

RED ACTION

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EDITORIAL

What is still arguably the most intriguing aspect about the initial riots in Oldham, and in Bradford - first time round - is the great difficulty in finding out, what had gone on. Even months afterward, events in Bradford remain clouded in allegation and counter allegation.

Was it really 'outside agitators' who sparked the trouble? Or once the torch paper was lit, did Muslim youth exploit the opportunity to exact retribution on ancient Hindu rivals? Typically the Left maintain that Asian youth were merely 'fighting back'. But against whom? The inference is that the aggressors were not only white, but were also 'National Front supporters'. Was it NF supporters who burned the eight cars outside the pub hosting a Hindu wedding, or did they own them?

The reason for asking these question is not rhetorical. Remarkably as in Oldham, despite the apparent media absorption, it is still far from clear who, or what, sparked the trouble.

Safe to say this smearing of the lens can hardly be accidental, and rather strongly indicates certain interests see political advantage in the whole truth not coming out. Obviously for the more conservative elements on the Left, that an institutionally racist police colluded with 'fascists' by not responding early enough to the swaggering aggression of the NF/C18/BNP (take your pick) is axiomatic. Fine, it is one explanation, but hardly the whole story, which is possibly the most damaging feature of the whole affair. Simply put, it is patently obvious to everyone that entirely for partisan reasons, the word of the Left simply cannot be trusted. If anything, it is as likely to lie as the is the far-right. Indeed for reasons we will go into, the left is now far more likely to do so. For instance, after the Bradford riots in July, the ANL line was that "Nazis had rampaged"!

Slightly less surreal was their role in the row following the attack on the Oldham pensioner Walter Chamberlain. Within a day, the BNP had adopted him as their 'poster boy'. Here was proof they said that 'no-go areas' existed. Whites were the primary victims of race attacks in Oldham, and something needed to be done about it, the BNP insisted. Not so, countered the Left. The attack on Walter Chamberlain was an 'isolated case'. It was in addition not even properly 'racist'. And any talk of 'no go' areas was a myth being peddled by an 'irresponsible media'. Motivated by hatred of the Macpherson report, police simply invented race attack statistics as back-up. A compelling theory, but as a chain of evidence, it is entirely bogus.

Atypically, even *Republican News*, was suckered by the seductive choreography. Challenged in the letters pages by AFA on the all important chronology of events, Fern Lane, the RN journalist in question insisted, without any attempt to quote sources, that the sequence of events peddled by the ANL/SA was accurate, and went as far as to question AFA's motivations in suggesting otherwise. Had she done her own research, she would have discovered that statistical evidence of racially motivated Asian attacks on whites was substantial. Neither is it a recent development, as available statistics stretch back as far as - 1993. The attack on the pensioner happened on April 21, days after the 'no go' allegations, (by Asian youth incidentally), were made to BBC's Radio Four. In other words it was the PC view of events she regurgitated, not the police figures, which had been doctored.

'Spin' apart, it is hugely instructive to note, that liberals generally struggle to find ways to express regret, much less condemnation for the attacks by minorities on whites, even when the victim is a pensioner, even as in Dover, when a twelve year old girl was slashed by a refugee, or even when, as in the case of Richard Everitt in 1993, the attack ended in the the murder of a schoolboy.

In contrast to the BNP, who strategically have no difficulty in condemning *all* race attacks these days, the SWP just cannot bring themselves to do so. Partly because it would be an admission that possibly anti-racism was not working, and partly from the rather quaint belief that only 'black people can be the victims of racism'. So regardless

of any actuality, this 'greater truth' is the story the SWP is determined to tell. This is in stark contrast to the situation in the 1970's. Then it was anti-fascism that invariably stuck to objective reality and it was the NF who felt obliged to rigidly adhere to doctrinal orthodoxy. Not that the BNP are any more honourable than their predecessors. Hardly. It is just that if they lie less these days, it is because they don't have to.

A primary reason they rarely over-reach, is that 'race is everywhere'. A little over a week, following the best vote for the far-right post war, banner headlines in *The Guardian* and *The Independent* wrestled with each other to prove which section of the public sector would next wear the 'institutionally racist' label. One forecast it would be the CPS, while the other the NHS. Within the week, London Mayor Ken Livingstone's race adviser Lee Jasper insisted

the entire school system too, was irredeemably bigoted. 'Black only' schools were the answer he announced. An echo of an earlier call from the head of an advisory housing body who had sought to justify 'black only housing'.

And despite displaying a certain degree of alarm, liberals when challenged, remain insistent calls by blacks for segregation are 'qualatively different' from identical demands made by the BNP. So when Nick Griffin calls for a 'peace line' in Oldham, the left feign outrage. Meanwhile the spokesperson for the CRE Chris Myant, can welcome the news that race is topping the agenda as a "positive development", while at the same time as former CRE chairman Herman Ouseley comments on the "brittleness of race relations in Britain".

But even in the midst of such manifest muddle, should AFA, say, pose the questions: 'Is anti-racism working?' or 'Can the LSA beat the BNP?' the uniform response is to close ranks, while calls to stone the messenger receive a sympa-

thetic hearing.

In the same vein, when the *Oldham Chronicle*, correctly took the ANL to task for "effectively doing the NF's work for it - winning it publicity without out it needing to do anything itself", the ANL, in the interests of a free press, denounced it for "pandering to Nazis" and launched a campaign against the paper. But when Oldham MP Phil Wollas alarmed by BNP influence, argues that "the traditional tactic of the anti-racist movement must change" he is largely ignored. Traditionalists presumably assumed his analysis is purely geographical. 'Oldham' rather than multiculturalism is the

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problem they reassured each other. But that was before Burnley blew up. And before Bradford exploded for the second time. And are race relations so much better in neighbouring Rochdale, Keighley, Halifax? All of them towns, where AFA was required to physically beat the BNP into submission in the early 1990's. On one notable occasion in 1993, following running battles with AFA in the town centre in the run-up to an election, a BNP candidate got a total of nine votes - even his sponsors didn't turn out.

What has changed in Burnley and nationally, is that in the seven years since the 'no marches, meetings, punch-ups' capitulation in 1994, the BNP climb from the fringes has been relentless. From 1992 to 1997 their national vote went up five fold. In the Euro-elections in 1999 it tripled again. In 2002, support in London leapt again, with a four fold increase bringing it up to 80,000 votes. In all of this it is most important to remember, that the *Socialist Worker/Searchlight* stance has been to deny, deny, deny. Both have worked tirelessly, even up to the point of fiddling results to sedate its own membership and anti-fascism in general, at every juncture. (In recent weeks, the SSP leader Tommy Sheridan has gone on record in the *Weekly Worker* as saying that the BNP's vote actually **dropped** at the last election!) Characteristically, when *Weekly Worker* addresses the Wollas warning it scrapes out the kernel 'change' and takes issue with the authoritarian husk, and even gives credence to Michael Meachers' claim that of the almost twelve thousand BNP votes in Oldham no more than a 'dozen or more are racist'. What has so far also been totally ignored, is that unlike the 70's, 80's and 1990's instead of the clashes being between left and right, they are now inter-communal and inter-racial,

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With the BNP, already recognised as the 'radical alternative', by the media at least, and will we must now assume, confirm this with council seats next May, how much longer can we wait for the Damascene conversion?

