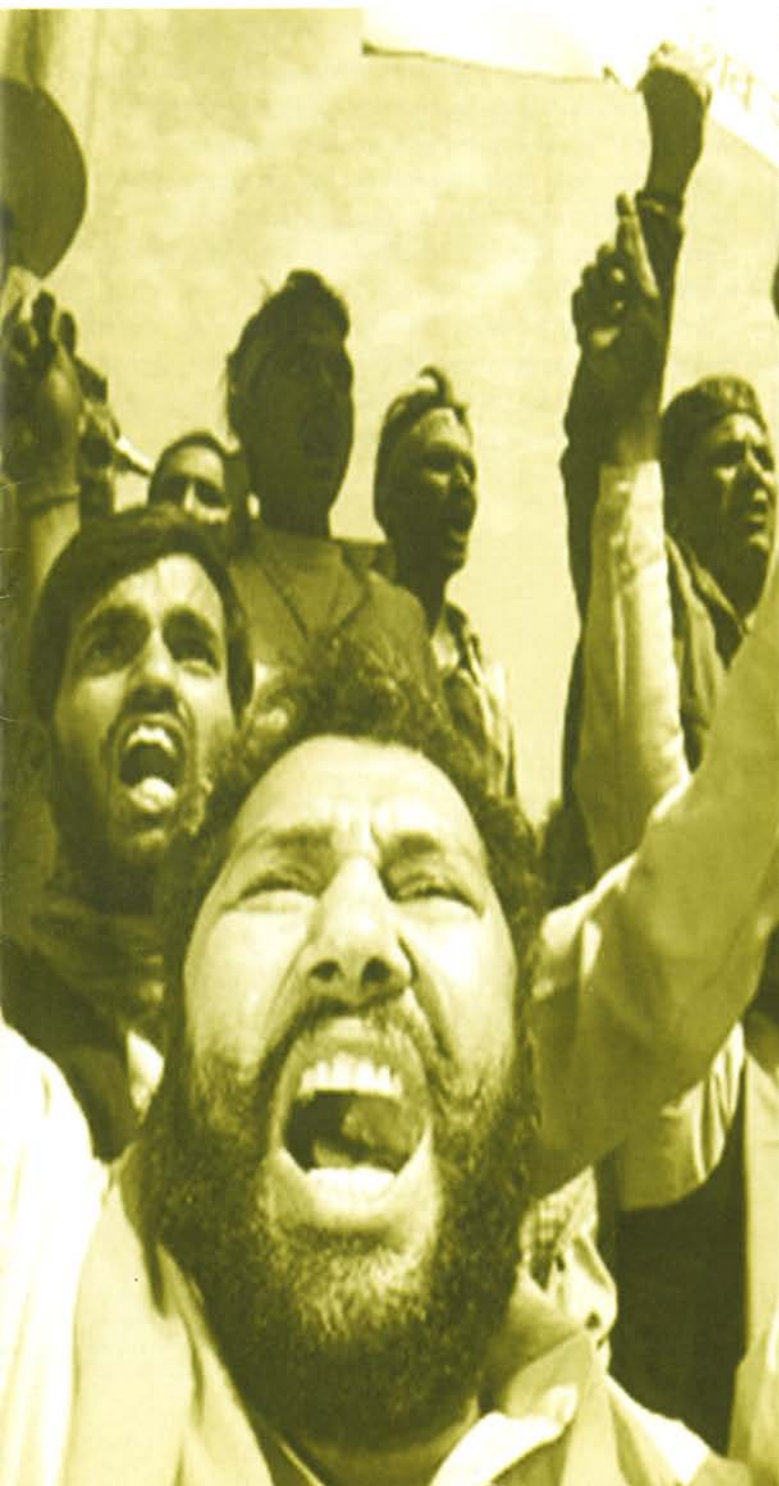


carf67

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fundamentalism?



fundamentalism /-iz(ə)m/ *n*
1a a belief in the literal truth of the Bible **b** *often cap* a movement in 20th-century Protestantism emphasizing such belief **c** adherence to such belief **2** a movement or attitude stressing strict and literal adherence to a set of basic principles

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In CARF 66, we promised readers a new-look magazine with a central focus around an issue of topical debate. There is, perhaps, no issue more topical – and more difficult to debate – than that of fundamentalism.

Even the word is controversial. What precisely is fundamentalism, and who are fundamentalists? Given the current use of the word to demonise Islam and justify war, is fundamentalism a term that ant-racists should even consider using? Too often, even progressive people, use the term in a lazy way, deploying it as a generalised euphemism for most forms of bigotry, fanaticism and religious extremism – and if that's what we are talking about, then, in order to be accurate and avoid misunderstanding, we should use one of these words. Guest-writer, Reverend Ken Leech, in explaining how the term fundamentalism emerged out of the North American Evangelical Christian world and has no equivalent, or meaning, within Islam, makes precisely this point. And Arun Kundnani, in his investigation into the growth of communalism in the British Asian communities post-September 11, is thinking along the same lines when he argues that it would be wrong to lump together groups in Asian communities that promote violent hatred of other faiths under some generic term, as each movement requires its own specific analysis and oppositional strategies.

In opening up this debate, CARF realises that we are throwing out more questions than answers. But unless we begin to engage with these issues honestly, anti-racists will cease to have an effective voice in a rapidly changing world. ■



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An unholy alliance?

Racism, religion and communalism

For too long there has been a reluctance to discuss the issue of communalism in British Asian communities. Organised religious groups can be powerful forces and their critics are either accused of 'washing dirty linen in public' or denounced for a supposed disloyalty. When those who have spoken out have been women the denunciations have been even more severe. Too often 'fundamentalism' has been a charge levelled only at other parts of the Asian community while silence has reigned on fundamentalism in the name of one's own faith.

Thus, in place of analysis, we fall back on the idea that these are age-old conflicts that are part and parcel of our cultural make-up. In so doing we not only play into the hands of religious extremists but also ignore the ways in which their power springs from the answers they offer to contemporary problems – whether it be questions of identity and loss, associated with migration, or protection from playground bullying. And we ignore the ways in which these ideologies are products of the modern age, using nationalist techniques of mobilisation derived from twentieth-century Europe.

**By Arun
Kundnani**



Communal tensions in British Asian communities are on the rise. Conflict between Sikh and Muslim youths and Hindu and Muslim is becoming a more common occurrence in Asian areas. Religious fanaticism – of the kind that promotes hostility toward others – holds a grip on a small but increasing number. And the tensions on Britain's streets are increasingly tied to events abroad, not least the US-led 'war on terrorism'.

In Bradford, early last year, violence flared up between Hindu and Muslim communities. And last October in Derby, a 15-year-old Hindu girl was hospitalised following an argument about the events of September 11. Tensions were already high in the town following the distribution of an anti-Sikh leaflet, credited to the non-existent group 'Real Khilafah'.

There are less violent signs too. In January, Sunrise Radio – Britain's 'leading Asian radio station' – took the bizarre step of banning the word 'Asian'. This was the culmination of a long campaign by groups such as the UK branch of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (World Hindu Council) that want to disassociate themselves from Muslims in the public mind by dropping the secular term 'Asian'. Although the term has always been problematic, this campaign is premised on the idea that racist whites could be persuaded to exclude Hindus and Sikhs from their hatred and instead focus just on Muslims. The tendency took on a disturbing twist after September 11 when many South Asians in America became victims of revenge attacks. Some Sikhs – instead of marching with Muslims and calling for an end to any revenge attacks – marched separately with banners saying 'we are not Muslims', as if American Muslims were any more valid as targets for revenge than they were. And in January 2002, for the first time ever, the British National Party (BNP) managed to convince a tiny faction of Asians – the Shere-e-Punjab grouping – to co-operate on anti-Muslim propaganda.

Later in the year, three British Muslims on holiday in India were killed in the state-sponsored anti-Muslim pogroms that swept through Gujarat in February and March. On one level these deaths are unrelated to developments in Britain. But, with the increase in ideologies and even funds (see box, p6) flowing across continents, such distinctions become less tenable.

It would be tempting to try and blame just one side for the cycle of mutual demonisation. But, as Arundhati Roy has written in the context of the Gujarat carnage, for anybody to 'arbitrarily decree exactly where the cycle started is malevolent and irresponsible'; all sides increasingly resemble each other the more they try to call attention to their religious differences by castigating the other. As a new generation of British Asians, born in this country in the 1960s and 1970s, occupies more positions of influence in our communities, it is the future orientation of British Asian life that is at stake. Will we be divided and separated by religion or will we be able to find a place in our lives for both our own faith and an understanding of others, within a secular framework?

