

FAIR JUSTICE

The Bradford Disturbances,
the Sentencing and the Impact

CHRISTOPHER ALLEN

F · A · I · R

FORUM AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA & RACISM

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ABOUT THE FORUM AGAINST ISLAMOPHOBIA AND RACISM

The Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR) believes in a multi-faith, multi-cultural Britain, where all people, including Muslims, are valued for the positive contributions they make to society whilst protected from all forms of stereotyping, discrimination, harassment and violence. FAIR strives to promote a more balanced understanding of the contributions and concerns of the Muslim community in Britain. It seeks to challenge Islamophobia at all levels of British society.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 7th July 2001, Bradford witnessed wide scale disturbances. Independent reports into the disturbances identified communities that had become divided along various lines of racial, cultural, social and religious distinction as the main cause. None of them addressed the activities and role of the far-right political parties operating in Bradford.

THE DISTURBANCES

As with other areas where disturbances occurred, far-right and neo-Nazi organisations were active. Despite having a march by the National Front (NF) banned on the day of the disturbances, many witnesses identified large groups in Bradford city centre. Tensions between police, Asian-Muslim groups and neo-Nazi groups led to confrontation between them. The violence escalated: the cumulative effect being the evening's disturbances. 400–500 Asian-Muslim youths fought pitched battles with police in the suburb of Manningham. 326 officers were injured, of which approximately two thirds were from assault. More than 1,000 officers were involved in the operation.

The estimated total cost is reported to be in excess of £11 million although estimates vary.

RESPONDING TO THE DISTURBANCES

Chief Superintendent Phil Read of West Yorkshire Police described the disturbances as “wanton violence”. The Home Secretary, David Blunkett reiterated this, adding that “whatever the provocation from outside the area, it is overwhelmingly local people who have damaged their own community and its future”. For him, the Asian-Muslim community was to blame rather than any outside agitation or demographic and socio-economic reason. He felt that it was not necessary to investigate the ‘inherent causes’ of the disturbances”. This message was reinforced by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair and local MPs.

From within the communities themselves, some saw the disturbances as community defence: one of necessity rather than choice. Many believed that the clashes were the direct result of racist, far-right groups attacking Asian-Muslim communities and the failure of the authorities to adequately protect them. As such, a severe schism exists between the poles of thought that developed between those at grassroots and those in authority.

COMMUNITY COHESION

Probably the most significant investigation into the disturbances was “Community Cohesion: a report of the independent review team”. In completely overlooking the role of the far-right, it preferred that the disturbances were due to communities leading ‘polarised’ and ‘parallel’ lives, along lines of culture, religion, races and ethnicity. The response was the concept of ‘community cohesion’.

The idea that Muslims are unable to co-exist and exist outside any ‘community cohesion’ has since gained a greater credence and resonance across society, where a definite overlap of rhetoric and ideas between the far-right and others has become worrying. Any legitimising justification that they might seek from this is dangerous.

It is recommended that all concerned parties unite against the rising spectre of fascism. Unless the full role of the BNP, NF and others is investigated and countered, such groups will remain unchecked to target and persecute minority communities – in the contemporary climate this has been overwhelmingly Muslim – to bring about further social unrest and division. If community cohesion is a real and distinct goal for those in authority in this country, FAIR call upon all concerned to unite against this very real danger.

THE FAIR JUSTICE FOR ALL CAMPAIGN

Of those 270 arrested – 90% of whom were of Asian-Muslim descent – many were first-time offenders who were also self-volunteered. Despite this, the Police applied for a riot charge. Some have suggested that this was politically driven. Nearly 200 have so far faced charges, and have received sentences of up to five years for what amounts in some cases, to stone throwing. Lord Ouseley has described the sentencing as “savage” and “unjust” as have numerous others.

The Fair Justice for All Campaign emerged to provide a support network for both those sentenced and their families, to challenge the sentencing, seek a judicial review and a public inquiry. As one campaigner puts it, “it’s about the punishment fitting the crime, plain and simple”. This is basis of the entire campaign, including the legal challenge being headed by Imran Khan at the Court of Appeal.

Despite its legitimacy and peaceful nature, David Blunkett described those imprisoned as ‘whining maniacs’ and those supporting the campaign as ‘bleeding heart liberals’.

An issue that requires careful consideration, are the comments made by some in positions of power that have not aided the situation in Bradford, or assisted the healing and reconciliation attempts that have so far been made. FAIR call upon

all concerned to be responsible and mature in their rhetoric and condemnation and to restrain themselves from instances of name-calling, accusation and anything else that could once again inflame social tensions.

There would appear to be evidence of a clear disparity between both the charges and sentences handed out to those involved in the disturbances in Bradford to their white counterparts involved in similar disturbances on the Ravenscliffe estate (Bradford), at Millwall Football Club and in Northern Ireland.

The need for an independent enquiry to be undertaken with regards the disturbances in Bradford must be fully acknowledged by all concerned. Only through such an enquiry can the underlying causes and factors be discussed and engaged with. The need for trust in Bradford for a better, cohesive future is imperative. Such an enquiry would go some way in restoring the lack of trust that understandably exists right now.

COMMUNITY SENTENCING

Many have suggested that since 11 September 2001, Muslims have been criminalised as a 'law and order' problem. This is a view that is being widely suggested with regards the situation in Bradford.

Judge Stephen Gullick, the main protagonist of the hefty sentencing stated that it "will deter others from engaging in this type of behaviour in the future". The idea of 'community sentencing' has been recurrent, where those convicted of involvement have been sentenced in line with a "common purpose", where all are "taken together". His attitude has focused upon apportioning blame rather than fair justice. Some have described this as institutionalised racism and/or Islamophobia.

It is recommended that any enquiry into the disturbances should address the role of the criminal justice system and the responsibility that its participation has had upon the whole issue of sentencing. The severe and unjust sentencing imposed in Bradford will have a deep and profound long term effect.

Whilst the sentiment therefore is quite clear, the decision to imprison a large number of individuals from one community, particularly those who are young and first time offenders, could have a significant and quite detrimental impact on Bradford's future.

It is necessary that the relevant agencies begin planning now for the time when a large number of individuals will be released from prison. As such, it is vital that a comprehensive programme is established that will ensure that issues of employability, training and self-esteem are all properly dealt with.

HEALING THE WOUNDS

It is a real possibility that the situation in Bradford, whether politically, socially and/or economically, will continue to deteriorate. The cause of the ongoing process of fractionalisation – along lines of racial, ethnic and religious differentiation – has been due to a lack of understanding in addressing the core, underlying factors that initiated the tensions that culminated in the disturbances, including a lack of commitment, trust and foresight by the leaders at all levels, whether locally or nationally.

This report therefore suggests that many of the recommendations made by Lord Ouseley need to be comprehensively addressed and tackled if the wounds of Bradford are ever to heal. The inherent Islamophobia that exists in some schools, the virtual apartheid in others must be seriously combated. Education can begin to tackle this, and with the necessary investment, internal criticism, cultural and religious divides, disenchantment and exclusion can all be tackled and overcome.

FAIR call upon all to work towards reconciliation, and a realistic and equal cohesive community.

CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE OF RELEVANT EVENTS 2001/02

2001

February

Ouseley group hears from local people.

March

Build up of racist events in Oldham over the next two months.

April

- Easter Lidget Green disturbances.

May

- Oldham disturbances, especially on the evening of Saturday 26th.

June

- Minor disturbances in the Leeds district of Harehills.
- General Election.
- Burnley disturbances.
- Late June through to early July Bradford Festival including Carnival.
- Carnival in Bradford.
- Minor disturbances in Accrington in Lancashire.
- Bradford Mela.

July

- British National Party (BNP) rally meeting attended by leader Nick Griffin on the Ravenscliffe Estate.
- Proposed date for National Front (NF) march through Bradford city centre.
- Bradford disturbances in City Centre & Manningham.
- Further disturbances in Greengates, Ravenscliffe, Holme Wood & Keighley.
- The Ouseley Report published.
- Stoke-on-Trent and Hanley disturbances.

September

- Terrorist attacks on New York and Washington DC.
- Subsequent 'War on Terrorism'.

October

- Bradford City Council deferred decision on a riot background study (no subsequent decision taken).

November

- Shazad Ashraf becomes the first person to be convicted for his part in the Bradford disturbances.

December

Oldham, Burnley and Cattle reports published.

2002**April**

- Disturbances on the streets of Preston, Lancashire.

May

- Worst soccer violence occurs following Millwall versus Birmingham City football match.
- Local elections and BNP win three seats in Burnley.

June

- 150 people attack police in East Belfast.

July

- Launch of the Fair Justice for All Campaign in Bradford.

August

- Longest prison sentence of eight years passed for Amjid Rashid's involvement in Bradford disturbances.

September

- David Blunkett, the Home Secretary, makes his 'wining maniacs' speech
- Protest and rally outside the Home Office by the Campaign.

October

- Mr Justice Wright indicates a highly unusual block of appeal applications might be more relevant to the appeals procedure.

November

- BNP win local government by-election in the Mill Hill ward of Blackburn.

INTRODUCTION

IN THE SUMMER OF 2001 a number of northern towns became the focus for a series of social disturbances: Bradford, Burnley and Oldham, whilst being the most significant, were also joined by similar but much less widespread and damaging disturbances in Stoke-on-Trent and Leeds.

In Bradford, on the 7th July, wide scale disturbances that went on for many hours were caught live on camera and were televised both locally and nationwide. Millions of pounds worth of damage was caused and in excess of 300 police officers were injured.

As a result, a number of independent reports into the disturbances identified that numerous factors had contributed to a situation where communities had become divided along various lines of racial, cultural, social and religious distinction.

From the disturbances that erupted on the streets of Bradford, the Fair Justice for All Campaign emerged. As a grassroots community defence campaign, it has been led by local women in Bradford whose families have been affected by the unreasonably harsh sentencing that has been handed out by the courts over the past year. It was launched in July 2002 at a public meeting attended by over 300 supporters.

Its aims have been to:

- raise awareness of the disproportionate sentencing
- to get sentences reduced through the proper legislative procedure of appeals
- provide a network of support for the welfare of those in prison and their families
- highlight the root causes of the problems and the circumstances which led young people to participate in disturbances
- present a women's perspective of the cause to the media and government agencies
- improve relations between local councillors and MPs through dialogue to generate support for the campaign
- educate and highlight young people to discuss their problems through a democratic process, demonstrations and promote young energetic leadership

All those who have been sentenced, and indeed continue to await sentencing, have admitted their involvement and shown remorse for their activities. Although what has been the impetus for this movement, is the fact that in so many cases, first time offences and minimal involvement has led to such heavy penalties. Many within the campaign, and indeed an increasing number elsewhere, feel that not only are those convicted being punished but that their families and the wider communities in Bradford are also being punished.

However, despite the upsurge in interest in Bradford from official sources and the commissioning of various reports, there is also a prevalent belief that none of them have addressed one of the most significant root causes of the disturbances: the activities and role of the extreme, far-right political parties and their neo-Nazis cohorts. It is this factor that has been suggested by some as the main reason why many youths in Bradford – the vast majority from previously respectable and law abiding families – felt the need to take their frustrations onto the streets.