In the interim what choice there is for the conservative left is unavoidably bleak. As we have repeatedly pointed out, it can conform to the European pattern and stick with a liberal agenda, deliberately stripped clean of class content, or it can - break with it. Given that much the same left were absent when the fight was physical, any real optimism it will respond with any greater courage when the challenge is political is practically non-existent.

What is more, the Socialist Alliance is politically stale. As an 'alliance', it is repeatedly shown to be utterly devoid of imagination, integrity and intelligence. It is conspicuously failing, and deserves to do so. Not only is failure, even by its own terms, seemingly assured, but for radical prospects apparently necessary. Unreconstructed socialism would like us to believe it's time has come, when in actuality, it's - time is very nearly almost up.



Bradford

'THE DAY THE PANTOMIME HORSE BOLTED'

For twenty years the ANL has followed a policy of calling counter-demonstrations against far-right initiatives in the full knowledge that either they would not take place, had been scheduled for an alternative venue, or had simply been cancelled. This means, that even, or particularly when, the SWP/ANL knew the fascists were not coming, every effort was made to maximise turn-out, for fairly venal reasons.

A large turn-out would for instance, allow the ANL to claim that the fascists had been intimidated by the numbers, it would allow unparalleled access by the SWP to a fresh layer of potential recruits, unhindered by any serious distractions, and it would allow the ANL to chalk up the event as 'a victory', something it has found increasingly elusive in the real world. So the policy to besting absent foes, has a threefold attraction for the SWP central committee.

For the ANL, things probably began to go wrong in Bermondsey earlier in the year, where despite facing an NF unable to muster more than a couple of dozen for a 'national' demo, the ANL strategy was on a humiliatingly repetitive basis, publicly shown to be entirely impotent against even the NF groupuscule. Morale and turn-out instantly collapsed. It became

embarrassingly apparent too, that the national publicity being generated for the NF and it's policies would not be happening, without the ANL gearing - as it has done since the re-launch in 1992 - all it's propoganda with the media in mind. This led critics, including when the action shifted up north, the *Oldham Chronicle*, to conclude that the ANL was effectively 'doing the NF's job for it'. However, as events in Oldham would show, the ANL, unable to understand, much less deal with the more sophisticated strategy being pursued by the BNP, need the NF as much as the NF need the ANL. Objectively, each can justify it's existence only through the reaction of the other. One senior militant anti-fascist described the relationship as akin to 'a pantomime horse, wherever the NF went the ANL followed'.

When earlier in the year, the NF called a march in Oldham the ANL responded with a counter-demo. But even when the NF officially announced more than a week in advance, that it had been cancelled, the ANL blithely ignored them, fully aware, that when hundreds turned out, many of them young militant Asians, there would be no fascists for them to engage with. It did not seem to matter at the time. There was no serious trouble and, 'Oldham had united against the Nazis' after all.

So in Bradford when the scenario repeated itself, the ANL stuck to the script, apparently indifferent to the heightened tensions that had exploded in riots in the same area

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Time 'to dump' multiculturalism

Currently there is much discussion on how the rise of the Far-Right can be halted. The truthful answer, says J. Reilly, is that an anti-fascism joined at the hip with multiculturalism cannot do so.

Britain 'has the highest number of interracial relationships in the world' according to the Institute for Social and Economic Research. This supremely natural and healthy state of affairs, is however, not due to multiculturalism but in spite of it. For multiculturalist ideology, which believes that 'culture makes man' rather than the other way round, sets its face firmly against miscegenation, integration and assimilation - on principle.

"Multiculturalism actually promotes racism. It engenders confusion, resentment and bullying and prevents people developing a shared British identity. This idea should have been dumped long since", claimed Minette Marrin in a *Guardian* article on May 29. Though evidence to support her claim is legion, in the same paper on the same day, Vivek Chaudry a *Guardian* journalist rather underlined her point, by inverting the Norman Tebbit 'cricket test'. He castigated England captain Nasser Hussain for bemoaning the fact that people with origins in the Indian subcontinent continue to support teams from that part of the world rather than England. "My message to Hussain is this. You need to get in touch with your brown side" Chaudrey advised.

Though small, a not insignificant number of journalists are now beginning to publicly ask questions of multiculturalism. Marrin's though is not a typical liberal view, nor is she a typical *Guardian* journalist. She is in fact a columnist for *The Daily Telegraph*, which explains why her article was entitled 'A view from the right'. But is it? Might it not as easily, or more accurately have been entitled 'A view from the Left'?

Mainly, what prevents the conservative left assessing the multicultural impact honestly, residual dullness aside, is the fear of being denounced. So instead of properly mocking the Robin Cook 'chicken tikka' statement, the conservative left feel under obligation to denounce any misgivings as 'right wing', and from that same standpoint feel under obligation to push the agenda toward what it sees as the opposite fundamentalist conclusions, when, and where ever, the opportunity presents itself.

Thus in Oldham, while the BNP canvass the white working class neighbourhoods, the Socialist Alliance (SA), whose analysis sees the white working class as the sole culprits, nevertheless distributes its propaganda, only in the exclusively non-white areas. What political purpose, one asks, is served by such tokenism, when if it took its responsibilities at all seriously the SA would have put up candidates against the BNP in the area to begin with? As it is, while the SA 'intervention' allowed impeccably white liberals to wear their multicultural heart on their sleeve for a few hours, the BNP went about its business establishing a bridgehead for the local elections in 2002 unhindered. None of this is not to suggest that the SA is politically equipped to win white working class minds. It is merely to point out that it has no ambition to do so. Instead it is perfectly happy to strike a pose, and pronounce on events from a thoroughly partisan, that is to say dishonest, perspective.

Other factors detected within the debris of multiculturalism that is Oldham, are also worth mentioning. First of all, there is the carefully cultivated myth that anti-racism is the preserve of social groups A, and B. Only with 'education can there be enlightenment' *The Guardian's* Polly Toynbee announced recently. This is so often said, that it is now widely believed among all sections of society, to such an extent that for many, to be properly anti-racist it is necessary to be anti-working class. Indeed to be properly anti-racist, it may for some, be necessary to instinctively feel 'anti-white'. "What we now have is a new version of the deserving and undeserving poor - the noble new British working class, who are ethnic, and the thoroughly swinish old working class, who are white". (Julie Burchill, *The Guardian*, 5.5.01)

Yet, even a casual glance at the make up of any inner-city community, reveals the conceit of an 'inherently racist' white working class to be a lie. It is among the working classes, and statistically, only among the working classes, that interracial relationships thrive. Elsewhere, apart from genially nodding to the man behind the counter in the corner shop, classes A and B contribute nothing to the project they loudly proclaim loyalty to.

