

nafa

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NOTTS ANTI-FASCIST ALLIANCE

united against racism & fascism

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER
EDITORIAL

Much of the material below refers to Mansfield. NAFA does have members in that area but local anti-fascist activity is coordinated by the small Mansfield Anti-Nazi League. The Mansfield ANL does not take the sectarian approach we are used to in the Nottingham ANL, indeed the Mansfield branch is now sharing NAFA's box number. Some members of NAFA, together with South Yorks Anti-Fascist Action have been giving practical assistance to our Mansfield colleagues in leafleting, providing security at events etc. as it has been difficult for them in such a small town where there are so many fascists. NAFA has decided, in the short term to focus our energies on Mansfield - it is the town where the biggest fascist threat exists in our area, and is only a short distance away from us. Be prepared to travel!

MANSFIELD BACKGROUND

The British National Party are quite strong in Mansfield. Their launch meeting was attended by 70 people, and they are regularly active in Mansfield and Sutton. The KKK has a chapter on the Ladybrook estate and there has been one reported cross-burning. Several local anti-fascists have received death threats, one attacked with an iron bar, another had a brick through their house window. The level of racist attacks in Mansfield is high, and the BNP, although largely recruiting among the badger-baiter, petty crook milieu has had some impact on local youth. Some 19 BNP members have been identified and are known to the local ANL, as many again are known by sight. It is likely that the BNP will be concentrating on the Mansfield areas during the May elections.

WHITE CHRISTMAS

Mansfield Palais Club was the venue for the Skrewdriver and Blood and Honour rally/concert just before Christmas. NAFA heard that there was some major activity in North Notts or Mansfield a day or two beforehand but we were unaware of what or where the event was. We sent cars up to tour the area, keeping watch on local pubs such as the Red Lion in Heanor where fascists hang out and the Horse and Jockey in Mansfield. The fascists were meeting at various points around the county, we came across a German coach in Heanor and gangs of skinheads were in some local pubs in Mansfield. We followed them to the Palais Club, a private club in Leeming Street in Mansfield where they were being shepherded in to the event by police. Security on Leeming Street was being carried out by nazi thugs from Column 18 (1st and 8th letter of the alphabet, work it out). The police response was to allow the event to happen, and escort the fascists away afterwards to the County border. NAFA members kept watch on the event, and toured some of Mansfield advising black people to avoid Mansfield centre. There is no doubt that the police had

powers to stop the event, a similar event was banned in Folkestone, for example by turning the coaches back. The lyrics of Skrewdriver's songs are an incitement to racial hatred, yet the police made no attempt to monitor what was happening in the Club. We contacted the Evening Post, which resulted in a front page splash and editorial the next day.

The success of Blood and Honour in pulling off the event may have been a pyrrhic victory. Mansfield politicians are now keenly aware of the nature of the local threat and we understand that the Notts. Police will not be so keen to allow similar events in future. We were certainly taught some lessons in surveillance and how to cope with such events too.

MANSFIELD ATTACKS

Two weeks ago members of Column 18 attacked Socialist Worker paper sellers in Mansfield, giving one seller a broken nose and stitches. on this occasion the police acted - the attack was in front of a policeman! One of the victims was a well know local solicitor. The police subsequently raided the houses of at least three of the assailants - Messrs. Chadwick, Trasker and Belshaw who have been charged with affray and actual bodily harm. Further charges may ensue from the nazi material and Column 18 hitlist plans found on Trasker and at peoples homes. To the embarrassment of the Mansfield police one of the other leading BNP activists, Tony Roy, is the son of one of their inspectors. In a separate incident BNP member James White has been arrested for assaulting Labour Party members in the Hucknall area.

MANSFIELD ANL BENEFIT

This Friday (12th) Mansfield ANL are organising a benefit event with Nottingham's Wholesome Fish and various thrash bands. Those who know what thrash is (this newsletter editor doesn't, and would rather not, being a more elderly anti-fascist) may want to leap at the chance of going up with NAFA. Two minibuses and other transport leave from the Salutation Inn, Maid Marian way at 7.00. Some NAFA people will be meeting in the Sal. at 6.30 to ensure security. The gig will be heavily stewarded to ensure it passes of peacefully. A previous ANL gig had to be cancelled as the publican at the previous venue was under threat by fascists if the gig went ahead. It is very important politically that the ANL are able to succeed this time.

ARA LAUNCH IN NOTTINGHAM

The national Anti-Racist Alliance has started a Nottingham Branch and several of the key players are NAFA members or people who have appeared on NAFA platforms. The ARA focus on state racism and attacks on minority communities, so whilst there is overlap with NAFA there is a different emphasis. We welcome this development and

look forward to working closely with ARA. Two NAFA members are to attend their first meeting and will be proposing close collaboration.