It is without doubt that such groups and organisations were actively campaigning in Bradford – as indeed they were in Oldham and Burnley as well – at the time of the disturbances. And substantive evidence presented to the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences by FAIR in October overwhelmingly proves that much of the campaigning and associated materials that were being circulated by such groups were both explicitly inciting and socially divisive in that they sought to exploit the many tensions that pre-existed within Bradford along the lines of religious determination.¹

¹ FAIR (2002) *A response: the religious offences bill 2002*. London: Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism. See also the oral evidence presented to the Select Committee by FAIR on the 17 October 2002.

In the report entitled “Community pride not prejudice” – which was published just days after the disturbances² – its author, Lord Ouseley acknowledged the fact that Islamophobia in Bradford affected the way in which the Muslim community are regarded and treated, both of which adds to the atmosphere of tension and fear that straddles all of Bradford’s different communities.³ As such, it is suggested that the role of the far-right would have been encouraged by the institutional and social foundations that were already in place in Bradford.

² OUSELEY, H. (2001) *Community pride not prejudice*. Bradford: Bradford Vision. From hereon, this report will be known as *The Ouseley report*.

The Fair Justice for All Campaign therefore aims to highlight this and other root causes and get them addressed at all levels of concern: by society, by the media, by councillors, by politicians.

³ Ibid, point 2.5.5

Since its launch, FAIR has tried to support the Fair Justice for All Campaign and has attempted to provide support where it saw fit.

Whilst FAIR do not believe that the concerns being voiced about the situation in Bradford are solely Islamophobic, they do believe that anti-Muslim expression and sentiment do not emerge from imaginary and vacuous scenarios. Instead Islamophobia emerges from real events and real situations – both overt and covert, explicit and implicit - and has had an impacting role in the events in Bradford.

The current social, economic and political situation in Bradford therefore dictates that FAIR assist the Campaign and gets involved in the debates currently taking place.

This report therefore was commissioned in order that it not only supports the Fair Justice for All Campaign but also that it goes some way in empowering the grassroots community in Bradford, in particular the Muslim youth and Muslim women, in order that it might assist their current lobbying and ensure that their voices are heard in any ensuing debate.

FAIR also hopes that this report will provide recognition for those 250 or so young men that appear to have been unfairly and unjustly dealt with at all stages of their convictions through providing substantive evidence and reasoned arguments to highlight the factors that may have been overlooked or overshadowed elsewhere. This is not to say that FAIR believe that these men are innocent, but merely to reiterate and strengthen the calls for justice and fairness for all that the Campaign has already made. Fair justice is one of the cornerstones of a democratic society and we must ensure that this is a profound right for all, irrespective of any racial, religious, ethnic, gender or other marker of difference.

FAIR also wishes to ensure that the very real concerns of ordinary people in Bradford are addressed, beginning with this very real situation. It is hoped that this report will go some way towards achieving this.

BRADFORD VOICES: A WIFE'S

"...since my husband has been sentenced, I have lost concentration on what needs doing. I feel I have become lazy and under a lot of pressure, and at times I feel depressed, alone and scared...

...my husband was an intricate member of our household and we shared our everyday tasks. Every day Allah knows what it is like for myself and the children, I constantly think of my husband, especially when the children are asking where he is. I cannot bring myself to tell them...

...this sentencing is not one that he is serving, but one that me and my children are as well...

...my son who is three years old misses him the most and has very bad tantrums and refuses to co-operate or eat and sleep at times...

...I pray that Allah can give us strength as a family to cope with the hard times and we wait for the day he comes home to us."

[A transcript of an interview with the wife of one of those convicted for their involvement in the Bradford disturbances. June 2002]

SITUATING BRADFORD

A DIVERSE POPULATION¹

¹ BRADFORD CITY COUNCIL (1998) *Bradford in brief 1998*. Bradford: Bradford City Council. Available online at <http://www.bradford.gov.uk>

Bradford is both a culturally and racially rich location, embodying much diversity within its population of 486,000. It is anticipated that this will grow to in excess of 511,000 by the year 2011. As of 1998, ‘white’ residents made up approximately 80% of the entire population, with the remaining 20% being from black or Asian backgrounds. Of this 20%, three quarters of those – about 71,000 residents – are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin. Another 13,450 are of Indian descent. The city also has a significant Afro-Caribbean community in addition to smaller communities from China and other South East Asian countries.

There is also a significant religious diversity within Bradford, with all of the major religions found in the Indian subcontinent represented. Of them, Muslims are the largest, amounting to approximately 11.5% of the total population. Sikh and Hindu communities also live in Bradford although their numbers are much smaller than those of their Muslim counterparts (1.1% and 0.7% respectively).

It is with this in mind that throughout this document, the term ‘Asian-Muslim’ should be used to describe those that both FAIR and Fair Justice for All have set out to campaign for. Following the disturbances, the media, Government and some official reports preferred to use the term ‘Asian’ to describe these individuals and communities. As a result, many in those ‘non-Muslim Asian’ communities chose to distance themselves from those involved in the disturbances as the vast majority were of Muslim origin, albeit Pakistani or Bangladeshi. As such, it was decided that using the undifferentiated term ‘Asian’ was quite inappropriate.

FAIR felt that it was necessary to maintain a positive recognition of the religious, cultural and racial backgrounds of those individuals and communities involved in the disturbances. However, this is not to assume that ‘Asian Muslims’ are a uniform and monolithic community either in Bradford or elsewhere. One consequence of this might be to challenge the perception and prevalent use of such inappropriate blanket terms such as ‘Asian’ in popular discourse. This also recognises the trend towards self-identification moving to religious affiliation rather than a racial or ethnic equivalent.

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION

It is without doubt that Bradford is one of Britain's most deprived areas. In the past year, a number of investigations have highlighted that the pockets of exclusion that exist in Bradford are widespread and deeply ingrained.² Bradford has suffered from deep-rooted de-industrialisation and has been seriously debilitated as it has fallen into the shadow of other towns and cities that have managed to establish post-industrial economies. Vitaly important in this consideration, as Humera Khan notes, is the "spiralling social decline of the Muslim community" in Bradford.⁵

Over the past 50 years Bradford has become a low-wage local economy with a large number of migrant workers. In the period between 1960 and 1990 alone, Bradford has lost in excess of 80% of its jobs in textiles – a total of 60,000 jobs in a population of 295,000.⁴ Bradford is like other northern towns in this respect but it is unique in that its population has significantly and proportionately increased as this process of de-industrialisation has occurred: bucking the trends noticeable elsewhere. Unlike the wider demographic picture that emerges from the UK, Bradford also has a very young population, with over 50% of its ethnic minority communities being aged under 18.⁵ There are currently therefore more young people entering the labour market at the precise moment that there are significantly fewer jobs available. In many pockets of Bradford unemployment is persistent, with six wards having long-term (over one year) unemployment rates of over 25%.⁶ Parts of Bradford also suffer appallingly high rates of youth unemployment, for example over 20% in Little Horton ward.⁷

Whilst Bradford has witnessed disturbances before – the most recent being in 1995 – the consultation process that has always followed has tended to highlight the same underlying problems: the indices of social deprivation – unemployment, poverty, poor housing and social exclusion. Whilst these have been persistently highlighted, it would appear that very little effort has been made to positively address these issues in Bradford.

Housing continues to be severely inadequate, with thirteen of Bradford's wards being designated as being in the worst 10% in the country, with University ward third from bottom and Bradford Moor 24th from bottom.⁸ In addition, discriminatory council housing policies, which allocated specific ethnic groups to specific new housing estates, have almost effectively enforced the establishment of segregated housing areas.⁹ As just 2 per cent of Bradford's large stock of council housing has been allocated to ethnic minorities of Pakistani and Bangladeshi descent,¹⁰ a further situation has developed where such communities have sought the safety of their own areas, in spite of overcrowding in what can only be termed inappropriate and unsatisfactory housing.

² See *The Ouseley report* and CANTLE, T. (2001) *Community cohesion: a report of the independent review team*. London: Home Office. From hereon, the latter named report will be known as *The Cantle report*.

⁵ KHAN, H. (2002) "Still not at ease: the next intifada". *Q-News*, July-August 2002, p.18.

⁴ BRADFORD UNIVERSITY (2002) *Bradford: one year on – breaking the silences*. Bradford: University of Bradford.

⁵ UK Census 1991.

⁶ MEZAROS, P. (2001) "Behind the Bradford riots". *Searchlight magazine*, August 2001. Paul Mezaros is from the Bradford Trades Council. The full article can also be read at, <http://www.searchlightmagazine.com/stories/BehindBradfordRiot.htm>

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ *Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000* (IMD 2000).

⁹ See Institute of Race Relations report into the disturbances, published on its website at, <http://www.irr.org.uk/riots/>

¹⁰ Ibid.

It is no surprise therefore that Bradford's health provision is equally poor, with the Health Improvement Programme identifying an overall premature death rate in Bradford around 50% above the national average.¹¹

¹¹ Bradford Health Authority, see <http://www.bradford-ha.nhs.uk>

Education in Bradford is an equally serious concern both in terms of its overall standing in national league tables and the underperformance of boys of Pakistani descent whose pass rate of five GCSE's at grades A*-C was 17% compared to 33% for their counterparts in the white community.¹² And as with the segregation in areas of housing, segregation has occurred in schools where the Ouseley report identified the "virtual apartheid" that exists in many secondary schools.¹³

¹² BRADFORD UNIVERSITY (2002) *Bradford: one year on – breaking the silences.*

¹³ *The Ouseley report*, 2.5.13.

Another significant factor that needs to be highlighted within this framework is the rise of drug dealing and usage in Bradford by those from within the Asian-Muslim community.

Bradford therefore is a fragmented community, one that suffers from some of the poorest levels of social deprivation in the UK and where socio-economic factors appear to compound rather than combat many of the deep seated problems. Certain areas within Bradford are severely segregated to the extent that those participating in the compilation of the Cantle report were "struck by the depth of polarisation" that existed.¹⁴ As Tariq Modood wrote following the disturbances in 1995:

¹⁴ *The Cantle report*, p.9.

Manningham is a situation that Lord Scarman warned against. An expanding and underqualified youth population, a declining labour market, racial discrimination and harassment, drug dealing, conflict with the police. With one important difference. On one side, racism and cultural contempt is mixed with Islamophobia; on the other side, an assertiveness, paralleling forms of black pride, that might be called 'Muslim Pride'¹⁵

¹⁵ MODOOD, T. (1995) Unsourced article in *The Guardian* supplied in a personal interview with T. Modood.

Since this was written in 1995, it would appear that very little positive action had been undertaken to combat much of what this observation highlights as being problematic for all in Bradford. It is therefore no surprise that social deprivation and exclusion saw individuals and communities from all sides of the racial, ethnic and religious divides looking towards more extreme options in order to solve their problems, and that the incidence of racist and cultural contempt – increasingly being manifest with either a 'White' or 'Muslim' identity depending upon which side of the community divide one existed within – has helped to determine and shape those options open to those most disaffected.

THE FAR-RIGHT

In the past few years, both in the UK and across Western Europe, the rise of far-right and neo-Nazi organisations has caused much concern. As the recent

European Union Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) report stated, such groups – especially since the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on 11 September 2001 – were becoming increasingly popular espousing racist, and in particular, explicitly anti-Muslim and Islamophobic messages.¹⁶ As with other areas where disturbances occurred throughout the UK in 2001, it is well known that far-right and neo-Nazi organisations, including the British National Party (BNP), National Front (NF) and Combat 18 were actively campaigning on an anti-Muslim agenda. Other more fluidly defined groups, were also particularly active in these same areas.

