

public **accountability** not public relations

Proportional representation: why we should say no

THE GREAT COP OUT



Smiles all round as the Met scores another public relations victory: Paul Condon welcomes detective inspector David Michael back to work at Scotland Yard.

Matthew Fearn/PA

Public accountability

'Institutional racism is that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions – reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn.'

A. Sivanandan

For more than two decades, anti-racists have struggled to put the issue of institutional racism on the agenda. In the period from the Scarman inquiry of the early 1980s through to the last few months, the accepted wisdom was that police racism existed but it was a case of 'a few rotten apples'. To root out racism, all that was needed was a combination of better training and more

black coppers. Those who argued that racism was endemic to the very institutions of the police, courts and prisons were branded as rabble rousers. In the wake of the Lawrence inquiry, the rabble rousers have been vindicated. Institutional racism is now flavour of the month. The signs are that the inquiry chair, Sir William Macpherson, is preparing to take a serious look at the 'collective racism' [sic] of the police force.

The response from the police has been a carefully managed exercise in public relations which aims at giving the impression of change while doing nothing new. Met chief Paul Condon tries his best to reassure the public that he is committed to ending police racism. He rejects the term 'institutional racism' because it stands to reason (he claims) that the whole police force to a man or woman cannot be racist. Institutional racism, however, is not the sum total of

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CREATING AN 'ANTI-RACIST POLICE FORCE' in 5 easy steps

By Paul Condon (Met police chief), David Wilmot (Manchester police) and John Newing (Derbyshire police)

- 1. 'I have sinned'** Organise a press conference and confess your sins. Admit that 'like society, Greater Manchester Police has institutionalised racism'. Admit that your police stop and search a disproportionate number of black people. Refuse to comment on any specific cases of police racism. Say you're doing your best to end police racism.
- 2. 'Listen to the people'** Organise meetings around the country to listen to the views of the people. Make sure that the meetings are stage-managed so that they are dominated by local authority groups and the police themselves rather than providing a forum for local people to relate their experiences.
- 3. 'Turn the tables'** Whenever possible turn the tables on the critics. Instead of responding to accusations of racism, present evidence of conflict between different ethnic groups, eg Muslims and Sikhs in west London. Use this to reject critics of the police as having a 'narrow and simplistic' view of racial conflict.
- 4. 'Bring in management consultants'** Bring in a private management consultant firm to provide specialist police 'race relations training'. Get £6 million over three years from the Home Office to 'integrate community and race relations awareness' throughout the national police training curriculum. Meanwhile continue to make cutbacks to community-based racism monitoring groups.
- 5. 'Organise a conference'** Then organise a conference called 'Working Together Towards An Anti-Racist Police Service'. Invite VIP guests from outside the police to discuss how the police can be made into an anti-racist force. Invite delegates to take part in 'facilitated group discussions' on such subjects as 'anti-racist stop and search operations'. Pretend that the conference will make a difference.

(Yes, all of this is happening. We haven't made it up. For more details see the CARF website: <http://www.carf.demon.co.uk/>)

What is institutional racism?

Institutional racism is that which, covertly or overtly, resides in the policies, procedures, operations and culture of public or private institutions – reinforcing individual prejudices and being reinforced by them in turn.

Why do we need to distinguish institutional racism from individual racism?

The problem is that individual racial attitudes and stereotyping have often been over-emphasised to the point where the institutional level of racism is ignored. This view was encapsulated in the 1981 Scarman Report on Brixton's riots which took the view that a few 'rotten apples' in the police had racist attitudes, but the majority did not. Racial awareness training has been seen as the answer, backed up with attempts to recruit more black officers. Condon has now decided that to accept institutional racism in the Met is to accuse all his officers of being racists. That is not what is meant by the term.

How is racism institutionalised in today's police forces?

Institutional racism is shown in the clear patterns of differential policing meted out on a systematic basis against black people. The whole criminal justice system then compounds those racist patterns. Black events, black areas, black meeting places are targeted for special policing. Black people are four to five times more likely to be stopped and searched. In the last ten years, 35 black people have died in police custody in suspicious circumstances. And, when black people complain of abrogation of their rights, the whole criminal justice system – from the Police Complaints Authority and the Crown Prosecution Service to the judiciary – compounds the racism by closing ranks. No one gets found guilty of racism, no one gets suspended or punished and charges are never brought following a violent death in custody. All of these practices point to an institutional culture of racism – nurtured in the top ranks, spread through the canteen culture and reinforced in the unhealthy close relationship between police press officers and the yellow press. As a result, black people are rarely seen as victims of crime, which in turn means that racial violence is never taken seriously enough. ■

...not public relations

individual racisms but the practice and culture of institutions (see right).

Meanwhile, some chief constables have followed a strategy of admitting the existence of institutional racism, in the hope that by admitting it nobody would notice if they didn't do anything about it. Whilst the 'rotten apples' analysis of the Scarman inquiry may have been implicitly rejected, its pro-

posed solutions are all the more popular. More racial awareness training. More black police officers. So desperate is the Met to boost its 'ethnic' quotas that it is even offering to pay black students to go through university if they agree to work for the police after graduating. But these measures do little to change the basic culture of the police force, a culture which, at the end of 20 years of

continued overleaf



The latest edition of *Police Review* illustrates how rank and file police officers feel about chief constables confessing to racism in their forces.

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'law and order' politics, has lost all notion of public accountability. Changing the colour of the police does not change police culture; changing police culture, however, may help to change the colour of policing.

It is vital at this time that anti-racists do not lose sight of the real issues in the midst of this public relations maelstrom. There is no excuse for police racism. Condon continues to offer the hoary old chestnut that the police are drawn from society and society is racist, and therefore one would expect the police to be racist. So, therefore, you cannot blame the police. QED. But the police are at the sharp end of law and order – they have a special role in society and special powers – and with those powers goes a responsibility to serve and be accountable to all sections of the community. In that sense the police, like teachers and social workers, should be in advance of society, not its rearguard. ■

CONDON AVAILABLE IN 3 FLAVOURS



NICE COP

"I acknowledge that for blacks and Asians in London racism is an everyday occurrence and the police are a part of that."

October 1998



NASTY COP

"We are targeting young black men as they are disproportionately involved in street robberies."

March 1993



WANTS MORE MONEY COP

"If you are not paying your police officers a wage they can live on, you are almost inviting them to indulge in malpractice."

October 1998

STOP AND SEARCH OPERATIONS

Operation Elliot involved stopping and searching suspected fare dodgers on trains in south-west London over a month. Police called the operation an 'amazing success', citing over 90 arrests in the first ten days. They don't tell us how many people stopped. Is this 'SUS' through the back door?

Clubbers beware Nightclub goers will be interested to know that instead of bow-tied bouncers in DJ's at the door of a club, we should now expect to find coppers waiting to frisk us as we enter, and to read us our 'rights'. The area around King's Cross, London has been designated a crime 'hot-spot' area and already CCTV has been introduced (which is to be extended all around the area) as well as a campaign of 'zero tolerance' (which means shifting the crime to other areas).

On 6 November, over 30 police officers stopped and searched over 125 clubbers on their way into Bagleys, York Way, Kings Cross. The one-night operation resulted in 27 arrests and 15 warnings.

Big Brother is watching you In October, Newham council launched one of the most sophisticated CCTV systems in the world.

Initially developed to catch hooligans at football matches, the equipment is to be used at West Ham's Upton Park ground and around the borough. Newham is also in the process of increasing its network of CCTV cameras to 240 and installing hidden cameras on housing estates.

The £60,000, six-month trial of the



equipment has prompted much criticism from civil rights campaigners. The CCTV is so sophisticated that it can match people caught on the CCTV with a database of images stored on computer. The system automatically identifies a 'target face'. This information is passed to the council and police, and the police can then decide to take any further action. Ostensibly the initiative is aimed at reducing muggings and shoplifting, and to keep an eye on suspected paedophiles active in the area. However, the system is sure to lead to cases of mistaken identity. And who will decide which faces go on the database?

Finally, US organisation Privacy International was so impressed with the CCTV system that it has nominated Newham for one of its annual Big Brother Awards. The awards name and shame organisations that invade personal privacy – no doubt Newham will be a winner. ■

MICHAEL MENSON UPDATE

Scotland Yard's new Racial and Violent Crime Task Force is to re-investigate the death of Michael Menson. Michael died in February 1997 after being set alight in a racist attack in Edmonton, north London. In October 1998, an inquest jury found that Michael had been unlawfully killed. Under pressure from Michael's family, Jack Straw took the unusual step of meeting family members.