On top of that there is the self-serving multicultural pretence that all ethnic communities are homogeneous, and in an ideal world, all would be treated as such. Not only that, but while some such as 'Operation Black Vote' for instance, insist Pakistanis, Bangladeshis, Sikhs and Hindus, as well as African and those of West Indian and even Chinese descent, must for general electoral convenience you understand, be treated as 'black', along side this form of forced integration, other multiculturalists are working just as hard to see the term 'black' further sub-divided on the grounds of ethnicity and religion. The aim? To have strict segregation in schools and housing (to begin with), not only for Blacks and Asians but, for Muslims, Hindus, Bangladeshis and so on, ad infinitum, finally ending in racial, cultural and political balkanisation.

Of course, in the midst of this racial engineering, one word is carefully avoided. That is the word 'class'. For the very good reason that the promotion of cultural diversity is intended to kill off, and replace the idea of social diversity. Yet despite such sleight of hand, that 'class' is as big a factor in the sense of alienation experienced by 'Pakistani' youth in Glodwick, as it is in the predominately white Fitton Hill is undeniable. For what is striking about their situation, is that unlike many Indians, the Pakistani and Bangladeshi inhabitants of Oldham show little sign of the fabled enterprising spirit, all of Asian origin, are we are told possess. They came here with nothing, to work in the mills as labourers, and labourers whether in work or not, they largely remain. They have not broken out - or up. Some pious humbugs like Ken Livingstone, will insist that this is entirely due to endemic racism in British society. But if true, how to explain the equally downtrodden white counterparts with whom they are at war? If racism is the root cause, how to explain the inability of 'Fittonhillites' to rise out of the ghetto? 'Oh them, they are you know, just so much white trash', many a multiculturalist will explain without blushing. Recently describing for the *New Statesman*, a visit to Oldham a couple of years ago when he more or less predicted the 'backlash', Darcus Howe uses that very expression, unashamedly, and apparently in ignorance of it's American Deep South origins. No matter, his observations make a nonsense of the working assumptions of the ANL/SA, that there is 'a uniform access to power for all whites, denied to all blacks'.

"For the first time in this country, I had seen people who fitted the American description 'white trash'. Their homes had a stench of decay: of damp, sweat, and stale food cooked days before. The little picket fences were collapsing. The roofs were leaking and pallid faces staring." These are the labour aristocracy, benefitting from imperialism and eager to protect their privileges and ill-gotten gains by voting BNP are

they?

For a further insight into how skewed mainstream multiculturalism thinking really is, it is necessary only to take stock of the racially loaded invective of the 'anti-fascist' visitors to the National Front 'guest-book'. These startlingly ugly contributions are, bear in mind, should you be tempted to look, all products of a multicultural education of thirty years standing.

In a further tribute to the influence of such teaching, one Asian group, allegedly set up to fight the NF and Combat 18 has chosen for itself the title: 'Combat 786'. Like Combat '18' which represents the A and H in the alphabet, 'numbers 786' are *The Observer* reports, 'a numerical representation of Allah'. The similarities do not, I suspect, end there.

Meanwhile that the segregationist 'peace line' solutions proposed by the BNP, are these days impeccably multiculturalist in tone and delivery is the final irony. 'In one area' an *Observer* article mentions 'where an alleyway leads from Fitton Hill into an Asian street, the council plans to erect a metal gate to separate the communities'. Remarkably, the metal gate has since been erected in line with the Griffin edict. How effortlessly euro-nationalism has appropriated the language of multiculturalism to meet its own objectives, also demonstrates just how far the anti-racism of the 1970's has drifted. Furthermore, the ease and comfort of the euro-nationalist fit, unmasks the lie that multiculturalism is naturally progressive.

In reality it is more trouble than it's worth. Not to say that people from the Indian subcontinent or anywhere else ought to be compelled to meet the 'Tebbit cricket test'. But neither should it be demanded of them out of some sense of racial fidelity that they meet the Chaudrey test either. Multiculturalism however, more or less insists they must. And it is largely when the left promotes or defends multiculturalism's right to do so, that it becomes a politically dangerous liability. Oldham has exposed it to be. Like many of the second generation Irish, whose support for the Republic at football is not entirely separate from an antipathy to England, similarly, as the unprovoked attacks of as many as 30 pubs in the Oldham area have illustrated, being pro-Muslim is not always entirely divorced from being anti-white. Clearly, such an ideology does not enhance authentic anti-racism - it subverts it.

Some commentators on the 'SPIKEONLINE' website (ex- *Living Marxism* magazine) have arrived at precisely such conclusions: "There was a time when the left was accused of stirring up race riots. Now it is the the far right that is accused of starting the violence. Where politicians once denounced violent blacks, today they are more likely to denounce violent racists. The establishment no longer relies on traditional British nationalism, but is more likely to talk in the language of anti-racism." Continuing in a similar vein another adds: "When every issue and incident is racialised and seen through the prism of race, it is not surprising that people start to see their problems in racial terms. The end result can only be more division and conflict."

Professor Frank Furedi, one time mentor to the now defunct RCP is sure-footed on this subject at least: "today it is the race relations lobby and particularly New Labour that finds it difficult to avoid the temptation of playing the race card. By treating every routine conflict as racially motivated they are racialising everyday life. This process is as destructive as the old-fashioned racism." It is a process he warns that can only end in "Everyday human contact" becoming "recast in racial terms, with the consequence that racism becomes normalised. This confuses and disorients people, breeding a climate of suspicion and mistrust." A by-product of this racialisation is that "it also trivalises the real experience of racism and distracts from confronting real cases of injustice" he concludes.

Currently there is much discussion on how the rise of the Far-Right can be halted. The truthful answer is that an anti-fascism joined at the hip with multiculturalism cannot do so. Indeed the higher the activity of the likes of the ANL, and now, and even more ridiculously the SA, the more entrenched the respective working class communities will become. Put bluntly, 'racialising social problems' is the motive force of both euro-nationalism and multiculturalism alike. For purposes of anti-fascist strategy, if for no more principled reasons, multiculturalism is 'an idea that should have been dumped long since'.

More can be found on the Race & Class section of the RA website

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'Something We Said!!!' column
will find it online at www.redaction.org**

COUNTDOWN TO MAY 2002

If it is to credibly survive the council elections in less than eleven months time, the general election results 'ought to scotch once and for all the notion' that the LSA is set for some kind of 'breakthrough'. What is needed now, says G. O'Halloran, is a period of sober, comprehensive and more than anything honest re-assessment.

All too typically, Paul Foot, who on the run up to the election on more than one occasion outlined precisely why he would be 'backing the Socialist Alliance (SA)', devoted his entire *Guardian* column the week after to other issues, with not a mention of the supposedly 'good start' his SWP chums insisted, the 550 votes the SA received per candidate represented.

His *Guardian* colleague, Gary Younge was more forthcoming. Younge, a former WRP activist, nonetheless described the official SA explanation for the desperately poor showing as 'smacking of desperation'.

