

BEWARE!



MEDIA LIES FUEL RACISM

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EDITORIAL

FIGHT XENOPHOBIA AND THEREFORE RACISM

Whereas the rest of Europe has rabid racist demagogues like Jörg Haider and his Freedom Party to contend with, the UK, with no comparable far-Right electoral threat, has instead, the rampant xenophobia of its tabloid press to confront. But, while New Labour joins with its colleagues in the European Community to ostracise an Austrian coalition government which includes the Freedom Party, it reacts to the virulent xenophobia generated daily by the *Sun*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Evening Standard* by actively collaborating in it. For, whether it be in its reaction to Afghan hijackers or Roma beggars, what the tabloids say on asylum today, New Labour legislates on tomorrow.

There can be little doubt – as we report in this issue of CARF – that the media's xenophobic campaign against asylum-seekers has had a wider fall-out, as witnessed by escalating attacks on anyone perceived as foreign or different. Recent racially motivated attacks – from that on Chris Cotter, the white boyfriend of Ashia Hansen, to the brutal attack in Liverpool of Sunil Modi – have a ferocity which appals police and community activists alike. But, if anti-racists are to wage an effective fight in today's climate of vicious and palpable hate, then our primary targets must be the weavers of this new racist fabric who, even as they thread xenophobia into racism, deny that racism and xenophobia are warp and weft of the same cloth. The anti-racist fight today is a fight against xenophobia and, therefore, against racism. That xenophobia does not arise from an inborn fear of strangers but rather it grows out of the organised manipulation of people's prejudices. Whether it emanates from Haider or the *Sun*, from the tabloids or the far-Right populists, the current xenophobia provides an updated alibi for old discredited nationalisms. Xenophobia is, quite simply, a fundamentalist crusade against difference – all sorts of difference. ■

ACTUALLY, I USED TO BE A PASSIVE BEGGAR – BUT THEN I THOUGHT, WHAT THE HELL...



RACISM AT LEEDS

Leeds Football Club's chairman has admitted an increase in racist behaviour by fans since two Leeds players were charged with attacking Safraz Najeib (pictured right) in January. In fact racial tension was so high, that police had to warn Asians not to attend the match with Bradford City on 12 March. But despite appeals from the Najeib family, from the local Football Supporters' Association (which had built a strong anti-racist tradition) and from a delegation which included Neville Lawrence, Kick It Out and the National Civil Rights Movement, the Leeds Club refuses to suspend the two players until their case is heard. They would not play again if they were found guilty, the chairman conceded. Well, it might be hard to get to matches from a prison cell. ■



RACIAL VIOLENCE ON THE INCREASE

There is little doubt that, with the massive upsurge of xenophobia against asylum-seekers, the fall-out is affecting anyone perceived to be foreign or different.

New virulence

Recent attacks on black people have a ferocity which appals police and community organisers alike. On 4 March a 19-year-old Sudanese student, unconcernedly chatting to his white mate on a bus travelling through Wandsworth in south London, was suddenly stabbed in the stomach three times by a white youth brandishing a knife.

On 12 March Sunil Modi, a 32-year-old Asian scriptwriter from London, driving with his fiancée from Liverpool town centre to his sister's house in Aigburth, was forced off the road and then ambushed by four white people. Sunil was dragged from the car, his face smashed with a beer can as he was pulled towards a metal fence with his attackers shouting 'spike him, put the Paki's head on a spike'. The attack left him with cuts under each eye, damage to the back of one eye, bruises and swelling to the head, multiple fractures to his nose, a broken cheek bone, bite marks to his hand and bruises to the upper arms.

The attack on 21 March on Chris Cotter, boyfriend of black triple-jumper. Ashia Hansen, made the headlines because both are well-known. But the frenzied stabbing of Cotter underlines a deep race hatred. Not only was Cotter told during the attack that he should have heeded warnings 'not to mix with niggers', but the attackers even sent a letter after the attack threatening to make sure he was killed the next time.

White heartlands

Granted, the press is now far more sensitised to the issue of racial violence and reports more attacks. A few years ago it would have been unthinkable that *The Express* would lead with a race-hate story, and the ordeal of Sunil Modi, which was in national and regional papers alike, cannot be unique. It is hard to tell whether we are getting to hear about more attacks or



attacks are actually on the increase. But a new worrying pattern does seem to be emerging. There is a kind of unspoken segregation growing up in conurbations. In white working-class heartlands, no-go areas for black people are being created. Mr Modi strayed into one in Liverpool. Ashia Hansen lived in one – Erdington – where retrenchment from the Dunlop factory has increased white resentment. In Bermondsey – a very white enclave in a poor region of south east London – police have, in the past two months, been battling against a 150-strong gang of white children who are consistently attacking the few black residents of the Rennie estate.

Across the UK

Racial violence has not just moved up a gear in England. In Scotland, two anti-racist workers, both members of the Lothian Racial Equality Council, have recently been attacked. In February racists fire-bombed the car of Shami Khan; in March, Faysol Chaudry was the victim of a racially-aggravated road rage incident. Two black families have been forced out of Edinburgh

housing estates because of harassment. The Race Equality Council in Edinburgh has reported a rise, over the nine months to December 1999, of 94 per cent in assaults and 56 per cent in verbal abuse and threats. It is calling on the police to set up a specialised racial incident task force. In South Wales, where such a special task force was set up, the police believe that the 185 per cent rise in recorded racial incidents proves that the community now has confidence in the police. (Obviously, it also shows a very worrying level of racism!)

Task Force raid

Since the Lawrence inquiry, many campaigners have been cynical about the police's supposed commitment to tackling racial crime. It has all been talk about target indicators with few results on the ground. But on 24 March, the Met's Racial and Violent Crimes Task Force, drawing on the slow, painstaking intelligence on racial harassment gathered by the Met's 32 Community Safety Units, carried out its first large-scale operation. In dawn raids on homes in Newham, Staines, Hounslow, Richmond, Dagenham, Barnet, Brent, Greenwich, Havering, Islington and Reading, one hundred people were arrested for offences including racially aggravated criminal damage, grievous bodily harm, distributing racist literature and threats to kill. Over thirty people have been charged with racial offences. ■

SURGE IN ANTI-SEMITISM

In March the Community Security Trust, which monitors anti-Semitic attacks in the UK, recorded an increase in attacks of over 16 per cent in the last year. These included 33 physical assaults, almost double the number for the previous year.

Over the last two years, tabloid attacks on asylum-seekers have grown in frequency and ferocity, spreading from the open hatred of local newspapers in Dover to national press 'exposés' of spurious refugee crime waves. In March this year, with the government's asylum-seeker dispersal plans set to take effect and with this year's round of council tax increases being announced, the tabloids seized the opportunity to turn the asylum issue into a national populist cause. With nobody to oppose the daily stream of tabloid scaremongering, least of all the government, a new strain of xenophobia has become part of an everyday 'common sense' way of thinking about new arrivals. And this xenophobia easily spills over and mixes with the racism that longer established black communities already face.

Stop This Bogus Tabloid

THROUGHOUT the summer of last year, asylum-seekers staying on the Folkestone Road in Dover faced harassment and violence. In one incident, three young Kurdish men were rammed by a car and beaten with an iron bar. Schoolchildren were regularly beaten or stoned on their way home. In nearby Folkestone, an Afghan boy was beaten up at school, while another youth was dragged from his house, attacked with a hammer and hospitalised. Many asylum-seekers have been forced out of their homes after threats and intimidation. A family who run a shop on the Buckland estate were twice on the receiving end of arson attacks. They were not asylum-seekers but, because they were Asian, were targeted by mobs who were now simply out to inflict injury on anyone 'foreign'.

Anita Chaudry (not her real name) is a young Asian woman who runs a small hotel on the Folkestone Road in Dover. When, on a Saturday night in July last year, a group of Kosovans were once again set upon and beaten up outside a nearby pub, she decided enough was enough. She intervened and pushed the assailant away and was hit herself. She followed the gang to the pub hoping to keep track of them until the police turned up. By now a crowd had gathered but none intervened as one of the gang threw beer over Anita before smashing the glass and trying to slash her face. Anita was then pushed in front of an oncoming car which braked to avoid hitting her.