The ongoing PCA inquiry into the police investigation of the murder is to be suspended while the Task Force re-investigates the murder itself. Meanwhile, three of the four police officers who were responsible for the original investigation have retired, making them immune from any possible disciplinary action. The Menson family have asked for a copy of the PCA report once it is published, and the Task Force has agreed that 'there will be no legal reason for us not to disclose it'. Only time will tell. ■



The EU is beginning to acknowledge that asylum-seekers fleeing persecution are victims too. But alongside the EU's recognition that well-organised smuggling rings are exploiting the human misery of desperate asylum-seekers, there is dishonesty and double-speak.

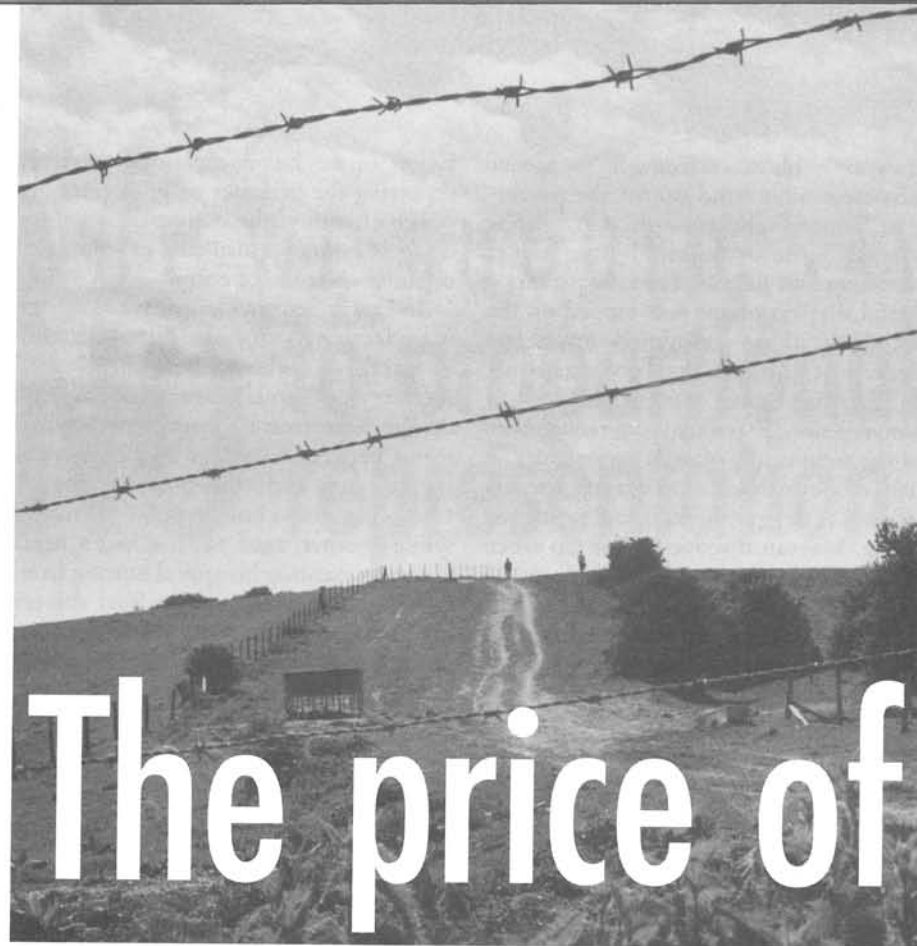
A European-wide crackdown on the commercial traffickers who bring in 'asylum-seekers' is exacerbating the plight of the powerless. For what the EU won't recognise is the way in which its policy of preventing legal entry to Europe for refugees via measures such as visa requirements and carriers' liability has created the demand for commercial traffickers and handed asylum-seekers over to the criminal mafias which control the human trade.

Trawling for traffickers

Having created the demand for the smuggling organisations, European governments (and their partners in Canada, the US and Australia) are now moving against them. No less than sixteen committees and working groups of civil servants, police and immigration officers from the EU countries work to combat 'human smuggling'. Europol, the policing organisation whose mandate originally covered just drugs, was given powers in 1996 to investigate people trafficking and, violating its non-operational role, recently carried out investigations in eastern Europe resulting in the detention of a number of immigrants. On a global level, the G8 group of the world's most powerful nations has recently set up groups looking at false and stolen passports and identity documents; and the UN itself is being asked to approve a draft Convention against the smuggling of illegal immigrants.

Victims caught in the net

This EU and world-wide crackdown is exacerbating the plight of undocumented asylum-seekers in a number of ways – some direct, others indirect. First, as the state acts against the traffickers, it entraps their victims too. Thus, when all Schengen countries co-ordinated an international anti-trafficking operation from dawn on 15 October to midnight on 17 October, hundreds of illegals were arrested alongside dozens of smugglers on the external borders of the Schengen territory (which consists of most western European countries, except for Britain and Ireland).



Mike Roberts, from *The Cost of Survival*

The price of ASYLUM

Humanitarian aid criminalised

Second, the offensive is closing off alternative non-criminally controlled pathways by which asylum-seekers can secure a safe haven in the West. One such pathway has been through the aid of humanitarians or those individuals not motivated primarily by profit. But by acting harshly against such individuals, governments will further push asylum-seekers into the hands of the criminal traffickers. The case of 50-year-old German Rudi Stark, sentenced in October to five years at Maidstone Crown court for smuggling a family of Kosovo Albanians into Britain, is a test case in this respect.

Stark had been approached by a Kosovan former colleague and had agreed to help the family, who were threatened with deportation from Germany back to Yugoslavia. He simply wanted to help for humanitarian reasons. His motive was humanitarian – not profit. He was paid the costs of hiring a camper van in which to bring the family of three adults and three children into Britain, petrol, ferry fares and accom-

modation. The family were discovered on the British side of the channel tunnel and Stark was arrested. He pleaded guilty to smuggling them in and was sentenced in the crown court as a commercial trafficker (the maximum sentence is seven years). That sentence was reduced to three and a half years by the Court of Appeal. They reasoned that, since 'the problem of illegal entry was on the increase, deterrent sentences were required'. As Stark languishes in prison, bewildered by the harsh judgement against him, he told supporters that he hopes that some good will come out of his predicament and that the Kosovan family he smuggled in will be allowed to stay in the UK.

Advocacy silenced

In the new asylum bill announced in the Queen's speech, Labour announced its intention to crackdown on immigration racketeers. While no-one can deny that there is a need to clamp down on the host of parasitical legal advisers who prey on vulnerable asylum-seekers, there is concern that governments will use new

laws as a blunt instrument to silence advocates who stand up for the powerless. Thus, French lawyer, Christophe Maysan – no racketeer, but a lawyer committed to helping the *sans papiers* – found that his phone was tapped on the authority of an examining magistrate because of suspicion that he was assisting an Algerian enter into a marriage of convenience. Previously, in recognition of the seriousness of such surveillance, it has only ever been used against lawyers in cases of drug trafficking and organised crime. Maysan discovered the tap when he was called as a witness before the examining magistrate in relation to the marriage – itself an unprecedented attempt to breach lawyer-client confidentiality. His own lawyer found transcripts of over forty telephone conversations between Maysan and clients in the judge's file. The phone tap has caused outrage among lawyers and the League of Human Rights has become involved in what promises to be a major legal battle.

Penalising the innocent

Thirdly, anyone implicated, however innocently, in the transport of illegal asylum-seekers is a target. In Britain, home secretary Jack Straw has announced his intention to impose carriers' liability fines on lorry-drivers in whose lorries asylum-seekers are found. He said it was necessary in view of the doubling of numbers caught entering Britain hidden in lorries in the past year (mostly Kosovans). A Road Haulage Association spokesman angrily responded that if this policy were implemented, he would instruct his 10,000 members to stop reporting immigrants found in their lorries to the police, as they currently do.

Even now, he complained, drivers reporting the presence of immigrants to police often find themselves detained for up to 24 hours on suspicion of helping to organise their illegal entry.

In Lower Saxony, Germany, a campaign is underway to stop the criminalisation of taxi drivers who are being prosecuted for carrying 'illegal' passengers. Five taxi drivers have recently been sentenced to terms between one year and 26 months for carrying undocumented passengers. One is planning a hunger strike in protest, while another, aged 60, has had a heart attack, preventing his appeal hearing from going ahead in November. Taxi drivers are now forced to perform immigration checks on their passengers; border police advised a meeting of the taxi owners' association that members should use a special code to call police if they were unsatisfied about a passenger's immigration status, and the association's journal told members they could recognise 'illegals' by their shabby or wet clothing, their reluctance to speak or by 'non-German' appearance. In a defiant protest statement issued in early 1998, taxi drivers stated: 'The duty to carry passengers holds good for everybody. The person who's breaking the law as it stands is not the one who carries everyone, regardless, but the one who calls for a particular group of people to be excluded from being carried. Under the regulations in force, we'll continue to take passengers who look foreign, speak German poorly, have a lot of luggage or wet clothes, to the places they want to go.'