Less than two years ago, in October 1999, Gary Younge took part in a public debate organised by Anti-Fascist Action. Then, along with SWP member and SA candidate Weyman Bennet, who famously claimed that 'the war is over and we ('we' meaning the ANL) won it'. On the day, Gary Younge too confidently insisted 'anti-racism was working'. An AFA prediction that in all probability 'we are approaching signal 109', in reference to the Paddington rail crash, was greeted with bemusement at the time. Unsurprisingly, in light of events in Oldham, Burnley and elsewhere, Younge at least, would seem to have revised his opinions.

On the SA claim that its general election result is vindicated by history, he comments: "The Socialist Alliance is putting a brave face on it. But its claim to have performed better than the Communist party did in 1950 rings hollow. First, travelling more than half a century back in time in search of electoral sustenance smacks of desperation."

"Second, the two scenarios couldn't be more different. In 1950 Communists were standing against a Labour government that had just introduced the National Health Service." And as against the lowest turnout since 1918 now, "at 84% the turnout [in 1950] was the highest of the century".

'Three' he could have added, the Labour party back then was an avowedly socialist party, with a mass working class base. And 'four', again unlike now, 1950 was around the time the spectre of Soviet aggression began haunting Europe, and cold war paranoia kicked in. And if he really wanted to put the boot in, he might have mentioned that the Communist Party of 1950, was, again unlike the SA, at least formally revolutionary. The 'Parliamentary Road to Socialism' thesis was still two decades distant.

So had it, put in such a pitiable performance, there were mitigating factors aplenty. For the Socialist Alliance to do so, is little short of fiasco.

By general consensus, the Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) with over 72,000 votes did more credibly. Particularly when you take into account the population of Scotland being only 5 million. Even so, the SSP overestimated its own appeal by a full third, insisting prior to the election that a 100,000 target was comfortably within its capacity.

Meanwhile the only target forecast on behalf of the SA in England and Wales, came from its most enthusiastic backer *Weekly Worker*. '250,000' would be a credible return it felt. In the event, that prediction came in

almost a full 200,000 short. As tends to be the way, *Weekly Worker* now protests that this figure was intended to cover the entire Left including the SSP and the SLP, and was anyway, "aspirational".

Whatever. A return of 57,553, still left the SA 15,000 short of the SSP total. Worse, according to an SSP spokesperson, the 70,000 was the 'political equivalent to 700,000 votes in England and Wales'. Thus, for the SA in England and Wales, to display proportionate ambition, the 'aspirational target' would have needed to be set - not at 250,000 - but - nearer a cool million.

Even closer to home and even more painfully the 57,553 accrued by the SA, only just surpassed the 54,104 achieved by the despised 'Stalinist crackpots in the Socialist Labour Party'. Woefully, the SA, with an extra 34 candidates could muster just 3,500 votes more than the 52,110 the SLP received in - in 1997! Taking into account the large scale working class abandonment of New Labour since, an advantage which averages out at a little over 100 votes per candidate, it is fairly damning. 'Good start' though containing just two words, is a statement that manages to be wrong on two counts. It was not 'good' and it was not 'a start'. But there are, as we will see, perfectly valid reasons why comparisons with the Greater London Assembly election only last year, are avoided in SA spin.

Only last year, the London Socialist Alliance polled 46,530 votes, on remember, a mere 33% turnout. Throw on an extra 8,000 or so for June 7th, and you now have the additional support for the SA, from the 45 million people in the rest of England and Wales! Had the appeal of the SA simply stagnated, the GLA result would need, (even discounting the 60% turnout) to have more than quadrupled. No matter how you cut it, the entire Socialist Alliance project, a little more than a year after announcing itself as a mainstream player, looks terminal. In response to the official LSA explanation in 2000, that their low vote could be entirely attributed to being 'a new party' one senior Red Action member remarked at the time: 'On the contrary, it may turn out that their first result, proves to be their best result'. So far, he has been proved correct. And if the implications are not startling enough already, as Gary Younge points out, things can get worse, very much worse.

"In Oldham's two constituencies alone, the BNP received a fifth of the votes that the Socialist Alliance mustered in around 100." Moreover, "in the 17 seats where the BNP or National Front stood, against either the Greens or the hard left, the BNP" Younge reckons "was always more likely to win".

In addition, the three best individual results attained by fringe candidates anywhere, including Scotland, have the

initials 'BNP' beside them.

Such stats are a reminder that these days, not only is the SA a fringe party, but socialism itself is very firmly a marginal ideology. Moreover, if judged alongside the current standing of more serious rivals like the UKIP and the Greens, the BNP can lay claim to the title 'radical alternative' in England and Wales - as of right.

Needless to say SWP/ANL spin doctors will have none of it. In a seemingly unheeded press release, ANL central office announced: "We've done it! The Nazis have been utterly defeated... They have been marginalized and rejected." Only after it is read a couple of times does it become clear that they are not talking about Oldham or Burnley - but Thanet! And the 'Nazis' referred to are not the BNP - but the 150 strong NF.

Only a little less dishonestly, the SWP/ANL along with *The Guardian*, also seeks succour in the fact that the BNP 'stood less candidates than in 1997'. But once again, the reality for anyone even vaguely interested, is that the BNP stated last year, and repeated a number of times since, that its focus would not be on the general election, but on the metropolitan council elections in 2002. For them this makes sense. As a small party the BNP are aware that the elusive electoral success, which it believes will catapult it into the political mainstream, is most likely to happen at a local council level. Long before the Oldham boost, it was already within touching distance, clocking up well over 20% in areas as diverse as Burnley, Tipton in the West Midlands; not forgetting the 27% it took when knocking the Tories into third place in Bexley south east London in June last year. (By contrast, the highest percentage the SA have accrued is less than half that.) The SA might have followed a similar strategy, had it ever sat down to consider strategy in the first place.

That said, there are rather curious statistics that might have prevented any SA strategist wholeheartedly recommending such an approach. Interestingly, unlike the BNP, the further LSA activists stay from its chosen constituency, the more attractive it appears, and the better it does at the polls.

For example, in the by-election caused by the death of Bernie Grant last year, the SA saved its deposit. Much capital was made of this at the time.

However, when it returned to the Tottenham area a couple of months later to contest a council by-election, and incidentally, canvassed heavily, it got the same percentage of the vote, 5% it had taken in the parliamentary contest. Attracting a mere 60 votes is not heartening, but this is on average what SA candidates can expect to take, if past results are anything to by, in council by-elections in the capital in the near future - if they're lucky.

No wonder the SWP were not keen to contest Beckton with the BNP. Fear of 'taking second prize', saw the SA in Southwark duck even the NF in Bermondsey. Exactly that rationale was offered for the failure to challenge the BNP in Oldham.

Prior to the suspension of the LSA executive in February Red Action delegate's sought, whenever the opportunity presented itself, to bring a modicum of reality to discussions. A number of policy documents were submitted. When not more or less openly accused of racism, 'refugees welcome here', was quite simply 'a vote winner' we were told. In our absence, the slogan has it appears, without explanation of course, been ditched.