The BNP has had ambitions to pit Hindus and Sikhs against Muslims since Nick Griffin's successful leadership bid and the subsequent 'rebranding' of the party. The focus is now on Islam as the prime enemy facing Britain and the party claims to have abandoned its policy of forcibly repatriating all non-whites. Of course, the 'media-savvy' reinvention of the party is a sham. But

The BNP has worked with two Sikhs, Rajinder Singh and Ammo Singh, who have co-operated on the production of a CD entitled 'Islam – a threat to us all'. Rajinder Singh has also appeared in the BNP magazine, *Spearhead*, in which he voices opposition to Britain's 'liberal immigration policy' and congratulates the BNP for taking a stand against 'Afghans and Bangladeshis clutching their copies of the Koran, fighting desperately to enter

Both Singhs are connected with the Shere-e-Punjab (Lions of Punjab) group, which has been active since the mid-1980s, operating as part street gang, part political grouping. The organisation has been successful in offering its 'muscle' when Sikhs have felt under threat from local Muslims, such as in 1997 when Shere-e-Punjab descended en masse on the largely Muslim Chalvey estate in Slough to exact revenge for earlier perceived slights. As a political organisation, the group can only claim a handful of poorly organised members. While Ammo and Rajinder Singh claim to be 'leading figures', they only represent a marginal fraction of British Sikh communities. Even so, the BBC still saw fit to allow Ammo Singh to appear on Radio 4 in July 2001 to praise the BNP's response to the riots in Oldham, Burnley and Bradford.

Many Asians were shocked by Rajinder Singh's open support for the BNP. Yet anti-Islamic feeling is becoming increasingly acceptable across society, especially under the guise of the 'war on terrorism', and anti-Muslim elements in all communities have found renewed confidence in the wake of Bush's 'You are either with us or against us' rhetoric. Hindu nationalists, both in India and the UK, believe that their own Islamophobia has now been vindicated. Meanwhile Muslims are finding that somehow they are all being held responsible for

With these tensions in the air, it has become easier for organised groups or gangs that define themselves by religion to persuade youngsters to join them. For some, the fear of bullying leads to outside groups being 'called in' for protection, especially as rumours fly around of the attacks being planned by 'the other side'. A lot of youthful male pride is at stake when your faith is being attacked or, worse, when there is a perceived threat to 'your' women. For others, these groups provide simple answers to the difficult questions young Muslims in particular now face. In either case, it feeds the growth of organised groups prepared to use violence in the name of religion.

Of course, since September 11, all the media attention has been on Muslim fundamentalists in the UK, such as Abu Hamza al-Masri, of Finsbury Park mosque, and Sheikh Omar Bakri, leader of the Al-Muhajiroun group, who have become household names. But for all the pages devoted to their 'links' to al-Qaeda, little effort

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Molestation of women



Tony Blair, Jan Duncan-Smith, the BBC and various top church leaders have all told us in recent weeks that Islam is a "peaceful" religion—just Christianity with a slow on its head. Well, they read LYING! Told us what Islam really stands for, all you have to do is to look at a copy of the Koran, and swear your self that the book is a guide on the supposedly "Holy" Book, which are reproduced word for word in this leaflet, we at 102% accurate.

We're not making anything up. All the good you need is in the Quran. Islam really disabated for intolerance, slaughter, killing, arson and molestation of Women. They're the way we did of white racism, the acronym is widely used in India, where the majority peaceful Hindu community have been the victims of a dirty Islamic rule and murder on a daily basis, during attacks for centuries. That's why in Britain today, many Hindus and Sikhs as dietary people their 'community leaders' who know they have to keep their mouths shut to get 1.5 billion grants and knighthoods, as is among those who are about the fundamentalism.

Among the ethnically Irish majority, no-one dares tell the truth about Islam and the way it threatens our democracy, freedom, freedom and dignity – except for the British National Party. So angry are old parties about our willingness to stand up and tell the truth that they are about to rush new rape laws 'tough' through Parliament to make exposing the evils of Islam an irreparable offence. The fact that you are reading this that it will be 'Islam' – as read on whatever you

"Muslim extremists plan to turn Britain into an Islamic Republic by 2025, using a combination of immigration, high birthrates and conversion. They must be stopped!"

Anti-Muslim campaign leaflet produced by BNP

has been made to place their antics in the wider context of British Islam and point out how small their respective followings are. Nor has there been much thought given to what the appeal of groups like Al-Muhajiroun may be to the small number of followers they attract. The constant media coverage has given the impression that these tiny groupings are in fact more influential than they are, thereby flattering their own apocalyptic pretensions.



Around 50,000 people from all backgrounds called for justice for Palestine on 18 May 2002. The march was met with silence from the mainstream media.

Since the slaughter of Bosnian Muslims in the early 1990s, there have been growing numbers of youths attracted to the puritan strands of Islam, in particular the Salafi sect, which makes up a tiny percentage of the Muslim population. Although some Salafis support the use of political violence to establish a state based on Shari'ah law, others emphasise a process of 'self-rectification' in which followers embark on a personal struggle to transform their lifestyle on the model of the Prophet Muhammad.

The puritan movement in Islam is thriving among young men in the UK because it offers a very different brand of Islam to that of their parents. The preachers are often more dynamic, younger and able to relate to their target audience in a way that most mosques, whose Imams have often been brought over from abroad, cannot. Particularly in medium-sized towns, like Luton, the Salafis are recruiting many youngsters who have previously dabbled in a life of crime. Well known local criminals have been converted to the Salafi lifestyle, swapping fast cars, womanising and night-clubs for the discipline of a minimum-wage job, voluntary work and a strict personal code covering every aspect of dress, manners and family relations.

At the heart of the appeal, though, is the question of identity. The process of conversion begins by asking what it means to be a Muslim. For many, that is not an easy question to answer but for Salafis – who seek to purify Islam of all innovation since the time of Muhammad – it means a simple set of lifestyle prescripts that remove all the confusions of being Muslim in the modern world. And for many young men, who see other Muslims suffering globally and connect that suffering to their own experience of racism, such messages have a potent appeal. Which is why Sheikh Omar Bakri places the following lines at the heart of his



Luton's Al-Muhajiroun leader, 'Shahed'.

recruitment speeches: 'They want to keep calling us Pakis, bloody Arabs, brown Kaffirs. So you change your name to Bobby. You change all your clothes. You dance. You rave with them. They still call you Paki. You ask, "For God's sake who do I belong to?" You belong to the Muslim ummah, brother, come on in.'

The problem for Muslims generally is that groups like Al-Muhajiroun, which revel in negative publicity and lace their rhetoric with anti-Semitism, homophobia and calls for jihad, have dominated the public representation of Islam. Their presence in a town can be devastating. In Luton, the local 'branch' of Al-Muhajiroun was attracting national headlines after two men from the town had gone to fight for the Taliban and had been killed in a US bombing raid on Kabul. Al-Muhajiroun, which has just six members in Luton, organised a 'demonstration' in memory of the two. Although only ten people turned up, racism against all the town's 20,000 Muslims increased. Once again, the majority were forced to suffer for the actions of a tiny minority because of a lazy racism that lumps all Muslims together. Soon afterwards the leader of Luton's Al-Muhajiroun, known as 'Shahed', was beaten up in the street by 'moderate' Muslims and warned off from continuing any activities in the town.


Fear and loathing in Derby

In Derby, tensions between Sikhs and Muslims worsened following September 11, as rumours spread that Al-Muhajiroun were active in the area distributing anti-Sikh leaflets. A hoax letter, which has been circulating on the internet for some years and aims at fomenting Sikh-Muslim conflict, inflamed the Sikh community when it was allegedly distributed on Normanton Road, in the heart of Derby's Asian community. The letter accuses the government of only being interested in funding 'Gurdwaras and Gays and Homos' and goes on to suggest that Muslim boys need 'to bring Sikh girls into the arms of Islam' by taking them out on a date – 'it is easy to take the Sikh girls out on a date as they generally like a good drink'. There was talk of a boycott of Muslim shops and angry meetings were held at the Gurdwara. With many Sikhs having already moved out of the Normanton area to Derby's suburbs, those remaining were feeling vulnerable and outnumbered.

Soon afterwards, a dispute between schoolgirls over the events of September 11 flared up, leading to one Muslim girl having her headscarf torn. Later, a gang of Muslim boys from outside the school smashed their way into a lunch break armed with hammers and axes and attacked pupils. A Hindu girl suffered a fractured skull and spine injuries. So far, a 15-year-old has been charged with racially aggravated wounding and GBH. Community leaders organised meetings to try and avoid a total collapse of trust but, according to Paramdeep Singh Bhatia of the Derby Sikh Youth Association, these meetings were ineffectual. In the end, the gang leaders themselves negotiated a truce.