Following the mass leafleting of certain areas in north Bradford at the end of 2000 by the BNP with leaflets entitled “Islam out of Britain” and “I.S.L.A.M. – Intolerance, Slaughter, Looting, Arson and Molestation”,¹⁷ it became clear that they were intending to stand candidates in the May 2001 General Elections. John Brayshaw did so in Bradford North and received over 1,600 votes, with much of his support identified as being concentrated in Eccleshill and Undercliffe, both of which are relatively white, rundown areas, where racial tensions were present.¹⁸ The BNP and its leader Nick Griffin also addressed a meeting for activists and sympathisers in the Ravenscliffe estate area on 6 July 2001, the night before the disturbances.

The NF continued the process of establishing a foothold in Bradford by announcing that on the 7 July 2001, it was going to parade through the city centre. This was the same day that saw the culmination of the two-week long Bradford Festival which had included the trouble free Mela the preceding week. The final event that would have coincided with the march by the NF was entitled, World in a City, and was due to be a celebration of Bradford’s cultural diversity.

Rather than attempt to stop the parade by the NF, the Police successfully pressured the Council into abandoning the multicultural event claiming that it was unable to ensure public safety. As such, the NF appeared to have been given a backhanded victory.

However, there is also substantial anecdotal evidence to suggest that Police were aware of the potential violence and confrontation that might ensue as a result of the NF congregating in Bradford. As the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* reported, “outside the Tyrls police station, lunchtime shoppers witnessed officers sorting riot shields and batons”.¹⁹ This evidence suggests that such preparations were being made some time before an Anti-Nazi League (ANL) rally in Centenary Square that was eventually attended by 600 peaceful supporters.²⁰

By this time, known neo-Nazi activists had already been identified in the area. One had already been stopped and searched by the police although he was allowed to carry on his activities.²¹ Despite this awareness, the police allowed

¹⁶ ALLEN, C. & NIELSEN, J. (2002) *Summary report on Islamophobia in the EU after 11 September 2001*. Vienna: European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia, p.42. From hereon, this report will be known as *The EUMC report*.

¹⁷ These and many other specifically anti-Muslim pieces of literature were widely circulated by the BNP. Until recent times, the vast majority of this documentation was available to download direct from the group’s website at <http://www.bnp.org.uk>. Some examples are included as an integral part of, FAIR (2002) *A response: the religious offences bill 2002*. London: Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism

¹⁸ MEZAROS, P. (2001) “Behind the riots”. *Searchlight magazine*, August 2001.

¹⁹ “Now the clear up begins”. *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*, 9 July 2001.

²⁰ See CARF website - <http://www.carf.demon.co.uk/feat54.html>

²¹ Ibid.

other identifiable neo-Nazi groups, including some Bradford City Football Club supporters, to trawl from pub to pub where their state of sobriety rapidly decreased. At the same time, the police confined the main body of anti-Nazi demonstrators in Centenary Square.

²² “Bradford under siege after day of race riots”. *The Observer*, 8 July 2001.

As those neo-Nazi groups, confirmed as being members of the NF and Combat 18,²² became more vociferous, ‘Seig Heiling’, taunting and becoming increasingly more verbally abusive, at about 16:30, a young Asian-Muslim man was attacked. Eyewitnesses have confirmed that the perpetrators of the attack were well known and identifiable supporters of a local Combat 18 cell. The young Asian-Muslim, having had his head repeatedly stamped upon, was eventually offered protection by another smaller group of Asian-Muslim men. Whilst the attacker was not arrested, the Police did escort the neo-Nazis to another public house.

Back in the city centre, tensions between Police, Asian-Muslim groups and other neo-Nazi groups become increasingly fractured. Fighting eventually broke out between them and as the violence escalated, so the Police drove the different factions towards the Manningham area.

The cumulative effect of these events set the stage for the evening’s disturbances.

THE DISTURBANCES

The disturbances in Bradford over the period 7–9 July 2001 were the worst instances of civil unrest to occur in Britain since the Handsworth, Brixton and Tottenham riots of 1981.

West Yorkshire Police described the severity of the disorder as “shocking”.¹ In total, 326 officers were injured, of which approximately two thirds were from assault, more than 1,000 officers and support staff were involved in the policing operation, and nine police forces sent assistance as the disorder threatened to overwhelm West Yorkshire officers. Two Police horses were also injured, one of which was stabbed.

¹ West Yorkshire Police Fact Files, <http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/Fact%20Files/bfd-riots.htm>

In all, 445 crimes including criminal damage, arson, assaults on police officers, robbery, serious assault and violence were all recorded. Of these, the Police have suggested some of the following as the most serious:

- Stabbing offence at the rear of Sunwin House in which two men were injured
- City centre crime that ranged from broken windows, targeted assaults, and robberies of people in the town centre.
- Crimes in Whetley Hill, which included fires at six public houses and clubs.
- Looting of a DIY store at Oak Lane.
- Looting of delicatessen.
- Looting and arson at a BMW dealers garage which caused a substantial amount of damage.
- Arson and looting of another motor dealers in Keighley Road that again caused a substantial amount of damage.
- Crimes in Girdlington, which included arson of club premises and looting of a chemist.
- Attack on Lawcroft House Police Station in which a number of vehicles were damaged.²

² *ibid.*

During the disturbances, 400–500 Asian-Muslim youths fought pitched battles with hundreds of riot police.³ Officers struggled to contain the worst of the violence concentrated in the mainly Asian-Muslim suburb of Manningham where dozens of burning barricades littered the streets. In White Abbey Road bricks and paving stones were torn up to hurl at the police. Several cars were set fire to and a number of petrol bombs were thrown at buildings; fire engines were forced to retreat several times under a hail of stones and bricks.

³ HOME OFFICE (2002) *Building cohesive communities: a report of the ministerial group on public order and community cohesion*. London: Home Office, 1.2. From hereon, this report will be known as *The Denham report*.

4 BRADFORD UNIVERSITY (2002)
Bradford: one year on – breaking the silences.

5 CENTRE FOR SOCIAL MARKETS (2002) *On the frontlines: the challenge of social integration and economic development for Asian businesses.* London: CSM.

The disturbances continued throughout the night, where the lives of police and local residents' were placed at risk. As the University of Bradford report notes, confrontation was directed mainly at the Police, whilst violence was "specifically targeted, mostly against non-Muslim premises".⁴

The trouble continued for eleven hours throughout the night until Police were able to regain control of the situation in those affected areas. Despite this cessation of confrontation, unrest and conflict continued in a much less significant manner for another three nights.

The disturbances were some of the worst violence seen on Britain's streets. The estimated total cost is reported to be approximately £11 million.⁵

BRADFORD VOICES: A POLICEMAN'S

"As the Police Commander who had the unenviable task of restoring public order in Bradford on the night of the 7th July I want to highlight the contribution made by all of the officers who were involved. The officers who took and repelled such a ferocious and sustained attack on White Abbey Road for so long showed dedication to duty, professionalism and bravery of the highest order.

Some have tried to justify disgraceful conduct by stating that the police 'allowed' the BNP to come to Bradford. In reality police advice was heeded, and a prohibition order was obtained preventing marches. This action was criticised, with local headlines shouting 'SPINELESS'. On the Saturday a handful of BNP supporters attended Bradford and held their rally, and sections of the local community, who had been asked not to attend and hold demonstrations chose to do so and then vented their anger on their local officers.

The media talk is of riot police, but we know differently. Those were ordinary officers, used to policing the community on foot and in panda cars, dressed in clothing and pads that offer only a very limited degree of protection. They stood and moved forwards professionally against overwhelming odds, in sweltering heat and in the face of extreme, inexcusable, escalating violence. The criminal acts against unarmed police officers including the driving of vehicles at police officers, an avalanche of rocks, stones and petrol bombs being thrown almost continuously, sticks and swords being

wielded and in addition, threats made with a crossbow. The result was over 200 officers physically injured, the psychological damage is inestimable.

Not only was this vicious criminal behaviour repelled, but 36 arrests were made during that period, while many injured colleagues were supported and recovered. The ground was taken and order eventually restored whilst officers were outnumbered and clearly exhausted by both the hours worked and the exertion in these conditions. The extent of damage to property was reduced, but more importantly their actions undoubtedly saved human life. This was done using minimal force, as West Yorkshire Police is proud of its reputation for policing by and with the consent of the communities we serve. These were the actions of ordinary heroes.

Every effort is being put into making sure that the actions of these criminals will be fully and comprehensively investigated to pursue prosecutions against those involved. The people of Bradford should be very proud of their police and should be prepared to come forward and give their witness accounts of the appalling events of that night. It is only by seeing justice done that the local communities can move forward to a brighter, peaceful and harmonious future."

MARK WHYMAN

[This is reproduced from a letter from Mark Whyman, Police Superintendent Operations, Bradford North, first published in the Bradford Telegraph & Argus]

RESPONDING TO THE DISTURBANCES

THE IMMEDIATE AFTERMATH

Chief Superintendent Phil Read, of West Yorkshire Police responded immediately to the disturbances by stating that what he witnessed was “...wanton violence...” where there “...can be no excuse for this criminal behaviour”.¹

The Home Secretary, David Blunkett reiterated this sentiment when he made it quite clear from the outset, describing the events as, “wanton violence and destruction”,² “sheer, mindless violence – people acting in a totally anti-social and thuggish fashion”.³ He added that, “whatever the provocation from outside the area, it is overwhelmingly local people who have damaged their own community and its future”.⁴

For Blunkett, not only was there no need to question the role of the far-right or the activities of the policing operations in the town centre and then later in Mannigham that day, but he was also making extremely clear his belief that it was the Asian-Muslim community itself that was self-inflicting damage. Blunkett took a similar approach with regards to the socio-economic factors that may have been integral in initiating the disturbances. Regardless of the wealth of demographic and socio-economic data available, Blunkett continued his immediate appraisal of the disturbances by adding that it was individual and communal behaviour that needed to be addressed rather than any form of social disadvantage. Blunkett made these statements despite the fact that in all the areas where the disturbances occurred in 2001, the wards were in the 20% most deprived wards in the UK,⁵ all have incomes which are amongst the lowest in the country,⁶ and many have considerably low education attainment standards in schools.⁷ Blunkett’s dismissive attitude towards the concerns and fears of those Asian-Muslim communities in Bradford was quite clear, particularly when it was reported that the “Home Secretary stated that it was not necessary to investigate the ‘inherent causes’ of the disturbances”.⁸

Following a visit to the north of England just four weeks after the disturbances, he again reiterated his disdain for those communities that had suffered by stating that he had overlooked them on his trip north because “I am determined not to reward communities that riot”.⁹ The message that the Home Secretary has persisted in sending to the people of Bradford has been, and indeed remains extremely clear.

¹ “Bradford under siege after day of race riots”. *The Observer*, 8 July 2001.

² “Blunkett condemns troublemakers”. *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*. http://www.thisisbradford.co.uk/bradford_district/bradford/riot/BRAD_NEW_S3.html

³ “Bradford counts cost of riot”. BBC Online, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/1428675.stm>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ *Indices of Deprivation 2000* (IMD 2000)

⁶ All the wards where disturbances occurred are ranked in the most deprived 10% of the country in terms of income (RDS research 2000)

⁷ p.8 (1.6) *The Denham report*.