By the time the police arrived, the assailant had tried to flee through the pub garden. Anita went after him and was punched in the face, while the police were hanging about inside. It was only around 30 minutes later that Anita was able to identify her attackers and the police made arrests. But one of those they arrested was a Kurdish victim of two attacks who tried to defend himself the second time. Later, in November, two Pakistani men from Manchester were

attacked outside the same pub after being mistaken for asylum-seekers.

Events such as these in Dover are the result of over a year of local newspaper scaremongering, which has included editorials telling readers to 'wash this human sewage down the drain' (*Dover Express*, 1 October 1998). As the government's policy of dispersing asylum-seekers around the country is clumsily implemented and the national tabloids launch equally virulent hate campaigns, the scenes which we have witnessed in Dover are now set to repeat themselves across the country.

Thrybergh, a small village near Rotherham, south Yorkshire, has seen the first example of a residents' campaign to prevent a hostel from being built to house asylum-seekers. The villagers are angry that the hostel is to be built near accommodation for the elderly. According to a local parish councillor, 'these are elderly people, nervous of what is going to happen. People have read stories about beggars and armed gangs.' In St. Leonard's, Hastings, after a woman was raped by men described as having 'foreign accents' and 'eastern European' appearances, the tabloids opened another assault on refugees in general, who were now all potential rapists.

In Sheffield, a young Asian student was viciously beaten up in February and left unconscious in the city centre, after being mistaken for a Kosovan refugee. His story, like Anita Chaudry's, never made it to the national press.

'Britain is not a racist society, as our long and humane record of accepting genuine refugees proves. Yet it would be irresponsible not to recognise the damage to good race relations threatened by the sheer numbers now arriving.'

Daily Mail, 1 March 2000

'This is not an extreme country. Just the opposite, in fact. But even the fairest-minded nation has its breaking point. And Britain has reached it.'

Sun, 14 March 2000

OFFICIALLY immigration has not been an issue in mainstream British politics since the 1979 general election. Indeed one of the proclaimed virtues of the British state system, we are told, is the absence of the race card played in other European parliaments. We British, the argument runs, are above that sort of narrow nationalism and our political system is weighted against such extremism. Yet, what is different about British politics is not the absence of an anti-immigrant nationalism, but the cultivation of that nationalism by the tabloid press, rather than by an organised far-Right political party of the kind that has been successful in France or Austria. The British state's peculiarly antique system of paternal, centralised and opaque power creates a legitimacy gap between state and citizen. As if to fill this gap, the tabloids insert themselves between the people and government, claiming to represent the ordinary 'man in the street' in a system which otherwise favours rule from above.

END THE HARASSMENT

In an important test case under the Prevention of Harassment Act, a judge demanded an undertaking from the *Daily Mail* that its journalists would stop harassing the Kinewa family, asylum-seekers from Algeria. *Mail* journalists will no longer be able to camp outside their house or follow them in their activities and further reports on the family will have to be cleared with a judge. ■

.....
THE POVERTY TRAP ■ A single parent asylum-seeker gets vouchers worth £36.54 per week for all living needs except housing ■ This amount is reduced for those in bed and breakfast, or receiving any assistance from anywhere ■ A one-off voucher worth £50 is paid after six months ■ Failure to disclose changes in circumstances (including pregnancy, cohabitation, separation, hospitalisation and death) can lead to suspension or termination of support ■ 'Intentional destitution' or being absent without leave from designated accommodation can lead to suspension or termination of support

Nationalism

This surrogate 'voice of the people' speaks the language of an insular 'us and them' nationalism, which infects the entire public sphere and both the two main political parties. The same distorting effect which the far-Right parties in Europe achieve, dragging the whole political spectrum in an anti-immigrant direction, is achieved in Britain, more subtly, politely and with less opposition. Whereas others might pursue the familiar nationalist call of 'France for the French', Anglo-British nationalism takes the form of arguing that 'our English tolerance' protects us against such 'foreign nationalist excesses', but that, even against our own natural instincts, we must not become a 'soft touch' as compared to other European countries. And while far-Right political parties can be fought politically by those who oppose them, newspaper editors are a more difficult target. They are only accountable to their shareholders and the corporations which own them. They claim to speak on behalf of ordinary people yet they are not tied to any democratic process. Furthermore because a small band dominate the mainstream arenas of debate, their populism goes unchallenged.

'There is absolutely no reason for any asylum-seeker to be begging on the streets; they are provided with enough to live on.'

Home Office spokesperson,
March 2000

Previous 'immigrants gained acceptance by working harder than the locals. That's why the rash of baby-toting Romanian beggars rubs the nation up the wrong way. Britain became a successful multi-racial country because the newcomers were ready to graft'

Tony Parsons, *Daily Mirror* column,
13 March 2000

ACCORDING to the tabloid press, natives of this land have been taken for a ride by a conspiracy of soft-hearted liberal officials, other western European countries (who have dumped their asylum problem on us) and 'money-grabbing gypsies'. The nation is on its knees. Faced with this message on an almost daily basis, few politicians have dared to contradict it with more realistic accounts of what is actually happening. The only voice of opposition has been the concerned broadsheet liberals. But their arguments have looked increasingly feeble in the face of week after week of 'gypsy beggars fund wealthy lifestyle' headlines.

In the perverse world of tabloid nationalism, all prophecies are self-fulfilling. The people are told that their threshold of tolerance has been breached; as a result, tolerance runs into short supply. The government bars asylum-seekers from working for at least the first six months (though the economy needs more workers); tabloid columnists claim that they are lazy. Their very deprivations are turned around in the tabloids and thrown back at them as if they themselves had chosen to be ostracised from normal society - 'they're not hard-working', 'they're different from the rest of us', 'they go around in gangs'.

The anti-asylum-seeker message has been repeated enough times, with so few opposing viewpoints, that it is now accepted as a perfectly natural view to hold. It is now the norm to think that there is a natural 'fear of strangers', that xenophobia is an 'understandable response' to the 'huge numbers' now arriving. It is not just that these extreme views circulate freely, but that their extremism is no longer noticed. The right-wing idea of a 'threshold of tolerance' has become accepted wisdom. Indeed the idea seems to be behind the government's policy of dispersal as a solution to the 'asylum problem', as if the problem were simply due to too many 'foreign elements' gathered in one place. Inevitably, once these views take hold, they

'TIME TO KICK THE SCROUNGERS OUT'

And here's yet another truck load

HUNT FOR REFUGEE RAPISTS

60,000 SEEKING LONDON ASYLUM

eggar me ... Dorinuta coins it in yesterday

FURY AT

sprees

REFUGEE

BRITAIN'S HAD ENOUGH

Migrant crime

Villagers in fear a

Romanians escape

HANDOUTS

THE SUN SAYS

Bogus claim

ASYLUM BILL

ROCKETS

...and taxpayers may pick up

part of the cost

also risk dislodging whatever gains have been won by longer established black communities. Violence against 'gypsies' all too easily spills over into generalised violence against all non-white communities, as we have already seen in Dover and Sheffield.

'We need deportations on a huge scale.'

Sun, 9 March 2000

'We're the laughing stock of Europe.'

Sun, 9 March 2000

LABOUR and Conservative administrations have jointly forged immigration policies which are as extremist and excessive as anything passed on the other side of the English channel. The shared consensus across the two main UK parties is that asylum-seekers effectively constitute a criminal community which ought to be dealt with as a law and order problem. This consensus survived New Labour's coming to power in 1997 and since then has, if anything, become more embedded in state practice. But this has not been enough to satisfy the tabloids. Thanks to their campaign, Labour Party focus groups are now warning that asylum is the third most serious concern of voters. As a result, government and opposition politicians compete in a ritual of who can be the toughest on asylum, as if to put on a show of genuine democratic disagreement on the issue, while in reality the basic direction of UK immigration laws has

been set in stone by the British state for some years. With the fundamentals of asylum policy already agreed, only the details remain to be thrashed out. Announcements by politicians are otherwise purely designed to placate the tabloids. To the current New Labour government, which has made 'modernisation' its mission statement, this regressive pandering to nationalism is also a way of compensating, a way of reassuring middle England that enough of the old Britain is still in place.