Bhatia believes that in order for future tensions to be avoided, youths need to be allowed to take the initiative in seeking solutions. He hopes that forums can be established where young people of different faiths can develop a mutual respect. For others, the incident highlighted how women are sidelined. 'You get quite frustrated with men wanting to fight things out, rather than wanting to talk,' says Shabana Najib. 'Why is it that men feel the need to protect us and yet never ask for


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Sevikas practising dand at the Vishwa Vibhag Samiti Shiksha Varg held in Nagpur (report on page 4)

March-April 2002 Volume XIII No. 2

Latest edition of the HSS magazine, showing British Hindu youths attending a training camp in Nagpur.

our views on it? A lot of the women that I come across are quite frustrated about the way things were dealt with.'

Britain's Hindu Right

Hinduism is often thought of as a religion that is inherently tolerant and humane, yet Hindu communities too have their small minority of active 'fundamentalists', who often escape scrutiny because of the religion's reputation for peacefulness. Few are aware of the history of Hindu nationalism (Hindutva) in India: the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), which was formed in the 1920s on the model of Mussolini's Brown Shirts, or the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Muslims in Gujarat earlier this year. In Britain, the offshoots of these groups pre-

sent themselves as cultural and social organisations and downplay their political agenda. But hostility to Muslims is never far away. According to an attendee at a recent VHP meeting in Southall, held in response to the situation in Gujarat, speakers demanded that non-Hindus should be made to leave India. And the writer Sunil Khilnani has described attending the 'Festival of Hindu Youth', recently held in north London, at which speakers 'worked the audience in televangelical style, exhorting the youngsters to stand up for their Hindu religion, to defend their caste identities, and to face down other religions that might intimidate them – especially Muslims.' Yet the UK branch of the VHP has also been given a platform in the mainstream media, such as the *Telegraph* and *Talk Radio*, as the representative voice of Hindus, particularly after last summer's riots.

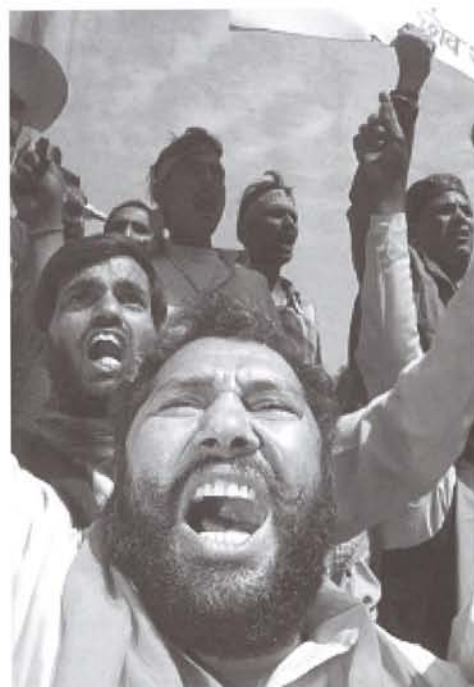
As in India, the Hindutva movement in Britain operates through a number of linked organisations each presenting a different face for different purposes. The Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS), which is a registered charity, describes itself as a cultural organisation 'right at the core of being British and Hindu', according to spokesman Manoj Ladwa. Although he claims HSS has a 'distinct identity in the UK' from its Indian equivalent, the RSS, he does accept that it shares 'common roots and beliefs' with the Indian anti-Islamic paramilitary group, one of whose members was responsible for Gandhi's assassination in 1948. HSS organises youth 'training camps', regularly invites RSS speakers from India to UK events and organises fundraising such as the 'Hindu marathon'. The next training camp is to be held over ten days at the end of July 2002 in Hounslow and will be attended by around 100 youths. The well-known charity Sewa International which, according to Ladwa, is 'managed by HSS' shares an address with HSS, as does the National Hindu Students Forum, which has a fluctuating membership in the low thousands.

The support for groups like HSS and VHP in the UK rests on a mixture of motivations. As described above, for many economically successful Hindus, particularly entrepreneurs from East African Asian merchant communities, Hindu chauvinism aims at a dissociation from less well-off Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities who are seen as giving Asians a bad name. This snobbery feeds into wider fears of Islam as a fundamentalist religion and is supported by the idea that Muslims have historically been 'invaders' of the Hindu homeland. The VHP has also been successful in mobilising around anti-defamation issues. Recently Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* had scenes re-edited so that extracts from the Gita were not read during an orgy, after an international internet campaign. Another factor is the strong Hindu tradition of contributing 'service' to the welfare of one's community. As the Hindu nationalist groups are often the only voluntary sector groups doing welfare and educational work in the name of Hinduism, they attract support, in spite of

FUNDING HINDUTVA TERROR?

It is now widely accepted that the anti-Muslim riots that erupted in Gujarat in February 2002 involved high levels of collusion with the BJP-controlled state government and were anticipated and planned for by other factions of the Hindu Right. In the lead-up to the pogroms, thousands of weapons were distributed to young volunteers of the Bajrang Dal, the VHP's paramilitary youth wing. And it is also well known that the funds which paid for these weapons have come from the Hindu diaspora in the West.

In India, there have been repeated questions about the funding of the VHP, which, like its UK and US branches, claims charitable status. Large sums of money that ought to be helping the poor, rather than promoting the interests of any particular religious community, are unaccounted for. Under India's secular laws, even constructing a temple cannot be considered a charitable activity. Much of these funds come from abroad, often by Hindus who believe the money is being used for genuine purposes. With the relative wealth of many Hindus in the US IT industry, some estimate the sums involved to be as large as tens of millions of dollars per year. Although the VHP claims not to receive foreign donations, it has had conferences in New York, Copenhagen, Netherlands and Singapore, as well as Milton Keynes, and has conducted fundraising tours of the USA. One such tour in 1999 had a target of raising \$400,000. ■



the fact that their ideology is a distortion of the Hindu faith system.

Perhaps because of the VHP's deeper roots in the Hindu community, and anticipating the backlash that would follow, the VHP did not follow Shere-e-Punjab in an alliance with the BNP. When Nick Griffin heard Hasmukh Shah, a VHP leader, denounce Muslims following the riots in Bradford last July, he turned up at Shah's office seeking an alliance, but his overtures were rejected.

Authentic voices?

For anti-racists, the growth of groups in Asian communities that promote violent hatred of other faiths raises difficult questions. Should they be treated in the same way as white extreme-Right political parties, like the BNP? How do we understand these groups' place in the context of the wider racist society? It would be wrong, however, to lump together very different political movements under the catch-all of 'fascism'. Whereas Asian communalist groups in the UK are reactive, distorted responses to a racist society, white working-class far-Right movements are, in the final analysis, scapegoating 'immigrants' for the iniquities of the class system. The former aims at separation, the latter at subordination. And each requires its own specific analysis and oppositional strategy.

One practice that needs to be urgently challenged is the tendency of 'multiculturalist' policies to take an unthinking, and often tokenistic, approach to 'minority' representation. Under the guise of multiculturalism, leaders of communalist groups can easily become accepted as authentic representatives of Asian 'culture', as has happened in some newspapers and radio programmes over the last year. Leaders of groups like HSS have been invited to become a part of the multicultural hobnobbing that is, these days, a part of the British establishment's attempts to manage race relations. As a result, the most reactionary elements in our communities are being given undue influence. And, under Blair, with his authoritarian and hermetic idea of 'community', we are increasingly being defined as 'faith groups', and religiously defined organisations are now seen as key players in tackling 'anti-social behaviour'.

Not only do we need to take more responsibility for the tacit support we give to people who claim to speak on behalf of a particular faith; we also need to develop strategies to give young people a greater sense of empowerment, to provide alternatives to the easy and simplistic sense of belonging offered by religious gangs and fanatics. The Aik Saath project, which emerged as a response to the Sikh-Muslim conflicts in Slough in 1997, aims to do just that. The project recruited youth leaders who had previously been involved in violent incidents and taught them 'conflict resolution' and team-working skills that they then passed on to their peers. Gradually the project developed the confidence and knowledge to challenge religious division and break down the fear and insecurity that surrounds these issues. Religion could then no longer be used as an excuse for violence. ■

Aik Saath, Young People's Centre, 323 High Street, Slough, Berkshire SL1 1BL. Another group actively challenging communalism is the Southall Unity Campaign, c/o The Monitoring Group, 14 Featherstone Road, Southall, Middlesex UB2 5AA. For more detailed analysis on Hindu nationalism, see *Hindutva Movements in the West: Resurgent Hinduism and the Politics of Diaspora*, edited by Parita Mukta and Chetan Bhatt, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, May 2000.

britain's christian fundamentalism

Creationism – a dangerous trend?

Christian fundamentalism as a political force may belong to the US, but its impact is beginning to be felt in the UK. And with a government seemingly intent on both extending faith schools and inveigling the private sector into education, the threat from the fundamentalists is becoming a real one here. Earlier this year, it was revealed that the Emmanuel City Technology College in Gateshead was teaching creationism – that human origins are (relatively) recent and divine – as opposed to scientific evolution, to explain our origins. The response from the prime minister was far from reassuring. He suggested that since the results from the college were good, what was taught didn't matter.

