

At the end of October Coventry BNP made the significant step of promoting a Blood and Honour gig, in aid of the BNP. This was the first such benefit since the BNP / C18 split. On the bill were **Whitelaw, Bulldog breed, Legion of St. George, Germania, Celtic Warrior** and Coventry's **Avalon**. It's worth bearing in mind that Blood and Honours revenue, during the early nineties, was well into six figures. AFA are monitoring the situation closely.

BNP membership was up 35% in 1998, and the number of BNP groups has risen from 60 to 74. In May they are contesting a few local council electoral wards. But the real stinger will be the June Euro-elections, where the BNP will have TV broadcasts and circa 20,000,000 leaflets will be delivered to homes throughout the country. Six months down the line they'll reap the benefits - perhaps six years down the line it will be payback time for anti-fascists, republicans, radicals and all the rest. Remember, we are living in an age of rapid social change, or if you prefer, rapid social decline.

This, however, should not be the worst case scenario. If the BNP are successfully engineering strongholds, then at the very least we should match them; street for street, estate for estate. For every fascist initiative we should have one of our own. Every negative has it's positive, and for every area receptive to the right there is one receptive to the progressive, working class left - and that equation starts with us. As the saying goes; If not us, who? If not now, when? Politically our responsibilities lie with our class. We must help provide answers to the very real problems of under-representation and police / council withdrawal from working class areas. If we fail to recognise and act on the situation, someone else will. Perhaps the BNP

As a footnote it should be stressed that no-one in AFA ever adhered to accepting the "Anybody But Fascists" syndrome, so prevalent in the ANL and other superficial bandwagon opportunists. AFA is, by it's very make-up, of the class and for the class. AFA's undoubted physical dexterity has only ever been a rearguard action, a means to an end, not the end itself. With an unashamedly anti-working class government attacking our class, and the fascist BNP courting respectability whilst basing a substantial part of their analysis around exploiting Labour betrayal of the working class, where, if anywhere, do AFA militants stand?

At this critical point we each ought to ask; "What difference do I really make?"

We now have a steward in charge of music - overseeing the organising of gigs and attending other gigs with stalls and merchandise. This has proved to be a worthwhile venture, in terms of sales and general enquiries. If anyone can help out on stalls, provide ideas for standing stalls or help with putting on bands etc then get in touch via the PO Box above.

A new internal bulletin, aimed to supplement "Fighting Talk" has begun publication. Members will each receive a copy. The bulletin is designed as an interactive focus for AFA members and supporters, and by virtue of the fact that it's internal will provide a forum for news, views and analysis otherwise unsuitable for Fighting Talk.

DIARY:

Steve Edwards, ex National Democrat, now prolific BNP organiser.



*Help is needed to steward the forthcoming Oi Polloi gig at the Foundry, B'ham this month.

*The National Front have applied to march in Worcester on April 24th, for St. Georges day.

*The Blair Peach commemoration march also takes place in London on Saturday 24th April.

*There is an AFA regional meeting on Sunday 18th April.

*In May the Tiocfaidh Ar La Supporters Club is launched in north B'ham.

Speakers include TAL, AFA and Independent Working Class Association representatives.

THE WARNING SIGNS FOR ANTI-FASCISTS ARE THERE FOR EVERYONE TO SEE. IF MILITANTS, PAST AND PRESENT (INCLUDING MANY SEASONED AND VALUED VETERANS), CHOOSE TO IGNORE THE WARNINGS AND PERSIST WITH ONLY WANTING TO GET INVOLVED "IF IT GOES OFF", THEN WE MAY FIND OURSELVES IN A SITUATION MUCH LIKE THAT OF FRANCE, OR ANY OF A NUMBER OF OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, A FEW YEARS DOWN THE LINE. IF WEST MIDS BNP REMAIN FOCUSED, DISCIPLINED AND RESILIENT WE MIGHT FIND OURSELVES DOING TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE.



**FOR WORKING CLASS PROGRESS
AGAINST FASCISM!**

**CONTACT NOW:
TAKE OUT A STANDING ORDER ON BEHALF OF
AFA. BETTER STILL, GET INVOLVED...**

**WEST MIDS AFA, PO BOX 3311
B'HAM. B13 ORZ.**

WEST MIDLANDS ANTI FASCIST ACTION



PO BOX 3311, B'HAM B13 ORZ.

LOCAL BULLETIN - APRIL / MAY 1999

This bulletin issue is primarily concerned with addressing the need for anti-fascists to become accustomed to the evolving methods and objectives of the West Midlands British National Party. Without overstating the BNP's current position AFA once again has to know and understand the enemy, and the climate in which we have to manoeuvre.

