

Unite to stop the BNP

SUMMER 2002

by Councillor M. Azam

Debeating the three British National Party (BNP) councillors elected in Burnley and stopping them from gaining a foothold elsewhere in Britain is a priority for the National Assembly Against Racism. The impact their election has and will have should not be underestimated — soon after winning those seats BNP leader Nick Griffin announced that the BNP's aim was an all-white Britain.

The government's response was yet more restrictive measures against asylum seekers and refugees, in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum bill. The false hope that this will appease the BNP and other far right organisations is a policy doomed to fail and will have the exact opposite effect.

The BNP can be defeated. In the general election last year the BNP polled 16.4% of the vote in the Oldham West and Royton constituency. The BNP thought they could make an electoral breakthrough there. However, the Coalition Against Racism — Unite to Stop the BNP campaign — established by NAAR, the TUC and the local Asian community organisations — ensured that the BNP were soundly defeated in Oldham.

Results in Burnley show that whilst there were high votes for the BNP — on average a third of Burnley voters cast at least one vote for the BNP — they could have been defeated.

In Burnley, three councillors were elected in each ward. The BNP did not top the poll in any of the wards, but were elected in second and third place. In these wards the Liberal Democrats and Conservative party did not stand full slates and the BNP stood more candidates than them in the whole of Burnley. The lesson is that a united campaign to defeat the BNP is absolutely essential.

In Oldham where despite the BNP's belief that they had the best chance of getting local councillors elected — in particular in Hollinwood and Alexandra wards — a campaign was mounted which ensured their defeat. Here high turnouts set new records and the BNP received less than a quarter of the votes. This was because the Coalition Against Racism — Unite to Stop the BNP's campaign mobilised mainstream opinion and political parties against the BNP, focussing on getting the 90 per cent of Oldham voters who did not vote BNP in the general election to turn out and vote.

The campaign will continue. We have to get the BNP out of Burnley — two of their councillors' seats are up for election next year — and ensure that they do not gain any further seats in Oldham's 'all-out' elections in 2004.

The BNP do not emerge out of a vacuum. Lies spread about most of taxpayers' money going to Asian areas, riots where the Asian youths received severe sentencing compared to their white counterparts, myths about most racist attacks are Asians attacking white people and institutional racism, have created fertile ground for the BNP.

Measures in the Nationality Immigration and Asylum Bill and comments by government ministers about asylum

seekers "swamping" Britain and the Muslim communities being "isolationist" will only serve to legitimise the BNP's propaganda. Instead the government must take the lead in fighting institutional racism and calling on institutions to implement the recommendations in the Stephen Lawrence Report, which recognised pervasive institutional racism in Britain.

NAAR will continue to support the local communities in Oldham and Burnley. Between now and May we must all redouble our efforts to ensure the BNP are defeated and racism rejected.

What you can do:

- * Sign the Unite to Stop the BNP pledge card
 - * Contact the Coalition Against Racism — Unite to Stop the BNP
- E** coalitionagainstracism@yahoo.co.uk
T 0161 624 1060

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 - Justice for the McGowan Family
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**Join
NAAR!**

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THE RESPECT FESTIVAL IS ORGANISED BY THE MAYOR OF LONDON, WITH THE SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AGAINST RACISM AND THE TRADE UNIONS IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION



Defending Asylum Rights — The BNP must be fought not appeased



by Lee Jasper,
Chair, Speak Out Against
Racism — Defend Asylum Seekers

Speak Out Against Racism — Defend Asylum Seekers is a national campaign that defends asylum rights and opposes the racism and hostility whipped up against asylum seekers. At the moment campaigning against measures in the new Nationality, Immigration and Asylum bill is a priority.

This bill further undermines the rights of asylum seekers and refugees. Included in the bill are controversial proposals such as:

- * segregating asylum seeker children from mainstream education
- * deporting asylum seeker children born in the UK if their parents' application fails
- * instantly removing failed asylum applicants and forcing appeals to be conducted from outside the UK
- * refusing financial support to asylum seekers who choose to live with friends and relatives and not in designated accommodation centres

The Government has been warned that its Nationality, Asylum and Immigration Bill, currently passing through the House of Lords, could violate international law. The Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights listed 14 areas in the legislation that may contravene the Human Rights Act.

These measures contradict the British government's commitment to the 1951 Convention on Refugees — adopted following the Holocaust and hitherto the international framework for the right of refugees to seek asylum in Britain.

Furthermore, the recent EU summit in Seville saw a further strengthening of 'Fortress Europe'. Measures to make it more difficult to enter the EU include: joint border patrols, a tightening of



borders with countries outside the EU, and political measures against countries who do not 'co-operate' with EU countries over asylum. A White paper on ID cards for asylum seekers is to be published by the summer and plans to use the Navy to prevent asylum seekers entering Britain were again suggested.