There is no better example of this than the Home Office's recent announcement that new powers are being looked at to clamp down on 'gypsy beggars'. The announcement came after an intense campaign led by the Sun under the headline 'Britain has had enough'. The Sun celebrated the announcement as a victory for its readers, yet the police admitted that they could not imagine what new powers could be brought in which they did not already have. All the announcement amounted to, then, was a decision to 'fast-track' convicted beggars through the asylum claim process and get them out of the country as quickly as possible. But, as even the *Telegraph* later pointed out (20 March 2000), there was something hollow in this – whether or not an asylum claim is genuine does not depend on the behaviour of the claimant, especially when they are forced to live on thirty per cent less than an already inadequate level of benefit. Furthermore, it will only be a short while before



Another Home Office minister caught aggressively begging for votes in middle-class suburbs.

tabloid-nationalism returns to the issue demanding yet more action, when, as is inevitable, the recent government 'initiatives' turn out not to have had the intended effect. And each frenzy of tabloid rage takes us further down the path of xenophobic madness.

The bogus nationalism of the tabloids has to be stopped. ■

MURDERS UPDATE

FERNANDES FAMILY FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Edgar Fernandes' alleged killer is currently on trial in Malta. Edgar, CARF readers will remember, was murdered for his passport while on holiday in Turkey. It was Edgar's family who tracked down his body to an Istanbul morgue, and who found the killer using Edgar's credit cards and passport in Malta. Unbelievably, the man now on trial in Malta faces not a murder charge but charges relating to credit card and passport fraud. Malta refuses to extradite the man to Turkey and the British government refuses to get involved. ■



Edgar Fernandes

Please write to Baroness Scotland to pressure the government to act: Foreign Office Minister, FCO, King Charles Street, London SW1A 2AH. Fax: 020 7270 2148. Also: The Fernandes Family, 41 Oval Road, London NW1 8HB.

JOSEPH ALCENDOR

In March, 31-year-old Leo Kearney was convicted of manslaughter after killing 61-year-old Joseph Alcendor with one punch. Joseph was at a birthday party in Kilburn which Kearney gatecrashed. Asked to leave, he became violent, attacking Alcendor and an Asian man at the party. ■

MENSON OFFICERS INVESTIGATED

Cambridge police are investigating the 11 officers whose bungled inquiries into Michael Menson's death led to their assertion that it was suicide, not racist murder. The PCA asked Cambridge police to investigate after the Menson family complained. ■

Justice for Michael Menson, c/o The Monitoring Group, 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex. UB2 5AA. Tel: 020 8843 2333

NAIL BOMBER CONFESSES

In February, 23-year-old David Copeland admitted causing explosions in Brixton, Brick Lane and Soho. He pleaded guilty to the manslaughter of the three killed in the Soho bombing, claiming diminished responsibility. The trial was adjourned until June. ■

MCGOWAN: POLICE U-TURNS

Police admitted that Jason McGowan and his uncle Errol were probably murdered and launched a major investigation at the end of March. ■

Beat the clock

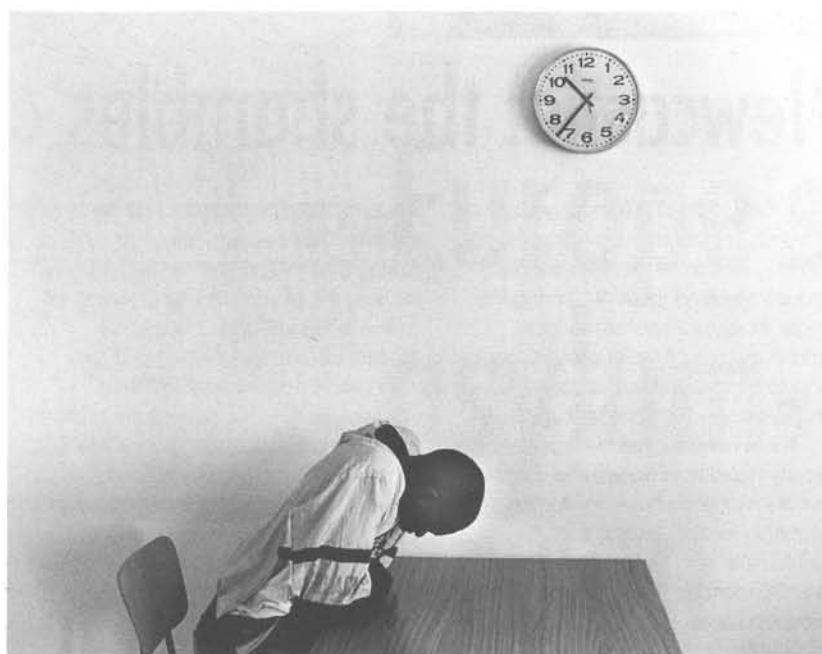
REMEMBER the old Bruce Forsyth game where a large stopwatch was set ticking while contestants had to perform a number of silly activities at breakneck speed? Well, it seems Bruce Forsyth is running the asylum directorate at the Home Office. New arrivals are being given a 20-page questionnaire (all in English, needless to say) about their asylum claim. They are told they must complete and return the form within two weeks. Then they're sent off to reception centres and dispersed around the country, to places where there are no lawyers and no interpreters and no one who has the faintest idea how to fill in an asylum questionnaire.

Eventually, if they're lucky, someone sends them to a law centre or a citizens' advice bureau where a worker knows what to do and has a couple of hours free in the next few weeks to help with the form. If they're even luckier, an interpreter can be found who isn't completely booked up for the next three months.

By then, the two weeks are long gone. Before the long-awaited form-filling appointment comes round, the asylum-seeker is sent a letter from the Home Office. It says: 'You have taken an unreasonably long time to provide details of your asylum claim. Your application is refused.'

Kafka lives!

It gets worse. The form also doubles as an appointment card. Asylum-seekers are instructed to come to the Home Office at Croydon for an interviewer – bringing all the children with them. The asylum-seeker is hundreds of miles away from Croydon by the time the interview date comes round. The authority which has sent the asylum-seeker and the family to Liverpool (or Leeds or Newcastle) refuses to bear the cost of travel to the interview – as does the new authority. But contacting the Home Office to reschedule the appointment is impossible: the form contains no phone or fax number, and telephone callers to the Home Office asylum directorate at Croydon are told (if they get through at all) that the



Andreas Herzau/bair

caseworker's phone number is not available. Letters to the Home Office receive no response. But out of the blue, the notice arrives telling the asylum-seeker the claim has been refused for failure to attend the interview.

It will get worse still. From October, when the new appeal provisions come in, the asylum-seeker who is refused for 'non-compliance' (the technical term for failing to complete and return the evidence form, or to attend an interview under these circumstances) will forfeit the right of appeal.

Court supports Home Office

What happens to the asylum-seeker (who might have had a lawyer in London) whose claim is rejected, who becomes destitute (because benefits are stopped) and is then dispersed? Unable to find representation for their appeal in the dispersal area, asylum-seekers would seek adjournment of the appeal. But now, such applications are being rejected. In March, the Court of Appeal heard an application for judicial review by an asylum-seeker from Camerouns, whose appeal was rejected after he had been forced to present his own case, through an interpreter. But the judges rejected his argument that his appeal should have been adjourned to give him time to find a new lawyer after being dispersed from London.

Speed over fairness

The courts are adopting a noticeably impatient attitude towards asylum-seekers' rights to fair procedures. It is almost as if they have been asked to do their bit to help Jack Straw keep his

promise – that by April 2001 the time taken to process an asylum claim will be down to two months, with the appeal process taking another four months in total. Refugee lawyers believed this timescale was impossible. But they had reckoned without the Home Office's determination to prioritise speed over any semblance of fairness. In February immigration minister Barbara Roche was celebrating the fact that over 1,800 decisions are being taken a week, more than has ever been achieved before. But the proportion of positive decisions has dropped by ten per cent – from 40 to 30 per cent of asylum-seekers.