Imprisoning the undocumented

What of the asylum-seekers themselves? The authorities in many European states,

including Britain, penalise those who arrive illegally or without documentation. Those with false documentation often find themselves in the magistrates' court charged with possessing forged documents.

Such cases now account for over half of the criminal cases heard in Uxbridge magistrates court, near Heathrow airport. The average sentence is three to six months' imprisonment. Lawyers are launching a test case against the prosecution of asylum-seekers, pointing out that Article 31 of the Refugee Convention bans the imposition of penalties on refugees who are illegally in the country of refuge.

Those with no documents who claim asylum at the port are likely to be 'fast-tracked' through the procedure and to have appeal rights curtailed. Home Office officials also approach the authorities of their home country for replacement documents immediately the claim is rejected, leading in the case of countries like Algeria to severe danger for the asylum-seeker if returned and for members of her family at home, say campaigners. Anyone arriving clandestinely is likely to be held in detention for the duration of the procedure.

The Home Office, in common with its European counterparts, steadfastly refuses to address the cause of clandestine entry, forged documents and human smuggling, and in doing so ensures that, although the price of asylum has never been so high, many will still have to continue to pay it. ■

Further information is available in *The cost of survival: the trafficking of refugees to the UK*, published by the Refugee Council, 3 Bondway, London SW8 1AJ, tel: 0171 820 3000 and from the German-based Antirassistische Initiative: 0049 39 785 9281

As CARF goes to press, the implications of the House of Lords' decision in the Pinochet case are being felt. Barrister Frances Webber comments.



VICTORY FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Amazement and jubilation greeted the House of Lords ruling on 25 November that the former dictator can't claim immunity from prosecution or extradition for crimes of genocide, torture and hostage-taking committed while he was head of state in Chile between 1973 and 1990. Survivors of the terror joined with relatives of the dead and disappeared to rejoice that finally, after 25 years of impunity, there is a real possibility of justice.

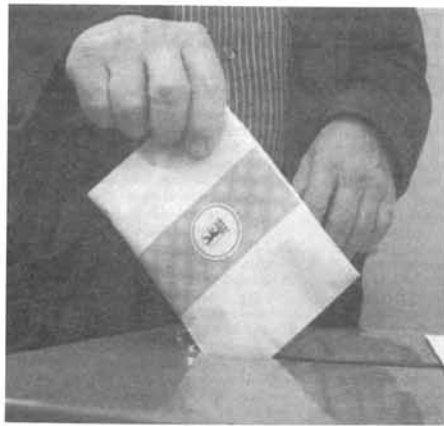
Pinochet had made sure that the Chilean courts would be unable to try him for the 4,000 cases of abduction, torture, murder for which he is believed responsible by granting himself an amnesty and lifetime immunity from prosecution before stepping down in 1990. And an international tribunal to try him would require UN Security Council approval, unobtainable because of US involvement in Pinochet's coup.

Attempts to bring Pinochet before the British courts on previous visits failed. Now, the Lords have, by a narrow 3-2 majority, affirmed that human rights are more important than

feudal immunities. The majority ruled that, although serving heads of state still enjoy total immunity abroad, once they stop down they are triable anywhere in the world for crimes such as torture and genocide. There can be no safe haven for those guilty of such heinous crimes.

Cries of outrage are heard in states which rely on terror and torture around the world, as ministers in Israel, the US and Turkey suddenly feel vulnerable to the hitherto despised 'human rights lobby'. Human rights, they tell us, have their place, in declarations and fine words, but are not meant to be taken seriously; not meant to override politics, trade and markets.

What is revolutionary about the Law Lords' decision is simply that they have put human rights first. So whether or not Jack Straw buckles under the pressure to be 'realistic', 'mature', to take 'hard decisions', to restore the discredited status quo of diplomacy and *de facto* immunity, the Lords' decision is truly a giant step forward. ■



Liz Fekete explains...

WHY WE SHOULD SAY **NO** to proportional representation

Labour came to office pledging electoral reform. Now, with the publication of the findings of Lord Jenkins's Independent Commission on the Voting System, which endorses change in favour of a specific form of proportional representation (PR), supporters of voting reform have gone on the offensive. While advocates of PR within Labour come from all ideological strands of the party, both Left and Right share a belief that continental electoral systems overwhelmingly prove the case for PR. But are PR supporters guilty of misreading the situation in Europe, where the far Right is advancing electorally and governments are now considering electoral reform away from PR? If an anti-racist, anti-fascist perspective is injected into the current debate, what lessons can be learnt?

The case for PR

The main argument for PR rests on a negative – the belief that the current first-past-the-post system is unfair and does not bring to power the government the electorate voted for. In the most extreme cases, first-past-the-post brings to power a government on a minority of total votes cast. This would not happen in most continental countries because PR introduces a threshold (usually 5%, but in some countries lower) whereby a party is guaranteed representation in government. This brings in not majority, but coalition, governments with a more consensual style of politics.

There are two additional arguments. The socialist Left of the Labour Party want PR because they believe it will bring small parties into the electoral process and 'give a voice to the Left' (thus the socialist Left magazine *Red Pepper* has called on the Grassroots Alliance to build for a 'yes' vote in the forthcoming referendum). Make Votes Count, backed by Operation Black Vote and the Runnymede Trust, is also campaigning for a 'yes' vote but on the grounds that PR will ensure greater representation for ethnic minorities.

Tony Blair, mindful of the depth of support within the Labour Party for the present electoral system, has declared

himself undecided. But, given Labour's ever closer links with the Lib-Dems, its introduction of the European Parliamentary Elections Bill which will introduce PR for European elections, its advocacy of PR in elections for the Welsh and London assemblies and Tony Blair's personal desire to end the 'tribal' nature of British politics in favour of the European 'consensus' model of government, few can doubt that he is a closet PR supporter.

Disillusionment with coalition politics

Implicit in the pro-PR argument is the equation majority voting equals anti-democratic; proportional representation equals democratic.

But if we take the concrete situation in Europe today as our starting point, all is not as simple as it seems.

In the UK, the first-past-the-post system has, in the past, tended to give to the electorate clear choices between parties that stand for different political programmes. In Europe, on the other hand, PR rewards not only the winners but also the electoral runners-up, and has led political parties to stake out the middle ground of politics so as to attract more votes and thereby enhance their bargaining power when brokering

positions within any subsequent coalition government.

PR is not just a voting system. It is also about a particular political culture that arises out of that system. It is with that political culture that voters across Europe are increasingly voicing disapproval. Disapproval at the lack of choice between political programmes (race is often the sole issue that divides the parties); disapproval that elections, in the absence of principles, are increasingly fought as gladiatorial bouts between personalities (such as the contest between Schröder and Kohl); disapproval of the corruption that flows from electoral systems which favour political deals to put together governments and keep them in place, particularly at the local level (as in Paris, currently rocked by a housing scandal that threatens to envelop President Chirac); disapproval of emasculated coalition governments which have institutionalised the art of compromise (as in Belgium where people's protests have exposed the coalition government's inability to act against the corruption exposed by the Dutroux paedophile scandal).

Voter disillusionment with the mainstream political parties is being expressed by declining voter turnout, on the one hand, and the rise of the protest vote on the other, both of which have favoured the extreme Right.

Thus, in Norway, the extreme-Right Progress Party, which is against immigration and campaigns against the rights of Norway's indigenous people, was the greatest beneficiary of the lowest voter turnout for 70 years in the 1995 county council elections. On the other hand, the highest ever vote achieved by the extreme Right in a state election since the Federal Republic of Germany's foundation in 1949, was achieved by the Deutsche Volksunion in Saxony-Anhalt on a high turnout – 70.5% of the electorate.



Toulon mayor Le Chevalier and FN colleagues discussing how to enhance democracy through proportional representation

Race and consensus politics

In a lead article in *Red Pepper*, the editor, Hilary Wainwright claimed that PR in Europe has given the Left a power base in government and swung centre-Left governments to the Left so that Social Democrats are looking 'over their left shoulder rather than getting a crick looking over their right' – all of which proves that electoral reform in the UK would help the Left to build on extra-parliamentary struggles. Yet concrete analysis of the situation in Europe today counters Wainwright on every point. For

in today's political climate, the consensus that PR produces is more Right than Left, irrespective of the shade of government.

Take France, where the far Right, not the Left, has been the greatest beneficiary of PR in local and regional elections and where the FN's share of the vote now outstrips that of the Communists and Greens combined. The French 'Socialist' government, with an eye to the FN and not the Greens or the Communists, is deporting more people than the previous Right-wing government. Far from building on the *sans papiers* movement – one of the largest extra-parliamentary movements of recent times – the Socialist government has effectively betrayed it and acted in an even more authoritarian way than its right-wing predecessor.

