

Mayor denounces police arrangements for Front and opposition marches

By Robert Parker

There was criticism yesterday of the way Mr David McNee, the Commissioner of Metropolitan Police, has handled arrangements for National Front and anti-racist marches to be held on Saturday in Lewisham.

Mr Roger Gedeiff, Mayor of Lewisham, said Mr McNee, who has intervened to lay down the routes and timing of the marches, had shown little understanding of the sensitive issues involved.

The criticism was made at a press conference held yesterday by the All Lewisham Campaign Against Racism and Fascism which has representa-

tives from the main political parties, the churches and the Socialist Workers' Party.

The campaign is unhappy about the route its march in the morning has been ordered to take. It is shorter than the route agreed originally with local police, and does not pass through areas of Deptford, where there is a large black population. The National Front march in the afternoon runs through the heart of Deptford.

Lewisham council is to begin proceedings in the High Court today which it hopes will end in the marches being called off.

Mr Alan Sinclair, of the Lewisham Community Relations Council, who had a meeting at

Scotland Yard on Tuesday, said there would be more police officers in Lewisham on Saturday than at Notting Hill last year and they would be wearing riot gear.

TUC chief's plea: Mr Len Murray, general secretary of the TUC, has urged Mr Rees, the Home Secretary, to use his influence to ban all marches in Lewisham on Saturday (the Press Association reports).

He fears "a very serious public disturbance, which in turn would cause a deterioration in relations between the police and the black community and, more generally, further damage to race relations".

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