Sir Peter Vardy, a fundamentalist Christian with links to the Australian-based Creation Research Organisation, helped found the Emmanuel city academy with £2m. It appears that this is just one of six city academies that he backs. His commitment to creationism is central to his educational endeavours. He has been organising a widespread survey of British academics to test their opinions on faith, evolution and creation. For Vardy, 'the root cause' of the attack on the World Trade Centre is 'sin which is rooted in the refusal to glorify the Lord as the God who created the universe'.

It has been left to a clutch of scientists and the teaching unions to try to rally against what could be a very dangerous trend in the UK. A group led by the Bishop of Oxford and Professor Richard Dawkins have warned Downing Street about 'teaching children a preposterous mind-shrinking falsehood'. A letter signed by luminaries such as Sir David Attenborough and the Astronomer Royal have asked that the curriculum in a new generation of faith schools be closely monitored. Nigel de Gruchy (General Secretary of the National Association of Schoolmasters and Women Teachers) furiously rebutted Blair's stance. 'What's the point of having better educated bigots?' he asked. And Phil Willis, Liberal Democrat education spokesman, has warned against 'our children becoming the fodder for the extreme views of religious fundamentalists and their wealthy backers'.

Fundamentalist ideas in the UK seem inevitably to go hand in hand with privatisation. But, as in the US, believers are not necessarily white. For example, the John Loughborough school in Tottenham, a private Seventh Day Adventist-run school which is much sought-after among black parents, also teaches creationism. And concerns are being voiced that a multicultural school in Manchester may soon be taken over by the Church School Company.

It should not have taken September 11 to make this government wake up to the problem of extending faith schools – we've got our own home-grown fundamentalist problem! ■

The rise of Christian

For the Reverend Kenneth Leech, the term 'fundamentalism' is being seriously misused in the aftermath of September 11. We publish below excerpts from his talk at the Institute of Race Relations earlier this year.



The more I look at the whole issue of fundamentalism, which I once thought was simple and straightforward, the more complicated it becomes. I want for that reason to restrict myself to Christian fundamentalism as a North American phenomenon in its origins. I'm not going to talk about 'Muslim fundamentalism'. I think there are some real problems about transferring a word, which comes out of the North American Evangelical Christian world, and transferring it to Islam – where, if I understand it correctly, there is no equivalent word.

The word fundamentalism was first used in 1920 but didn't get into the Oxford English Dictionary until after 1950. It was a long gap from the late 19th century, when people were using words like 'fundamentals of the faith', before the word actually entered the dictionary.

There is a memorable article by the American H.L. Mencken, published in 1926, where he says, 'If you throw an egg out of a Pullman coach, you are bound to hit a fundamentalist anywhere in the US.' What he meant was that it is a very serious error by people in Europe to think that fundamentalism is a fringe religious phenomenon. For example, the biggest fundamentalist denomination in the US is the Southern Baptists – which became almost entirely fundamentalist in 1988. There are more Southern Baptist ministers in the state of Texas alone than there are Roman Catholic priests in the whole of the US. Evangelical fundamentalism has a stronger claim to be seen as the mainstream American religion than most others do. I think that it was arguable that in the English context, although not in the British context, Christian fundamentalism was more peripheral. Under the influence of the United States it has become more central of late. But, in contrast to Ronald Reagan, it was not politically necessary for Margaret Thatcher to learn whole chunks of the Bible in order to appeal to a religious constituency. It was not necessary politically to appeal to that biblical tradition because the Christian Right in Britain was of a different character, more flabby, more vague, more broadly moral than rooted in the fundamentalist tradition. I think things perhaps are changing.

Extremism is not fundamentalism

But one of the difficulties in assessing its impact here is in the loose way in which the term has been used. In a lot of writing, fundamentalism is used as a kind of generalised euphemism for most forms of bigotry, fanaticism and religious extremism. If that's what we

are talking about we should use one of those words and not fundamentalism. It's also used as a synonym for literal interpretations of the text. I'm not at all sure that it is very helpful to equate fundamentalism with literalism. A lot of Christians for a very long time have been what I would call accidental fundamentalists. Most of the Roman church prior to the second Vatican Council were as literalistic in their interpretations of the Bible as any of the people we call fundamentalists.

The origins of fundamentalism

If we look at the origins of fundamentalism as a North American Christian movement we get a clearer picture of its importance and of its real dangers. Its origins certainly lie in the period just before and running into the first world war, with the publication of ten volumes from Chicago called *The Fundamentals*. Three million copies of these volumes were issued. Note the people who wrote them were very proud to be called fundamentalists and claimed the title for themselves. They believed that they were defending the fundamentals of Christianity against four movements. Biblical criticism and liberal theology was the first enemy. The second enemy was socialism, particularly in the form of what they were calling bolshevism. The third thing that these fundamentalists were concerned about were heretical forms of Christianity itself such as Jehovah's Witnesses (Millennial Dawn), Seventh Day Adventists, the Mormons and so on.

The fourth enemy and the enemy above all other enemies, was Darwin. Marx may have been a bastard, but behind Marx was Darwin. It wasn't that they didn't think Marx was a bad thing, but they blamed Darwin for

fundamentalism

Marx. In fact they blamed Darwin for most things. They had a commitment to a literal understanding of creation, and looked at the theory of evolution as the source of all the other evils – the source of heresies, the source of liberal theology. The high-water mark of the creationist movement came in 1925, when Scopes appeared in Tennessee charged with teaching the theory of evolution. It became illegal to teach evolution in the state of Tennessee until 1967. And even after 1967 it had to be balanced with a teaching of alternative views of creation.

The tenets of fundamentalism

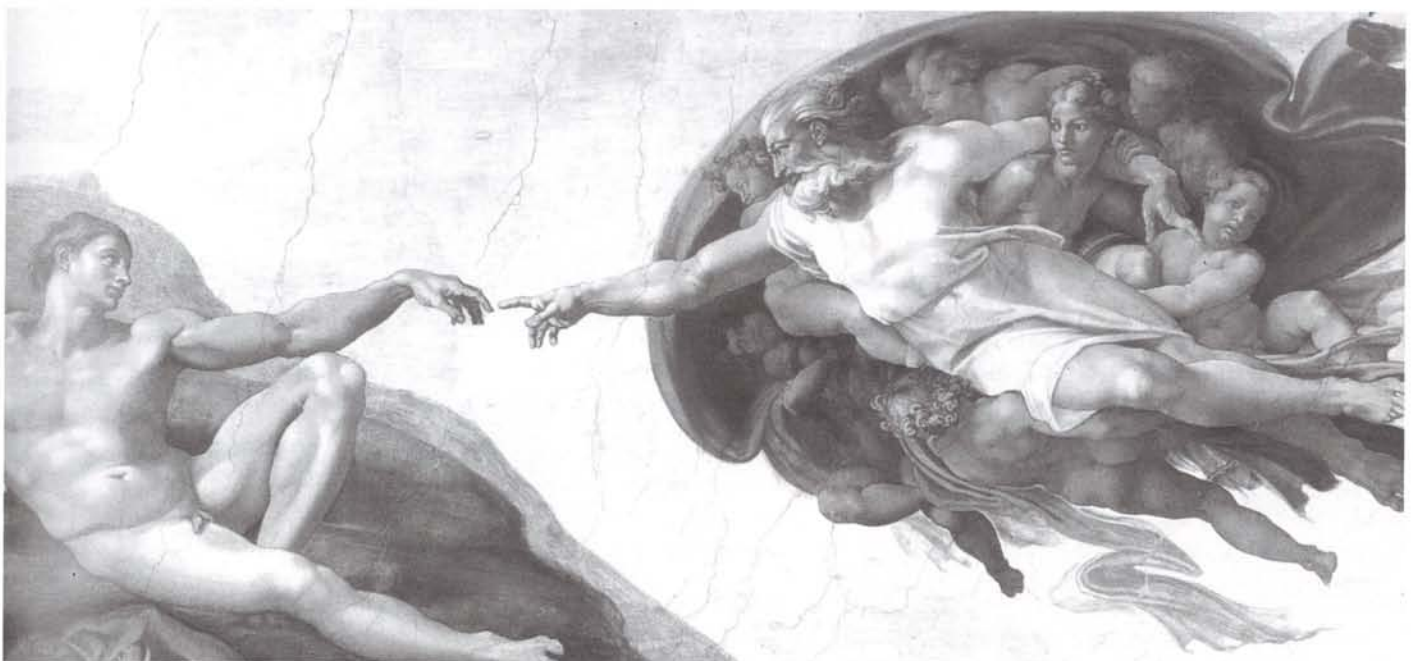
It seems to me that biblical literalism is only one aspect of fundamentalism – though an important one. There are three features of the fundamentalist movement which have survived all the changes which have taken place. One is the very clear division between the 'pure and true' Christians and the rest of the Christian world. That sense of purity is very, very important, and the division of the world into the saved and unsaved, ie, into those who are true Christians and those who are not. The Manichean dualism between the saved and the unsaved, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness, is absolutely central to the fundamentalist mindset.