In an other staggering example of the bland leading the

bland, *Weekly Worker* editor Peter Manson, following a poor showing from the BNP in a parliamentary by-election in Preston at the beginning of this year, (it transpired the candidate had fallen out with the leadership and was not even in the country in the run up to the election) more

or less demanded any further discussion on the possibility of 'a BNP breakthrough be scotched - for once and for all'. Whether it was intended as a rebuke to AFA and RA or for internal consumption, or whether Manson was simply making editorial policy on the hoof, it does at least explain why Red Action letters to *Weekly Worker* are routinely cut, or simply not printed. Tellingly, despite the BNP making headlines in the national media, *Weekly Worker* found no room to allow even a passing comment the week after the election. When challenged, 'a small staff' was offered by way of excuse.

Censorship or self-censorship apart, what is almost unnerving about discussions within *Weekly Worker*, on the *Uk Left* site or inside the LSA, is that regardless of what is really happening on the ground, soundbites inside and out, are relentlessly upbeat. (One unkind comparison would be with the Indian "ghost dance" movement of the late 19th century when, just as the Native American cause was hopelessly lost, prophets appeared, predicting the sudden disappearance of the white man.) There are naturally more prosaic explanations. First, the collection of sects that make up the SA do not really know what is going on. Second, such is the introspection they do not care what is going on. Third, and most cynically of all, the SWP leadership specifically, are all too aware, but will resist any comprehensive review for fear of it, and indeed SWP morale generally, might not survive the analysis. Their fears are well grounded. Up to now, due mainly but not exclusively to, the SWP stranglehold there has been no mature analysis; no strategy grounded in objective reality. Result? 'Rubbish in, Rubbish out'. Unsurprisingly, SA method such as it is, is shambolic, and the tactics, when there is evidence of any (the SWP put a ban on canvassing for example) imbecilic.

If it is to even survive the council elections in nine months time, the general election results 'ought to scotch once and for all the notion' that the LSA is set for some kind of 'breakthrough'. What is needed now is a period of sober, comprehensive and more than anything honest re-assessment.

Ultimately, what the LSA needs to decide is whether it is going attempt to offer a real alternative to the BNP, or just lazily continue being (what it regards) as it's *opposite*? What at the end of the day it comes down to is whether the political will exists within, what is referred to as the far-Left, to seriously compete for working class hearts and minds with the far-right? What this means is perfectly straightforward. In light of the election results there needs to be a general acceptance that the fiction of 'socialism without the working class' (which invariably leads to an anti-fascism *opposed* to the working class) is no longer sustainable practice. Self-evidently, without at the

very least, the tacit support of the bottom 40% of society 'radical change' is possible, but progressive social change is inconceivable. More listening and less lecturing would be the necessary start.

When, or as it increasingly looks like if, the London Socialist Alliance steering committee is reconvened, these two questions are the first items RA delegates will put on the agenda. If responses are at all reasonable, then perhaps we can all sit down and see how we might collectively 'remedy the situation'. Whatever the LSA decides, there is no escaping one salient fact: one way or the other, for all concerned May 2002 means - 'showtime'.



BNP supremo Nick Griffin

What at the end of the day it comes down to is whether the political will exists within, what is referred to as the far-Left, to seriously compete for working class hearts and minds with the far-Right?

Communities of Resistance

MAKING A SPLASH Govanhill - Glasgow

The Govanhill Pool campaign originated from a public meeting called by the Govanhill/Crosshill Community council in mid January where user groups and council representatives spoke to a crowd of about 120 people. Individuals who gave their names arranged another meeting for the following week and have met weekly since to co-ordinate the campaign. IWCA members were amongst a group of a dozen or so who initiated the campaign.

The campaign had three distinct groups, 'direct action', 'strategy' and 'press'. The IWCA were primarily involved in the direct action and strategy while the IWCA national number was employed by the press group. It was the IWCA who convinced others of the occupation idea, and on the night it happened it was IWCA activists who gave the lead. Since then around two dozen different people have stayed in the building on a round the clock basis while the picket has 70-100 people who at one time or another do quite regular hours. The pool's closure would effect a vast area. One swimming group has 200 members who meet twice a week. The other pool available is in another area approx 6 miles away.

Typically, the left were slow in getting involved even though it was the SWP who had initially tipped-off the IWCA. For two whole months the local Scottish Socialist Party (SSP) branch contributed no more than a few individuals. By contrast the IWCA donated £50 to the campaign with the proviso that we would double it if all the parties equalled the gesture. This was not taken up, but it served to highlight where the IWCA was at, with regards the community generally, and how others, including the SSP, treat the community as a springboard to their 'higher' ideals. In March the IWCA organised a leaflet drop to 2,500 houses in the area. Furthermore, the recent leafleting and canvassing of approx 800 homes by the IWCA has raised the profile both of the IWCA and individuals within it. One IWCA member in particular who was co-opted as a local 'community councillor' prior to the pool campaign has earned support, both as someone who had demonstrated his commitment to the area before the pool campaign became a 'cause celebre', and from elderly women in particular who see him as a 'young blood'. At a rally in March he represented the IWCA on the platform. When elections are held in Sept/Oct he intends to put his name forward for election.

As we go to press a judicial review is in the offing. On the 10/7/01 campaigners were given a writ to get out of the pool within the next 48hrs. Having done the canvassing the IWCA will publish the findings. There is also a plan to leaflet 1,200 homes in the area with a call for a public meeting to address the next steps.

See: www.crowd.to/saveourpool

Thornwood Park

The campaign against the closure and development of Thornwood Park, began in the middle of March. Along with the IWCA, reps from the SSP and the SWP attended the first meeting. At the first semi-public planning meeting held shortly afterwards - restricted to community/community activists - 50 people attended. The IWCA outlined a strategy which involved canvassing working class opinion on the choices available. While not strictly an IWCA campaign, the IWCA which usually chairs the meetings is hugely influential. For instance, though local MSP and MPs are used for publicity, community work remains at core of the campaign. Of the 3,000 people canvassed a mere 2.3% backed the development plan while 21.2% were for development - only if money was made available for use by the community. 55% opted to fight the council for better services and no development, while a further 21.5% favoured leaving the park as it is.

In total 2,000 signed the petition against the development plans, while a further 300 letters objecting to the planning application were submitted.

A 'fun day' - barbecue, music, etc was organised on with 500 people turning up. Because the SWP/SSP failed to organise any of the things they claimed they would do, and did not collect their ballots for four weeks after the proper date, many in the community have already lost patience with them.

The future: The basic plan is to show the community it can organise events in the park without outside influence, things like cinema, play stations in park, dj workshops, wall climbing, nature trail (area of park with protected life) are all planned. If successful, this will hopefully show what can be done without resources, so therefore opens the question on what could be achieved WITH resources. Overall this work, will build confidence as well as allowing IWCA to work in agenda and introduce faces to the community with a view to the future.