Recently David Blunkett met with the French interior minister and agreed the closure of the Sangatte refugee camp within the next twelve months, which will leave many asylum seekers destitute.

The Government has openly stated that they are introducing 'tough' measures on asylum in order to stem the gains made by the BNP. However the net result of draconian legislation on immigration and asylum has been the exact opposite.

Extreme right and far right organisations have recently made gains across Europe, most notably 5.5 million votes for Front Nationale's Le Pen in the second round of the French presidential election, and 26 seats for the anti-immigration List Pim Fortuyn in the Netherlands. "Fortress Europe" policies will only legitimise these organisation's views.

There are a number of myths surrounding the immigration and asylum debate

which the BNP are feeding off. Comments by government ministers and various articles in the media lead us to believe that Britain is being 'swamped' by asylum seekers, that most asylum seekers are 'bogus' and that asylum seekers get huge handouts from the government — this is simply untrue.

Statistics from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) show that for every 1,000 UK inhabitant there is less than one asylum application. The UK only hosts 2% of the world's asylum seekers. Third world countries shoulder the burden of the world's refugee crisis — a fact that is rarely acknowledged.

Most asylum seekers are proven to have well founded claims, and those whose claims are rejected are not because they are bogus. Furthermore asylum seekers are amongst the very poorest in this country, and only receive 75% of income support.

The Speak Out Against Racism — Defend Asylum Seekers campaign is urging MPs to vote against the measures in the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum bill.

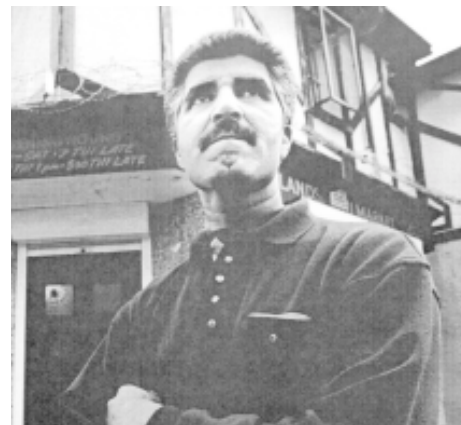
What you can do:

- * Send the Speak Out Against Racism — Defend Asylum Seekers Postcard to your MP.

Satpal Ram Freed

Satpal Ram was imprisoned in 1986 for defending himself against a gang of racist assailants. Fearing for his life, he defended himself with a penknife he used in his job in a warehouse. Satpal's attacker later died in hospital upon refusing medical aid. Satpal was charged with murder in a flawed trial which excluded crucial witnesses and no translators were provided for witnesses who only spoke Bengali. In October 2000 the parole board decided to free him. A deciding factor was the overwhelming support Satpal

had from the local community and nationally. The then Home Secretary Jack Straw over-ruled this decision. This June the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Home Office had no right to overturn the parole decision and set him free. Earlier this year the Student Assembly Against Racism and the National Black Students Alliance ensured the National Union of Students overwhelmingly adopted Satpal Ram as Honorary Vice-President of NUS as part of his campaign for justice. Satpal is now campaigning to quash the conviction and clear his name.



Mal Hussain fights on

Mal Hussain and his partner Linda Livingstone bought the Ryelands Mini Market estate in Lancaster in June 1991.

Since then they have been subjected to a 24-hour, seven-day week campaign of the most intense racial harassment including death threats, stonings, and fire bombings, physical attacks, graffiti and verbal abuse. Their shop is routinely attacked and customers are systematically threatened. Mal has also been shot at with live bullets. Often Mal has made multiple calls to the police with little or no response.

After the repeated failure of Lancaster police and the local council to intervene, his case recently took a new turn for the worse. One man on the estate, who has been repeatedly reported by Mal for harassment, made an offensive gesture at him. Upon reporting this to the police Mal was informed that the perpetrator was accusing him of the same offence, which was being treated as racist in its intent. Mal had to attend the police station to give DNA, fingerprints and be photographed. Mal is now calling for a public inquiry into his case.

For more information and to support this campaign:
Tel: 020 7582 1990
Email: blink1990@blink.org.uk

Justice for Errol and Jason McGowan

Errol McGowan, a bouncer in Telford, experienced prolonged racist abuse and threats after ejecting white youths from the pub where he worked. He was told he was on a Combat 18 death list and his 8 year old son was attacked and told he would have his fingers cut off. The police dismissed the threats and when his body was found hanging from a door in his house they concluded there were no suspicious circumstances surrounded his death. Suspecting his uncle had been killed, Errol's nephew Jason, a journalist with a local paper, began an investigation.