Separatism of some kind has been an important part of fundamentalism, but the rejection of separatism has been one of the elements in the splits that have taken place. This separatist tradition and the expulsion of the impure does have a long history, particularly in the US. There is a town in Kentucky, where in one street there is a Church of God, and then a few yards away, there is a split from the Church of God called the True

Church of God, and further down the street there is the One True Church of God. That tendency to fragmentation on the grounds of purity is very important. One of the most detailed defences of Christian fundamentalism, written by a Professor at Bob Jones University, is actually called *In Defence of Purity*. He stresses the necessity to separate the wheat from the chaff.

The second thing is that fundamentalism is inseparable from militancy. There is always an enemy, or usually a number of them. This is why George Marsden, one of the best writers on Christian fundamentalism, says a fundamentalist is an evangelical who is angry about something. Theologically, there isn't a great deal of difference between an evangelical and a fundamentalist. But the fundamentalist has got angry about something. This sense of being under siege is an important aspect of the fundamentalist tradition.

The third thing, which seems far more dangerous and more worrying than whether you interpret the Bible literally, is the sense of utter certainty and the systematic exclusion of doubt and therefore of any creative change. The fundamentalist is absolutely certain of everything. There is a movement in the US, on the lines of Alcoholics Anonymous, called Fundamentalists Anonymous, who see themselves as in recovery. The recovery from fundamentalism and the growth either to a secular lifestyle or to a new understanding of religious faith is analogous to the recovery from alcohol. The systematic exclusion of doubt is actually very, very central. Whether you believe Jonah was swallowed by a whale or that the world was created in six days, or even that Isaiah died at both Megiddo (according to the second book of Kings) and also at Samaria (according to the second book of Chronicles) may not do anybody any actual harm. It may be silly,



but it may be quite harmlessly silly. What is far more dangerous, though, is the utter conviction not only that you are right in every detail but that you have the right, because of that, to enforce your position on others. That I think is where fundamentalism is dangerous.

Let me say why I think the issue of Christian fundamentalism and the constituency of fundamentalism has changed. A lot of people who used to be called fundamentalists are no longer regarded as such. At one time Rome was the great whore of Babylon. You could have nothing to do with the Roman Catholic church. But now there are some very strange alliances being made. Paisleyites and Lefebvre-ites are appearing on the same platform. The sense of the Pope as the anti-Christ is going, though not everywhere. And you have got a sort of Catholic fundamentalism which has emerged as a reaction to liberation theology in Central and South America. And the politicisation of some fundamentalists, which goes back at least to the period just before Reagan became president, has led to quite a new situation. The rise of the tele-evangelist, the fact that Pat Robinson of the 700 club was actually a presidential candidate, does represent a quite marked shift from the earlier separatism, which included separatism from the world. The older fundamentalists believed that the world was evil and defined worldliness as one of the things Christians should avoid. Now, you've got a new type of fundamentalist represented by Robertson and Falwell and by the Christian Reconstructionist movement, which really wants to control the world – not to avoid its contaminating influence, but to claim dominion. That language of dominion is very important.

Racism and fundamentalism

There is a change in relation to racism which I think needs to be looked at quite carefully. It's not that racism

has disappeared. In fact there's quite a bit of evidence that the Christian Identity movement, which has its strongholds in Idaho and Michigan and is a particular growth out of the British Israelite movement, is extremely dangerous. It is linked with the bombing of synagogues and with the rise of militias which are quite crudely and openly racist. It believes that black people are not fully human but belong to a species which existed prior to Adam and Eve. That kind of crude racism that believes that the white population of Britain and the US are in fact the lost tribes of Israel has not gone. But, alongside it has developed a different type of fundamentalism which is really rather going out of its way to recruit conservative sections of the black population.

If you interpret fundamentalism purely in terms of biblical literalism, you are going to get into great difficulties when you look at the black churches. Because a lot of black churches are fundamentalist in that sense, in fact the majority are. But what do you make then of someone like Arthur Brazier in Chicago or Herbert Daughtry in Brooklyn? Arthur Brazier runs the Apostolic Church of God on the south side of Chicago, and not only marched with Martin Luther King but also worked very closely with Saul Alinsky, has a very strong sense of neighbourhood politics, and wrote the history of the Woodlawn Organisation of which he's been president. He is a fundamentalist if you define it in that sense. Or what do you make of Daughtry, an old style Pentecostal preacher but with a very strong social conscience? So you've got what some people would call left-wing fundamentalism as well as that of the Christian Right. ■

The Reverend Kenneth Leech of St Botolph's, Aldgate, is a lifelong campaigner against racism and fascism and the author of *The Sky is Red: Discerning the Signs of the Times* (DLT Press, 1997) which includes a chapter on Christian fundamentalism.



"The world is in danger from America – economically, politically and, now, militarily. Globalisation has engendered a monolithic economic system governed by American corporations that hold nation states in thrall.

September 11 has engendered a monolithic political culture that holds that those who are not pro-American are either terrorists or value-less and, therefore, surplus to civilisation. Together, they signal the end of civil society and the beginnings of a new imperialism, brutal and unashamed.

On a more philosophical level, one would have expected that the suffering inflicted on the American people on September 11 would have sensitised them to the suffering of the poor and the deprived of the world. But, alas, they have had the experience and missed the meaning. Worse, they have denied all meaning to their own suffering by inflicting it on others.

We are connected to one another, in the deepest sense, through our common pain. When we lose that connection we lose our humanity."

Dr A. Sivanandan,
Director, Institute of Race Relations and Editor, *Race & Class*

Standard-bearers of civilisation: (left to right) Pim Fortuyn, Silvio Berlusconi, Jean Marie Le Pen



The new far-Right identity politics

'Multiculturalism is precisely what splits society. It is not living together. It is not integration.'

Spanish prime minister Jose Maria Aznar

Le Pen's stunning successes in the French presidential elections and the assassination of the increasingly popular Dutch anti-immigrant leader Pim Fortuyn, have focused attention on the rapid rise, since September 11, in the electoral fortunes of anti-immigrant and far-Right parties across Europe. But what has received far less attention is the manner in which the far Right is fashioning a new politics of identity based on the 'clash of civilisations' arguments of the right-wing US theorist, Harvard professor Samuel P. Huntington.

The clash of civilisations

When we think of the European far Right, we tend to think in terms of nationalist parties with a narrow agenda of protecting white cultural identities against the encroachments of immigration, globalisation and multiculturalism. Yet, since the events of September 11, far-Right politicians have been singing a more European tune, presenting themselves as the standard bearers of a superior European civilisation which acts as a bulwark against Islam. Islam is being demonised as never before – and Muslims are the enemy within.

While Blair is quick to denounce Le Pen as an obnoxious racist, he is quite willing to do business with Silvio Berlusconi. Berlusconi is in many ways the chief populariser of Huntington's thesis that, after the end of the Cold War, politics has begun a new phase in which the fundamental source of conflict is primarily neither ideological nor economic, but cultural, and that the principal conflicts of global politics now occur between nations and groups from different civilisations. Berlusconi was clearly thinking along these

lines when he told the press during a visit to Germany that 'We should be conscious of the superiority of our civilisation, which consists of a value system that has given people widespread prosperity in those countries that embrace it, and guarantees respect for human rights and religion' – something, he added, that does not exist in Islamic countries.

Multiculturalism and the enemy within

Another 'clash of civilisations' proponent was the Dutch far-Right leader Pim Fortuyn, who in his book *Against the Islamification of our culture* wrote that Dutch values of tolerance and pluralism were under attack from the 'backward culture' of Islam. And the leader of the Danish People's Party, Pia Kjaersgaard, has gone one step further than Huntington in openly arguing that 'It's been said that 11 September was the start of the clash of civilisations. I disagree, since a clash would indicate that there are two civilisations, but that's not true. There's only one civilisation and that's ours.'

Huntington argues that 'Civilisation identity will be increasingly important in future', citing the fact that processes of economic modernisation are separating people from local identities. As globalisation breaks down the nation state as a source of identity, civilisations will attempt to rally support via a 'kith-kin' syndrome. Whether anti-immigrant politicians have read Huntington or not, this is precisely what they attempt to do when they rally voters around the animating myth of a European civilisation based on one white, Christian root. In so doing they are popularising Huntington's second theme – namely that western civilisation is under threat from an enemy within. This enemy comprises the civil rights activists, educationalists and intellectuals who promote 'racial, ethnic and other subnational cultural identities and groupings' via the 'cult' of multiculturalism and identity politics.