(**Latest:** a councillor who originally was for the development has stated after ballot that he now opposes development.)

ADDRESSING THE ISSUES Harold Hill - Havering



Pictured are members of Harold Hill IWCA who, along with local people, organised a meeting in the Salvation Army Hall in Petersfield Avenue, aimed at organising against the continuing anti-social behaviour which has caused so many problems for all who live

in and around Petersfield shops.

Many local people who attended the meeting expressed the view that despite constant calls for something to be done, the police, local councillors and the local MP had failed to come up with any solutions to the problem. Members of the IWCA had made it clear at the start of the meeting that the solutions to the problems had to come from local people, because ultimately it is local people who are suffering.

There were various suggestions as to what could and should be done. One local person suggested a 'name and shame' campaign, another videoing those causing the problems so as evidence was caught on camera, one of the most surprising suggestions was that all local people withhold their council tax in protest at nothing being done. This from many 'law abiding' people who were quite willing to face prosecution in order to show their disgust at how the majority of people on Harold Hill are treated, the IWCA believes this shows not only the courage of local people but just how far the political representatives of this area have failed.

A local activist had this to say, "The time is fast approaching when working class people on estates like Harold Hill have to start addressing issues like anti-social behaviour themselves. For far too long this area has had councillors who simply do not care about what goes on - mainly because they don't live here. They only act as though

GOOD FIRST TIME RESULT

Blackbird Leys - Oxford

Blackbird Leys IWCA achieved an impressive result of almost 300 votes at the 7 June County Council election - it's first electoral contest.

Independent candidate, Stuart Craft, who stood on behalf of the IWCA, came in third behind Labour and the Tories with 294 votes, beating the Lib Dems and the Greens, both well-established at local level.

Though only a relatively new organisation, the IWCA has already carried out substantial work on the Blackbird Leys estate which explains how, in the words of one observer, "it came from nowhere," to take 9% of the vote cast.

Through campaigning and canvassing, particular areas of Blackbird Leys have become IWCA strongholds. This support is steadily spreading to other areas.

Friends have also been won through the numerous social activities organised by the local IWCA branch such as the now regular trips to France and Belgium and the upcoming visit to Alton Towers. The ongoing childrens cinema project is also a very popular feature in the IWCA's repertoire.

Feedback from the IWCA's newspaper, *Leys Independent*, has also seen a sharp increase since the beginning of this year thus encouraging more people to become involved in the IWCA.

Outwith the election, the IWCA has been the focus of recent media attention since, at the request of local residents, it has issued a press release highlighting two areas of the estate where tenants are being forced to endure heroin dealers as neighbours.

All the local papers carried articles on the subject in which the IWCA was quoted and BBC *Radio Oxford* featured a very sympathetic interview with the IWCA's Stuart Craft on a walkabout of the afflicted areas. Residents were very pleased with Craft's performance on the show on which he took to task the authorities for their lack of interest in the concerns of Blackbird Leys' residents.

Craft left housing chief, David Trewsdale, and Thames Valley Police to respond to the allegation that they are colluding on a policy of containment against the decent majority on Blackbird Leys and handing dealers and anti-social elements a licence to do as they please as long as they only do it on the estate. For many listeners the allegations were unconvincingly refuted by the authorities.

The IWCA's solution to the heroin dealing problem is straightforward.

Arguing that the housing authorities, often knowingly, house dealers and anti-social elements on the estate, the IWCA says the sole responsibility for the removal of those elements lies squarely with the same housing authorities. Further, tenants

pay rent to their landlord not just for bricks and mortar but also for a safe and decent environment in which to live. The landlords are not delivering. The IWCA intends to make them.

The housing authorities claim it is the tenants themselves who have the responsibility to stand up in court and testify against the dealers thereby penalising the tenants twice - once by enforcing dealers and associated anti-social elements on them and secondly by asking them to put themselves at risk by testifying in court.

The IWCA says that if evidence is required it is the authorities' responsibility to gather it. In all the cases that Blackbird Leys' IWCA have highlighted, the dealers are clearly in breach of their tenancy agreements on a daily basis. If the will existed, the authorities would have no trouble removing them.

As the only organisation willing to raise these issues, the IWCA has gained a lot of respect on Blackbird Leys. This respect, sometimes hard won, is very important to the building of a sound foundation from which future IWCA victories will spring.

Below: IWCA Stewart Craft, as featured in the Oxford Mail



www.bliwca.fsnet.co.uk

they're interested when elections are coming up, hence the sight of police over the last few weeks, just happens to 'coincide' with the General Election".

Maybe local people agree with Labour councillor and Mayor Brian Eagling who believes "some verbal and physical abuse cannot be stopped." He also claimed "most of the young people are being blamed for things that has nothing to do with them". What was surprising however, was the various articles in the local press detailing how local councillors and the MP were coming together to discuss the problem with - Yes, you guessed it - the mobs of youths involved in the anti-social behaviour. This is of no surprise to us; once again local politicians only start to do something when there is an election around the corner. The IWCA rejects this, believing it is the right of all local people to live free from this type of anti-social behaviour.

A leaflet outlined that, "The IWCA has committed itself to work with local people in trying to find solutions that not only reduces problems like anti-social behaviour, but also involves local people so as we all can live without fear of attacks, vandalism and harassment. Some may ask what is different about the IWCA? Well IWCA activists live and come from Harold Hill - what effects you, affect us. We will be holding various meetings over the coming months in order to discuss the issues that local people want to see addressed;

look out for our adverts and come along"

HOUSING REPAIRS: GOT A PROBLEM? WE HAVE

Members of Harold Hill IWCA spent many weeks collecting names of local council tenants who were fed-up with the appalling housing repair service they were getting from Havering council. Over 400 tenants signed the petition, which was presented to the Labour Mayor of Havering Dennis O Flynn. The IWCA held a stall at Hilldene shops where dozens of local people signed the petition. Members of Hackney IWCA, who have been fighting for better housing services for local council tenants for sometime, joined Harold Hill IWCA on the day.

Harold Hill IWCA member Neil Stanton outlined why the IWCA had organised the petition "when the IWCA was formed we promised that we would be a different type of organisation than the political parties in this area. This meant we would actually listen to what issues and problems local people wanted highlighting and act, overwhelmingly the problem of housing repairs was the issue that came up time and again. This meant actually taking the time to visit tenants and discuss what needed doing. It is as simple as that".

'Nice to be back on the winning side'



'Sinn Féin are turning out the vote with almost military precision' commentators warned in the run up to Michelle Gildernew's victory in Bobby Sands old seat of Fermanagh and south Tyrone. What do you mean 'almost'? A. Shaw reports.

One of the factors that makes SF so electorally compelling is the knowledge that so many of those of formidable military reputations; 'players' in Brit-speak, are being firmly integrated within the political structures. People like Gerry Hanratty, 'Flash' McVeigh, Gerry McGeough are visibly all putting their shoulders to the wheel.