People will probably be aware of the BNP's attempts to win support in Redditch last Autumn, via the Lodge Park anti-mosque campaign. New regional BNP press officer, Simon Darby of Cannock, achieved considerable media coverage by claiming that the BNP had distributed several thousand leaflets around the issue, and had a promising response from the residents concerned. AFA supporters in the area knew this was complete fabrication. So in order to stress the point and try to allay any local concern an AFA stewards group visited the area in October, distributing 3500 leaflets around the vicinity of the proposed mosque site. The Redditch papers ran a story from AFA, stating that the BNP would be "removed" from the area if they did show. This in turn prompted the BNP to make a public statement the following week, demanding police protection from Anti Fascist Action. A few years ago this would have been considered something of a propaganda victory on AFA's part. However, the BNP haven't suddenly become media masochists. This move should be viewed in the context of a party geared towards mainstream acceptance, a fascist outfit trying to imitate it's European counterparts, in lifting itself out of the ghetto of fringe politics. One of their stated aims in this pursuit of respectability is to "legitimise" their own political operation, which effectively criminalises AFA from the outset. AFA Observers and supporters should keep this in mind. Redditch was only a "toe in the water" - the first tentative steps of a new, potentially more dynamic and strategically improved BNP.

All in all they've been surprisingly patient with their tactical shift, particularly considering the fact that the former National Democrats Black Country branch is thriving with both resources and numbers. This reflects a greater political maturity than previously shown - like AFA, in the absence of immediate and consuming street activity they're learning to operate with a better long term perspective. The Black Country branch alone has enough members to hold "public" events and, with a little help from the sensationalist media, create a wave of public hysteria. They will continue to exploit media negligence and gullibility, but they will not foolishly expose themselves to AFA attack (In December Worcester BNP, apparently acting on a regional initiative to generate a press "splash", announced a meeting via a well covered press release. This turned out to be nothing more than a closed branch meeting). If Redditch is to be taken as a reflection of tactics then they will box clever, until such a time as they have a mandate within the communities in which they're operating, such as happened in East London in the early nineties, and much of Europe - the templates



(Above) Midlands BNP organisers meeting; , October '98.

The BNP, since the autumn, have made Tipton one focal point for their grassroots work, as we predicted they would last September. riding on the back of the National Front's electoral persistence since the 1970's (polling up to 16.9% in recent years), and the National Democrats subsequent residents association work. The BNP have made efforts to reintegrate fascism into a potentially receptive community. Their long term prospects are still the subject of speculation, but there it is a realistic conclusion that this area could already be territorily lost to the quick fix, rearguard remedy of militant anti fascism - rendering AFA's physical tactic obsolete. As the most incisive element of what remains of the working class left, it's up to AFA to start planning strategically, rather than merely tactically. We have to match them politically in the long term. In the age of Labour and the middle class left betraying the working class so blatantly, nobody is perceived to be more radical and organised than the BNP, at least in those areas where they are trying to get established. If your commitment to AFA rests entirely on hatred for fascism, and not on a wider commitment to radical social change, then you should consider this; AFA was only ever billed as a rearguard action, to defend the vacuum left by years of political corruption and neglect. While AFA have proved themselves physically, by dealing with fascists on the street on numerous occasions, politically and strategically the BNP are slipping the net and are leaps and bounds in front of us. Anyone who disagrees is free to try and remedy the situation in affected parts of B'ham and the Black Country using 'traditional' AFA methods. But remember, in these areas they have something of a mandate, you don't.



**FOR WORKING CLASS PROGRESS
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For instance, in Great Barr two BNP members recently cleaned up a neglected churchyard, apparently gaining gratitude and support from local residents who'd spent years demanding the council take action to no avail. Again, a reflection of the shortcomings of purely physical opposition where such a low key, locally supported, populist formula is applied. How can AFA counter that? Smash the gravestones, owing to the fact that they represent a small but nonetheless significant furtherance of fascist ideology? Obviously not. It's a small example of a big shortcoming, of AFA's previously limited physical solution. AFA members in Newtown were quicker than the BNP in recognising the scope for addressing local concerns, without the barrier of preconceived ideology, and we know how easy it is to sway people towards progression, in our case, or reaction, in the case of the BNP.

Again, to return to Tipton, the BNP recently fought the case for a young girl, who had been gang-raped. The council refused to rehouse the girl and her family away from the perpetrators. The BNP stepped in and eventually the girl was rehoused. A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step, and such a gesture will not have gone unnoticed by residents. We would all want the girl rehoused, but we weren't all on the ground fighting for it, were we? The BNP were.