Far-Right parties have always prioritised the attack on multiculturalism, but what is of even greater concern is the dramatic changes to government policies on race relations and integration since September 11, leading Liz Fekete to conclude in a new report on racism and September 11 that 'we are, in fact, entering a new era in domestic race policy where old, discredited ideas of monoculturalism and assimilation into the dominant white, European, Christian culture are once again in the ascendant'.

Racism: the hidden cost of September 11 is available price £5 from the Institute of Race Relations, 2-6 Leeke Street, London WC1X 9HS

Racism: the hidden cost of September 11

A new report from the IRR (issue No.40 of the *European Race Bulletin*) examines the impact of the events of September 11 and the subsequent War Against Terrorism on European political culture.

In outlining the EU's approach to combating terrorism, the IRR documents the effect new anti-terrorist measures have in terms of the erosion of democracy, the denial of civil liberties and the removal of refugee protection.

Racism: the hidden cost of September 11 concludes with an examination of the ways in which European anti-terrorist laws are creating a culture of suspicion against Muslims and people of Middle-Eastern appearance.

Includes case studies and discussion of recent legislative changes across Europe.

ISBN 085001 0632, 28pages, £5. (Add extra for airmail P&P)

Racism: the hidden cost of September 11 is available at £5. Readers of CARF can take out a subscription to the *European Race Bulletin*, and receive *Racism: the hidden cost of September 11* and three further issues as part of their annual subscription. Annual subscription rates: £25 (academics/funded groups) or £10 (individuals/unfunded groups). Cheques payable to the Institute of Race Relations. Please quote CARF/ERB40 offer.

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We're all anti-racists now – the new immi



David Blunkett on a PR drive

The Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Bill will bring about further segregation of asylum seekers from mainstream society – both physically, in camps ('induction centres', 'accommodation centres' and 'removal centres') where they are removed from mainstream housing, education, health and welfare provision, and by subjection to extraordinary policing measures. Why, then, was it welcomed by so many Labour MPs?

IN the April second reading debate on the Bill, the fourth in ten years, MPs of all political complexions fell over themselves to praise the mature and moderate way in which they were dealing with the difficult and emotive issue of immigration and asylum. Seizing on Le Pen's success in the first round of the presidential election in France, they contrasted their very reasonable approach. Most welcomed the Bill's provisions as generally progressive, expressing concerns and reservations carefully so as not to spoil the generally co-operative and friendly atmosphere.

The main provisions of the Bill follow the proposals of the White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Haven*. Immigrants seeking naturalisation will have tests on the English language and knowledge of life in the UK, and will have to pledge to uphold democratic values as well as allegiance to the Queen. All British citizens, including those born British, can be deprived of citizenship (unless this would make them stateless) if the Secretary of State thinks they have done anything seriously prejudicial to the vital interests of the UK or one of its territories.

New powers to remove citizenship

The nationality provisions reflect the shift from multiculturalism to 'cohesion' described in *CARF* 66. The power to deprive even British-born citizens of their citizenship is unprecedented. There's little doubt that the targets of this measure are not so much the Anthony Blunts of this world, more British-born Muslim youth moved to violence by global imperialism. Nowhere in the Bill is there any guidance as to what sort of actions are likely to qualify for deprivation of citizenship, but the omens are not good, given Blunkett's predecessor Jack Straw's assertion that anything which prejudices the interests of friendly states prejudices British national security, and the inclusion of anti-globalisation protests and environmental activism within the vastly amplified definition of terrorism in current anti-terrorist legislation.

More checks before travelling

Policing is the theme which runs through the immigration and asylum provisions. The Bill provides that airlines and other carriers will have to check the details of passengers travelling to Britain against information held on a Home Office database to confirm that they pose no known immigration or security risk and that their documents are in order. In this way,

airlines' immigration control functions are set to become even more intrusive. It's no longer just a question of checking documents to see that they are in order (although even those provisions, introduced in the 1980s, have given rise to racist measures such as photocopying all black passengers' passports in the past). In future, airlines will have to check on passengers' undesirability, as well as their documents. There are no appeal rights for those refused boarding on the basis of an airline's check. The measure is likely to mean that many more people will be wrongly prevented from leaving countries where they are at risk of detention, torture and death.

Data collection for internal controls

Anyone applying for a visa, or to stay in the country, will be required to provide biometric data such as their iris image with their application, which will be stored on a central database so as to create a forgery-proof system of immigration control. Asylum seekers, too, will be provided with 'smart' registration cards which will contain biometric data. Detention escort officers (Group 4/Wackenhut employees) are given powers to enter premises and to search detainees before removal. Local authorities will be under a duty to supply information to the Home Office to assist in establishing the whereabouts of anyone suspected of breaching immigration controls. The Inland Revenue can be asked for information to help the Home Office find persons suspected of working illegally or of breaching immigration control. Employers can be forced to supply information about employees' details and earnings; banks and building societies will be obliged to provide information about earnings and financial status, to 'detect and prevent fraud of the national asylum support arrangements'.

In addition, provisions in the 1999 Act, which have not been brought into force, which would have given detained asylum seekers automatic bail hearings, are to be repealed. In Blunkett's world, immigrants and asylum seekers are seen as more of a threat than criminals.

Segregation for asylum seekers

All asylum seekers will have to stay in an induction centre for up to two weeks when they first make their claim. Those who are not detained during the asylum process will be subject to strict reporting and residence conditions. Destitute asylum seekers won't be able to stay with relatives and receive a cash allowance, as at present: they must either accept the whole package of

gratiation consensus



Diane Abbott – the only opposition?

accommodation and support, or nothing. They may be housed in accommodation centres, which will house up to 750 people and will provide all support, including health care and education, on-site. Children in accommodation centres will be prohibited from attending mainstream schools. Anyone refusing to go to an accommodation centre, or breaching its conditions, can be denied all support. The proposed sites are deep in the countryside, remote from legal help, and one is by a burial ground for diseased cattle. Announcement of the sites has already sparked local protests.

Separate education

It is the removal of asylum seeking children from mainstream education which has attracted the most press coverage, because of Blunkett's 'swamping' remarks to the BBC's radio 4, in which he said children going through the process would be educated on site, 'not swamping the local school'. Blunkett refused to apologise during the second reading debate, despite Diane Abbott MP's rebuke that 'by being a blunt Yorkshireman and trying to conciliate white people's fears' he was 'straying into using language many people find offensive'. Although Blunkett has justified the measures in terms of removing pressure from local schools and GPs' surgeries, he had no answer to Abbott's telling question: why not put resources into those local facilities instead? Or rather, his answer during the second reading debate exposed the real motivation behind the segregation measure. While condemning Diane Abbott's remark 'I don't buy the doctrine of separate but equal education', he admitted that allowing children to go to local schools prevents the Home Office from removing them. He said: 'The difficulty sometimes with families whose removal has been attempted is that their youngsters have become part of a school, making it virtually impossible in some circumstances to operate the managed system to which we should all sign up unless we believe in completely open borders, which would be an interesting free enterprise experiment – eventually the system would give and people wouldn't want to come here anymore as it would no longer be attractive, which would be crackers and crazy piece of politics.'

This is the philosophy of the government. Allowing children of asylum seekers to go to local schools undermines immigration controls because it integrates them too well. The government of 'social inclusion' draws the line at such successful integration. Never mind that the experience of school, and of mixing with local children, has been found to be the most effective means of overcoming the traumas refugee children have as a result of their experiences. Never mind, either, the studies showing that such children learn English remarkably fast and do so well that they bring up the overall performance of the schools they go to. The imperatives of immigration control must prevail over the needs and interests both of traumatised children

and of the schools – and the ideals of an open society.

Appeasement

Blunkett's rhetoric became even more Powellite when he explained the provision to strip refugees who commit crimes, of their residence rights: 'I don't think it's acceptable for an old lady of 78 to be mugged for £60, as happened in my city, and for the three people who mugged her to continue to claim that they require asylum in this country.' As the *Independent* put it in its leader of 25 April: 'Mr Blunkett's use of the sort of language you might find in a BNP leaflet simply legitimises the sort of arguments the far right uses ... [it] does make it look as though ministers have decided that it is better to appease the racist element in society rather than defeat it. ... It remains a deeply flawed, indeed dangerous strategy.' The BNP's successes in the local elections of 2 May tend to bear out this concern.

The Bill increases the maximum sentence for smuggling migrants and bringing refugees to Britain to 14 years, and create a new offence of trafficking for prostitution, which carries the same penalty. But the UN's concern that victims of trafficking be protected, and in particular that they may be given residence rights, finds no reflection in the Bill. The Bill will also allow asylum claims to be dealt with outside the UK, through UNHCR and other resettlement schemes in which the UK may participate – but those refused refugee status abroad will have no right of appeal.