Limbo for refugees

The speed in refusing new asylum claims makes a bitter contrast with the inordinate delay in granting status to refused asylum-seekers who succeed on appeal. CARF recently received a desperate email from a refugee who had been waiting months for a travel document to enable him to visit a sick relative in France. His is one of hundreds of cases where the Home Office fail to implement positive decisions from courts, leaving those found to be genuine refugees in limbo for many months: unable to travel for want of a travel document (since they cannot travel on their national passport), ineligible for benefits until they obtain official documentation from the Home Office, often unable to get work for lack of proof of eligibility and deprived of resident status for educational grants. Now a number of refugees-in-waiting have launched a test case in the High Court, seeking compensation for the delay. ■

HOUSING ■ 1

Newcastle: the shambles of dispersal

AT A PUBLIC MEETING in Newcastle on 8 March, representatives from a number of refugee, community and support groups resolved to work to bring the plight of asylum-seekers to local attention, to fight racist press coverage and to campaign against compulsory dispersal and the voucher system.

There used to be lots of decent empty housing in Newcastle. No work, but a lot of good housing. It was probably for that reason that Newcastle, with Gateshead, Tyneside and Sunderland, was designated a reception area. But no-one told the local authority to save the houses, and the streets and streets of two- or three-bedroomed houses with their own gardens have been demolished. Now, as local papers run headlines like 'Asylum-seekers spark housing crisis warning', new arrivals are being put into old nurses' homes, crumbling damp old blocks, into ex-council blocks like Angel Heights (the company which owns hostels in Leeds) and into hard-to-let council blocks in North Tyneside and in the West End, where the bail hostels and the drug and alcohol halfway houses are. There, they

become sitting targets for hostility and racism. They become 'they': 'they're taking over the nurses' home', 'they're all over the estate'. The BNP has been active in Sunderland, distributing leaflets door-to-door which say 'We don't want asylum-seekers here'.

According to the *Newcastle Journal*, there are around 2,000 asylum-seekers in the north-east, mainly from the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East and Africa. Another 5,000 are scheduled to arrive in the course of the year. Private landlords are cashing in. Some are not handing over the cash and vouchers due to the asylum-seekers, claiming that they're 'waiting for Kent to send the money'. Others are making more money by feeding the asylum-seekers in-house, employing one person to do all the cooking, cleaning and shopping for the block. The cooking is monotonous, chilli-hot (on the basis that the asylum-seekers, being foreign, must like spicy food) and inedible. Some distribute the second-hand clothes collected by church groups to give the impression that they're providing the clothes themselves – 'giving added value', in the jargon. But

in some hostels, asylum-seekers can't bathe or shower or use the washing machine without permission. Those getting vouchers have to walk miles – literally – to the designated supermarket (Kwiksave or Tesco) to use them. Some supermarkets won't accept the vouchers on the fruit and meat counters.

There is a dire shortage of interpreters, doctors and lawyers who can provide help. There has been no attempt to train doctors in how to deal with patients who have suffered torture. Teachers specialising in refugee education can't find the children because the information is not centrally available. A law centre worker was rung up and asked to represent asylum-seekers recently arrived in a hostel. When she asked how many needed representation, she was told 200.

Workers in housing, education, health care and law are saying that the way dispersal has been implemented in the north-east is a shambles. But the statutory agencies claim that it's all going according to plan. Whose plan? Campaigners want to know. ■

Contact Newcastle Law Centre 0191 230 4777

HOUSING ■ 2

No welcome in Oxford

SINCE MARCH the advice and support work of Asylum Welcome in Oxford has been undermined by the media's fixation with how much it costs to provide emergency accommodation to an estimated 1,300 asylum-seekers, most of whom become the county council's responsibility after disembarking from lorries and being picked up at service stations along the M40.

It all started in early March when the *Times*, the *Daily Mail* and the *Oxford Mail* focused on 'unscrupulous landlords'. These papers warned that Mohammed Faruq, who owns Mair Property Services, was set to make a profit of up to £2 million, as the sole provider of emergency accommodation for asylum-seekers in Oxford. But while Oxford City Council's environmental

officer was concerned by the health and safety risks asylum-seekers faced in dilapidated private property, the media's sympathies were with the long-suffering Oxford taxpayer who was footing Faruq's bills.

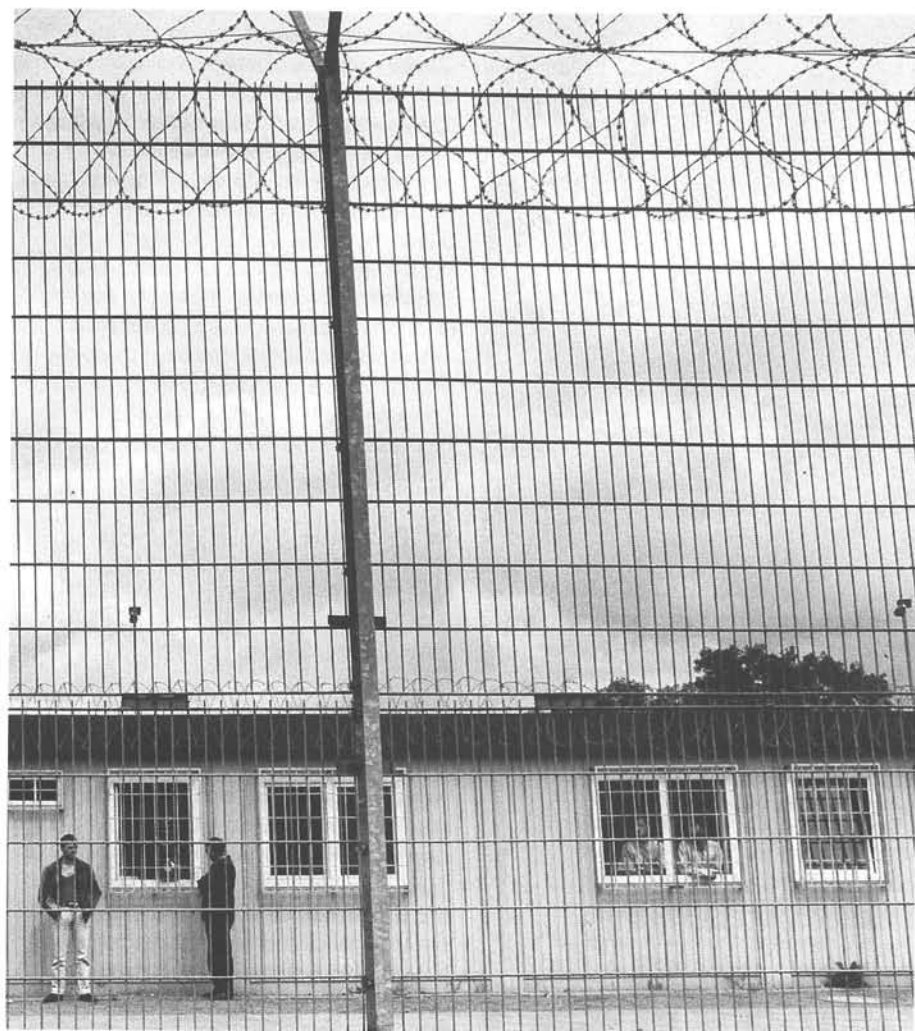
Integration or isolation?

Oxford Mail editor Patrick Fleming wrote of 'floods of refugees from eastern Europe swamping Oxford and costing the city a small fortune' and established a special phone line for readers to report 'landlords cashing in on the crisis'. While in parliament Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesperson, Simon Hughes, was urging Tony Blair to stop Straw and the Home Office fanning prejudices against asylum-seekers, local Liberal Democrat

MP Evan Harris was quoted in the press warning of Fagin-style gangs of asylum-seekers, some as young as 5, travelling up from London to engage in 'aggressive begging'. Soon the *Oxford Mail* was receiving letters expressing sentiments like 'Put our own people first' and 'Charity begins at home'.

Then the leader of the Conservative group on Oxfordshire County Council announced his backing for a cost-cutting proposal to create a 'separate town for asylum-seekers', isolated from the rest of the community at the Upper Heyford former RAF base. Already Oxford is home to the Campsfield detention centre. If the NASS backs Upper Heyford, will this provide decent open accommodation or will it be just a half-way house between accommodation and detention? ■

Europe's asylum-prison complex



Detention centre for rejected asylum-seekers in Hamburg

IT'S THE BEGINNING OF MARCH and 100 people have gathered in Cambridge's central marketplace to oppose the opening of Britain's latest detention centre at a former military barracks in Oakington, north-west of Cambridge. On 20 March, activists from Cambridgeshire Against Refugee Detention gather again, this time outside the detention centre itself as the first disoriented internees, including women and children, arrive from UK ports and airports. As demonstrators attempting to block the gates tussle with police, seven activists are arrested.