A similar example comes from south B'ham where, in December, the BNP distributed several hundred warning and advice leaflets to pensioners, after a spate of robberies directed at the elderly. Despite their obvious ulterior motives, this would naturally have been seen as a considerate action on behalf of people who deserve better. And they do deserve better, but unfortunately a significant number of militant anti fascists apparently find hands-on political work boring or unworthy. Some even believe that the BNP's new strategies and growth have been fabricated by elements in AFA that have 'lost their bottle', and wish to withdraw from anti-fascist streetfighting. What they fail to acknowledge is that it was the BNP themselves that withdrew from the fray; not last week, nor last month, but almost five years ago. While we may get the odd dig at the occasional unlucky bonehead, the BNP themselves are honing their act, addressing our class and quietly but successfully playing Robin Hood in little pockets right across the region.

Other new areas in the Midlands where the BNP name has surfaced recently are Tamworth, Lichfield, Newark, Welshpool, Burton, Nuneaton and Hatherton, near Cannock, to name a few. All outlying, largely middle class areas, not our natural constituency but increasingly a part of theirs, as they try to develop a veneer of respectability and mainstream acceptance. Using a 'horses for courses' approach, their target issues have varied between urban encroachment, EU farming directives and paedophiles etc. As time goes on it's a plain fact that the left are not only left behind, but running on a different track, one without any spectators or any prizes for coming first. The left is cutting it's own throat, while the BNP is grooming itself for what has the potential to be substantial growth. Look at the huge growth, in local councils, of the Liberal Democrats to see the resonance of local political focus.

"(In the inner cities)... the combination of white flight and high non-white birthrates will lead inevitably to organisational stagnation and electoral decline. While there are still pockets of the old population, which are likely to give us electoral successes at council ward level within the next few years, the large numbers of disgruntled but still defiant working class Whites who powered the growth of the National Front in places like Inner London, Leicester and Blackburn in the 1970s simply aren't there any more. Fortunately, the Britons who used to live in the parts of London and other cities which have been lost to us have not just vanished into thin air. The surrounding suburbs are full of them...All too often these are the most talented, ambitious and dynamic section of the population. ...The first step is to reach the small number who are already prepared to do something, and the huge leaflet delivery opportunity offered by Euro '99 is the best chance we will have of doing that for literally years to come."

NICK GRIFFIN - BNP ORGANISER; On the growth potential of breaking out of the inner-cities.

"We now have at our disposal instant response groups, where within a matter of days, we can produce a leaflet on a 'hot' local issue and supply a team of activists to distribute them...Although it is important that branches are not distracted from carrying out weekly community leafletting, it's also vital that we can respond immediately to any important event..."

STEVE EDWARDS - WEST MIDS BNP ELECTION OFFICER; Speaking after BNP day of action against attacks by Asian gangs in the Black Country. Edwards and his wife, Sharron, are keen exponents of community politics. Sharron Edwards is currently organising a nationalist families network. Both joined the BNP as a result of the overall change in BNP strategy.

The nature of anti-fascism must develop, because politically the British left is as good as dead; not in a bad shape, not going through a rough patch, but **DEAD**. The BNP are well aware of this, and are eagerly going about the business of promoting themselves as the new radical alternative, both for the working class and 'white flight' middle England.

Don't take our word for it - read Spearhead, British Nationalist or their well produced website and you'll see the objective clearly outlined. It's a strategic shift that, since 1994, has effectively negated the use of street violence as a singular counter measure, and AFA combatants and supporters should be aware of these developments.

AFA intelligence officers will reliably tell you that the West Mids BNP have a good enough looking mob to give AFA a decent contest - but the fact that they haven't is proof of the seriousness with which they take the national policy of "No more meetings, no more marches, no more punch-ups..."



(Above) Sharron Edwards; leading light in revamped Black Country BNP

The National Front, National democrats, White Power movement, International Third Position and various other piecemeal fascist groups that are struggling to survive in the Midlands, are virtually bankrupt and should be of no real concern to AFA.