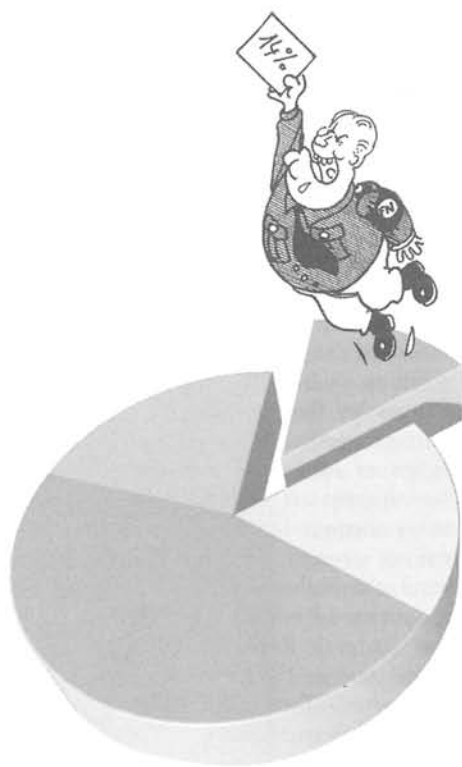
Recent elections in Germany brought in a Social Democrat/Green coalition government which, for the first time in the Federal Republic's history, appointed a Green foreign minister, Joschka Fischer. Far from the Social Democrats looking over their left shoulder towards the Greens, the Greens have capitulated to the SPD on nearly every fundamental issue. On being appointed foreign minister, Fischer announced 'We are not going to have a Green foreign policy but a German foreign policy.' As part of its coalition agreement, the Greens concurred with the SPD's right-wing agenda on asylum which included a call by Schröder for the denial of development aid to 'Black African' countries which refuse to take back 'foreign criminals'. Granted, Germany's citizenship law, the most restrictive in Europe, is to be amended to allow citizenship rights to

third generation immigrants – but the law relating to citizenship still continues to be based on German blood rights, hardly evidence of socialist principle.

Small is fascist too

But what of the socialist argument that because the first-past-the-post system excludes small parties, PR gives Socialists a leg up? How else, they ask, can they remove the stranglehold of mainstream politics unless small parties can break through? Again a concrete analysis of the situation on the ground in Europe demonstrates the fallacies of this argument. For small isn't always beautiful; it's also racist, populist, and anti-democratic. Demagogic far-Right parties don't always remain small, particularly if they are as clever at manipulating the political process as the Freedom Party (Austria's third largest party with 22.6% of the vote), as Italy's Alleanza Nazionale (second largest opposition party with 15.7% of the vote) and the Lega Nord (10.1% of the vote nationally), as Norway's Progress Party (second largest party with 15.3% of the vote) and as France's Front National (15.2% of the vote in the most recent elections for regional assemblies).

The Left's pro-PR argument fails the anti-fascist test. Far from denying fascists a platform, PR has given them unprecedented voice. Small parties can do as much to destroy democracy as advance it. From small spores, far-Right parties have mushroomed to dominate national debate, fracture conservative parties on race lines and to demand, as the Alleanza Nazionale did in Italy in



1994, their rightful place in coalition government. Today, Europe's far-Right parties have the capacity to bring down governments and to hold local politicians to ransom, as the FN did when it threatened to block regional budgets if its conservative allies failed to implement FN policies of 'national preference'.

Cosmetic diversity versus democratic struggle

Here in the UK there is another pro-PR group which wants to take account of the racial dimension. While the recently-launched Make Votes Count (MVC) campaign, an alliance of constitutional reformists and race groups, acknowledges the fascist threat, it seems to believe that the potential of PR – to empower marginalised ethnic candidates and subsequently make the views of ethnic minorities count – outweighs the risks. According to the unofficial black London mayoral candidate, Trevor Phillips, also chair of the Runnymede Trust, political parties ignore the power of ethnic minority voters at their peril – for minority groups will stay away from the polls if their needs and interests are not represented. In this view, as more ethnic tribunes advance through PR, race and minority issues will be addressed.

What is most disturbing about the MVC argument is the way it is being used by New Labour to defend the introduction of PR and the widely-criticised 'closed list system' (whereby

the electorate is only asked to back a political party and not an individual constituency candidate) for voting in European elections. Although New Labour does not go as far as to argue publicly for an official quota of ethnic candidates, its advocacy of the closed list system is justified on the basis that it will allow more ethnic and female candidates to advance through the system. Implicit is a criticism of constituencies as too backward, too white and too patriarchal to effect change. But, leaving aside the question of whether constituencies and not the party machine are blocking ethnic and female candidates, MVC seems to be putting the cart before the horse. For, if there is discrimination at a constituency level, and if there is to be real and not cosmetic change, then surely discrimination should be challenged at the grassroots. Empowering the party machine at the expense of ordinary party members is not only to entrench prejudice (ethnic candidates will be seen to be selected not on merit but on skin colour), but the party's closed list system, by breaking down the constituency link, will introduce a system of patronage under which ethnic candidates will no longer be tribunes of the minority communities but satraps of their political masters in the party machine. Already, the Social Democrats in Sweden have been accused of placing immigrant party members who have spoken out on race issues, so far down the party list that they have no chance of election. In the end, all that this system



Bonn-Sequenz, AP/Eckhard Schulz

Who's in the driving seat – Schröder or Fischer?

LESSONS FROM EUROPE

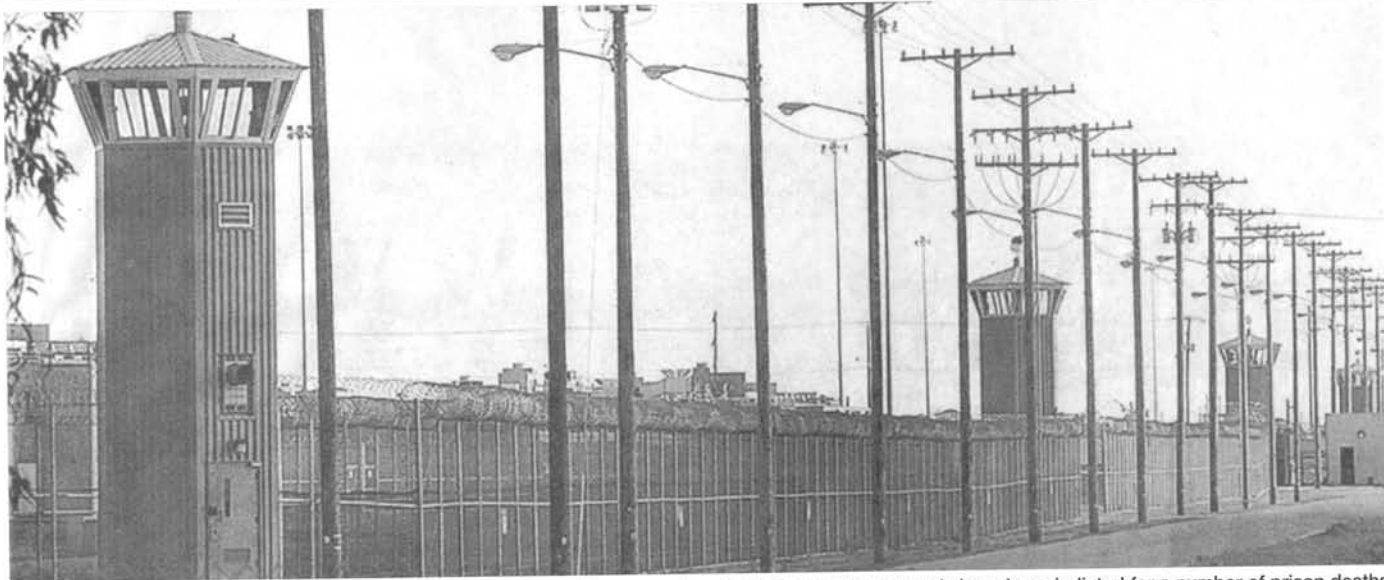
Is there really a danger that the European situation could be mirrored in the UK if PR is introduced? Even though the far Right in the UK is weak and divided PR is dangerous because

- **Political circumstances never remain static.** In 1981, the French FN, with 0.2% of the national vote was nowhere. But when President Mitterrand changed the voting system for national elections and introduced PR, the FN's share of the vote shot up to 10%, securing it 35 seats on the National Assembly, and prompting Mitterrand to reform the system once again in favour of majority voting (PR, though, was kept for local and regional elections). In the UK, the far Right's support has not been static, booming in the 1970s where, in 15 by-elections the NF won 4% of the vote or more, with its share of the vote twice exceeding 10%.
- **New Labour's devolution package could prompt the far Right to play to its regional strengths.** In elections for the Greater London Authority, it is recommended that any party winning 4% of the vote (and perhaps less) should secure a seat. Hence, there is a realistic threat of the BNP, which averaged between 3 and 5% of the vote in the May London elections, securing representation on the London Assembly.
- **New far-Right or anti-immigration parties could emerge.** Proportional representation is the lure that entices the formation of new political parties which have no history, no democratic ways of organising, no grassroots base but are merely vehicles for the rich and the powerful to buy power and influence.

leaves you with, is tokenism of the worst kind.