⁸ ALLEN, C. (2001) “Mentioning the unmentionable” Islamophobia in Britain”. *Q-News*, August 2001, p.16.

⁹ “Blunkett ignored worst hit areas on Bradford visit, say Asian leaders”. *The Guardian*, 9 August 2001. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/racism/Story/0,2763,554260,00.html>

In fact this message appeared to be part of a unified response from the Government. A spokesperson for Tony Blair, the Prime Minister shortly after the disturbances, confirmed that, “there may initially have been an element of provocation from the far-right at some point during Saturday...” but “...evidence suggests that this is simply thuggery and local people intent on having a go at the police and, in the process of doing that, destroying their own community”.¹⁰

¹⁰ “PM blasts thugs”. *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*, http://www.thisisbradford.co.uk/bradford_district/bradford/riot/blair1.html

Local Labour Member of Parliament (MP) for Bradford West, Marsha Singh, also voiced the same: “we have to put the events into some sort of perspective. It was nothing to with deprivation, this was sheer criminality”.¹¹

¹¹ “Sheer criminality is the root cause”. *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*, http://www.thisisbradford.co.uk/bradford_district/bradford/riot/BRAD_NEW_S11.html

Terry Rooney, Labour MP for Bradford North took a similar view, preferring to address the criminality issue rather than the seemingly underlying causes. As he stated, the “troublemakers” that had been behind the disturbances must be brought to justice: “we’ve got to root them out, get them banged up and show people that justice will apply to anybody that engages in this mindless thuggery...one way of doing that is making sure the police can have the maximum presence possible”.¹²

¹² “Blunkett’s promise”. *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*.

The MP for Bradford South, Labour’s Gerry Sutcliffe appeared to understand the solution to the problem as being something even more extreme, and was pleased to acknowledge the Home Secretary’s sympathy to proposals to deal with outbreaks of violence by bringing in water cannons: “we want short sharp solutions to crowd disturbances”.¹³

¹³ Ibid.

The last local MP to make a significant comment regarding the disturbances was Christopher Leslie, Shipley’s Labour parliamentarian. In his opinion “we need to root out the criminals involved and make sure that swift justice is delivered”.¹⁴

¹⁴ Ibid.

This institutional attitude was therefore quite unsympathetic to those communities that had been placed under siege by far-right and neo-Nazi groups. Irrespective of the causes from outside the community – in this case and quite deliberately overlooked by the Home Secretary and his blanket-style response to the disturbances – the Labour inspired Governmental response was also quite clear, sending the same message to all those who had been victimised and oppressed in their own communities and localities. The Government, led by the Home Secretary was saying that whatever the provocation, reacting against it will be deemed illegal and criminal.

Some have suggested that this Blunkett-led response is one that has been deliberately skewed in order to avoid dealing with the very real problems that pre-existed the disturbances in Bradford.

Indeed, peace campaigner, writer and grassroots activist for the Fair Justice

for All Campaign, Aki Nawaz suggests that the disturbances were much more a case of community defence rather than anything else, where the taking to the streets by large swathes of Bradford's Asian-Muslim community was one of necessity rather than choice.¹⁵ This idea of 'community defence' is one that has also been pursued elsewhere. The University of Bradford report suggests that despite the disturbances being largely about confrontation with the Police, there is evidence to suggest that, "the rioters seem[ed] nevertheless to have been defending a community".¹⁶

¹⁵ Interview with Aki Nawaz.

¹⁶ BRADFORD UNIVERSITY (2002) *Bradford: one year on – breaking the silences*.

From within the Manningham community itself, that same message is being echoed with the implication that the Police were unwilling rather than unable to protect them. As Manawar Jan-Khan, of the Mannigham Residents' Association said, "no one was prepared to let the NF march into Manningham and people were determined to show that we would not take this. But instead of protecting the residents, the police turned on our community, herding us like animals".¹⁷ For him, there is no doubt that the clashes were the result of racist, far-right politically aligned gangs attacking Asian-Muslim communities, which in turn was supplemented by the failure of the police to provide adequate protection for them. Responding to direct and persistent provocation, in the case of Bradford at least, does seem to highlight the dichotomy of trying to pinpoint exactly where community defence begins and subsequently ends.

¹⁷ The summer of rebellion special report is available at, <http://www.carf.demon.co.uk/feat54.html>

Blunkett again responded to such charges and instantly dismissed Manningham's communities. The Home Secretary, without consideration or investigation, categorically denied that police in Bradford were "institutionally racist".¹⁸ He continued by adding that it was "ridiculous" to blame police attitudes to Asian-Muslim communities for the disturbances and that locals should stop looking for scapegoats instead of taking responsibility.¹⁹

¹⁸ "Blunkett condemns troublemakers". *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

Such an immediate rejection of ideas is surprising, considering that only two years earlier the Stephen Lawrence Report had highlighted the very real problem of institutionalised racism within various regional constabularies.²⁰ Yet in the aftermath of the disturbances, there was scant attention paid to any possible racism within the police services. It was clear that the possibility that institutional racism might have contributed to the disturbances was not a view that was to be officially aired. Instead, as mentioned beforehand, both the Prime Minister and Home Secretary gave their full and unequivocal backing to the police. This despite Imran Khan, the lawyer to the family of Stephen Lawrence decrying the "perceived institutionalised racism" of the treatment being dealt to those involved in the disturbances.²¹

²⁰ MACPHERSON, W. (1999) *The Stephen Lawrence inquiry*. London: Home Office.

Others use much more emotive language, where the essence however remains the same, albeit in a more polemical rhetoric. The Institute for Race Relations (IRR) take this idea of community defence one step further and challenge the dismissive approach of the Government much more directly. For them the disturbances:

²¹ From a speech at the Fair Justice for All Campaign rally, London 17 September 2002.

signalled the rage of young Pakistanis and Bangladeshis of the second and third generations, deprived of futures, hemmed in on all sides by racism, failed by their own leaders and representatives...their violence was ad hoc, improvised and haphazard...this was the violence of communities fragmented by colour lines, class lines and police lines. It was the violence of hopelessness. It was the violence of the violated.²²

²² Institute of Race Relations. <http://www.irr.org.uk/riots/>

As such, a severe schism exists between the poles of thought that developed surrounding the disturbances and their underlying causes. Many at the grassroots level in Bradford and elsewhere had hoped that the dilemma between how the disturbances are seen locally by those in Bradford and by how they

THE BNP IN OLDHAM

The example of the nature and impact of far right activities against the Muslim community is provided by the northern city of Oldham. The upsurge in the level of activities by far-right organisations in this city, including the BNP and the NF, are at least partly the catalyst for the civil unrest witnessed there in the early summer of 2001. Two reports seek to illustrate the socially divisive and disruptive role played in this city by far right organisations.

The first report, produced by the Black Racial Attacks Independent Network, entitled '*The Oldham Riots—Shattering the Myths*', states:

"...the result of years of...institutional attitudes combined with media hysteria has given legitimacy and created a climate for the racists and the BNP to gain a foothold to propagate and stir hatred...It is important to note the BNP's strategy of blaming Muslim communities for the problems in the northern towns. Articles have appeared on BNP websites and literature, with titles such as "The Situation in Oldham: Ethnic Cleansing Muslim Style", calling for a boycott of Muslim businesses, but not Chinese or Hindu. On the BBC's Newsnight programme, in an interview by Jeremy Paxman with Nick Griffin, Griffin stated that "It's not an Asian or black problem but a Muslim one". The existence of Islamophobia in society endorsed by Government policies on refugees, asylum, terrorism...etc., in conjunction with the media's subsequent portrayal [of these people] further adds to Islamophobic attitudes which the BNP turn into political gain by claiming to disillusioned whites that these fundamentalist Muslims live only up the road from them..."

The second report, produced by the Islamic Human Rights Commission, entitled '*The Oldham Riots—Discrimination, Deprivation and Communal Tension in the United Kingdom*', offers similar insights:

"Political leaders in the town have admitted that the riots had been stirred up by right-wing white extremists. Both the Police and the Prime Minister concurred...Even Chief Superintendent Hewitt highlighted the particular role of the National Front (NF) and British National Party (BNP)...Statements by right-wing groups reveal that their efforts were primarily directed against Oldham's Muslim community. An article on the race riots on the BNP's website commented that 'this is how extremists within the Muslim community in Oldham are repaying the hospitality of the people who built the town and allowed them to settle there by the tens of thousands.' Another BNP article remarked on how the Party has been able to use the riots to further exacerbate racist and Islamophobic sentiment to thereby recruit members: 'Media coverage and the personal experience of scores of thousands of white people every year are combining to make gangs of Muslim thugs the best recruiting sergeant the British National Party has ever had...it is a perceived distinction...and one which indicts the current state of anti-discriminatory legislation in the UK"

What we see here is a situation where inciting religious hatred becomes a somewhat self-fulfilling prophecy. As hatred against Muslims rises, so too hatred within the Muslim community itself rises against the initial perpetrators. The result is an outburst of tensions into confrontation. This then is identified as another reason for inciting hatred towards the said group, where the tension and hatred continues to escalate until it is beyond control. Religious hatred thus evolves into a situation where the cause becomes the catalyst, where the catalyst eventually becomes the cause again.

have been interpreted and categorised by those in authority, would be one issue that those at local, national and governmental leadership levels would be willing to tackle and address. It was hoped that through one of the many official reports commissioned following the disturbances across the north of England, this idea may have been further developed and may have been the key to understanding the reasons why so many felt compelled to take to the streets.

CANTLE AND COMMUNITY COHESION

As with the ‘Blunkett-inspired’ response to the disturbances, the wider institutional response also sought to overlook the involvement of the far-right and its persistent targeting of the Asian-Muslim community in Bradford and elsewhere.

Probably the most significant investigation into the causes of the disturbances across the north of England was the report entitled “Community Cohesion: a report of the independent review team”.²³ It was commissioned by the Home Office under the auspices of the Community Cohesion Review Team, and was chaired by Ted Cantele, a then relatively unknown civil servant chosen by the Labour Government.

²³ As before, *The Cantele report*.

One of the most serious objections to the Cantele Report is that it completely overlooked the issue of the involvement of the far-right in the tensions that existed on racial, ethnic, religious and social class lines in Bradford. For Cantele, the roots of the disturbances were quite clear, although these were categorically not the result of Asian-Muslim communities being targeted by far-right organisations. Communities in Bradford – which Cantele preferred to describe as ‘Asian’ and ‘White’ rather than acknowledge any direct Muslim or other religiously self-identified community – were leading ‘polarised’ and ‘parallel’ lives, where people of different cultures, religions, races and ethnicities did not mix.

On a wider interpretation as well however, probably the most controversial and widely reported aspect of the report was the call for “a clear primary loyalty to this Nation...[where] a clearer statement of allegiance...should be considered”.²⁴ Overall therefore, this report suggested that a much more meaningful concept of citizenship, social unification and identification with a British identity, would provide a better solution to Bradford’s societal ills and would go some way towards removing those catalysts that might initiate further disturbances. At no time did the report set out to acknowledge or tackle those problems being posited by Bradford’s Asian-Muslim communities.

²⁴ *The Cantele report*, 5.1.15.