The BNP, on the other hand, are systematically building bridges, building resources and building confidence amongst their growing membership. Like us, they spent many years locked in a street war - the difference now is many of our side are still there; shadow boxing, or worse still drifting away from working class politics altogether, armed to the teeth with excuses and justifications. Fascism has not gone away, even though Searchlight and the Anti Nazi League / SWP would, for whatever reason, like everyone to think they're on the downturn, whilst simultaneously overstating the far-right position when it suits their purposes, bizarrely! Anyone who watched BBC2's recent 'Lost race' programme about fascism in Britain would be forgiven for thinking that fascism had been on a steady decline since the early 60's. Firstly, the programme was edited beyond recognition. No mention of Bermondsey and the Isle of Dogs for example, and no mention even of the fact that militant anti-fascists spent the early nineties consistently outviolencing fascists throughout the country, forcing them to abandon the tactics of street visibilty and the 'far-right is hard!' mentality. Searchlight acted as advisers to the programme makers.

November's annual BNP rally was held in Kidderminster. 350 attended and £12,000 was raised on the day - adding substantially to the £48,117 that had been raised by February this year towards the Euro-election fund. In May the BNP will be contesting less local council wards across the West Mids than usual. Though it's expected that they could still poll as much as ten to twenty percent of the vote in key areas. However, in June there are also the European elections, which the BNP have been working towards to since 1995. This will present them with the opportunity to distribute around 20,000,000 leaflets free via the Royal Mail. With only a 1% return the consequences for anti-fascists would be grave. Searchlight's Nick Lowells, on this occasion, chose to make light of the BNP rally;

Gradually people began to arrive and I had to be quick to grab a good seat. There was a space next to "Steptoe" (Keith Axon - Kingstanding BNP) but on getting close I soon realised why. As journalists on one Sunday newspaper would say, I made my excuses and left. Moving to the back of the hall I took up position near Glasgow's Steve Cartwright. By the look of his neatly creased blue shirt, he had bought it especially for the occasion.

In a break with recent years there was no international speaker, with greater emphasis placed on local reports and activities. Whether this was because the only foreign speakers who would appear were the fringe lunatics the BNP is now trying to avoid or whether the party was too embarrassed to show its pitifully small numbers to outsiders was unclear. What was certain was that every man on the party's top table was a convicted criminal. Welcome to the party of "law and order".

BULLSHIT. Utter bullshit. Maybe AFA intelligence in the West Midlands is far superior to that of Searchlight, or maybe they are just plain liars, for whatever purpose. In their April '99 issue Searchlight go on to state that Tamworth BNP, contrary to what they themselves might say, cannot have twenty + members as claimed. Why? Because, according to Searchlight, the BNP can't even muster twenty members in the whole of the West Midlands! Either these cunts are stupid and ignorant, or they're simply carrying on their longstanding tradition of state-sponsored disinformation. It doesn't really matter anymore, what does matter is that any information about fascist activity should be passed directly to AFA and not Searchlight. Supporters should bear this in mind - Searchlight are state assets, Searchlight have no allegiance to the working class and Searchlight do not disseminate information about fascist activity to those in the frontline.

By way of example, Searchlight's disparaging coverage of the November BNP rally carried a photograph of Keith Axon entering a BNP rally, above the caption; "Anti fascist protesters and fellow fascists alike give a wide berth to Keith 'steptoe' Axon". What they fail to mention is that the photo in question was ten years old, and there had been no anti-fascist opposition at the November event, in spite of the fact that Searchlight had known the details the meeting for months before. Searchlight are presumably happy then to at least create the illusion of anti-fascist opposition, even though they actively avoid propogating it in reality!

Another good example is about eighteen months ago, two AFA members were driving through Brierley Hill one Sunday at about 8pm when they came across a noisy ANL/SWP picket, outside the Turk's Head pub, on the High street. One of the AFA members, after parking discreetly further down the road, walked back to enquire what all the fuss was about. The middle class ANL 'leader' from Telford, some thirty miles away, informed the woman in question that the ANL were there to picket a National Front meeting. "Yeah", she replied, "...There are NF meetings round here, but you're at the wrong place. The pub you're after is just a couple of hundred yards down the road..." "Mmm... yes...", came the reply. "No, seriously, if you walk 200 yards down the road there is an NF meeting taking place as we speak!". "Yes, maybe we'll go there later...". The AFA operatives returned 'later' and the ANL were nowhere to be seen, and the NF meeting went ahead unhindered. AFA had actually stopped the meetings two years earlier, when a mob of anti fascists had gone in the said pub, with a brawny Irish republican comrade at the helm, and threatened to blow the place up if they continued to host fascist meetings! The ANL leadership, however, wouldn't dirty their middle class hands with the vulgar business of dealing with fascists on a practical level. Better to deal with illusion, rather than reality.



(Right) Nick Griffin, BNP publicity officer and one of the key co-ordinators of the BNP's new strategy.