What the Socialist and MVC arguments in favour of PR seem to hold in common is a desire to short-circuit problems thrown up by the lack of democracy in the Labour party. But their advocacy of PR is ultimately defeatist because it implies that the only way to counter the dumbing down of progressive politics is via mechanical solutions. In the final analysis, the only argument for PR that stands up to scrutiny is the negative argument against the first-past-the-post system as a crude indicator of the people's will. But in the event the people's will is dissolved in coalition politics and the people's creed, socialism, dissolved with it. PR is the last cry of those who have lost faith in socialism. ■

Liz Fekete is editor of the Institute of Race Relations' *Euro Race Bulletin*.



Corcoran prison in California where guards have been indicted for a number of prison deaths

PRISONS Signs of resistance

LESSONS FROM THE US

Deaths in custody, brutality and racism in British prisons, resistance to privatised regimes, new children's units. CARF went to California to talk to Ruth Gilmore, a prisons campaigner, and Elizabeth Robinson, who runs a community radio station, about why incarceration is fast becoming the most burning political issue. In September, 3,500 activists attended a conference on *Critical Resistance: Beyond the Prison Industrial Complex*.



Ruth Gilmore



Elizabeth Robinson

CARF: Why are people organising now around prisons?

Ruth Gilmore: I think there are a number of reasons which all stem from the absolutely staggering size of the prison population today. More and more people know someone who is under the jurisdiction of the state; they had thought it would never happen to them and their families. And people are beginning to see the trade-off between the funding for prisons and criminal justice and the funding for education or even the prevention of calamities like the dismantling of welfare.

Many tiny grassroots groupings have become aware of one another and brought together issues of families of prisoners, children of prisoners, political prisoners, prison reform, health issues in prison to create what I think is the beginning of a real social movement.

Elizabeth Robinson: And the nature of prisons has changed dramatically from the liberal model of the '60s, premised on rehabilitation, to that of the last decade which is very much about punishment.

RG: The only purpose of prison now is to incapacitate prisoners; they cannot commit crimes while they are in cages.

Since Blair and Straw seem determined to follow US domestic policies could you tell us what might be in store for us?

ER: The Omnibus Crime Bill created an environment in which all kinds of state practices were permitted which are, in fact, violations of basic civil rights. The law was premised on convincing the general populace that they were in danger. There is a steady drumbeat in the media about what a violent world it is out there. In fact, in most neighbourhoods it is just not the case; crime is no more a problem than 20 or 50 years ago.

RG: In the US as a whole the overall crime rate has been going down in advance of expansions of prisons – by about two years. So while politicians claimed that being tough on crime and

putting up prisons had made the streets safer, if you looked closely the time-lines were wrong. Lots of people ran for office in the late '70s and early '80s on anti-crime platforms. They brought a militarised view of what the domestic state ought to be into mayors' and governors' offices. Throughout the '80s at federal and state level have come all kinds of laws which criminalise the behaviour of the poor and marginalised eg, addiction is not seen as an illness but a crime. If you look at what the majority of people are in prison for you will see they are drug crimes and property crimes and less and less any kind of violent crimes like rape or murder.

How is the situation changing for juveniles?

ER: Now you get the position of imprisoning young people as adults, trying them as adults, incarcerating them with adults so the notion of juvenile crime is really disappearing.

RG: In California in 1984 the governor established a task force on street youth crime (which it called street terrorism) which looked into gangs. In 1988 a law was brought in which extended to the entire young working-class poor the designation of probable gang member. Police were called upon to find every gang member on their patch – they got paid for finding them and so they were very zealous, especially in black neighbourhoods. The consequence of being

■ **The US has almost two million people in jail** and possibly five million under some kind of probation, surveillance or parole ■ **7% of the prison population are women**, and the number is increasing rapidly. Women are the fastest growing segment of the prison population in California because of the **criminalisation of behaviours that are associated with poverty** ■ **Two-thirds of the prison population are people of colour** and, of those, the greatest proportion are African-Americans and then Latinos in the West, Chicanos in the East, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans and then poor urban Anglos

designated a gang member (for a juvenile or an adult) is that, on top of whatever punishment comes for a conviction, you get sentence enhancement for being a member of a gang. What could be a small offence categorised before as a misdemeanour (attracting probation or a fine) can now bring a charge of felony for which you can get a year and a day, plus five years for doing it as a gangster. The records of young offenders are now open and usable against them for the rest of their lives. If people are brought up on a second or third strike charge, these records can be opened and used against them.

ER: Whole families have also lost their public housing because one member has been found guilty of gang activity or drug crimes (including mere possession). This is effectively collective punishment, although it is, of course, never discussed as such in the US.

There are, sadly, many parallels in the UK with what you are saying. Can you tell us about the hopeful signs, the fightbacks that we might learn from?

RG: Two things came out of the conditions that created the LA uprisings of 1992: the gang truce between the two major black gangs and an organisation of mothers whose children had got dragged into the criminal justice system. The gangs and mothers began to organise against yet another police killing. The truce has held for six years (contrary to

what the press says). And the organisation of Mothers Reclaiming Our Children now operates in part as a self-help group for those who suddenly find their children facing enormous sentences for things they may or may not have done, and in part as a political organisation. It realises that the only way to take on these individual cases successfully is to launch a political battle against the system. One organisation that came out was Families Against California's Three Strikes (FACTS). This organisation has sprouted up state-wide, there are chapters appearing almost everywhere. People are starting to see the universe of kinds of families who have been caught up in the system. Because California, and the US as a whole, is so segregated by race, class and income, it's very hard for a group of black mothers to understand that groups of Chicano, Anglo, Vietnamese and Salvadoran mothers are all going through the same thing. So the emergence of this organisation is also beginning to produce a class-wide solidarity.

ER: Lots of things are happening because of sharing of information, there are web sites, e-mail lists on privatisation of prisons which aren't just local, they are global. It's one of those instances when we can really use these tools in our best interests rather than corporate ones. For my work in the media this kind of information is critical.

Another point on our side is that ordinary people, even those caught up in the climate of fear about crime, are beginning to question the unfairness of a system which sends someone down for a very trivial offence. Before Three Strikes such a dialogue was not possible.

How does privatisation fit in?

ER: As the argument goes we 'need' more and more prisons we are turning it into corporate activity; the privatisation of the prison industry is really a serious problem. Any controls that existed on state-run systems are absolutely gone and it's creating a whole economy of its own, from jobs for people to stock options.

RG: The problem is that terms are now so set: 'we need these cages, we need more because they are overcrowded'. They never stop to evaluate laws which shoved

all these people into cages. Instead they say how can we have more cages, or virtual cages like bracelets [tagging] or house arrest? 95 per cent of prisons in the US are still publicly owned and operated, the private sector does not as yet have that much control. Where they make their money is in selling food, uniforms and so on. Similarly private industry doesn't use prison labour very much as yet. It's still very politically fraught because large capitalists can get into prisons in the way that small capitalists can't and small capitalists have been very effectively opposing the opening up of this dirt cheap labour to their big rivals. Ironically, the strongest opposition to the privatisation of prisons comes at the moment from the prison guards, because they won't have the new guard jobs.

A lot of people think that prisons provide recession-proof economic development for an area. Towns are now competing desperately for new prisons when twenty years ago no-one wanted a prison anywhere close to them. But research shows that prisons do not create jobs and do not create wealth locally. The investment bankers who lend the state the money get rich, the construction firms get rich and the guards get really good salaries compared with everyone else in the region. ■

FREE MUMIA ABU JAMAL



On 29 October the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled against the appeal of political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal, who was sentenced to death in 1982 after a rigged trial on charges of shooting a policeman. Mumia, a former Black Panther and MOVE activist,

has been shuttlecocked between the courts since the sentence, in attempts to get a stay of execution. In September 1995 he was denied a new trial and on 29 October 1998 the Pennsylvania Supreme Court unanimously upheld the decision to deny a new trial. Governor Tom Ridge promised to sign a new death warrant quickly.

What to do: Express your concerns by writing/faxing: Governor Tom Ridge, State Capitol Building, Room 225, Harrisburg, PA 17120. USA. Fax No: 001 717 783 4429.

