

Brief Update Report to CoEJ on the MCB Central Working Committee meeting at Markfield Conference Centre, Leicester on Sunday 9th Jan 2005.

3 main issues to report (Summary).

1) Situation of the MCB offices.

Currently the MCB offices are too small and the lease for the existing offices expires in 9 months. It was decided that in the short term that the MCB will try and secure new offices for a short period of time with the longer term aim of acquiring a freehold office in central London that could be part used by the MCB and that could also be part let to generate income. It was anticipated that this would cost in the region of £1 million pounds, **BUT WOULD BE A VALUABLE STRATEGIC MOVE SECURING THE LONG TERM FUTURE OF THE MCB**

It was left to the finance committee to take this further to look at potential sites and consider fundraising initiatives or the possibility of getting donations, Karz-e-Hasana , Islamic loan or a combination of the above.

The obtaining of freehold offices was deemed a vital issue any help with this in to form of advice/experience/donations/guidance/expertise from individuals or our community or a Jamaat would be much appreciated by the MCB.

2) Subscriptions and raising funds for the work of the MCB

The situation regarding subscription and funding is also very tight and was brought up in the treasurer's report. Some pledges from organisations had not been fulfilled – **I am pleased to say that pledges and donations from all KSI Jamaats were up to date – but any KSI Jamaats that are still NOT members of the MCB should be encouraged to do so (minimum membership is only £25 per annum)** and that give the Jamaat important voting rights at the bi - annual elections thereby ensuring our continued influence on the organisation.

3) Incitement to religious hatred.

The current new major political issue is the governments attempt to introduce a law of '**Incitement against religious hatred**'. – An initiative the MCB have campaigned and lobbied for tirelessly. This law would simply put the position of protection Muslims and

other faith groups into the same position as Jews and Sikhs and stop the loophole that currently allows racists and Islamaphobes to rant against Muslims.. A significant groundswell of media opinion however has organised itself and swung against the law – based on the nebulous claim that it may restrict **‘freedom of speech’** – or to curtail the rights of artists and comedians **‘freedom of expression’** - the strong reaction to the bill has put at risk whether the law will in fact be passed this term (with the impending election looming). The MCB with several other non Muslim organisations is carrying out strong lobbying of MP's and at the Lords exposing the medias deliberate misrepresentation of the law - citing examples and arguments like the recent case of the televising of the 'Jerry Springer Opera' on BBC2 and the recent play produced by a Sikh artist that caused controversy in Birmingham amongst concerned members of the Sikh community – showing that despite there being law protecting the Jews and Sikh - **‘freedom of speech’** and **‘freedom of expression’** was not be curtailed – and that the existing law for Jews and Sikhs did not prevent the showing of these programmes. It was suggested that local communities lobby their own MP's with letters and the compelling arguments in our favour which will be put up on the MCB website.

Another issue about this law is of course it means that visiting speakers (particularly from the subcontinent) must be careful in the delivery of their own sermons and lectures on other faiths or even indeed other sects and branches of Islam - or else they risk falling fowl of the same law. This is an issue that should be passed on to our resident Alims and visiting Maulanas particularly those from the Indian subcontinent.

Salaams

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