In addition, Cantele also touched upon and indeed institutionally reinforced many of the subtle anti-Muslim discriminatory ideas that had been in circulation for some time. In recommending quotas on faith schools for example – a

direct response to the call by some British Muslims to establish state funded Islamic faith schools along the lines of those already enjoyed by the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches, and the Jewish, Sikh and Seventh Day Adventist communities – Cattle was able to reinforce the argument and unfounded concern by those in authority that such schools would not only lead to, but actively encourage deeper divisions and greater isolationist tendencies within society.

However the most significant element to evolve though was the concept of ‘community cohesion’, something that was not in essence new but has since the Cattle report, found a greater resonance and importance in central government. Indeed, it has become a lynchpin upon which Government has formulated its response to all of the disturbances across the north. As the overriding message was that the disturbances were caused by a lack of community cohesion, the solution became a series of measures designed to create this required cohesion, whilst at the same time reducing the risk of similar occurrences in the future. Community cohesion therefore became the central focus of all thinking, where the need for allegiance, loyalty and a meaningful concept of citizenship were required. Through the report’s findings, Cattle was able to both articulate and substantiate the arguments for community cohesion in a way that nobody had beforehand.

It is also clear that community cohesion has begun to displace the concept of ‘social cohesion’ as posited by the Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain. For them, a much more positive attitude towards difference and unity came from the concept of ‘belonging’. With regards to belonging therefore, it would be necessary for the polity of the individual to be recognised both within a community of communities and a community of individuals, and that through this, ‘belonging’ would then challenge all racisms and related structural inequalities.²⁵

²⁵ From discussions with Professor Tariq Modood, University of Bristol.

Such ideas would also appear to be underlying the ideas being suggested by Aryeh Neier, the founder of the Open Society Institute. Rather than community cohesion, he suggests that what is required is a much greater effort towards “integration rather than assimilation...to integrate equals”.²⁶ Both of these systems of cohesion therefore would appear to be somewhat oppositional to those of Cattle and the Government. However, it is important to insist that other processes and models for social integration and unity are continued to be researched and considered, if for no other purpose but to restrict the suggestions being made that ‘community cohesion’ for example has greater political potency and control than other models.

²⁶ Speech at the Foreign Policy Centre, 5 November 2002.

Indeed it might be argued that the cohesion within some communities in Bradford was one of the factors for interpreting how the disturbances developed.²⁷ It is this cohesion, that might be the reason why community defence was preferred by those trying to understand and explain the disturbances from

²⁷ BRADFORD UNIVERSITY (2002) *Bradford: one year on – breaking the silences.*

the perspective of the Asian Muslim community rather than the ‘law and order’ perspective that many establishmentarians prefer to insist upon.

This perspective would imply that some aspects of community cohesion therefore are not entirely desirable with regards to the idealistic scenario that many official sources are suggesting that community cohesion will ensure. The cohesion that such sources would prefer would be those which seek to overcome sectarian divides, regardless of the origins of those social divisions: rather an assimilation of difference maybe. Even at this very basic level of understanding, community cohesion in Bradford may not ultimately provide the answers or solutions to prevent further disturbances in the foreseeable future. The need to deal with those groups – such as the BNP – that seek to encourage ‘community division’ rather than ‘community cohesion’ would also need to be tackled before the situation could realistically be overcome in the long term.

In fact the Cattle Report appeared only to serve a political purpose, where it quite clearly shifted the emphasis for responsibility back onto those communities that had been at the centre of the disturbances rather than those that might have in some way initiated or influenced the situation. As argued by Tufyal Choudhury, author of “The situation of Muslims in the UK”, “debate on Muslims and the integration of Muslims, has always focused on what Muslims must do”.²⁸ As he goes on, the question at some stage must therefore be, “what can you do?”. This quite accurately reflects the situation in Bradford where the finger of blame has been categorically pointed at those communities that had already suffered from far too much injustice.

²⁸ Speech given by Tufyal Choudhury at the Foreign Policy Centre in London, 5 November 2002.

As a result, many other voices have similarly become much more prepared to attribute blame and condemn those involved in the disturbances without giving any due concern to other equally important and integral factors. Community cohesion it would seem, whilst being the official goal, merely reinforces the idea that those who participated in the disturbances are best left outside the newfound cohesive community of Bradford. ‘Community cohesion’ as a concept therefore appears to be able to equally promote and encourage ‘community exclusion’ as well, where the cohesion aspect must come from the pursuits and activities of the ‘outsider’ group (in this case the Asian Muslim communities) in trying to find some cohesion with the insider group. Expectation therefore is purely one way.

Community leaders who had for some time struggled with their own lack of influence in Bradford also found themselves increasingly prone to merely offer condemnation rather than solutions for their beleaguered communities. In fact the persistent failure of the leadership provided by local councillors and community leaders in Bradford was singled out in both the Ouseley and Denham reports as one of the most significant issues underlying some of these communities’ problems.²⁹ In a setting where local politics and community

²⁹ See 2.20–2.27 inclusive.

leadership have for far too long been overshadowed by clan and caste instincts that date back to a pre-migrant situation in the Indian sub-continent, and where sectarian influences could bring success or failure in equal amounts, setting out to build community cohesion from this perspective would always appear to be a near thankless task.

The issue of local political leadership is a very severe problem in Bradford and as those in central government appear to overlook the needs and injustices affecting those disenfranchised communities, so too do those elected at local level. For them, the issue of their ineffectiveness and inadequacy in supplying community guidance is one that even now is repeatedly overlooked by their respective endeavours to encourage exclusion and outmoded cultural practices, whilst equally suppressing justified criticism by deflecting attention and relevance to issues related to the Indian sub-continent. As Simon Hughes, of the Liberal Democrats observed on his visits to Bradford following the disturbances, the local political leadership not only saw fit to discourage women from their rally meetings but also preferred to discuss the emotive situation of Kashmir in preference to the situation of Bradford's convicted youth.³⁰ At all levels of political leadership, Bradford's communities have been persistently and repeatedly failing. It is no surprise therefore that within those communities that were identified as feeling excluded and disillusioned, a total lack of trust and respect for those in authority from their own communities has long since been by-passed.

³⁰ From a presentation by Liberal Democrat MP for Bermondsey, Simon Hughes at the launch of the Open Society Institute's "The situation of Muslims in the UK", London 5 November 2002.

Indeed the ethos of community cohesion was even further destroyed when the World Council of Hindus sought to publicly differentiate themselves from those Asian-Muslims involved, hoping to make clear that Hindus should not be tarnished by the continued usage of the unidimensional 'Asian' marker in both the official reports and the media to describe those who participated in the disturbances. It should also be noted at this time, that preceding the events in Bradford, some small Hindu and Sikh groups had also affiliated themselves with the BNP in order to denounce and denigrate Muslims in Britain.³¹ The historical and geographical proximities of these religions in the Indian sub-continent was used as justification for not only continuing hostilities towards Muslims here in the UK but also because they had a greater and historically longer knowledge and insight into the apparently 'true' nature of the Islamic faith. Whether the motives of the BNP can be trusted to substantiate this claim remains, at best, highly questionable.

³¹ See BNP website for details, www.bnp.org.uk although much of its anti-Muslim content was removed in the run up to the sitting of the House of Lords Select Committee on Religious Offences.

With regard to the BNP themselves, they too were able to use the Cantle report, its findings and the newfound culture of blaming the victims to reinforce and bolster their own claims about Asian-Muslims in Bradford, and Muslims much more generally elsewhere. Community cohesion and the apparent lack of inclusion of Asian-Muslims that it suggested, served to enhance the vitriolic, anti-Muslim message that they were persistently sending out. In one leaflet that was widely distributed in the Ravenscliffe Estate area of Bradford and was

also available via the group's website until very recently,⁵² the BNP used a quote from the Qur'an to justify its own particular interpretation of Bradford's disturbances:

The 'justification' for trapping people in burning buildings is found in S.22.22: "And every time they want to get out of it (the fire) they are brought back into it. And it is said to them: "Taste the agony of burning?" Here we see the source of the vicious mentality which, during this summer's anti-kafir⁵³ violence in Bradford, led rioting Muslims to block the fire doors of a local Labour Club with burning cars.⁵⁴

Despite this reference to Qur'anic sources being highly selective and used without contextual balance, the BNP have been able to successfully campaign on this type of limited and ignorant propaganda. With the institutional voices declaring that the victims themselves are to blame for what has happened, so the BNP and other groups have been able to profit on the institutional justification that they have been able to easily locate. Not only were the BNP able to denounce the Government for aspiring to such ideals as community cohesion and multicultural unity, but they were also able to campaign directly against Muslims who they blamed for making such policies impossible and unrealistic.

Similar ideas were also widely reported through the local press. Despite initially blaming outside influences, following the message emanating from Governmental sources and official reports, so the balance of blame and responsibility in the press also shifted in a similar direction. With the Cantle Report came ideas relating to isolationism, separatism and the inability of Islamic culture and Muslim communities to co-exist with Western and secular communities here in the UK, a message that has subsequently gained credence in the media, the far-right and most worrying, the Government.

And with this, the wider political domain became overshadowed and dominated by debates concerning restrictions on immigration including English-language tests, the role of citizenship, the need to speak English 'at home' and numerous other debates that blurred the distinction between Muslims, asylum seekers and immigrants. This was a pattern that was identifiable not only here in the UK but right across the spectrum of Europe as well,⁵⁵ with the already volatile situation facing Muslims in Europe following the events of September 11 the year beforehand, further inflammatory suggestions and demonisation has really made Muslim communities feel extremely vulnerable.

Despite all of this, very little conclusive evidence has been established to identify the catalytic causes, nor does there appear to be a need to from various different institutional bodies.

However, one factor that does remain – regardless of whether those sources

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ 'Kafir' is an Arabic term that refers to non-believers and is used in much the same way as the term 'Gentile' is used within the Jewish community to identify non-Jews.

⁵⁴ See BNP leaflet, *The truth about I.S.L.A.M: intolerance, slaughter, looting, arson and molestation.*

⁵⁵ *The EUMC report.*

acknowledge their respective influence in the ensuing disturbances – is the presence and knowledge that far-right groups and organisations, in particular the NF and the BNP, were present and politically active in Bradford prior to and indeed on the day of the outbreak of the disturbances. It is also without doubt, that the same organisations and groups were also present and active in Burnley and Oldham, as well as Leeds, Hanley and Stoke-on-Trent where much smaller scale disturbances also occurred. Only the Denham report makes the most fleeting of references to this activity and presence.³⁶

³⁶ *The Denham Report.*

It might therefore be fair to suggest that there was some collusion between different sectors in order that the ‘inherent causes’ as the right honourable David Blunkett so aptly termed them, were consistently and persistently overlooked. The evidence available is much more than mere speculation, and there remains a very real need for both this evidence and the repeated dismissals and rejections by all those in authority to be addressed. Unfortunately, this willingness to respond has not materialised through any source, whether institutionally derived or otherwise. A recent conversation with Ted Cante would suggest that even now he continues to dismiss the far-right BNP, NF and others as being of any significance to what happened in Bradford. As he quite clearly stated, “the far-right had no relevant impact on disturbances in Bradford”.³⁷ This opinion seemed even more remarkable when Cante admitted at the same time that he had just the night before watched a Channel 4 programme that quite clearly showed the BNP campaigning on the Ravenscliffe estate.³⁸ He insisted that despite this, their role should still be categorically dismissed.