For more info on the campaign contact the website: www.mumia.org



■ **More money in California goes into prisons than into higher education** Since 1981 California has created one new university/college campus and 21 new prisons ■ For years studies have found that **arrests for 'delinquent behaviour' are dramatically racially skewed** The white middle-class kid who is stopped, gets taken home. The black kid will get some sort of citation and get embroiled in the system



CAMPAIGNS & REPORTS

Roma refugee organisation launched

After years of persecution in eastern Europe, Romany asylum-seekers, faced with racism in Britain, are organising.

Romany asylum-seekers have good reason to leave the Czech Republic and Slovakia, with continuing racist attacks and the denial of basic human rights such as citizenship (up to 20,000 Czech Roma have lost their citizenship) without the possibility of recourse to the courts. Yet Britain and other European countries continue to reject Romany asylum-seekers' applications for refuge. In August this year, the Roma Refugee Organisation (RRO) was established to help detainees and to counteract the general restrictive shift in British asylum law. The central and most urgent demand of the RRO is the end of internment of asylum-seekers who have committed no crime other than to flee from death and persecution. It seeks to provide assistance to newly arriving Romany refugees with accommodation, translation services and English lessons and is anxious to fight corruption within the 'asylum business' whereby asylum-seekers increasingly fall victim to 'touts' and unscrupulous advisers because of the shortage of decent, free legal advice.

In the long term, the RRO is asking the Home Office to adhere to its international obligation under the Geneva Convention and recognise Romany asylum-seekers as refugees, a demand that has been made by many human rights organisations such as Helsinki Watch, the European Roma Rights Centre as well as the UNHCR and the Canadian government's Immigration and Refugee Board. The RRO has published a critical response to the government's white paper on immigration and asylum.

The extent to which Romany asylum-seekers are mistreated in western Europe has recently been highlighted by the flat rejection of applications from 47 Roma in Ireland within one month of their arrival. Despite a backlog of about 4,000 asylum applications in Ireland, it took the Department of Justice only three weeks to reject Roma refugees, proving their treatment by Europe's authorities to be based on nothing more than prejudice and scaremongering statistics.

In Britain, the racism against the Roma has been more overt and crude. Racist attacks towards Romany asylum-seekers in Dover are steadily increasing. Three families had their windows smashed and



Romany asylum-seekers arrive in Dover

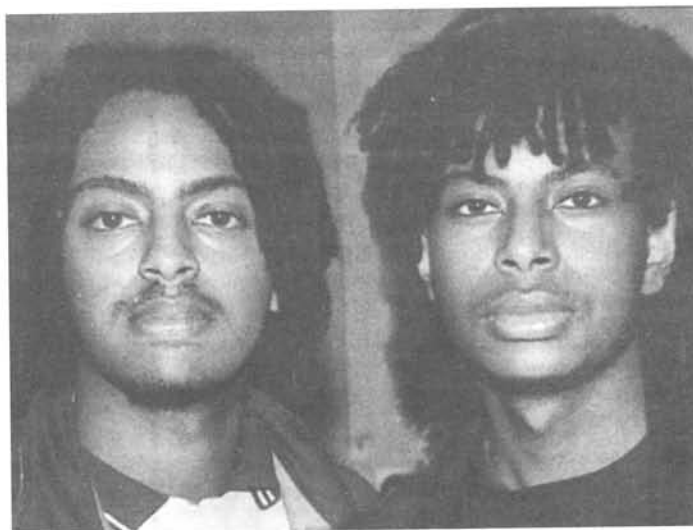
fireworks were thrown in, narrowly missing a child. Racist slogans such as 'we will burn you out' were daubed on the homes. A member of the Dover Residents Against Racism Campaign (DRAR) said, 'it's starting to feel like Montgomery, Alabama down here'. She linked the attacks directly to racist media coverage which depicted the refugees as 'human sewage' (*Dover Express* 1.10.98) and printed the address of one Roma family (*Daily Mail* 6.10.98), leading directly to an attack.

The RRO, which seeks to counter decades of misrepresentation of Romany people and the increase in racist violence, is appealing for solidarity from refugee groups, British Traveller and Gypsy organisations, churches and trade unions in order to build up a support network. In order to collect accurate information on the situation of Romany asylum-seekers in Britain, it is also calling on all detainee support groups to get in contact. ■

Roma Refugee Organisation c/o 1B Waterlow Road, London N7 5NJ, Tel: 0171 267 8198 or 078012 40083. Fax: 0171 209 1669.

Irish Anti Racist Campaign, Upper Camden Street, Dublin 2.

Dover Residents Against Racism c/o Refugee Link, PO Box 417, Folkestone, Kent CT 19 4GT.



Students under threat of deportation

Students and staff at Leyton sixth form college have joined the campaign to prevent the deportation to war-torn Ethiopia of two students at the college, Million and Dereje Hailemariam. The two would face great danger in Ethiopia where opposition parties, like the one their father belongs to, are not tolerated. Already their two elder brothers have been murdered and an uncle died in prison. The two boys have been in Britain for five years and in that time have made remarkable educational progress. But they have been less successful in persuading the Home Office to let them stay. In the last two years they have had their applications to remain rejected four times and friends and supporters are growing fearful that a move to deport them is imminent. Million and Dereje have appealed for support: 'It was frightening and painful losing everything and everyone we loved once - it took all our strength to rebuild our lives and to be rejected again would be bringing our lives to an end. Please, please support us; we need your help.'

Letters and petitions of support to: Friends of Million and Dereje, c/o Emmanuel Youth Project, Emmanuel Church, Forest Gate, London E7 8BD.

Anti-Racism in Scotland

Educationalist Andrew Johnson casts a cynical eye over institutional responses to racism north of the border.

Anti-racism is finally being given a high profile by Glasgow City Council. But the costs have been tragic. For it was the death of 15-year-old Shawlands Academy schoolboy, Imran Khan (reported in *CARF* 43) at the hands of Gary Gilmour on a Shawlands street on the south side of Glasgow in February, which set the ball rolling.

Imran died in Victoria hospital seven days after he was stabbed. Gilmour's defence attributed this tragedy to an infection he picked up in the hospital. But the verdict was 'attempted murder'; the sentence seven years imprisonment. The trial judge, the police, the prosecution and the defence all disingenuously mumbled in time-honoured legal fashion that the attack had nothing to do with racism, but with common, everyday Glasgow violence.

A study commissioned by Glasgow's Anti-racist Task Force said, 'a common thread throughout was the perception that central figures of authority, for example teachers and the police, were indifferent, disinterested and racist themselves'. Moreover, the Council concluded in its own report, after an extensive trawl of all of its departments, that 'there was little evidence of specific anti-racist activity or pro-active action on incidents of racial harassment'. Why has it taken this death for Glasgow Council to seriously address racism? Why did it not act years ago so that such a death could, perhaps, have been prevented?

Anti-racists in Scotland are angry at the way that certain institutions are now, in the wake of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, happy to jump onto the anti-racist bandwagon. Chief Constable Orr of Strathclyde police, for example, was recently publicly congratulated by a Glasgow councillor because he had intervened to give PC Lawrence Ramadas his job back after an industrial tribunal found he had suffered 'racial abuse and racial discrimination' in 1994 at the hands of the Strathclyde force. Orr apologised to Ramadas and offered a substantial award for injury to feelings and loss of earnings. Accusations of racism within the Strathclyde police have been publicly debated for ages and complaints have been made to the Chief Constable for over four years. So why did it take so long for an apology and compensation? The Chief Constable's actions did break new ground, but would they have happened without Ramadas' threat to take his case to the European Human Rights Court? ■

Monitoring groups join forces

A report from the Black Racial Attacks Independent Network



Sharon Wallace / SIA

Anti-racist monitoring groups from across the country came together in London to hold a national racial harassment conference on 24 October 1998, out of which the Black Racial Attacks Independent Network (BRAIN) was launched.

The conference, entitled 'The Betrayal of Stephen Lawrence' and attended by some 400 delegates, sought to reflect on the issues arising out of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and to consider the way forward for grassroots activists tackling racist violence and policing in local communities. The audience heard moving speeches from both Doreen and Neville Lawrence, who spoke of their five-year struggle for justice and the way in which the criminal justice system betrayed their son. Doreen also expressed her determination to keep Stephen's memory alive through the promotion of the Stephen Lawrence Trust.

The gains of the Stephen Lawrence Family Campaign in the past year became immediately apparent from the experiences of other families in attendance who had also lost loved ones in racist murders. Kwesi and Essie Menson spoke of the killing of their brother Michael and their meeting with Jack Straw to seek a review of the case, and Sukdev Reel, mother of Lakhvinder 'Ricky' Reel, told of how the Lawrences 'paved the way for families like ours'.