Welcome to Oakington – welcome to Europe's latest anti-detention campaign.

A secret system

Many European countries already have a fully-blown detention system for asylum-seekers. And each national system contributes to a Euro-wide system of control, an asylum-prison complex which has various constituent parts. The first stop is often the application centres which fast-track new arrivals, then come the special holding centres to intern 'problem applicants' and finally there are the discrete prisons close to airports, where rejected asylum-seekers are held pending deportation. From the Granja Agricola and Calamoccaro

camps in the North African Spanish enclaves of Melilla and Ceuta, to the Steenokkerzeel detention centre 127 bis (Brussels), Glasmoor (Hamburg), Opbouw (Holland), Via Corelli (Italy) to Campsfield and Harmondsworth, the names of such detention centres are synonymous with repression and human rights abuse. In countries like Germany, Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, where the imprisonment of asylum-seekers at different stages of the asylum process seems to be most systematised, there is a nucleus of grassroots monitoring groups – some large, some small – committed to exposing the secrecy and lack of accountability that lie at the heart of the asylum prison system. Groups like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch are being drawn in to addressing Europe's democratic deficit. For instance, AI has pointed out that Belgium may be violating standards set by the UN for the scrutiny of all persons under any form of detention, in appointing at least one director of an aliens' detention centre onto a Monitoring Committee.

The democratic deficit

While grassroots campaigns are clear that the goal is no less than the closure of all asylum and immigrant detention centres, it is worth pausing to consider how a situation came

about whereby asylum prisons mushroomed while protection of even basic human rights and civil liberties declined. Unbelievably, there seems to be no forum or committee within the European parliament engaged in democratic scrutiny. Close Down Campsfield's Bill MacKeith, who is organising a pan-European conference in September to bring together European detention monitoring groups, has been trying to tease out information from European parliamentarians, but so far with scant success. Tony Bunyan, editor of Statewatch, told CARF that the issue of detention comes under the jurisdiction of the Committee of Citizens' Freedoms and Rights (Justice and Home Affairs) which is presently locked in battle with the European Council over the secrecy of its decision-making on asylum issues. This committee has recommended to the Council the creation of an Immigration Monitoring Centre to oversee asylum and immigration policy – although no specific mention is made of detention centres.

The UK agenda

Certainly, Oakington is a prelude to the development of a more systematised asylum detention system within the UK. The government instructed the immigration and



S. O'Neill

There are asylum detention centres all over Europe, and there are protests all over Europe too. Above, **England**: protest against opening of Oakington detention centre. Below, **Italy**: anti-detention demonstrators face police in Genoa. **Belgium**: postcard campaign to close notorious Centre 127bis. **Germany**: a demonstration against detention centre in Ingelheim

prison services to carry out a major review of existing facilities in 1999 in the light of international condemnation of the UK practice of placing asylum-seekers within mainstream prisons, in violation of international standards. Oakington is a result of the review, as is the transformation of Aldington prison, near Ashford, into a special detention centre (to take immigration detainees from HMP Rochester) and the commandeering of one wing of South Yorkshire's Lindholme prison for use as an immigration detention centre, providing 112 places. Victoria Tennant of the Law Centre Northern Ireland does not anticipate the government opening a special detention centre for asylum-seekers in Northern Ireland as immigration minister Barbara Roche has already indicated that the numbers do not warrant a purpose built centre. So they will, presumably, remain detained in Magilligan and Maghaberry prisons.

More countries follow

Other countries are following suit. Norwegian asylum groups are fighting a proposal to build a special detention centre close to Oslo airport to hold asylum-seekers whose claims have been rejected as well as those who arrive without identity papers. And on 20 March – the UN International Day of Action Against Racism – the Irish Anti-Racist Campaign demonstrated in Dublin against Taoiseach, Bertie Ahern's proposal to intern new arrivals in line with the so-called 'Australian model' of interning all 'illegal entrants' (condemned by UNHCR as a violation of international law). In Australia, detainees, mostly Iraqis and Afghans, are held in guarded compounds.

Italy fights back

Across Europe, the internment of asylum-seekers is being opposed. The year 2000

started with a new militancy in Italy. Some 20,000 people demonstrated in Milan and there were extraordinary scenes in Sicily when 3,000 people stormed the Serraino Vulpitta centre, leading to 27 arrests. Detention is relatively new in Italy. Under the Turco-Napolitano immigration law of 1998, eleven detention centres were established, many administered by the Red Cross. Intolerable living conditions were at their worst in the North where containers, stifling hot in summer and freezing in winter, were used to intern non-EU 'illegals', supposedly for no more than 30 days while their asylum claims were processed. At the Ponte Galeria camp in



Rome, there were flea and scabies infestations and outbreaks of food poisoning. A parliamentarian found 'signs that inmates had been beaten and walls were spattered with dry blood'. After one detainee died at Ponte Galeria after being denied medical treatment, and a further four perished in a fire during a riot at Serraino Vulpitta (and two more died later as a result of their injuries), the scene was set for a major confrontation with the Italian state. Following the dramatic protests, Milan's Via Corelli and Brindisi's Francavilla Fontana have been closed down as the government announced a charter of living conditions to 'guarantee safety and human dignity'. In a sharp rebuke to the Red Cross, other charities have refused to be drawn into the administration of such centres, saying that they will play no part in repression.

Pan-European priorities

Italian campaigners provide inspiration not just by their actions but by their ability to inject much-needed political arguments into the asylum debate. For example, they clearly link the fight for asylum rights to the struggle against neo-liberal political and economic policies globally – policies that are displacing millions of people and creating refugees. The noborder network, which strengthened its links at the alternative meeting to the EU summit at Tampere, also believes that protests against detention centres provide the chance to voice a new politics. Noborder's Florian Schneider, who was asked by the Dutch organisation v2 to prepare a photographic exhibition for the Rotterdam Foto Biennale, launched a website on 1 April where campaigners can download pictures and text on Europe's detention centres. He told CARF that the new developments are heartening.



'Wherever there is a new prison under construction, immediately groups campaign. While the tradition of monitoring is a brand new thing, the internet now provides us with the tools we need to link up the grassroots campaigns into a pan-European network.'

Scrutiny not secrecy

What is at issue is not detention but internment. And internment, normally associated with states of emergency (most recently used in Europe during the 1991 Gulf War) is being brought in surreptitiously. From Italy to Germany and the UK, politicians are constructing a whole discourse of humbug and lies to mask their prison programme, describing detention centres not so much as prisons as hotels (yes, the Home Office says Oakington is a hotel!) and depicting inmates not as prisoners but guests. But it is a strange hotel that denies its guests the right to leave the premises or even move around buildings without an escort of private security guards. In some of these so-called 'hotels', children – denied an education – are locked up for 24 hours a day, leading Belgian doctors to warn that children at Brussels' Steenkerke have been psychologically damaged. In which hotels do inmates regularly attempt suicide or 'riot' because they lack fresh water (Serrano Vulpitta), or because they are dosed with drugs to stop them making trouble (Ponte Galeria), or because they are regularly beaten and brutalised by guards (Ceuta and Melilla) or because they are denied the right to communicate with the outside world (almost everywhere)?

Internment = xenophobia

As our Italian colleagues point out, it is not emotive to describe detention centres as 'laagers' or 'concentration camps' because once you imprison, not individuals who have committed a specific crime, but a whole social group who have committed no offence at all – save the crime of being a foreigner, one of the global millions displaced by military might or neo-liberal economic policy – you follow the logic of fascism. The Italian Association of Democratic Magistrates calls the formation of a 'special law regime for foreigners' a threat to the democratic process. By interning asylum-seekers, governments around Europe legitimise the growing xenophobic reaction against them. Internment and xenophobia go hand in hand. ■

A longer version of this piece will appear in the June issue of the *Institute of Race Relations European Race Bulletin*.