INTERNAL NEWS

Membership

We have now reached 175 members, warm welcome to all new members especially the 13 who joined at a lively Lenton Labour Party meeting and to the Nottingham Council of Christians and Jews. The CCJ are forbidden by their national constitution from formally affiliating, but have sent an equivalent donation. The CCJ incidently recently held a large meeting addressed by Alan Simpson MP on the rise of the far-right in Europe.

Money

For the year ending Dec 1992 NAFA spent £1809 and took in £1816. Expenditure included £494 for printing, £455 for campaign materials, £413 for coach hire, £198 for po box and post office and various smaller items. Income was £442 from donations and collections, £427 from benefits, £400 from stewarding the APNA arts festival, £363 from membership, £164 from coach ticket sales and some small items. Notts. NALGO and Mushroom Bookshop have also covered a number of other expenses. At time of writing we are still solvent...

AGM

NAFA's AGM was due in February. It was decided to postpone this to April and hold the AGM on the same day as a large public meeting. Ray Hill (a leading light in the fascist movement for many years, and who turned, remaining inside the BNP as a mole) and a representative of one of the London black family campaigns for justice are being asked to come to speak. There will be a creche and food and the event will be on a Sunday. Further details next time. For the AGM we want to raise discussion as to "the way forward" and re-arranging our structure to open NAFA out more and take some of the responsibility away from an overworked few. If you wish to circulate any proposals please send them to the box number by the end of February.

NEWSLETTER

Apologies for the absence of a newsletter in January, work commitments did not allow the time it takes to produce. NAFA meetings have been discussing reducing the internal newsletter to bi-monthly, with a publicly available newssheet to come out on alternate months. The launch date for that is the AGM. The working group envisage the newssheet being better produced than the internal one and being an initial 4 A4 sides, broadsheet format aimed at educational work and "propaganda" and information being a bridge between local anti-fascist work and the work of specialist papers like Searchlight and CARF journal. It would be edited and produced separately from the internal bulletin. If you have any comments or could work on either writing, editing or production please write to the box, again by the end of the month.

NAFA MEETS 2nd AND 4th MONDAY, 7.30.ICC, MANSFIELD ROAD.

COUNTY LABOUR PARTY

NAFA has been in correspondence with the County Labour Party about the possibility of the BNP standing in the May elections and the problems which this raises for the County Council under electoral law (where parties are legally entitled to the use of schools etc). There are also clearly problems in sharing platforms with fascists, including at "the count". The County Labour Party are keen that material be circulated to Head Teachers, relevant unions, librarians etc. and that the County council issue a statement condemning the activities of the BNP. All this will be done. Are there any NAFA members who are involved in other parties who could work with our Secretary to raise the issue there too? Please contact Ross Bradshaw at the Box no.

BOOK REVIEW: THE 43 GROUP

The 43 Group: the untold story of their fight against fascism Morris Beckman (Centreprise) £7.50

The 43 Group - the name coming from the number attending its first meeting - was a non-political group of Jewish ex-servicemen and women who fought the fascists in the mid to late 1940's. Returning from the war and only too aware what had happened to millions of Jews Beckman and others were horrified to find that British nazis, many of whom had been interned during the war, had regrouped and were back on the streets. The largest groupings were the British League of Ex-Servicemen and the Union Movement. The "Blackshirts" began organising public meetings, parades and street meetings - three or four a week in London alone - blaming Jews for the war and encouraging anti-Semitism. The 43 Group decided to fight back by exposing the Nazis, by persuading the then Labour government to make inciting racial hatred a crime (they were not successful) and in physically confronting fascist papersellers, rushing the platform at open-air meetings and combatting the "Blackshirts" everywhere. Some 43 Group members infiltrated the fascists - one even becoming one of their leader Oswald Moseley's bodyguards (for his pains he was beaten up by other 43 Group members who did not know he was a fellow member, and he could not break cover). Around 1,000 Jews took part in the 43 Group, including one Vidal Sassoon, who has contributed a forward to the book. Many were arrested and fined for their activities. Within three years the fascist cause was lost, their members dispirited and (literally) beaten and the 43 Group wound up, its members now feeling able to return to "civilian life". The book is a fascinating read and includes a very useful directory of the far-right groups and papers of the 40's. At £7.50 it is expensive and I do feel that better editing could have produced a smaller book with a cover price likely to reach a wider sale. That's my only complaint. At the last NAFA meeting it was agreed to contact Morris Beckman to see if he would come to Nottingham to talk about his experiences.