No opposition

Why was there no widespread condemnation of the Bill from Labour? An early day motion signed by around 60 MPs condemned clause 30, the educational segregation clause, but Blunkett was generally given a very easy ride. David Lammy, Bernie Grant's black successor in Tottenham, even compared the segregated education of refugee children with Eton! And there was simply no concern expressed at the extraordinary policing measures on asylum seekers. The Bill's reception was, doubtless, influenced by Blunkett's announcement of the end of the NASS voucher scheme and its replacement by cash; it may also have been helped by the references to the possibility of creating legal mechanisms for unskilled workers to come to Britain to work – although all that is proposed is strictly short-term work visas for six months, with no possibility of settlement. But it was the sense of collective self-congratulation at having arrived at mature consensus on immigration control that was so repellent. Post-Stephen Lawrence, they seem to say, we're all anti-racists now. And having acquitted themselves of any racist motivation, they can indulge in 'plain speaking': racism in effect, if not in intent. With Diane Abbott almost the only dissident, the Commons endorsed the most authoritarian and xeno-racist immigration measure yet. ■

ID cards and iris scanning system



The truth about Yarl's Wood

ON 15 February, following clashes between detainees and Group 4 staff after a female detainee was refused hospital treatment and manhandled, a fire spread through the Yarl's Wood detention centre in Bedfordshire, causing an estimated £38m worth of damage and destroying an entire wing of the building. But while four separate inquiries have been launched, the authorities are no nearer to confirming the true course of events on that day or the fate of 22 detainees still missing. CARF asked four people critical to the campaign – an activist, a parliamentarian, a trade unionist and a lawyer – what their priorities will be in the coming months.

The campaigner – Emma Ginn of the Campaign to Stop Arbitrary Detentions at Yarl's Wood:

Having sought to expose Home Office and Group 4 negligence, having gathered together eye-witness accounts about the disturbances, the fire and the punishment regime subsequently instigated against detainees, the Campaign to Stop Arbitrary Detentions

at Yarl's Wood is now turning its attention towards:

- supporting the ten Yarl's Wood detainees charged with violent disorder
- ensuring that the Home Office investigation does not become a cover-up and
- campaigning to ensure that the Home Office provides information on the fate of the 22 people still missing.

The trial of the ten detainees has little to do with justice and everything to do with the need to scapegoat detainees for the results of the government's negligence. We will monitor court proceedings, seeking to expose that this is another malicious prosecution, similar to those brought in 1999 after disturbances at the Campsfield detention centre, also run by Group 4. In terms of the Home Office inquiry, the authorities claim

that so far they have taken 2,000 statements. To our Knowledge, at least fifty five women have not been properly questioned, key witnesses have been removed from the country before any police questioning and without their solicitors' knowledge.

Our immediate priorities therefore are:

- release of the names of the 22 missing people, and confirmation of whether any detainees died in the fire
- a fair judicial process for the ten Yarl's Wood detainees charged with violent disorder
- encouraging Group 4 staff to come forward and speak the truth
- encouraging MPs to sign the Early Day Motion 1048.

The parliamentarian – Neil Gerrard, MP for Walthamstow and chair of All Party Group of Refugees:

We now have 53 signatures for our Early Day Motion and there is significant feeling in Parliament that there ought to be an inquiry (which is as near to a public

inquiry as practically possible) so as to establish what actually happened at Yarl's Wood and to ensure that lessons are learnt. This is especially important since the Home Office are talking about significant increases in detention places in future. I shall be raising once again in Parliament the question of the removal of potential witnesses, as there is still a problem with people being removed. We still don't know for sure when the police investigation and search of the site will be finished. I have raised a parliamentary question about this, but have not been provided with an answer. But until the search of the site is finished we cannot be absolutely sure whether any of the detainees died in the fire.

The trades unionist – Ashley Drage, Political and Industrial Organiser, Region 10 Fire Brigades Union, East Anglia Region:

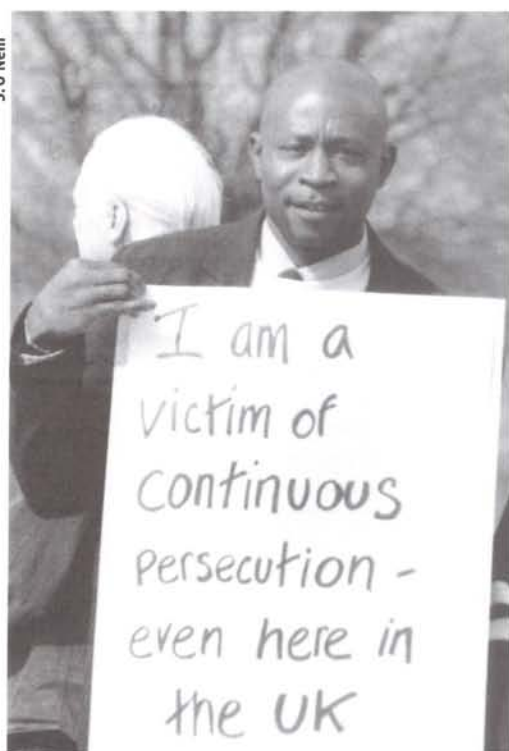
The events at Yarl's Wood provided a stark picture of the way that asylum seekers are treated in this country. What was particularly horrifying was the way the media treated the fire. All they were concerned about was whether asylum seekers had escaped from the premises – as though it were preferable that they be locked up in a burning building to die. At conference, in May, I spoke for a resolution which called on our Executive Council to use all its powers to improve the situation for asylum seekers in this country and to treat them with humanity. I pointed out, during debate, that asylum seekers are being treated like criminals by this government and called on all members to challenge any incidents at the workplace of racism towards asylum seekers.

The lawyer – Daniel Guedalla, solicitor at Birnberg Peirce, a civil rights firm which was involved in the Campsfield Nine trial in 1999:

Lawyers working with the campaign, including lawyers here, are fighting on a number of fronts simultaneously. We are challenging the transfer of victims of the fire out to prisons. We're working to prepare civil proceedings about the failure by those supposed to be looking after the welfare of the detainees to protect them in the fire – apart from the absence of sprinklers, there is evidence that officers were running off, and were locking people in to the building. We're involved in the defence of the ten detainees who face criminal charges. And we're trying to challenge the Home Office's attempts to remove victims and witnesses from the country. Solicitors have already prevented one removal on the ground that the person concerned has a potential civil claim. ■

Campaign to Stop Arbitrary Detentions at Yarl's Wood, PO Box 304, Oakley, Bedford MK43 7WB Tel: 07786 517379
Web: www.stoparbitrarydetentionsatjarlswood.co.uk
Email: stoparbitrarydetentionsatjarlswood@hotmail.com

S. O'Neill



Asylum seeker demonstrating outside Yarl's Wood detention centre

ASYLUM DEATHS

Asylum policy kills again

This year at least three asylum seekers have committed suicide – taken their own lives as a result of harsh British immigration laws. Their deaths have received little or no publicity. CARF remembers them...



Mohsen Amri, an asylum seeker who took his own life in Birmingham after his claim was refused

At the beginning of the year, on New Year's Day in fact, 28-year-old Souleyman Diallo jumped 100 feet to his death from Redheugh Bridge, Tyneside because he was to be deported back to Guinea.

Souleyman arrived in the UK in July 2000 and was dispersed to Newcastle. He understood only basic French and spoke no English. He was therefore unable to get proper legal advice and comply with complex legal requirements. A coroner recorded an open verdict into his death.

His friend, 31-year-old Foster Ohenenyanar, had stopped him from jumping from the same bridge just the day before. He said 'He'd been depressed for a long time. He was badly let down by the authorities. There are a lot of people in the same position as Souleyman. They don't sleep because they don't know their future.'

In March, 27-year-old Iranian Mohsen Amri took his own life at his home in Handsworth, Birmingham. Mohsen had been in

the UK for two years, he had made repeated requests for work permits (he did not want to work illegally) but had been refused and his asylum application was refused on a technicality.

In May, Shiraz Pir, a 25 year-old Afghani asylum seeker living in Bristol, was found hanging, but still alive. He died five days later in Bristol Royal infirmary.

Shiraz had been living in hostel accommodation in Bristol for eighteen months, while his asylum application was processed. Six months ago, many of his friends were awarded refugee status and they all moved on. His own asylum application for refugee status was refused. Shiraz was left by himself, fearing deportation to Afghanistan where two of his brothers-in-law had been killed by the Taliban. Shiraz himself had scars from being shot in the legs by the Taliban. He left a note asking that his body be returned to his parents, who are living in Pakistan as refugees. ■

POLICING

Police officers on trial for manslaughter



Christopher Alder

The trial of the five officers involved in the death in police custody of Christopher Alder began in April 2002 at Teesside Crown Court. The officers, Sergeant John Dunn (40), Matthew Barr (38), Nigel Dawson (40), Neil Blakey (42), and Mark Ellington (36) all denied charges of manslaughter and misconduct in public office.