For further information email: noborder@kein.org
National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns:
ncadc.demon.co.uk

Please support noborder's new website by sending pictures of detention centres and of your campaigns to www.deportation-alliance.com

FIGHTBACK - 1

Refugee Congress — Unite against deportation

'WE HAVE NO VOTE BUT WE HAVE A VOICE' became the slogan of 'The Caravan' when it started as a grassroots movement of refugees in Germany shortly before the elections in 1998. Functioning as an umbrella organisation, the Caravan is made up of autonomous refugee groups, anti-racists, artists and others, who together are building new solidarity networks. Although initially set up to focus on the situation of refugees within Germany, 'The Caravan' has become a broader network, linking local issues to the harmonisation of repressive and racist migration policies at European level. Now, The Caravan is organising a massive **Refugee Congress** in Jena, east

Germany. The Congress, which will take place in late April, aims to 'build an effective unity against deportations and social exclusions', and to show that the historical racism of the West is being replicated in the globalised power of corporations. 'We are here because you destroy our countries' is the Congress slogan. ■



Refugee Congress is co-ordinated by The Voice of Africa Forum.

For more information contact The Voice of Africa Forum,

Tel: international 0049 (0)3641 66 52 14;
Fax: 0049 (0)3641 42 37 95
www.humanrights.de,
THE_VOICE_Jena@gmx.de

FIGHTBACK - 2

Prevent the Terrorism Act

The new UK terrorism bill has brought together refugee groups, greens, unions, anarchists and civil liberties groups in a broad umbrella coalition of opposition. The Bill, the first permanent measure after 25 years of annual Prevention of Terrorism Acts, is now in the Lords having passed its Commons stages virtually unscathed. Under it, the definition of 'terrorism' is broadened to include not just the use but also the threat of violence, not just against people but also against property, not just in the UK but also abroad, not just for political ends but also for religious or ideological ends. Organisations believed by the government to promote terrorism will be banned and giving them any support will be criminalised.

The use of anti-terror laws against refugees is an issue which is frequently ignored. But at a meeting in March organised by the Kurdish Information Committee, Kurdish activists spoke of the use of PTA powers to monitor political dissent against 'friendly' torture regimes, witnessed by the raids of community centres under the old PTA in which mountains of documents

and files were seized but no charges ever brought, and the three-year-long case against Algerians on terrorism charges (which was dropped in late March after the House of Lords ruled that the defendants were not obliged to prove their innocence, so that police sources had to be revealed).

The campaign to stop the deportation of Kurdish activist Hikmet Bozat after his sentence for arson of



Turkish banks shows how the label 'terrorist' is misused to justify draconian treatment of refugee activists and rights campaigners. The Home Office intends

to deport Bozat to Turkey, where he faces almost certain torture and a real possibility of extra-judicial execution. If the Terror Bill is passed, such action will, the government hopes, become easier – despite the fact that it breaches Britain's obligations under the European Convention on Human Rights, which bans sending people back to torture. ■

Kurdish Information C'ttee: 020 7250 1315



Protesters demonstrating against Austria's new coalition government warn of an increasingly violent police force. In March, Amnesty International criticised the Austrian police for their violation of human rights and brutal treatment of foreigners.

FAR RIGHT IN POWER

Austrians for democracy

While the rest of Europe quibbles over whether Haider is or isn't a Nazi, ordinary Austrians must deal with the reality of the Freedom Party in power.

It's not just about Haider. Nor is it just about the four FPÖ government cabinet ministers (the fifth, justice minister Krüger, resigned after just 25 days). What is of equal concern is the FPÖ's unprecedented powers of political patronage in a country where the state employs one in five of the workforce. Under the 'Proporz' system, important jobs in all state and semi-state bodies – from banks and building societies to TV networks and the national airline – are divided between supporters of the two ruling parties, until recently the Conservative ÖVP and the Social Democrats. Haider is believed to have drawn up a list of people that he means to drive out of the state broadcasting service and publicly-funded institutions and anti-fascists fear a witch hunt.

The FPÖ witch hunt

And it has already begun. The Salzburg FPÖ has called for all cultural groups which demonstrated against the new government to be closed down. The contract of Gerhard Marschall, the

home news editor of a leading Upper Austrian daily, was unceremoniously terminated because his anti-Haider stance was now deemed 'unacceptable'. And Radio State Broadcasting may axe the weekly broadcast of one of Austria's most popular comedy duos, accused by the FPÖ of inciting violence against Haider. Schoolteachers protesting at the government's implementation of the FPÖ plan to limit foreign children to no more than 30 per cent of any class, fear they may be targeted too. In Burgenland, Bishop Gertaud Knoll, the head of the evangelical church, who is a staunch critic of the FPÖ, has received so many racist threats that she has been forced to go into hiding.

Intimidation is aided by the press branding of democracy demonstrators as riotous left-wing agitators, mirroring Chancellor Schüssel's view that

protesters who demonstrate weekly in Vienna are indulging in 'the last emotional fling of the Hippie and Internet generation'. But the biggest disincentive to protest comes from the baton-charging and water-cannon wielding police, who were recently condemned by Amnesty International and the UN Committee Against Torture for their rampant racism and regular abuse of human rights. Rosa Antifa Wien, which has long warned of the high level of support in police unions for the FPÖ, say that police agents provocateurs infiltrated a 16,000-strong demonstration on 2 March and later arrested four demonstrators at gunpoint. A new police Special Attack Group (SEK) has been formed to deal with Austria's new democracy movement. ■

Rosa Antifa Wien email: raw@swi.priv.at.

Information from the anti-fascist movement in English at: <http://gegenschwarzblau.cjb.net>

'This is the beginning of the abolition of the right to demonstrate' ROSA ANTIFA WIEN

FACING THE CRISIS

The publication of the Macpherson report threw up more questions than those relating to institutional racism in the police. Macpherson also put back on the agenda the role played by education in the reproduction of inequality and racism.

His three recommendations on education included a change in the National Curriculum towards emphasising 'cultural diversity and preventing racism', the need for the implementation of strategies 'to prevent and address racism' and the role of Ofsted inspectors in implementing these guidelines.

One year on, CARF talked to teachers about how those recommendations had been embraced.

Kingswood pupils protest at the suspension of black teacher Chris Hassan



Anti-racism in education after Macpherson

CAMPAIGNS & REPORTS

Anti-racism is not culturalism

Despite the introduction of citizenship studies to the national curriculum, there is little scope to address racism and inequality specifically, and no apparent strategy to prevent racism. Instead, racism seems to be diverted into a post-modern mix of culture and identity.

But, as educationalist Marika Sherwood told CARF: 'It was not cultural diversity that murdered Stephen Lawrence, Ricky Reel, Michael Menson and all those other young black men; it was racism'. And the government's introduction of compulsory anti-bullying policies in schools is not going to be sufficient to counter racist attacks.

Anti-racist baseline

The government's failure to implement Macpherson's recommendations shows that there is still no real commitment from the top to combat racism in education. Despite the lip service paid to the recommendations, there are huge gaps between policy and practice, rhetoric and reality. Teachers speak of the need for a clear 'anti-racist baseline' on a national level so that the national curriculum will start to address racism in the classroom and in society at large. The curriculum should also reflect black people's historical presence in this country, as well as present realities.

The case of Chris Hassan

The case of Chris Hassan, a black English teacher who was suspended from Kingswood high school, Hull, at the end of January, shows just how badly an anti-racist baseline is needed. Hassan's suspension

followed his refusal to continue to teach one of his pupils, who had repeatedly called him racist names. For when Hassan refused to take the pupil back into his class, it was he who was put on the spot. Why, asked the head, is 'racist abuse worse than being called fatty?' and why didn't the pupil's apology to the head close the matter? The child had offered an apology, said the head, and it was 'part of education to learn from your mistakes'. In the case of Kingswood high school 'unlearning racism' was translated into re-admitting the pupil into the black teacher's class (after a five-day suspension) without the necessary framework put into place to ensure that the incident did not recur.

Unbelievably, CARF found from talking to teachers, union representatives and workers in the local Hull education authority, there is no approved procedure for dealing with incidents which involve racial abuse of teachers by pupils. 'It is not normal to suspend the teacher', a lawyer for the LEA conceded, but he justified the action on the basis that Mr Hassan's refusal to re-admit the pupil to his class had left the authority with no other option.