³⁷ Conversation between Ted Cante, Mohammed Abdul Aziz, Shareefa Choudhury and the author at the Foreign Policy Centre, 5 November 2002.

³⁸ The programme in question was “Young, proud and Nazi”, broadcast by Channel 4 on 4 November 2002

This report would therefore suggest that integral factors in the disturbances that took place across the north of England during the spring and summer of 2001 was the significant campaigning and grassroots activity that the NF and BNP were participating in at that time. That this factor has been repeatedly overlooked and rejected without due regard or research, and the voices of dissent that have vociferously aired their concerns have been subsequently repudiated, highlights the blinkered attitude adopted by many of those apparently seeking to locate solutions in the aftermath of the disturbances. The attitudes and response so far towards the activities of the far-right, has been one of sheer repugnance and disrespect to the victims of their hateful campaigning.

The victims, whether of socio-economic deprivation, far-right racism and religionist attack, police irresponsibility, and/or institutional disregard, cannot be continually overlooked and cannot continue to be blamed for that which has been thrust upon them. Justice and fairness must be of paramount concern to all concerned.

This legacy of injustice and inaction by those in authority has been far too common a recurring feature of their lives. As David Ward, Liberal Democrat councillor in Bradford confirmed, with regard the institutional response to the

disturbances in Bradford, “I have read it all before...it’s more of the same”. Unfortunately, with regard injustice, those same communities were to experience ‘more of the same’ again.

BRADFORD VOICES: A MOTHER’S

“We want an inquiry to find out the cause of the riot because we do not want it ever to happen again. We want our children to have a future and learn from this horrible episode.”

[*Quote from the mother of a Bradford University student sentenced to four years imprisonment for throwing stones at police.*]

BURNLEY TASK FORCE REPORT

The disturbances in Burnley saw around 400 individuals taking to the streets between 23–25 June 2001. Violent clashes occurred between gangs of whites, Muslims and police. During this, some 83 members of the police suffered injuries along with 14 members of the public.

Led by Lord Tony Clarke, the Task Force report found that:

- Burnley clashes were ‘not race riots’.
- Civil disturbances were ‘not race riots’.
- A series of violent incidents were sparked by a war between Asian and white drug gangs.
- The clashes were deliberately exploited by organised white racists.
- ‘Grinding poverty’ further exacerbated the situation.
- Government must provide funding for regeneration tackling “the chronic problems associated with inner city deprivation”.
- Government must work with local police to tackle poor housing, unemployment, drug abuse and petty crime.
- Council must communicate effectively to white people its spending on projects for ethnic minorities.
- Greater integration of Asian people through community projects.

[*Adapted from the respective reports with further information taken from the Denham Report (2001) and BBC Online.]*

BURNLEY & OLDHAM: A COMPARATIVE SUMMARY OF THE RESPONSE REPORTS

Violence broke out in Oldham over three days in May 2001, where approximately 500 individuals were involved in running battles with the police. Two police officers were injured during the disturbances and three members of the general public. The cost of disturbances has been suggested to be around £1.4 million.

An independent review into the causes of the race riots was led by top civil servant David Ritchie. Its key findings included:

- Years of “deep-rooted” segregation between communities identified.
- Local authorities failed to address causes of racial division.
- Threat of “more serious” trouble in future unless action taken.
- People should see themselves as ‘Oldhamers’.
- Council should try to mix ethnic groups when letting properties.
- Mixed-race specialist schools should act as beacon schools.
- Faith schools should admit pupils of different faiths.
- Big public sector employers should have more representative workforces.
- Local health service needed improving.
- Police structure should be more community-focused.
- Religious leaders should speak to the town as a whole, not just their own faiths.

Oldham Independent Review

FAIR JUSTICE FOR ALL: THE GRASSROOTS CAMPAIGN

At the end of July 2001, West Yorkshire Police took the unusual step of releasing photographs of people wanted in connection with the Bradford disturbances, launching a poster campaign where police released 212 photographs on nine separate posters. These were put on display in police stations across the county as well as local mosques and schools, and on the police website,¹ Operation Wheel became Britain's largest criminal investigation whilst also being a showcase for Labour's law and order pledge – to be tough on crime.²

¹ West Yorkshire Police Fact Files, <http://www.westyorkshire.police.uk/Fact%20Files/bfdriots.htm>

² "Muslims got Cantle: what they needed was Scarman". *The Guardian*, 1 July 2002.

As a response to this, the Asian-Muslim community overwhelmingly supported the Police in identifying those wanted in connection with the disturbances. Families, in recognition of the crimes that had been done, handed over sons, brothers and husbands in order to begin the healing process that so needed to happen. As a result, a high percentage of those shown on the posters were voluntarily handed over to the Police or decided to do so themselves. The community reacted in this way as it wanted to ensure that relations within the city were not strained any further and that a co-operative reconciliation could be at least striven for.

Of the 270 arrested since the Bradford disturbances, over 90% are Asian-Muslims, and it was the Asian-Muslim community that did its utmost to ensure co-operation between themselves and the Police. Of this 270, the vast majority of these were not only community or self volunteered, but were also first-time offenders without any history of criminal activity. Many also supplied excellent character references from a range of different sources, including local councillors and others in authority.

But what was not made clear by the police were the specific charges with which the said offenders would be eventually charged. Of those that have so far been arrested, 145 have been charged with riot. Lawyers state that it is extremely rare for the Police to apply for a riot charge, preferring lesser charges under the 1986 Public Order Act. However, the maximum sentence for being convicted of riot charges is a ten-year prison sentence. Since it is necessary for the Police to obtain the prior consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions for each charge of riot, there are many who have suggested that the prosecutions have been politically driven, where Governmental involvement pre-meditatively dictated what charges should be meted out to those involved.³

³ *Ibid.*

Considering that such suggestions are being widely circulated, that the Asian-Muslim community in Bradford so readily co-operated in locating and naming the perpetrators, and that the ‘inherent causes’ of the events have never been taken into account, some in Bradford and elsewhere believe this to highlight the apparent contempt that those in power and authority appear to have for Bradford’s marginalised communities. Yet despite this, the community reaction to these events has been the catalyst for a peaceful community response.

The Fair Justice for All Campaign is a grassroots movement that is led by local Muslim women who have seen their lives shattered as a consequence of the severe sentencing that their husbands, brothers and sons have been subjected to. Launched on the first anniversary of the disturbances, the group had in excess of 300 in attendance at their inaugural meeting.

The campaign has had two significant strands: the first, to provide a support and welfare network for those who have been unfairly sentenced and their respective families, whilst the second, is to seek to legally challenge the sentencing and ask for a judicial review, whilst also having a public inquiry into the disturbances themselves including a comprehensive analysis of the role of the far-right.

As part of the support network that many of the Muslim women behind this campaign have established, the Campaign organise weekly protests outside Bradford Crown Court in order to peacefully highlight their dissatisfaction of the apparently disproportionate sentencing. This has recently been termed in the press, the ‘mother’s vigil’. Here, they are trying to illustrate through gentle tactics, their message that “the sentencing does not fit the crime”.⁴

4 Press release from the Fair Justice for All Campaign dated 6 September 2002.

Justice and fairness are the only consequences that are being sought. Sal Lal, one of the Muslim women activists in the campaign regularly asserts to those passers-by that ask what they are campaigning for, that there is no doubt that those individuals who are in court are indeed guilty and “definitely, they should be punished”. But as her friend Tracey Latif, another campaigner puts it, “it’s about the punishment fitting the crime, plain and simple”.

And this point has been continually reinforced. At a recent protest and rally outside the Home Office on the 17 September 2002, Arshad Javaid again reaffirmed the core thrust of the Campaign, “we want a review of those events and we want an element of proportionality in the sentencing”.

The honesty and sincerity of this aspect of the campaign has begun to attract support from a range of sources across the political spectrum and from many other non-affected organisations and individuals. One of the most damning for the authorities has been the recent outspokenness of Lord Ouseley. He has described the sentencing as “savage” and “unjust”:

In Bradford, otherwise law-abiding young people who voluntarily gave themselves up to the police are being handed down savagely harsh sentences. In some cases, murderers would get away with less...what these families are complaining about is fairness and consistency⁵

⁵ "Blunkett savages Bradford riot 'whiners'". *The Times*, 6 September 2002.

They rightly had to be dealt with, but on comparison with how people have been treated in similar or worse cases, it is undeniably unfair and possibly racist. All these young men have to come back into the community. To have criminalized first time offenders or people with only minor convictions previously, is going to be horrendous. There is a long process to go, resentment is building up.⁶

⁶ "Gentle fight to show unfairness of riot jailings". *The Guardian*, 31 August 2002.

Other figures have been equally supportive of the issues that are so clearly paramount to the healing process of Bradford.

Zaid Iqbal, a former Conservative candidate for Bradford North, believes that through the severity of the sentencing, Bradford is inflicting wounds upon itself again, "we made a bold move by coming out and condemning our own. But how have the courts repaid that bold move? How can it be fair that someone drawn into throwing one stone in a moment of frenzy goes to prison for more than four years?"⁷

⁷ "Asians decry 'stiff' jail terms". *The Guardian*, 27 August 2002.

Javaid Akhtar, who lost his Liberal Democrat seat on Leeds city council just last year is another figure that has come to empathise with the plight of the women on the campaign and indeed the injustice that the convicted are again suffering. One of his major concerns is, like Lord Ouseley, the long-term resentment towards the authorities that will stem from this tragic situation.

Support is also being voiced from other ethnic groups, one such group being Bradford's Polish community. At a recent rally meeting, Therese Muchewicz called for changes to the 1986 Public Order Act so that fairer sentences could be handed out depending upon the actual involvement of those concerned.

Despite the peaceful approach being taken by those active within the campaign and their wider supporters, the institutional response to this campaign has again been one of repugnance and disrespect. At a regional conference of the Federation of Small Businesses in Sheffield on the 5 September 2002, the Home Secretary David Blunkett described those who had been already imprisoned for their involvement in the disturbances as 'whining maniacs'.⁸ Again reiterating the recurrent feature of community sentencing rather than merely seeking justice where the punishment fits the crime, Blunkett said that the,

⁸ "Anger at Blunkett 'whining maniac' attack". *The Guardian*, 6 September 2002.

maniacs who were engaging in [the disturbances] are now whining about sentences they have been given...at last the courts are handing out sentences that are a genuine reprisal but also a message to the community.

With regards those who were campaigning entirely peacefully and within the legal bounds of British society, the Home Secretary went on to call them ‘bleeding heart liberals’. As he added,

For every sentence, for every tough new law, for every sensible measure, there’s some bleeding heart liberals who are there wanting to get them off, get them out and reduce their sentence.

The contempt shown by the Home Secretary is clearly evident, and his own views in this respect at least, are quite clearly expressed.

Whilst community cohesion would appear to be the goal that all in Government are apparently seeking to achieve in places such as Bradford and elsewhere, as Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the Muslim Council of Britain quite rightly observed, “We find the Home Secretary’s comments very unhelpful and can prejudice the appeal process. They have very negative effects on community cohesion”.⁹

At once, the Home Secretary seemingly dismissed both sides of the Fair Justice for All campaign: both the grassroots and legal campaigns. Despite this, both sides are continuing to press on for greater justice for those involved.