Six months later Jason was also found hanged. Prior to this Errol's brother had received an anonymous call stating that they should back off or "one of the McGowans would be sorted." Inquests have been held into the both deaths — the jury at the inquest into Jason's death could not reach a decision and another inquest is being convened later this year. A conference is also being planned in October.

For further details contact:
cliff.mc@ic24.net or visit the website at:
www.mcgowan.ej.co.uk
Or phone 020 7247 9907

Support Sylvester campaign

Three years ago Roger Sylvester died after he was illegally detained and restrained on this own doorstep by eight Tottenham police. Last year the Crown Prosecution Service decided not to prosecute any of the officers involved in Roger's death because of 'insufficient' evidence. The Roger

Sylvester Justice Campaign has campaigned for a judicial review into the CPS' decision as his family believe he died through excessive force and prolonged restraint by police force. For more information contact www.rsjc.org.uk RSJC@hotmail.com 07931 970 442



LAGCAR was set up to create a visible anti-racist voice of lesbians and gay men, and to help forge the unity needed to defeat racism, homophobia and bigotry. The nailbombings of Brick Lane, Brixton and Soho demonstrated that the Black and LGB communities are targeted by fascists like nailbomber David Copeland. Racism, homophobia and the activities of the fascist right are on the rise across Europe. The need is now more than ever to show unity of action between the Black, Jewish and LGB communities against the far right which are gaining political power across Europe. For more information contact mail@lagcar.fsnet.co.uk or www.lagcar.fsnet.co.uk

Justice for JEVAN RICHARDSON

Stop racism in education and policing



Ten year old Jevan Richardson took his own life on 13 February 2001, having endured two years of racist bullying at St. Mary Magdalen Roman Catholic school, and racial harassment from the local police. Jevan's two year's of hell included:

- Bullying by his teacher and head-mistress
- Witnessing violent arrests by the police of his family
- Watching his mother victimised by the school, governors and police
- Inaction from the local authority despite frequent letters from his family including details of Jevan's note threatening suicide
- Exclusion from his school and loss of his friends.

In May 2002 the Board of Governors agreed to settle the Judicial Review case taken out by the family for the illegal and wrongful exclusion of Jevan

in December 2000. The governors admitted that they were wrong and that they should not have excluded Jevan. In June 2002 at the Central London County Court the judge upheld Carol Edmund's claim granting her permission to pursue cases of race discrimination, negligence and failure in statutory duty and care against St. Mary Magdalen Roman Catholic School, the Board of Governors and Lewisham Education.

The family is also pursuing legal action against the police, and the Police Complaints Authority has agreed to a panel to examine all aspects of the police's actions.

Please support the campaign. Donations can be sent to the Justice for Jevan Campaign, PO Box 24785, London SE13 7GQ.

For more information email jfj_campaign@yahoo.com or visit the website at www.blink.org.uk



SAAR is the student wing of the National Assembly Against Racism and exists to ensure students are active in the fight against racism on campus and in the community. SAAR wants to unite all students against the BNP in the face of the increasing rise of the far right, campaign against racist attacks and murders, end racist policing, campaign for full implementation of the Lawrence report, oppose racism in education, defend asylum rights and for increased black representation. If you are interested in our campaigns, setting up a group or holding a freshers' stall in your college or university, get in touch and get involved!
tel: 020 7247 9907 email: contactsaar@hotmail.com

Local groups

The NAAR has many different regional and local groups, the campaign against racism in specific areas. If you are interested in getting involved contact the following:

Birmingham AAR 07973 628 357

Coventry AAR 02476 714070

*Greater Manchester AAR
07736 105 995*

*Sheffield AAR
c/o Sheffield Black Health Forum,
14-28 West Bar Green, Sheffield S1 2DA*

*Lewisham Anti-Racist Action Group
larag@ita.demon.co.uk*

London AAR 020 7247 9907

Wales AAR 07855 884 292

The National Assembly Against Racism campaigns against racism in all its manifestations. With national black organisations playing the leading role - in an alliance with Jewish groups, the trade unions, the student movement, religious groups and many others, the NAAR has set about building a mass anti-racist movement uniting all those who believe racism must be fought and not appeased.

Make an anti-racist pledge today:

JOIN NAAR

Name

Address

.....

.....

Tel

E-mail

Affiliation rates:

Individuals Waged: £10 Unwaged/students: £3

Organisations Local unfunded: £15
National unfunded/regional/local unfunded: £25
National trade unions/funded organisations: £65

Return to: NAAR, 28 Commercial Street, London E1 6LS

**Tel: 020 7247 9907 e-mail: AA_R@compuserve.com
www.ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/AA_R**