Following a powerful campaign of about 500 pupils at Kingswood high school, Mr Hassan was reinstated in late March. The pupil who abused Hassan has been moved to a different class and the school has reviewed its guidelines and procedures for dealing with assaults and abuse of staff.

Underscoring institutional racism

It seems that throughout the country, there are no proper anti-racist procedures in place, no support systems for staff and, apparently, no ways of dealing with abusive children except through exclusions. (And these are already unacceptably high, especially for black children.) But all manner of new government initiatives, from the dispersal of refugee children to the removal of safeguards for parents and children over exclusions, are entrenching racism yet further. And the government's new target for secondary schools – to achieve a pass rate of at least 25% good GCSE grades by 2006 – will only serve to increase the pressures on inner-city schools like Kingswood High. For this policy increases the 'dogma of the educational market place' where the goal is no longer to learn but to achieve and make ends meet. It is a policy which will encourage schools not to admit children who, like refugees, might have special needs. It is a policy which will deter teachers from a career in 'difficult' areas. It is a policy which will divide schools and divide teachers. The government appears to be institutionalising inequality, not dismantling institutional racism. ■



Reclaiming the struggle

Successful anti-deportation campaigners Natasha Matembe and her friend Shamima (above) were just two of the speakers at 'Reclaiming the struggle', a conference jointly organised by the Institute of Race Relations, the Monitoring Group and the National Civil Rights Movement, to assess progress on anti-racism one year after the publication of the Macpherson report. In the morning speakers from a number of family-based campaigns spoke of their ongoing struggle for justice, indicating how, in spite of the apparent support of the establishment, lessons from the Lawrence case have not been heeded. Speakers in the afternoon, including Sir Herman Ouseley, A. Sivanandan, Mike Mansfield and Doreen Lawrence, attempted to define the priorities of anti-racist struggle for the future. Imran Khan, the Lawrence family solicitor, said that 'In 1993, one family, without an organisation, without any other form of support, was able to change the way society looks at the issue of racism. I have learnt the lesson that in order to move forward you have to look at the ways in which families struggle, using families at the forefront. We have to ensure that the McGowans in Telford and the Najeib family in Leeds become litmus tests for the police forces and institutions in those areas.' ■



M25 Three vindicated

In January, the Prison Service paid Raphael Rowe an undisclosed amount to settle his court action, in which he claimed that prison officers at the notorious Wormwood Scrubs kicked and punched him and called him a 'murdering black bastard' in 1993.

In February, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the M25 Three had received an unfair trial. Seventeen judges unanimously voted that the trial of Michael Davis and Raphael Rowe (Randolph Johnson was not involved in the appeal) violated Article Six of the European Human Rights Convention because the prosecution had denied access to evidence. The Court of Appeal will hear their appeal later in the year, when hopefully they will be released. ■

M25 Three Campaign, 28 Grimsel Path, London SE5 0TB, 0207 735 2985

PRISONS

CALIFORNIA

Turning defeat into victory

California's Proposition 21, approved by a ballot on 7 March, will criminalise yet more young people and adults by extending mandatory minimum sentences (like three strikes), the death penalty, the definition of gang activity and reclassifying misdemeanours (such as low level vandalism) into felonies. At the heart of the legislation is the dismantling of the state's whole juvenile justice system and the transfer of power from judges to prosecutors.

The vote might have been lost, but two and a half million people said 'No' in an unprecedentedly high poll. And for the Freedom Winter coalition, which had organised young and old people from across a range of communities, linking the campaign against the incarceration of young black people to that against proposed anti-gay legislation, the movement has been a victory. Ruthie Gilmore of Freedom Winter/Critical resistance told CARF: 'We have hope and energy. The political consciousness produced by the struggle and by the loss will mean that nothing ended. Rather, like the outcome of Freedom Summer in 1964, when young people went to the apartheid south to secure voting rights for Black people, new activism will arise that broadens and deepens demands for equality and justice, which must include ending the practice of putting people in cages for part or all of their lives.' ■

AUSTRALIA

Crime and punishment

A campaign in Australia against mandatory sentencing (the equivalent of the US three strikes policy) has just been launched, following the suicide in detention of a 15-year-old Aboriginal boy. Since the introduction of the policy in two regions, imprisonment rates for indigenous people have increased by 20 per cent in the Northern Territories and 22 per cent in Western Australia, while imprisonment rates for non-Aboriginals have actually declined.

Black people are getting a spell in prison for the most trivial of reasons. A homeless indigenous man was imprisoned for stealing a towel from a line to dry himself; an

apprentice was detained for kicking a light bulb during an argument. Now a 15-year-old boy, whose crime was to steal some pens and paint, hanged himself in his room while in juvenile detention. And another Aboriginal boy of the same age, who broke a window after hearing about the suicide, was sentenced under mandatory detention for damaging property and then he himself attempted suicide. Just days after, a black man from the same town was given a mandatory sentence of one year in jail for a third 'property offence' – stealing biscuits from a works mess on Christmas day because he was hungry! ■

To protest against mandatory sentencing in the Northern Territories, email the Chief Minister at denis.burke@nt.gov.au.

Protests can also be registered at the homepage of the Prime Minister of Australia at <http://www.pm.gov.au>.

UK

Satpal Ram: official inquiry into prison racism



Members of Satpal Ram's family, his solicitor and campaigners met with prisons minister Paul Boateng in March to demand action on Satpal's treatment at Full Sutton prison. Boateng was presented with overwhelming evidence of a culture of racism among prison officers, including telephone logs in which they recorded prisoners' conversations as 'foreign crap', 'foreign lingo' and 'talks in Paki'. As a result, Boateng has ordered a full inquiry into racism at Full Sutton and promised that relevant prison officers will be disciplined. There are also hopes that

REVIEWS

Reclaiming Claudia Jones

She was the founder of two of the black community's key institutions – carnival and the black press. She led black opposition to the 1962



immigration act, the first to restrict Commonwealth immigration. And yet for over two decades the contribution of Trinidadian Claudia Jones – Communist, activist, writer and organiser – went unrecognised. In this book, made up of recollections from those who knew

and worked with her in Britain from 1955-1964 and painstaking research from a range of archives by Marika Sherwood, a fuller picture emerges of Claudia's unique contribution to British politics.

Never quite embraced by the British Communist Party because of her determined support for a range of anti-colonial movements and uncompromising anti-racism (in part the result of living for 33 years in segregated America), she managed to fuse the burgeoning cultural and political black movements here, the Asian and Afro-Caribbean workers' associations, the issues of anti-racism and internationalism. This 'meteor which brightened our landscape, pointing the way forward' was someone who suffered from tuberculosis and heart trouble and was never without the worry about how to pay the next printer's bill for the *West Indian Gazette*. This important work of reclamation reminds us in these days of spin-doctoring and public posturing that politics was once about commitment and self-sacrifice. ■

Claudia Jones: a life in exile, by Marika Sherwood, Lawrence and Wishart, £13.99

Hear this warcry



And we're supposed to be cool
Inna de dance our riddims rule
But we knew it all along
Cos our parents made us strong

Never abandoned our culture
Just been moving it along
Technology our tradition
Innovation inna the song
Now da struggle continues
To reverse every wrong

New Way, New Life

Asian Dub Foundation should need no introduction to anyone with a pulse. Their commitment to struggles against injustice continues to bring a militant anti-racist message to the charts, while their dedication, to the causes of Satpal Ram and Ricky Reel among others, has inspired hundreds of thousands; from the most jaded campaigner to the white rock kids of Europe.

This is not 80s agitpop. *Community Music*, dedicated to the music

technology centre where the band met, develops ADF's unique brand of 'qawwali jungle punk' – Sivanandan and Assata Shakur are set alongside beats so phat you can't get in the room, while *New Way, New Life* celebrates the struggles of their parents as first generation immigrants and the musical pioneers of the time, such as Gurdass Mann and Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan.

ADF eschew the self-serving, soul-searching indulgence of much of the British Asian music scene ('My parents are Asian – I'm British – I am a Fusion – I make Fusion – Listen to me' ... yawn). Collectively they put their feet, money and hearts where their mouths are. Having set up their own youth and music education project (ADFED) two years ago, they are providing youth access to music technology and quietly nurturing some new homegrown talent.

All this and still living up to their reputation as 'the best live band in Britain'. ■

Community Music is available now on London Records.