The event was organised by BRAIN in partnership with Sia, The National Development Agency For The Black Voluntary Sector. The network, which has existed informally for over two years, was created to provide mutual support in the face of

attacks by the local state on the likes of Southall Monitoring Group and Newham Monitoring Project, which were accused of being too political by the local police and had their funding cut by the local authority. Members hail from places such as Newcastle, Liverpool and Birmingham and all the organisations in the network provide a specific frontline service to victims of racist attacks and police harassment which includes practical support and campaigning on their behalf. The campaigning element in their work has led to a backlash from the authorities which has now become a national trend. Even during the past eight months of the Stephen Lawrence inquiry, the Edinburgh-based Wester Hailes Against Racism Project and the Hounslow Monitoring Project have had their funding withdrawn because of campaigning activities.

A clear outcome of the conference was to highlight the crucial role that monitoring groups play in combating racial violence at the grass roots and campaigning for change. The day ended with a rousing speech from Myrna Simpson, the mother of Joy Gardner, who challenged communities across the country to mobilise themselves and campaign for justice: 'Do we want more Stephen Lawrences, or Joy Gardners or Ricky Reels? They are killing black people and we've got to stop it. It's not easy, it's a struggle, but we've got to unite, and fight and never let them shut us up!' ■

The Black Racial Attacks Independent Network can be contacted at:
BRAIN, c/o Sia, Winchester House, 9 Cranmer Road,
Kennington Park, London SW9 6EJ.
Tel: 0171-735 9010. Fax: 0171-735 9011.

PCA deaths in custody conference: families fight to be heard

The PCA conference held in October on preventing deaths in custody was picketed by the United Families and Family Campaign, which was protesting the refusal of the PCA to allow the most interested parties – the victims' families – into the conference. Protesters made enough of a 'noise' that the organisers 'allowed' Brenda Weinberg, the sister of Brian Douglas, to address the conference. Brian died as a result of a fractured skull after a baton was used on him in May 1995. Also 'allowed' in was Myrna Simpson, mother of Joy Gardner who died after immigration police attempted to deport her in August 1993. Brenda Weinberg called for the disclosure of information to families as

the current refusal to disclose information led to suspicion and mistrust. She called for the abolition of the PCA and the setting up of an independent complaints authority, and for an inquiry into deaths in custody.

Home Office minister Alun Michael warned police officers not to hide behind the excuse of prejudicing legal proceedings in attempts not to disclose information. Michael held up the prison service as a shining example of good practice, saying that they were already 'open' about deaths in custody. He seemed to have forgotten about Alton Manning who died in Blakenhurst private prison in 1995 after an unlawful search was carried out by guards. The assault on Alton should have been

recorded on the prisons hi-tech CCTV system but the guards claimed that, owing to an 'operational error', no such tape existed.

The United Families and Friends Campaign, a coalition of the families and friends of those who have died in police custody, is to hold a protest at the Home Office (50 Queen Anne's Gate, London SW1, Tube – St James Park) on Wednesday 16 December at 12.00 noon to demand a public inquiry into black deaths in custody. ■

United Families and Friends Campaign, PO Box 9501, London, N17 6EG. Tel: 0370 432439

Plumstead death in custody

A 57-year-old black man died in the custody of Plumstead police officers on 2 November. The man, as yet unnamed, died after being arrested for allegedly being drunk and disorderly (as was Oscar Okoye in 1996 who later died of a brain haemorrhage). He was taken to the station at 4.30 pm, at around 8.30 he was found collapsed in his cell and an ambulance called and he was pronounced dead at Greenwich District hospital at 9.10 pm. ■

Ibrahima Sey

Once again the CPS has refused to prosecute any police officers involved in the death of a black man. At the beginning of October the CPS announced its decision not to prosecute officers involved in the death in 1996 of Ibrahima Sey, who an inquest jury ruled in 1997 had been unlawfully killed. Once again the phrase 'insuffi-

cient evidence' is used to justify the lack of proceedings against police officers. The CPS claimed that the cause of death was unascertainable. This is strange, given that the jury seemed to have no difficulty ascertaining that Ibrahima Sey died because he was forcibly restrained by overzealous police officers, handcuffed, placed face down and then had CS spray sprayed directly into his face.

In a report issued in November, the United Nations Committee Against Torture expressed concern at the number of deaths in police custody and the apparent failure of the government to provide an effective investigative mechanism to deal with allegations of police and prison authorities' abuse. ■

Justice for Christopher Alder

The Justice for Christopher Alder Campaign has called on people to lobby Home Secretary Jack Straw in his home constituency of Blackburn after the death of 37-year-old black man

Christopher Alder. Christopher was arrested on 1 April by Hull police for a breach of the peace at Hull Royal Infirmary, where he was being treated for injuries sustained during an incident at a night-club. He was placed face down with his hands cuffed behind his back and taken to Queens Gardens police station, where he collapsed and died. The post-mortem was inconclusive and suggested that Christopher had mental, drug and heart problems. The case is very similar to that of Wayne Douglas, who died in 1995 as a result of 'positional asphyxia' from being handcuffed and placed face down. Police initially suggested that 25-year-old Wayne had a heart condition.

Christopher's family are also calling for an independent post mortem and inquest to be held as quickly as possible. Five police officers have been suspended pending the PCA investigation. ■

Justice for Christopher Alder Campaign c/o Red Triangle Cafe, 160 St James Street, Burnley, BB1 1NR. 01282 832319

CS SPRAY CLAIMS NEW VICTIMS

CS claims third victim: 53-year-old Eric Smith died on 2 November after Leeds police officers sprayed him three times 'to ensure a safe arrest'. According to his wife, Eric had said, 'They're killing me. Will you tell them, please, I'm going to have a heart attack. I can't breathe.' Eric was arrested on 30 October and officers justified the use of CS by claiming he was acting in a violent manner. He saw a police surgeon at Pudsey station, went to hospital on his release the next day and died two days later at his home. Eric, who was white, was

the third man to die after being sprayed with CS after Ibrahima Sey who died in 1996 at Ilford police station (see CARF 31) and Peter San Pedro who walked into the path of a lorry a few hours after being sprayed by Kent police in April 1997 (see CARF38).

CS spray now available for dogs too: 'Bite Back', a new CS spray designed to stop aggressive dogs, is now available to the police (as well as to postmen, dog wardens and meter readers). But animal expert Dr Roger Mugford claims the

spray has a similar effect on dogs as on humans, including breathing problems and skin irritations and is calling for the spray to be banned. What about banning CS use on humans?

CS spray affects coppers too:

In October, a City of London police officer suffered a heart attack after a CS spray training session. The officer was taken to hospital, where he was reported to be in a critical condition. City of London police claimed that there was no reason to link his heart attack to the use of CS. ■



Victory for Hillingdon strikers



Twenty-one strikers at Hillingdon hospital have finally won their three-year fight, after an industrial tribunal ruled that they should get their jobs back and receive compensation. The dispute began back in 1995, after Pall Mall, which won a contract to provide domestic services to the hospital, imposed a 20% pay cut, reductions in holiday and sick pay, followed by checks on the immigration status of Asian workers. The workers responded by striking.

The women never gave up despite losing vital strike pay from their union, Unison,

which urged them to settle the dispute, seeing it as 'unwinnable'. In parallel with the strike the women took the company to an industrial tribunal. The hearing began in July, and ended in October with the ruling that the women should all be reinstated without any cuts in pay and conditions. The tribunal also awarded £11,300 compensation each to most of the women. The strikers' spokeswoman Malkiat Bilku said, 'This was a fight against greedy bosses taking money from the poorest workers and every employer should learn from this and treat their workers with respect.'

However, their struggle isn't over. Granada Healthcare Services, the company which took over the contract from Pall Mall, is refusing to reinstate the women, claiming it has no vacancies and 'work patterns and practices of staff have changed'.

On 17 November, the strikers staged a lobby of the bosses at Granada Healthcare Services, calling for the company to stand by the tribunal ruling and reinstate the workers. The company is in the process of appealing against the tribunal decision. ■

Send donations and messages of support to Hillingdon Hospital Workers c/o 27 Townsend Way, Northwood, Middlesex HA6 1TG. Tel: 0956 135311

CLOSE HARMONDSWORTH CAMPAIGN

Stop locking up asylum-seekers
Picket Harmondsworth detention centre
Saturday 12 December 1998
11.30am - 1pm

(Colnbrook by-pass A4/bus 81 from Hounslow West)

Call 0181 571 5019 for more info

Fascist walks free

Paul Ballard, the Surrey British National Party (BNP) organiser, escaped prosecution for inciting racial hatred under the Public Order Act in October after the High Court ruled that Muslims are not covered by the Race Relations Act. Ballard, a key player in the BNP's violent and intimidatory 'rights for whites' campaign against a proposed mosque in Merton, was arrested in possession of inflammatory posters in 1997. The BNP's campaign involved Muslims being spat at and insulted on their way to prayer as gangs of fascists from outside the area plastered Merton with posters and stickers.