Christopher had an argument in the Waterfront nightclub in Hull, and once outside the club he was punched and floored. He was taken to Hull Royal infirmary. At the hospital, he allegedly became aggressive and PCs Dawson and Blakey, who had come to question Christopher about being assaulted, arrested him. A witness from the hospital, senior nurse Helen Townend, said that Christopher had

seemed 'disorientated'. He was taken by van to Queens Garden station and by the time he arrived he was unconscious. There was blood found in the van and in the corridor through which he was dragged. He was dragged unconscious and placed on the floor of the custody suite, where a CCTV camera recorded the last minutes of his life.

The trial continues until the end of June, and the family are asking supporters of the campaign to attend to show their support. ■

Teesside Combined Court Centre, Boulevard, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS1 2AE Tel: 01642 340000
Justice for Christopher Alder Campaign, c/o Red Triangle Cafe, 160 St James Street, Burnley, Lancs BB11 1NR Tel: 01282 832319
United Families and Friends Campaign c/o Inquest, Alexandra National House, 330 Seven Sisters Road, London N4 2PJ Tel: 07770 432 439

campaigns & reports

NCADC Urgent financial appeal



NCADC family campaigns

The National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC) has been bringing together families and individuals fighting deportation since 1995. Ninety per cent of its campaigns have been successful. It is a voluntary organisation providing advice and practical help about campaigning.

On account of its opposition to immigration controls, much of its work is seen as 'unpopular'. It is unable to register as a charity and access funds through many charitable trusts. It has received its main funding for the last three years from the National Lotteries Charities Board (now the Community Fund) – but this funding expires at the end of May 2002. As a result, NCADC has a funding crisis as the Community Fund is not even considering its application for renewal until the end of July, with a decision in August. Even if the decision is positive it will take a few months to get the money.

NCADC is therefore appealing to supporters to help. If 750 people donate £10 each month, NCADC can continue its work without relying on outside funders. If you cannot donate on a regular basis, please send a one-off donation. ■

NCADC, 110 Hamstead Road, Birmingham B20 2QS. Tel: 0121 554 6947 Fax: 0121 554 7891 Web: www.ncadc.org.uk Email: ncadc@ncadc.org.uk

The refugee week of action

The refugee week of action begins on 15 June (with a demonstration outside Harmondsworth detention centre) till 23 June. There will also be a national demonstration in central London on 22 June. Events are taking place all over the country so join in. ■

For further details on events check out the websites below:
www.defend-asylum.org
www.ncrm.org.uk
www.barbedwirebritain.org.uk
www.ncadc.org.uk
www.refugeeweek.org.uk

diary of race and resistance

JAN - MAY 2002

RACISM

19 JAN 22-year-old Hakan Piskin and an unnamed friend, both Turkish, are racially abused then attacked by a gang of five men and a woman in Cardiff city centre, both men suffer serious facial injuries

12 APR Research by Bath University reveals that black football players still face racial abuse from other players and spectators

18 APR Four white teenagers arrested at Clifton school, Rotherham after fight which police acknowledge had a racial element

21 APR Riot erupts after football match in Deepdale, Preston; twelve arrests made, four people charged with racially aggravated public order offences

22 APR Royal College of Nursing publishes research revealing that overseas nurses are underpaid, exploited and forced to take HIV tests ■ 45-year-old Asian taxi driver racially abused then stabbed by two white men in Bolton

26 APR OFSTED report finds that boys with Caribbean origins are four times more likely to be excluded from secondary schools and three times more likely to be excluded from primary schools than white peers

27 APR Employment tribunal finds Ford guilty of victimising and abusing 41-year-old Shinda Nagra who suffered for three years at Dagenham engine plant

28 APR Research by Glasgow Media Group reveals that British television is biased towards the Israeli view in current Palestinian conflict

1 MAY Guests at Leeds United FC awards ceremony hear string of racist jokes from 'comedian' Stan Boardman

4 MAY 63-year-old, black woman, Margery Mitchell beaten unconscious by gang of three white youth in Dagenham, Essex

5 MAY Iain Duncan Smith sacks Ann Winterton MP from shadow cabinet for telling racist joke at rugby club dinner

ASYLUM & IMMIGRATION

23 JAN Induction centre opens in Dover, holding asylum seekers for 2-10 days for screening and health checks

14 FEB Yarl's Wood detention centre burns down

18 FEB Body of an unknown male asylum seeker, thought to have fallen from a train, found in Channel Tunnel

20 FEB Eight asylum seekers liberate themselves from Harmondsworth detention centre

7 MAR Two asylum seekers transferred from Yarl's Wood to Norwich prison attempt suicide

12 MAR 27-year-old Iranian asylum seeker Mohsen Amri takes his own life in Birmingham after his asylum application is refused on a technicality

15 APR 25-year-old asylum seeker fatally stabbed, and another seriously injured in fight between Afghans and Kurds at Sangatte refugee camp

19 APR Ten asylum seekers appear in court charged with violent disorder after the fire at Yarl's Wood detention centre

23 APR Around 60 asylum seekers clinging to a train are seen jumping from it in Kent after it arrives from France

24 APR Hours before the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum bill begins its second reading in the House of Commons, David Blunkett claims children of asylum seekers are 'swamping' schools

26 APR Asylum seeker suffers serious injuries after breaking free from immigration officers deporting him to France and jumping 40 feet from a ferry to quayside at Dover ■ Suspicious fire at 15-storey block of flats housing refugees in Everton, Liverpool; no-one is injured

7 MAY 25 year-old Afghani asylum seeker Shiraz Pir dies in Bristol Royal infirmary, four days after being found hanging in asylum accommodation; following refusal of his asylum claim

11 MAY Three asylum seekers and one family, witnesses to the Yarl's Wood fire, deported

14 MAY Government announces that asylum seekers who are living in Home Office accommodation centres and are absent at night will have claims rejected

16 MAY Asylum seeker, believed to be west African, found dead in wheel bay of BA flight from Accra, Ghana

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

18 FEB David Norris and Neil Acourt appear in court on charges of racially aggravated harassment of an off-duty black police officer ■ Inquest jury records suicide verdict into death of 43-year-old John Elliot, third black man found hanging in Telford, who had also claimed his life had been threatened

15 MAR Satpal Ram moved from Blantyre House open prison to HMP Elmley, a closed prison, his 72nd move and 37th different prison

27 MAR High Court judge rules that five officers involved in the death of Christopher Alder must face manslaughter charges as well as charges of misconduct

28 MAR Racial and Violent Crimes Task force announces re-investigation into the death of

Sean Rodney in Ilford in June 2001, which the police had assumed was a suicide

9 APR Jonathan Woodgate has his jaw broken in a fight outside a Middlesbrough pub

12 APR Sarfraz and Shazad Najeib launch civil action for £50,000 damages against Lee Bowyer for assault, battery and perverting the course of justice ■ 35-year-old Joseph London jailed for six months after being found guilty of racially aggravated harassment and resisting police officers in the execution of their duty

20 APR Sunday Mirror fined £75,000 plus costs after publishing article which led to collapse of the trial of first Leeds footballers charged with assaulting Sarfraz Najeib

23 APR Inquest into the death of Jason McGowan commences

30 APR CPS decides not to prosecute police officer whose heavy-handed actions in arresting Hossein Miah sparked disturbances in Leeds last year

10 MAY DPP orders review of 15,000 cases after report by HM Inspectorate to CPS reveals that criminal justice system 'subconsciously' discriminates against black defendants and victims

11 MAY 21-year-old Marcus Downie found hanged in Chelmsford prison

13 MAY Inquest records verdict of accidental death contributed to by neglect into death of 23-year-old Michelle Allen, who was found hanged in Barking magistrates court in November 2001

14 MAY 39-year-old Scotsman Colin Green found guilty of acting in a racially aggravated manner after sticking up a sign in his car, days after September 11, reading 'Support America in its hour of need: kill an Arab today' ■ Black motorist Raymond Bewry awarded £5,000 damages for unlawful arrest and wrongful imprisonment after being stopped 16 times by Norfolk police

FASCISM

14 APR Sunday Mirror reveals that 59-year-old Robert Bennett, BNP election co-ordinator in Oldham, has conviction for involvement in rape of two 17-year-olds

21 APR Front National leader Jean Marie Le Pen ousts Lionel Jospin from second round of French presidential elections, leaving himself and Jacques Chirac

27 APR Finsbury Park synagogue vandalised, over 20 windows smashed and the building is ransacked

5 MAY 80 gravestones are desecrated in Jewish cemetery in Hull

25 MAY BNP stands 68 candidates in local elections, they win three seats in Burnley

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