Boateng will reclassify Satpal as a category C prisoner and move him to a prison nearer to his family. An announcement on was expected as CARF went to press. ■

The Free Satpal Campaign (London) will be organising a presence at Vasakhi celebrations in Southall on 15 April. For more information contact the Free Satpal Campaign (London) on 0973 632827 or 07775 795263 or write to: 'Free Satpal Ram', PO Box 23139, London SE1 1ZU.

Free Satpal Ram Campaign Website:
<http://www.ncadc.demon.co.uk/satpal.html>

DEATHS IN CUSTODY

Prison service 'contributes' to death

An inquest into the death of 43-year-old Alfonso Coley recorded a verdict of death by misadventure, contributed to by neglect. Alfonso, who was mentally ill, was found hanged in Pentonville prison healthcare unit on 8 August 1999 after being transferred from Mount prison. His death came hours after he was found in Mount prison with a noose around his neck. The coroner criticised the 'blunders, cock-ups and incompetence' which led to Alfonso's death. Mount prison officers failed to pass vital documents, including a self-harm form and medical records, to Pentonville prison. As yet no prison officer has been disciplined for these failings. Alfonso's family are considering a civil action against the prison service and have made a complaint to the parliamentary ombudsman. ■

Police initiative to reduce deaths in custody

The police have installed CCTV cameras in every cell in Kilburn station. The pilot scheme was launched at the station after Marlon Downes died locally at Harlesden station. Most stations now have cameras in one or two cells to monitor prisoners at risk. However, in Kilburn, each of the 15 cells has a camera. The scheme is part of a police strategy to reduce deaths in custody.

But the case of Christopher Alder shows that CCTV cameras did not help this prisoner, merely recorded his mistreatment. The tape shows officers apparently calmly walking around Christopher as he lay dying on the floor of the custody suite in Hull police station. Alton Manning was not helped either by being monitored on CCTV. And after his death vital CCTV footage of his restraint and removal to strip cells was mysteriously lost because of an 'operational error'. ■

United Families and Friends Campaign, c/o Inquest, address below. Tel: 0370 432439

Inquest, Ground Floor, Alexander National House, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London, N4 2PJ. Tel: 020 88027430

RACIST VIOLENCE

2 FEB 27-year-old Stephen Moncrieffe, a black law student, plans to sue the Met police for wrongful arrest and assault by three police officers in Harlesden, north-west London in October 1998. The PCA's investigation failed to get sufficient evidence to back his allegations **22 FEB** *A 20-year-old black student is fighting for his life at Northern General hospital after a racist attack in Sheffield left him with severe head and facial injuries...* Fazlollah Niknejad sues the Met police for damages of over £50,000 after he was allegedly racially abused and had his arm broken by police in his Finchley home... According to Scotland Yard, the number of racist incidents reported to the Met has soared by 175 per cent in past year **6 MAR** *Following a meeting between the McGowan family and Jack Straw, the Met's racial and violent crime task force takes the inquiry over from Mercia police* **14 MAR** Two Leeds United footballers, 23-year-old Lee Bowyer and 21-year-old Jonathan Woodgate are charged with grievous bodily harm and affray following a racist attack on 19-year-old Safraz Najeib **17 MAR** *Bail conditions for Leeds United footballers, Lee Bowyer and Jonathan Woodgate, changed to allow them to play in away games...* The McGowans, family of the two black men who were found hanged in Telford, receive a new death threat **19 MAR** A black man found tied up with flex in the Birmingham canal in Smethwick, West Midlands, had died from asphyxia, post-mortem reveals **21 MAR** 28-year-old Chris Cotter, boyfriend of black athlete Ashia Hansen, is stabbed and slashed across the head by four racists outside his girlfriend's home in Birmingham

IMMIGRATION

4 FEB European Union demands that 71 non-western countries take back immigrants as part of a new trade and aid package **1 MAR** Home Secretary Jack Straw calls for rewriting of United Nations convention on refugees, to restrict numbers of asylum-seekers **6 MAR** The government announces a delay in implementing its dispersal scheme for asylum-seekers, due to its failure to find enough bed spaces for them around the country **8 MAR** Rotherham borough council plans to build portable hostel for about 180 asylum-seekers in Thrybergh instead of having them in empty council housing **9 MAR** Sodexho Pass, a private company running the voucher system for the Home Office, has told retailers to keep the change and not hand it back to asylum-seekers **13 MAR** Home Office ministers consider a new European funded programme to encourage asylum-seekers to return home voluntarily **18 MAR** Refugee welfare groups reveal that more than 2,500 refugee children are being denied their legal right to a school place... Home Office introduces hard-line policy to separate husbands and wives in new detention centre **19 MAR** Home Office considers 'fast-track system' for asylum-seekers who are caught begging **20 MAR** *New detention centre for asylum-seekers opens at Oakington barracks, Cambridgeshire...* Government drops racist proposal for bond scheme for visitors from Indian subcontinent **24 MAR** Home Office publishes figures claiming that the backlog of asylum applications has been reduced by nearly 2,000 **27 MAR** *Seven asylum-seekers escape from Oakington Detention Centre*

FASCISM

24 FEB *23-year-old David Copeland, who planted nail bombs in Brixton, Brick Lane and Soho which killed 3 people in 1999, pleads*

guilty to manslaughter on grounds of diminished responsibility. He can still face trial if the prosecution decides to reject his plea **23 MAR** Glasgow council condemns leafleting campaign by BNP supporters that links social problems with the housing of asylum-seekers in the area

POST-LAWRENCE POLICING

10 FEB Detective David Coles, who had unauthorised meetings with Clifford Norris, the father of one of the Lawrence murder suspects, retires on medical grounds **16 FEB** John Grieve, head of the Met's racial and violent crimes task force, describes the Met as an 'institutionally racist organisation' **17 FEB** Doreen and Neville Lawrence drop their damages claim against 15 junior officers, but continue against 26 senior officers for the bungled investigation into their son's murder... Judge William Macpherson, who chaired the Lawrence inquiry, tells police to stop 'whining and complaining' **18 FEB** The Met announces it will get lawyers to investigate whether the Lawrences' damages claims are legitimate... Scotland Yard unveils largest race hate database in Britain with more than 13,000 known or suspected racists **11 MAR** 35-year-old black security guard Stuart Melchor is left with seven deep bites on his thigh and several head wounds after police set dog on him believing that he was breaking into the warehouse where he worked **14 MAR** *11 Met police officers are investigated by the PCA over their handling of the investigation into Michael Menson's death* **15 MAR** The PCA is to launch a new inquiry into the police investigation of Ricky Reel's death **21 MAR** *Two white men in their 20s are arrested in connection with the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence... Prosecution of Duwayne Brooks for indecent assault is stopped after revelation that main witness denied the assault* **22 MAR** Third suspect is arrested in relation to the murder of Stephen Lawrence **23 MAR** Peter Hampson, Chief Constable of West Mercia, apologises to MacGowans for the 'less than satisfactory' initial investigation into the two deaths... Scotland Yard's crack down on known racists leads to 100 arrests and the charging of 30 people

CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

14 FEB Ian Blair becomes Deputy Commissioner of the Met **16 FEB** Launch of pilot project at Strathclyde Police in Scotland, which will allow victims of racist attacks to report to specially trained workers at local community offices... *European court of human rights rules that 32-year-old Raphael Rowe and 34-year-old Michael Davis, two of the M25 Three, were denied a fair trial and appeal, because vital evidence was withheld from the trial judge and the defence* **24 FEB** The ratio of black to white people being searched fell from 4.4 to 3.3 to one in a pilot scheme **11 MAR** Former Tory chairman Lord Tebbit leads campaign by some Met officers to create a white police organisation, modelled on the Black Police Association **15 MAR** Police to investigate new complaints by prisoners against officers at Wormwood Scrubs **16 MAR** Prisons minister Paul Boateng demands investigation into Full Sutton prison, after seeing telephone logs of racist remarks by prison officers **19 MAR** Inquest rules that the suicide of 43-year-old Alfonso Coley at Pentonville prison was 'misadventure contributed to by neglect' by prison officers **22 MAR** Report about the criminal justice system by the Howard League shows that black people are over-represented in the prison population.

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