⁹ “Blunkett’s ‘whining maniacs’ remark condemned”. *The Muslim News*, 27 September 2002.

FAIR JUSTICE FOR ALL: THE LEGAL CAMPAIGN

BACKGROUND

Of course the other strand of the Campaign, which to a large extent has gained more publicity nationally, has been the legal challenge, lead by the solicitor, Imran Khan. Whilst wider publicity has to a greater degree been focused upon the words and actions of one or two figures, the Campaign has always stressed that each of the strands are complimentary and that each is as vitally important as the other.

Imran Khan has joined forces with a number of other leading human rights lawyers to support more than 25 appeals against sentencing that are currently waiting to be heard in the Court of Appeal.¹

¹ As of 4 December 2002.

Khan, who made his name in the Stephen Lawrence case and uncovered the depths of institutionalised racism in Britain, is also calling for a judicial inquiry into the disturbances in other Asian-Muslim districts in Oldham and Burnley as well. This, as both he and the Campaign leaders hope, would be able to scrutinise the role played in the disturbances by far-right and neo-Nazi groups in fuelling and fermenting race hatred.

Khan said: “This is seen purely as a law and order issue and it is not that simple. The Asian community has been criminalised with the paint of one brush. To add to that, since September 11 the community is looked upon with great suspicion. Their dignity and respect has been removed and they have been made a scapegoat.

There is concern about the excessiveness of the sentencing and no distinction has been made between the leaders and the followers.²

² <http://www.ummah-news.com/viewarticle.php?sid=3878>.

Khan’s involvement and his calls for a judicial inquiry has sent ripples of concern through establishment circles.

Nearly two hundred have so far faced charges, with 145 of these for riot. Yet despite having had no previous convictions, many did not receive any discount and have received sentences of up to five years for what amounts in some

cases, to stone throwing. In addition to this excessively harsh sentencing regime, many of those charged complained that they were also given poor legal advice prior to their trials and many gave up the right to appeal against the sentencing.

THE SENTENCES: AN OVERVIEW

Below is a list of some of the individuals and their respective sentences. This highlights some of the issues that the Campaign has set out to challenge:⁵

- Amjid Rashid, 22 received a sentence of eight and a half years for throwing a petrol bomb at police lines. This has been the longest sentence received by any of the convicted participants of the disturbances.
- Shazad Ashraf, a first time offender who handed himself in to the police and who was personally supported by Councillor Ian Greenwood, was imprisoned for five years for throwing “two missiles” and “waving your arms” to encourage others.
- Kamran Ali, 20, was sentenced to four and a half years for throwing “about ten missiles”.
- Asam Latif, a father of four was given a sentence of four years and nine months because he “sought to minimise his involvement” and was seen on the streets “throwing at least six stones”.
- Mohammed Manir, 21 years old, received four years and nine months in prison for “hurling two stones”.
- Ashraf Hussain was sentenced to four years following evidence of him throwing two or three stones. A psychologist confirmed that the 30 year old has psychological problems, an abnormally low intelligence and would “follow the crowd like a sheep”.
- Parvais Najeeb, who handed himself into police, was handed a four year sentence because he threw a missile “with considerable force”.
- Mohammed Shakel, 25 and father of a three month old child, was imprisoned for four years because he “threw several stones”.
- Musader Khan, a 21 year old student without previous convictions and who had eye witness accounts testifying that he protected a pregnant woman and a pet shop during the disturbances, still received a two year sentence for “hurling a piece of rubble”.
- Mohammed Rashid was sentenced to five and half years in jail for holding a firework at waist height “like a gun” and throwing “three missiles”.

⁵ This information and the various quotations are taken from numerous articles that have appeared over the past year in the *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*. Their sources are too numerous to list here.

- Faisal Ishafaq, 19, who was seen “among people throwing missiles” received a sentence of two years.
- Mohammed Akram threw numerous missiles and was filmed in a crowd advancing on police. The 23 year old was sentenced to five years.
- Mohammed Arif, aged 26 with no previous convictions, was sentenced to five years and three months for throwing bricks after allegedly being kicked in the groin by a police officer.
- Shahanwaz Khan received a sentence of five years as he was filmed “throwing nine missiles” at police. He is 21 years old and a first time offender.
- Jamil Qurban, 21, who brandished a strip light and threw four stones not directly at police was sentenced to four and a half years imprisonment.
- Mohammed Ali Zaman was sentenced to two and a half years for throwing two or three stones, despite the 26 year old being filmed trying to usher youngsters off the street and protect cars at a garage that was being attacked.
- Asam Latif, a 33 year old father of four, was sentenced to four years and nine months imprisonment for throwing six stones at police.
- Mohammed Shakeel Farraz threw a single rock at police and was sentenced to three years and four months in jail. He gave himself up to police and was a first time offender. He is 21.
- Alam Zeb Khan, 27, was described by police as being a ringleader. This was the only apparent evidence against him as there was no video footage of him throwing stones. He received a sentence of three years for riot. Alam is also deaf.
- Rashid Hussain, aged 20 and a former police officer’s son, received a sentence of four and a half years in a young offenders prison for hurling eleven missiles at police.

Of those already sentenced, 38 have so far been refused individual leave to appeal.⁴ However, at a recent rejected appeal case – Shazad Ali, 3 October 2002 – Mr Justice Wright indicated to Khan and the rest of the legal team working on the appeals that it might be more beneficial for them to present to the Court of Appeal a highly unusual block of appeal applications.

⁴ Shazad Ali was the 38th individual to be refused leave to appeal on the 3 October 2002.

BRADFORD, BERMONDSEY, BELFAST: IDENTIFYING THE DISPARITY

One of the major obstacles that have hampered the appeals process has been the fact that the sentences handed out to those involved in the disturbances have been wholly consistent. As such, appeals against an individual sentence on a case by case basis have been extremely difficult to challenge, as the rest of the defendants have been subjected to the same levels of sentencing. However, the basis for this new possibility is that as a block of appeals, there may be some disparity between the sentences of those involved in the Bradford disturbances and those from elsewhere.

The IRR agree with this point and have published some of their findings as a result. From the analysis of 58 similar situations, the IRR state that:

cases reveal a huge discrepancy in the sentences imposed against the Manningham rioters, most of whom are of Pakistani descent, and the sentences which have been brought in other cases of civil disturbance in the UK, such as the recent riots in Belfast. The sentences are also out of proportion to those imposed in the cases resulting from the disturbances which took place one day after the Manningham riot, at the mainly white Ravenscliffe estate, Bradford. For this reason, the IRR is concerned that the sentencing policy is meant to discipline an entire community, rather than reflect the severity of each individual's actions.⁵

And some disparity does definitely occur within this context. Of those sentenced so far for their involvement in the disturbances on the Ravenscliffe estate – unlike their Manningham counterparts – the charge has not been riot. Instead, these individuals have been charged with violent disorder, a much less serious offence which attracts a lesser sentence. As Imran Khan asks, “Why the difference? Why the disparity?”⁶

Whilst the scale and damage of the events on the Ravenscliffe Estate – which has also been a central location for the BNP's Bradford based campaigning – were on a much smaller scale, the events and actions of those involved would appear to be remarkably similar. As was reported immediately after the disturbances, the BBC noted that “youths pelted stones and rocks at [police] officers, and a car was set on fire and a wall demolished”.⁷ An estimated 60 people took part in the disturbances.

Whilst those involved in the Manningham disturbances of Asian-Muslim descent have received average sentences of four and a half years, at Ravenscliffe, those convicted of their involvement in the disturbances have been sentenced to an average sentence of not more than two years.⁸ However, it is difficult to directly compare the sentencing between Manningham and the

⁵ IRR statement, reproduced by the Tyne and Wear Anti-fascist Association, <http://www.twafa.org.uk/news/index.html?id=000145>

⁶ Quote from the Fair Justice for All Campaign rally, London on the 17 September 2002.

⁷ “Further trouble in Bradford”. BBC Online, 10 July 2001.

⁸ “Gentle fight to show unfairness of riot jailings”. *The Guardian*, 51 August 2002.

Ravenscliffe estate due to the charges being for riot and violent disorder respectively. The question therefore – ‘why the disparity?’ – must be asked again. At the same time, one might also ask on which basis and by whom such decisions to charge and prosecute were made.

In fact, these questions are pertinent when posited against other similar circumstances and those that were involved in them. One example are the riots that followed a Millwall Football Club home match in May this year. Following the English First Division Play-off semi-final between Millwall Football Club and Birmingham City Football Club on the evening of 2 May 2002, fighting erupted in the Ilderton Road area of Bermondsey, South London.

In excess of 900 football hooligans participated in confrontation with the police for over four hours, where 127 police officers and 16 police horses were injured. The aftermath, Operation Zampa, has required in excess of 2,000 police hours just to trawl CCTV footage. It was the worst ever riot seen at a football match in the UK.⁹

9 The data relating to the analysis of the disturbances and subsequent sentencing in Millwall was collated from the following sources:

<http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/2005058.stm>

<http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/england/1966826.stm>

<http://www.news.bbc.co.uk/1/low/england/2060777.stm>

<http://www.thisislondon.co.uk/html/news.html>

http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,5064,791902,00.html

<http://www.met.police.uk/appeals/millwall/millwall-june2002.htm>

Sergeant Russell Kamb of the Metropolitan Police described the situation as, “one of the most frightening situations I have ever been in...it was the ferocity of the assault and the level and amount of ammunition they were using...every single car had a brick on the back seat, concrete had been thrown through wind screens and sun roof”.

Detective Chief Inspector Peter Newman confirmed that the violence was premeditated, “most of them call themselves football fans but not all of them had tickets for the game that night...we have evidence that weapons such as flares and bottles were stored nearby, those who hadn’t come prepared started picking up anything around them – paving slabs, bricks, anything – they even ripped apart a children’s playground in an effort to arm themselves”

As with those who were convicted for their involvement in the Bradford disturbances, all of the following individuals were charged with riot by the Metropolitan Police. Most however only pleaded guilty to violent disorder following legal advice.

The first man to be sentenced was Ian Harman, aged 38. He was jailed for two years and banned from football matches both here and abroad for ten years following his involvement in the disturbances.

Ian Stone, who was seen throwing rocks at Police, was sentenced to two years in jail in spite of the fact that he had a previous conviction of possessing an offensive weapon as well as other various public order offences. The 24 year old was described as being “contorted with rage”.

25 year old John Manzaroli who also had a number of previous football related convictions, was similarly jailed for two years.

A two year sentence at a young offenders institute, one of which was suspended, was the sentence for 20 year old Paul Healy, even though, like many convicted in Manningham, he hurled missiles at police.

The sentencing here reflects a major driving force underlying the Fair Justice for All Campaign. The underlying injustice of sentences that do not fit the crime, even without such comparisons to Ravenscliffe, Bermondsey and elsewhere, would mean that the sentences being distributed in Bradford are considerably disproportionate. The evidence to suggest this is therefore quite apparent, with the comparisons being highlighted here merely seeking to reinforce and substantiate comparatively.

Another perspective highlights that whilst the charges at Millwall and Manningham were the same, the sentences were considerably shorter as the final sentence was based upon the guilty plea of those convicted. Following legal advice, it would appear that those at Millwall were informed to plead guilty of violent disorder whereas in Manningham, they were advised to plead guilty to riot. The suggestion that poor legal advice therefore was another contributory factor in the excessive sentencing handed out to those convicted in Manningham would seem to warrant further consideration.