In north Belfast, it was Bic MacFarlane (OC in the Kesh during the hunger strikes) who along with Gerry Kelly had led the breakout from the Maze in 1983, who in the recent general election helped Kelly, now SF candidate, add another 25% to his total from 1997. In the 26 Counties, McGeough was coordinator of the successful No vote to the Nice treaty. While in Derry, the current mayor, SF's Cathal Crumley, actually served fourteen years for bombing the - town hall!

The thinking behind the transference was explained by Martina Anderson, in an article in *Republican News* last month, Anderson, who herself served thirteen years wrote: "those who tell us about being more of 'a military man' have become mere spectators during one of the most important periods in our struggle. I can tell you that the burden of responsibility on the majority of us who are actively pursuing this phase is much greater than the risks I took that ended me up in prison."

But what does tactical transition from guerrilla fighter to community rep mean in practical terms?

Well in the first place, for anyone who knows of the demeanour of politicians in the south of Ireland, the contrast with individuals who exude charisma, dynamism and more than anything, incorruptibility, could hardly find a greater contrast with the venality which motivates and permeates all aspects of government thinking in the 26 Counties.

The upshot, as bitter Republican foe Ruth 'Deadly Dudley' Edwards concedes, is that in the eyes of the voters, "Sinn Féin is cool; Sinn Féin is sexy; Sinn Féin is energetic, Sinn Féin is the future." Of course, she also adds that the Shinners are "fascist", thus attempting to convey the notion that the enterprise is driven by a ultra-nationalistic messianic zeal. It is true that SF are a nationalist party, and the only all-Ireland party, which lends its ambition to forge a 32 county Ireland a certain logic. However the real secret to Sinn Féin success - is that there is no secret. What to ambition, vision, and dedication, they have added are the two other prerequisites to success in the field of radical change; hard work, backed up by numbers.

Take North Belfast for instance. In that area alone in addition to Assembly member Gerry Kelly, SF have four councillors, run four advice centres, have eight cumann (branches) and hundreds of committed activists who work all year round. In Newry/Armagh the area is serviced by no less than 19 cumann.

In providing this constituency service in terms of advice and advocacy work, the

party is perfectly placed to build up its political intelligence profile on the constituency for electoral purposes. In addition to the standard donation from the salaries of Assembly members Conor Murphy and PatMcnamee, which was used to set up offices in Camlough and Armagh, the party from it's own resources, has opened new offices in Keady, Crossmaglen and Newry. The SDLP by contrast have a full-time office in Newry (donated by a local businessman) and a part-time office recently opened in Armagh.

Whereas during the recent election the SF team did three canvasses of the area, the SDLP had little in terms of campaign workers and were forced to hire a PR firm from the south to put up posters and deliver election material. Sinn Féin on the other hand had "hundreds" of cars to go out and lift Sinn Féin votes on the day itself. In the final few hours a fleet of 'Sinnfeinmobiles' would have scoured designated areas "knocking on doors" as one put it "like demented Mormons". 'To get the Brits out you have to get the vote out'.

Newry/Armagh is, remember, the seat of senior SDLP member and deputy to the first Minister, Seamus Mallon. The result? Mallon: 20,784; Conor Murphy, described as 'little known': 17,209. "That struggle was perhaps" as one reporter put it "the SDLP's nadir - worse even than Brid Rogers defeat." Why? They kept the seat didn't they? Yes, but for how long? For what is noticeably happening now is that as well as attracting new voters and previously non-voters, SF is also noticeably eating, for the first time, into the core SDLP support. Mallon's vote was down by almost 6% while Sinn Fein's was up nearly 10%. With less than 7% now separating the parties, what odds SF taking it next time round? Conor Murphy, lest you assume otherwise, is another former 'military man', who spent almost a decade in prison for the cause.

With the dust settled, not only had SF edged past the SDLP to become the largest nationalist party but with 21.7% of the North's vote Sinn Féin is now within five points of overtaking the UUP as the largest political party in the Six counties.

In some ways the SF role in the Nice referendum is even more significant. There, SF and allies, faced a united front of all the major political parties and - won. In political terms the 'constituencies where Nice was most roundly rejected were almost without exception those where the Sinn Fein analysis, delivered by an indefatigable team of local activists, has been attracting votes for years.' One such area was Kerry North 60.6% 'NOs'. It is here, alleged IRA Army Council stalwart Martin Ferris is expected to take a seat next time. The highest no vote was Dublin South-West where a Republican TD now seems but a matter of time.

In other arenas too, the Republicans have boxed in their opponents. Unionism at one time thought it could exploit decommissioning to exclude Sinn Fein. Then when in chagrin it collapsed the Assembly it served only to confirm the republican argument that 'Northern Ireland' is an untenable entity. In nationalist eyes, far from undermining support for Sinn Fein, this reality merely damaged the credibility of UUP partners, the moderate SDLP. As Malachai O'Doherty puts it: "The broad unionist plan now, to bring down the Executive for want of decommissioning can only bring closer the day when unionists have only Sinn Fein to barter with. While there is an Assembly there is at least a forum, in which the SDLP is still the larger nationalist party. The possibility of them being overtaken by Republicans there was not considered conceivable before 2003. It has already happened, and unionists are pursuing a strategy which could force an election to the Assembly in the autumn, in which Peter Robinson [DUP] may be elected First Minister with Gerry Adams as his deputy." Bad enough from their point of view, having a former IRA Belfast commander as deputy, but as O'Doherty points out "if unionism is fragmented, Adams may be First Minister"!

Currently the UUP have six MP's, Paisley's hardline DUP five, with SF on four. Typically, British commentators have tended to cast the growth of the DUP and SF as a sign of a growing polarisation within the Six Counties, but doing so, only by ignoring the fact that while the DUP are foam-flecked anti-Good Friday Agreement die-hards, SF is it's most sincerely committed advocate. Hardly surprising when the peace strategy, is in all its essential detail a republican construct.

Which is why when a reporter for *Radio Five Live* asked Adams if he was worried by the surge in support for the DUP, and the problems he might have in dealing with them, he just laughed: "I'm not worried. It's Tony Blair that will have to deal with them." Seeing the reporters confusion he added "These people want to ban line-dancing! - It's Tony Blair who should be worried."

An undeniably dynamic party, SF is also a progressive party. The avowed goal remains a 32 County Socialist Republic. More than anything it is from top to bottom a - working class party. An all round combination which makes it a 'sexy' party. It is also

deemed 'cool' in a Europe, where such soubriquets are generally associated with the likes of Haider, Fini and the far-right.

