

October 2004 newsletter

unite against fascism



Reverse the rise of the BNP



*By Ken Livingstone,
Unite Against
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The election of a British National Party councillor in the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham in September 2004 must serve as a wake up call to all of us who oppose the politics of hatred and fascism and instead see the way forward through democracy and the celebration of diversity.

The BNP won its first seat in London in eleven years and received 1,072 votes with over 50% of the vote in the Goresbrook ward – pushing Labour into second place with 602 votes and 29% of the vote – on a low turnout of just 28%.

However it is possible to defeat the BNP, when the anti-fascist majority use their vote. In the recent Village by-election also in the same borough of Barking and Dagenham, the BNP were stopped. Labour won the election with 1085 votes, 44.7% and the BNP received a high vote with 935 votes, 38.5%. The turnout was fairly high at 35% – indicating a mobilisation of the anti-BNP vote in the ward. Unite Against Fascism mounted a big campaign urging people to use their vote to stop the BNP in the by-election. Similarly the BNP were defeated in the Laindon Park by-

election in Basildon, where they finished third with 365 votes.

In all by-elections that the BNP have contested since the June elections, they have averaged 20.4% of the vote.

The Barking result follows a massive increase in support for the BNP in the European, London and local elections on 10 June, where the BNP received over 800,000 votes nationwide and came close to winning four seats in the European Parliament. In London, they narrowly missed winning a seat on the London Assembly. In Bradford they won 4 councillors – their highest representation in the country.

Significant

It needs to be clearly understood that although they did not win the seats they targeted, these were the highest votes for the far right since the Second World War. They indicate that if this trend continues, the BNP is on the verge of a major breakthrough in national politics. Indeed had it not been for the surge of the UK Independence Party and the campaigning work of Unite Against Fascism, it is likely that the BNP would now have four MEPs and a London Assembly member. That would have given them a significant platform in national politics for the first time.

The BNP is currently polling high votes in the context of extreme right breakthroughs in elections across Europe. Recently in Germany the neo-nazi National Democratic Party of

Germany (NPD) took 12 seats in the state Parliament in Dresden, only one seat short of the Social Democrats.

As Goresbrook shows, those who think that the BNP is plunging into crisis after they were stopped in June are wrong. The reality is that the BNP is winning more votes than ever before. It is represented on more councils than ever before and is poised to make a major advance into national politics, unless we continue to campaign and mobilise the majority that exists against the BNP's politics of race hate.

As France, Italy, Belgium and other countries across Europe show, it will be infinitely harder to reverse a major breakthrough by the far right once it has occurred, than to block it occurring in the first place.

That breakthrough is not inevitable. But we will only succeed in blocking the far right if we have a sober and realistic estimate of how substantial the threat has become. It will require a colossal and united effort by the labour movement, the black, Asian and Jewish communities and everyone that supports democracy to reverse the rise of the BNP.

At the same time, everybody who participates in that effort will know that they personally have made a difference. The results in June were so close that every person that gave out a Unite Against Fascism leaflet, attended a meeting or simply voted made a difference to stopping the BNP making an electoral breakthrough.

www.uaf.org.uk • 020 7833 4916 • unite@natfhe.org.uk

Support Aslef in kicking out BNP

UAF is supporting the train drivers' union Aslef who will appeal against an employment tribunal ruling that it had unlawfully expelled a member for belonging to the British National Party.

Jay Lee, 35, from Bexley in Kent, was kicked out in 2002 after Aslef discovered he was an activist in the BNP.

Mr Lee, who has stood for the BNP in elections in Bexley, was told he has won his case, entitling him to a minimum award of £5,000. Aslef acting general secretary Keith Norman said: "The effect of the law is to force trade unions to accept into membership fascist activists. Freedom of association is a basic human right. The effect of this decision is to force thousands of train drivers – who detest racism and fascism – to be associated with the fascist Lee who now openly celebrates his hostility to the union and its values and proclaims his intention to claim thousands of pounds from the union."

"It is particularly perverse that the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992 allows for heavy financial penalties against the union. There is a minimum award of £5,000 plus for an expelled fascist – who has suffered no financial loss – but no such minimum award to a worker suffering racial discrimination or sacking."

Last year the government promised to introduce legislation allowing trade unions to expel members of the fascist BNP and to stop BNP members from becoming civil servants. UAF is calling for the appropriate legislation to be introduced at the earliest opportunity.

Unite Against Fascism conference 5 February 2005

UAF is planning a major conference on 5 February 2005. It is likely that there will be a general election in 2005 and the conference will bring together anti-fascists activists from all over the country to discuss strategies on campaigning against the BNP. For further information please contact unite@natfhe.org.uk or phone 020 7833 4916/ 7837 4522.



Spelling out the anti-fascist message

unite against fascism

Please return this form to

Unite Against Fascism, PO Box 36871, London WC1X 9XT

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