The Crown Prosecution Service decided not to prosecute Ballard, prompting Merton council to take the CPS to court to end uncertainty over whether laws against incitement to race hatred covered Muslims. The High Court decision means that while it's a crime to incite hatred against Jews and Sikhs, fascist and racist groups can abuse Muslims and Rastafarians (also not covered by the Act) at will. ■

Gertrude Elias 1913-1998

I knew Gertrude long before I knew her name. She was that short, be-shawled woman who scuttled down, at the last moment, to the front row of so many Left meetings in the 1960s and 1970s. Other times I would catch her in ardent discussion with someone to whom she was handing out leaflets on a demonstration. When I finally met her in 1985, to ask for illustrations for an exhibition on black struggle that the GLC had commissioned, she was everything I had imagined: lively, disputatious, amusing and difficult. I was in awe both of her life-time's dedication to politics and her commitment to anti-racism. When she arrived in London in the 1930s, as a

refugee from Nazi-occupied Austria, she was already a Left activist and, over the years, was to put her writing, design and cartooning skills at the service of a whole range of anti-colonial and anti-racist movements from the Coloured Workers' Welfare Association and the *West Indian Gazette* in the 1950s to *Searchlight* and *Liberation* in the 1970s. Her strident anti-Zionism and support for the Palestinian cause, unusual in a Jew of her age and era, were born of her hatred of racism and injustice. Late in life I found my role model - though she would have had a good laugh at the term. Dedicated and uncompromising, she was the grit in the oyster that makes the pearl. Every movement needs its Gertrude Elias. ■

Jenny Bourne

Gertrude Elias, self-portrait



Remembering Blair Peach

It is almost 20 years since anti-racist teacher Blair Peach was killed by a blow to the head from the police on an anti-fascist demonstration in Southall. And teachers, anti-racists, black groups and trade unions are organising a series of events early next year to commemorate the anniversary of Blair's death on 23 April 1979:

- Schools competition organised by East London NUT on the theme 'We are different ... we are equal'
- 6 February 1999: a major education conference at Goldsmiths College
- 28 February 1999: concert
- 24 April 1999: a demonstration beginning from Southall Park

Further details on all the above events from East London Teachers Association on 0181 980 3601.

SPECIAL OFFER FOR CARF READERS

Receive a free copy of *Show Racism The Red Card*

Send an A4 self-addressed envelope with a 39p stamp to:

Show Racism The Red Card,
1 Drury Lane,
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1EA.



1998

CALENDAR OF RACE AND RESISTANCE

OCT 1 CPS announces officers involved in death of Ibrahima Sey are not to be prosecuted because of insufficient evidence... Latest figures show that black children are still more likely to be excluded from school than white... Lawrence inquiry hears from Met Chief Paul Condon who attempts to explain police failures and refuses to acknowledge institutional racism in the force **OCT 2** Advertising Standards

Authority accuses CRE of being 'irresponsible' after its latest advertising campaign, and will vet all future campaigns... At the Lawrence inquiry, CRE calls for powers to investigate the police force **OCT 3** Government announces plans to fine road hauliers £2,000 if they are found carrying stowaways

OCT 4 CRE condemns Tory leaflet opposing travellers' site in Bristol, saying it could incite racial hatred **OCT 7** Government introduces visa restrictions for Slovakian citizens coming to the UK **OCT 8** North Staffordshire Race Equality Council threatens to take Sneyd Cricket club to court if it does not reinstate 26 Asian cricketers who have accused the club of racism

OCT 9 Three men found guilty for second time of the April 1996 murder of Jonathan Reid, a white man, for his marriage to a Nigerian, are jailed for life **OCT 12** Report into racism in Birmingham city council finds that despite a four-year drive for black recruits the council has failed to tackle racism **OCT 13** Sam Yeboah wins £380,000 for injury to feelings and the loss of earnings and pension rights after he wins case of racial discrimination against Bernard Crofton, former director of housing in Hackney... Easington District council ordered to pay £1,250 compensation by local government ombudsman for failure to recognise the five years racial abuse suffered by family of five **OCT 14** Figures from Nottingham police show increase in racist attacks, with 267 incidents reported in the first eight months of 1998 **OCT 16** Police arrest 82-year-old General Augusto Pinochet, former Chilean dictator, on international extradition warrant, for atrocities committed between 1973-1990 **OCT 17** 3000 black people march on Trafalgar Square in rally organised by Nation of Islam **OCT 19** Family of 56-year-old Asian man Remi Surage, stabbed to death in a motiveless attack on Orpington High Street, appeal for help to catch his killer **OCT 20** In test case High Court rules that councils have legal duty to provide suitable accommodation for asylum seekers after Ealing council placed family of four in two rooms a mile apart **OCT 22** Paul Condon announces that Met's new Racial and Violent Crime Task Force will reinvestigate the death of Ricky Reel **OCT 23** Couple found guilty of importing Hungarian girls into UK and forcing them into prostitution... At Lambeth town hall, police officers evict protesters against proposed closure of New Initiative Youth and Community Association, which has provided a service to local black youth for 10 years **OCT 24** 28-year-old black woman attacked while shopping in Muswell Hill by couple who shouted racial abuse before attacking her **OCT 25** 28-year-old Iraqi man nearly loses ear, needs stitches to his face and neck after bottle was smashed into his face in unprovoked racist attack in Borough, south London... Truck drivers protest at British ports at new fines for carrying illegal immigrants **OCT 26** Government announces plans to electronically tag all asylum-seekers **OCT 27** Merton Council loses case to bring Muslims under the protection of the Race Relations Act as High Court rules Muslims are a religious, not

ethnic group **OCT 28** European Court of Human Rights condemns police failure to prevent murder and demands legal charges for failing to act on threats of violence... Road Haulage Association advises its members who find stowaways on their trucks to 'dump' them at the Home Office **OCT 29** Brent council blocks travellers' access to a campsite with a skip after unsuccessfully trying to evict the group **NOV 1** David Calvert-Smith takes over as Director of Public Prosecutions at CPS from Dame Barbara Mills... 27-year-old Carl Joseph sues police for racial harassment after being stopped 34 times in two years... Home Secretary announces proposals for 'smart cards' to enable refugees to buy food and clothing **NOV 2** 14-year-old Kevin Panton knocked unconscious in latest in string of racist attacks on his family in New Eltham, south-east London **NOV 3** 57-year-old unnamed black man dies in Plumstead police station **NOV 5** Toller Lane police station targeted by Asian youth rioting in Manningham area of Bradford... CRE calls on Home Secretary to step in over inappropriate remarks made by Judge Peter Fingret who denied racism in two men who called 19-year-old Marlon

Watson a 'stinking nigger' and beat him up. The men received non-custodial sentences **NOV 6** Karamjit Singh Chahal loses case for compensation after being imprisoned for six years as a 'threat' to national security... Neeta Amin wins £4,000 damages from CPS for case of racial discrimination **NOV 9** CRE report on racist bullying in Scotland finds Pakistani children in Fife bear brunt of racial abuse... Black housing charity Frontline finds black people four times more likely to be without a home than white people and that people with non-English names more likely to have passports checked when applying to council for housing **NOV 10** Household Cavalry march in Brixton in attempt to recruit more black people into army **NOV 11** Home Office bans use of word 'bogus' in relation to asylum-seekers, suggests 'abusive' instead **NOV 12** Government announces 15% increase on spending to improve educational standards for black children for whom English is a second language... Group of travellers camping in Tesco's car park, Neasden, accuse management of racism after being barred from store **NOV 13** Gathering of evidence by Lawrence inquiry ends... Schizophrenic Sipho Jozana accepts £100,000 damages from Met after violent arrest four years ago left him permanently disabled **NOV 15** Three players from Asian football team Bari FC end up in Newham hospital, London after football match with mainly white team, Wanstead Holly, disintegrates into fight **NOV 16** Manchester fire service strike over racist remarks allegedly made by senior officer Don Bramhall that 'I would rather be gay than black' **NOV 17** 15-year-old white boy who initiated gang fight in Southam, Warwickshire after making racist comments, loses appeal against two-month jail sentence **NOV 18** Criminal Cases Review Commission announces decision not to refer Winston Silcott's case to Court of Appeal **NOV 20** Government announces measures to reduce football hooliganism and tougher laws on racial abuse... **NOV 23** BNP speaker addresses meeting of 200 boys at Dulwich College **NOV 25** Law Lords rule that General Augusto Pinochet is not immune from extradition proceedings... Sir William Macpherson announces Police Federation to be given prior warning of criticisms in Lawrence inquiry report, which is to 'name and shame' officers involved.

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