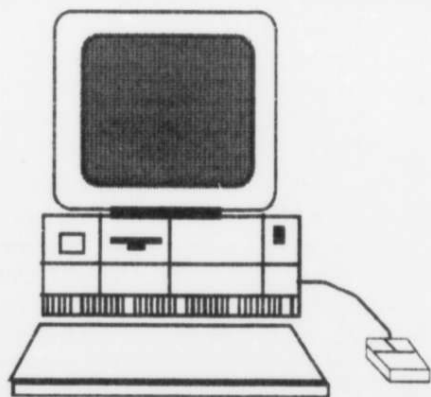
Writing in *The Sunday Telegraph* on July 1, even an obsessive adversary like journalist Kevin Myers, is forced, through gritted teeth admittedly, to recognise that "Sinn Fein-IRA is intellectually superior to most of their political opponents" and so for them "the peace process is a mere tactic within a strategy which has prepared for all possible contingencies." So while on one level, SF eclipse of the SDLP represents a strategic electoral victory; a fitting tribute to the military men and their flying machine, in the context of the times and of Europe, it is a working class victory. And for that alone, it is a victory in which we can all share.

While in no way denying, that like military strategies, electoral strategies can exact a high political price, for now at least, it's just nice to be back on the winning side.

PICTURES

Left: A delighted Michelle Gildernew becomes Sinn Fein's first woman MP in 80 years, fittingly reclaiming the seat of Fermanagh and South Tyrone on the 20th anniversary of the 1981 hunger-strikes.

Below: Sinn Fein activists. 'From top to bottom, a working class party!'



Red Action Online

"There are not too many places in the world where you're likely to find a discussion about why socialism failed. But here's one. Red Action is based in the UK where they lament that 'less than a decade ago, for those seeking change, Labour was the choice for hundreds of thousands of people.'

Not now. New Labour is determined to wipe the working class out politically. It comes as no surprise that Red Action is calling for action, to reclaim the left or what is left of it. Not content to sit and moan, the discussion area is filled with timely suggestions and copies of past and current bulletins are also featured."

**Review taken from: Altnet.org
(Independent News and Information)**

www.redaction.org



'THE DAY THE PANTOMIME HORSE BOLTED'

continued from page 3

only weeks previously. It is one of many miscalculations. The principle problem is that the ANL is not an anti-fascist organisation in the understood sense. It does not in itself seek physical confrontation with the far-right, indeed it condemns such activity, even when its own members are victims. Instead its whole strategy is based on 'pinning the Nazi label' on those targeted - via the media mostly, in that sense it is spectacularly ill-equipped to control or channel those elements who answer the call to 'smash the National Front' - but take the slogan literally. This lack of physical control and credibility at a street level is heightened, when among those who turn up are many, who denied authentic fascist targets, seem perfectly content to exercise their 'anti-fascism' in random and indiscriminate attacks against any people who 'look right'. In Bradford trouble was sparked by the presence in pub near the rally of National Front supporters. They may have been 'supporters' in a loose sense though even this is arguable, at least one witness described them as 'local Saturday afternoon drunks'. For the purposes of the riot, all that mattered was that they looked like they might have been. Justification enough these days it seems. But even if justified why then were they not properly dealt with as AFA stewards would have ensured happened?

The inability and reluctance of the SWP/ANL to properly organise their mobilisations, means that what has served the ANL perfectly well when dealing with Poly students, becomes seriously counter-productive when the invited audience are almost exclusively militant Muslims, possibly armed with an agenda, political or otherwise, all of their own. Local Labour MP Terry Rooney who actually spoke at the ANL rally, insists that a 'hard core' manipulated the situation. "Over the last five years we have had a battle for control over drugs in Bradford which this hard core has won."

Whatever the merits of the argument that it was the ANL who was manipulated, the fact remains, that the pacifistic solutions favoured by the ANL are deficient in a whole variety of

ways. For instance "petitions" a mainstay of ANL campaigning "are not likely to satisfy Asian youth. Retaliations will still occur, but in the absence of collaboration with more experienced anti-fascists, or accurate intelligence, they will and can only be arbitrary and indiscriminate." ('Trues Lies', *Red Action*, issue 71, 1995)

At the height of the riots one exasperated local Asian asked: "Where is the logic, where is the protest, where" he demanded "...is the National Front?" A prescient observation. Of the 'Nazis' the ANL would later claim were 'rampaging' the highest estimate put the number at 20, while the *Sunday Times* reported that a mere five 'Fronters' had been persuaded to turn back at the railway station. Such figures make the ANL headline that "2,000 defend Bradford" seriously surreal. Writing in *The Independent*, Ian Herbert describes the rioting as "a copybook National Front sting, and it left the more reflective among Bradford's teenage Asians wondering how on earth they fell for it. Just as in Oldham, one of the former mill towns to have burnt on sultry Saturday nights these six weeks past, the National Front stoked the fire days ago by announcing plans for a march. They knew full well it would be banned by the Home Secretary but it would serve the purpose of bringing out the white liberal Anti Fascist League in force with Asians and national television crews in tow".

As in Bradford, Oldham, Burnley and Bradford, the combination of ANL, young Asians and no fascists, has led to much random and indiscriminate activity. For liberals generally, the symbolic fire-bombing and gutting of the Manningham Labour Club may disabuse them of the idea that the rioters intentions are uniformly progressive. For the ANL, who follow, as they readily admit a 'liberal bourgeois agenda', their unique responsibility in events ought too to have given pause for thought. After all, high profile sponsors such as Labour Cabinet Minister Peter Hain can hardly be over overjoyed with tactics that produce results exactly opposite of those desired.

Headlines such as "Nazis rampage through

Bradford" can hardly hope to convince either when television pictures showed those doing the 'rampaging' to be almost exclusively Asian. Equally, "The cause of the violence in Bradford Oldham and Burnley lies solely with the Nazis and police inaction against them" is so absurd a statement it might have been designed to antagonise further an already seriously alienated white working class. It is possibly surpassed only by the comment of ANL supremo Julie Waterston that the whole affair; nine hours of rioting and £30 million worth of damage was the sole responsibility of the lone "C18 member" (unnamed incidentally) "who threw the first punch".

In all of this the ANL, up to now anyway, displays little awareness of the damage it is surely inflicting - on itself. It is for instance, unlikely the ANL will continue to get unconditional Cabinet Minister endorsement when it is perceived to be acting as a recruitment sergeant for the BNP. Labour MP Marsha Singh for one, has called for the "ANL to be banned" insisting the "price is too high". Another Labour MP Sion Simon, too denounces the role of the ANL: "one might have thought the supposed anti-Nazis would recognise their own leading role in bringing it [recruitment to the far-right] about as counterproductive." But not only is the ANL being brought into disrepute, but on a more fundamental level anti-fascist principles are being prostituted along with it. For example the impact of events on the core message, and on working class consciousness that 'fascism is the enemy of all', is taking a severe beating to no useful effect, when the political threat lies not with the NF 'stoking of fires', but with the BNP's ability to capitalise on them.

As both AFA and Red Action, have continually pointed out, this is where the strategic danger lies. Ever so reluctantly even *Searchlight* have come to recognise that it is the BNP - and only the BNP - who are benefiting from the NF-ANL political play-acting. If even now, the ANL cannot see the objective role they are playing, then the pantomime horse really has bolted, and it increasingly looks like it will require someone other than the SWP leadership to rein it in •

J. Reilly