who, I think, were members of the Universal Coloured People's Association. And when I visited Manchester some years later, the centre was still there and this was the response to two children being killed in the streets by automobiles. Those types of things are small but extraordinarily valuable. The movement encouraged this sort of self-organisation, looking at the places where we actually live and doing what we can there as well.

*Geoff Brown:* Thank you. On that note, I'd like to thank everybody who's taken part. As has already been said, this is something which doesn't happen often enough.