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“ TO MEET THE CHALLENGE OF OUR TIMES, HUMAN BEINGS WILL HAVE TO DEVELOP A GREATER SENSE OF UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY. EACH OF US MUST LEARN TO WORK NOT JUST FOR HIS, OR HER, OWN SELF, FAMILY OR NATION, BUT FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL MANKIND. ”



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THE DALAI LAMA



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World Tibet Network News

Sunday, July 14, 1996

1. Call to close sect's benefit loophole

The Guardian, London: Saturday 13 July, 1996 (page 10)

Madeleine Bunting - Religious Affairs Editor

Labour has urged the Government to plug a loophole in housing benefit which Britain's richest and fastest growing Buddhist sect has exploited to fund the purchase of a series of substantial properties.

Chris Smith the shadow social security spokesman, urged an immediate investigation into the New Kadampa Tradition (NKT), a Buddhist sect set up in 1991 which has over 20 affiliated residential centres. Former members claim the majority of the 300 odd residential members are on housing benefit, which is paid in rent to the centres to fund their mortgages.

The Department of Social Security is effectively subsidising the NKT's expansion to the tune of hundreds of thousands of pounds.

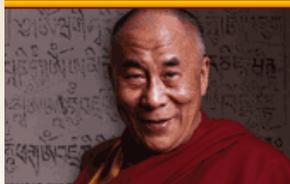
Mr. Smith said: "There must be an immediate investigation. If there is a loophole, the Government should plug it as rapidly as possible. Meanwhile members of the NKT are involved in a series of demonstrations as the Dalai Lama arrives in Europe today ahead of his arrival in Britain on Monday. Coach-loads are leaving from the NKT's headquarters near Ulverston Cumbria, to attend a demonstration organised by the Shugden Supporters Community in Zurich.

The demonstrators - they claim that the Dalai Lama opposes religious freedom because he has banned a centuries-old religious practice - are also planning to

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GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP
THROUGH UNIVERSAL RESPONSIBILITY



HIS HOLINESS
THE DALAI LAMA
— A RETROSPECTIVE —

picket the Buddhist Society in London on Tuesday.

Organisers of the Dalai Lama's UK visit are increasingly anxious about the possibility of disruption from the activities of the Shugden Supporters Community (SSC).

The Tibet government in exile has vigorously denied the allegations against the Dalai Lama as "baseless."

More details have emerged following the Guardian's investigation published last week, of how NKT-affiliated residential centres use the benefit system.

Early next month, the NKT headquarters at Conishead Priory, Ulverston, is holding one of its main fund-raising events of the year, a two week summer festival for more than 1,500 followers, likely to generate a surplus of well over =A3100,000.

Former members of the NKT have come forward to claim that nearly all the approximately 90 residents of Conishead Priory are on income support and housing benefit, which they pay as rent. With rents of =A3160- =A3190 a month, this amounts to the Department of Social Security paying out more than =A313,000 a month in benefits. Ex-NKT members claim this pattern is duplicated at many centres affiliated to the NKT.

Conishead Priory has developed another source of income during the festivals, held three times a year. Residents have to leave the rooms for which they receive the benefit to make way for paying guests.

Chris Bussell had been a monk in the NKT at Ulverston for two years before he left last year.

Ultimately Mr Bussell felt he was receiving money he was not entitled to. The founder of the NKT is a semi-reclusive Tibetan monk, called Gehe Kelsang. Mr Bussell decided to hand back his vows and wrote a letter of explanation to Kelsang, telling him he had a "moral responsibility to inform people to act within the law." He received no reply.

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