Indeed one other factor that is also quite apparent that is worth investigating with regards the smaller sentences and charges being handed out following Millwall is the fact that whilst those in Manningham were of Asian-Muslim descent, like those in Ravenscliffe, those convicted at Millwall were all primarily white.

The situation in Northern Ireland, whilst uniquely problematic with regards its history, the ongoing tensions and the regular incidence of sectarian violence, is another situation where the police, judiciary and Government would all appear to have a completely different response and approach than they have with regards Bradford. Whilst Northern Ireland has different legislation to England and Wales, for comparative purposes, an overview of the situation there is extremely useful.

For example, at 3:00am on Saturday 29 June this year, two police officers were injured when a crowd of 150 people attacked police in East Belfast. The BBC reported that police were attacked with, “blast bombs, petrol bombs, stones and bricks”.¹⁰ In addition, two houses were damaged by fire after being hit by some of the petrol bombs. This is just one example from many.

¹⁰ “Fresh violence hits east Belfast”. BBC Online, 29 June 2002.

In fact a report by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) has shown that during the year to the end of March 2002, 17 people have died as a result of civil disorder.¹¹ Whilst the situation and context may be different, the seriousness and repetition of disorder in Belfast is much more apparent. Yet despite this, it would seem that no arrests were made following this disturbance in East Belfast and by deduction, no sentences were handed out.

¹¹ See Police Service of Northern Ireland website for additional information at, <http://www.psni.police.uk>

In fact the situation in Northern Ireland is much worse, and on a much more regular basis than anything that has been witnessed in Bradford. At the start of June this year, East Belfast was again the scene for four consecutive nights of rioting. Four people including a police officer were shot; 19 other officers were also injured. Over 1,000 people were on the streets participating in the riots.¹² Yet again, the lack of arrests and charges being made against those involved in the riots is conspicuous by their absence from the relevant coverage.

¹² “Reid in bid to halt Belfast rioting”. BBC Online, 5 June 2002.

However, the situation in Belfast and the rest of Northern Ireland is quite unique and different factors may impinge upon and indeed deflect from the case against disproportionate sentencing between there and Bradford. The disproportionate number of riot charges could be in part at least, due to the failures of the police to identify those involved, the ability of those involved to hide their identity and more importantly, the role of the communities themselves in protecting the identities of those involved, something which is distinctly different to the situation in Bradford. Despite this, the two locations offer an interesting if not entirely equalised comparison.

In fact the two cities have some aspects that are remarkably similar. Each has deeply entrenched social divisions within them, where communities largely live, work and socialise separately along lines of religious differentiation, and where disturbances have been a recurrent feature of both, albeit Bradford being much less significant and regular than it is in Belfast. But whilst this is the case, the reaction and treatment being dealt out by the Police, judiciary and Government remain poles apart.

In Northern Ireland, PSNI statistics highlight how little emphasis is placed upon bringing those to trial for their involvement in similar actions that those from Bradford have been so severely sentenced for. For example, whilst the police recorded 216 petrol bomb attacks in the province, only 11 charges were made (5.1%). Similarly, of offences against the public order, only 54 cases were cleared despite a total of 634 being recorded (8.5%).¹³ The magnitude of the recorded problem in Belfast, and indeed the small numbers of cases that are eventually cleared highlights the gulf between the two that clearly exists.

¹³ PSNI (2002), *Recorded crime 2002*. Belfast: PSNI.

But underlying all of this data is the reality that whilst throwing a stone in Bradford has resulted in first time offenders being charged with riot and sentenced to imprisonment for up to five years, in Belfast the reality is quite different. Indeed in Belfast, in some scenarios, it has been readily apparent that some participants are able to walk free from much more serious crimes. As Faisal Bodi noted, “according to staff at the *Belfast Telegraph*, ‘if the judge was making an example of you, you’d probably get 30 days for throwing a petrol bomb’”.¹⁴

¹⁴ “Muslims got Cattle. What they needed was Scarman”. *The Guardian*, 1 July 2002.

The extraordinary suggestion by Mr Justice Wright has therefore handed the Campaign a new lifeline. By bringing a group of cases before a full Court of

Appeal hearing, the general level of sentencing rather than individual sentencing can be duly considered, and some – if not all– of the above issues can begin to be considered within a hopefully fair and non-politically motivated judicial setting.

What must be the issue though is that irrespective of whether the location is Bradford, Bermondsey or Belfast, the policing, legal advice, sentencing and political input must be exactly the same. One community cannot be set above all others in being afforded excessive and particularly harsh treatment: one community cannot be made to pay and be accountable for the groundswell of popular hostility that has evolved since September 11 where Muslims and their problems, both here and abroad, are treated as issues of criminality and law and order. Irrespective of religion, race, ethnicity or any other marker of differentiation, genuine fairness and justice must prevail.

Whilst Imran Khan has described the sentencing in Bradford as being perceived as “the biggest act of single discrimination” in the UK, he has also added that the situation appears to be based not upon justice and fairness, but upon something “much more politically insidious”. His words would seem to have some justification.

COMMUNITY SENTENCING

Many from the Muslim communities in Britain have been suggesting that since 11 September 2001, all matters connected either directly or indirectly to Muslims has evolved into a situation where the authorities respond by defining any issue connected to Muslims as being a criminal, 'law and order' problem. This is a view that is being widely suggested with regards the situation in Bradford, where the prosecutions are merely demonstrating the Government's apparent overriding policy to deal with the Muslim community solely in such terms. Such an observation would appear to reinforce the existence of the blame culture that the institutional response to the disturbances has quite clearly established, and which was identified from the very outset of the disturbances by those such as the Home Secretary, the Prime Minister and the judiciary itself.

BRADFORD VOICES: A MOTHER'S

"...my son was a very good and hard working lad...he has been married for two to three years and has a ten month old boy. His baby boy was only 4 months when he went into prison..."

...I feel that I am being sentenced not just my son...I am so devastated that my son has been sentenced to four and a half years in prison. I am shocked that I am still having difficulties coming to terms with this tragedy. I cannot stop crying, I also suffer from high blood pressure which does not make it easy for me. I cannot be asked to be with anyone any more. I am

still in shock, I doubt whether I will ever get over it till my son comes back...

...I myself feel upset and find it very difficult to come to terms with what happened. I go to see [him] every two weeks. I travel all the way to Hull Prison where my son is. Every time I come back from seeing him I never sleep and I think of him all night and when I say goodbye, it breaks my heart."

[*A transcript of an interview with the mother of one of those convicted for their involvement in the Bradford disturbances. June 2002*]

"COMMON PURPOSE"

At the centre of this policy of sentencing, is Judge Stephen Gullick. Gullick was called to the Bar by Gray's Inn initially in 1971 before sitting as Assistant Recorder in 1986, Recorder in 1990 and Circuit Judge in 1998. He then went on to become Senior Resident Circuit Judge for Bradford in July 2001.¹

However, Gullick has quickly established his notoriety with the severity of his indiscriminate sentencing of those convicted of involvement in the Bradford disturbances.

¹ "City honour for riot judge". *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*, 11 April 2002.

And like the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, Bradford's leading judge also feels that the 'inherent causes' of the disturbances are insignificant. Whilst Blunkett's motivations and comments have been documented nationally, Gullick's have benefited from only being reported on a much more localised scale.

At the sentencing of the first defendant to be convicted for his part in the disturbances, he stated, "I trust [this] will deter others from engaging in this type of behaviour in the future". His attitude, like so many before him, is one that ultimately focuses upon apportioning blame rather than ensuring fair justice prevails. So whilst Blunkett used the phrase 'inherent causes', Gullick has preferred to state that his intentions are "not concerned with [the disturbances'] origins".²

From the onset of sentencing in Bradford therefore, there seemed to be another clear lack of justice emerging. The somewhat over zealous and questionable approach to dealing with those convicted, also seems to have an underlying thematic strand that might hint that collusion between the government, police and judiciary has culminated in a situation that can be interpreted as 'keeping Muslims in their place'.³ With so many institutionalised obstructions and such a 'closed-shop' attitude amongst the varied and concerned establishmentarian authorities, many are left asking how institutionalised racism and/or Islamophobia on this scale can ever be challenged.

In fact Judge Gullick was rewarded by the establishment in Bradford for his efforts to heavily and disproportionately sentence many of Bradford's youth. As the Lord Mayor, Councillor Richard Wightman awarded Gullick one of the highest honours the City can bestow, that of Honorary Recorder, the award began to recognise the new 'official' link between local authority and the judiciary. Institutional endorsement of the highest order would appear to be the sole motivation for awarding such a honour on a figure that was so publicly outspoken about his willingness to mete out community punishment.

That the 'inherent causes' or the 'origins' of the actions have never been taken into account, and that the judiciary continue to flout all concern for them, highlights the seemingly utter disregard that many in power and authority appear to attribute towards the Asian-Muslim communities in Bradford. It is this disregard for justice that has been the catalyst for action, and subsequently the ongoing need for more action to be taken.

One seriously concerning aspect of Gullick's sentencing has been his continued reference to a point that he clearly and categorically made at the sentencing of the first to be convicted, a 19 year old first time offender named Shazad Ashraf. During his trial, Gullick said that:

I must have regard to the total picture as it has been presented to me...however, it must be made crystal clear to everyone that on

² "What a judge told Bradford rioter". *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*, http://www.thisisbradford.co.uk/bradford__district/bradford/riot/judge1.html

³ ALLEN, C. (2002) "Righting Bradford's wrongs". *Q News*, August 2002.

such tumultuous and riotous occasions, each individual that takes an active part by deed or by encouragement, is guilty of an extremely grave offence...it must be made equally clear, both to those who are apprehended and to those who might be tempted to behave in this way in the future...it is a message which I trust will deter others from engaging in this type of behaviour in the future...⁴

⁴ "What a judge told Bradford rioter". *Bradford Telegraph & Argus*.

As it is inherently clear, Gullick used the sentencing of Ashraf as a means to make his intentions known, setting out to deter others from considering or participating in similar disturbances in the future. It would suggest, from Gullick's words alone, that a sense of pre-meditative communal sentencing framework had been established where the recurrent idea of 'teaching them a lesson' was quite openly and recognisably present.

Indeed Gullick would appear to have reinforced such suspicions even more so with his comments at another trial when he noted that those convicted of involvement were being sentenced for their own actions as well as those around them, most prominently highlighted by the phrases "common purpose" and "taken together".⁵ Whilst he may have said at the same trial that:

⁵ <http://www.ummah-news.com/viewarticle.php?sid=3878>

the colour, creed, ethnic origin or religion of the individual defendant is of no consequence whatsoever. Sentences have been and will be passed in respect of any offence a defendant admits or is convicted of by a jury regardless of the racial origin of the defendant.

His actions have been suitably consistent, draconian and harsh towards those Asian-Muslims that understanding the sentencing programme in terms of punishing the community through the pursuits of named individuals really would appear to have some credence. As he confirmed at the trials of Saghir Younas and Shazad Ali, "that charge [of community responsibility] I have sought to stress every time that I have passed sentence...includes not only the actions of the individual defendants such as yourselves, but also the unlawful conduct of all those around you as well".⁶

⁶ From a transcript supplied via e-mail from the Fair Justice for All Campaign dated 8 July 2002.

SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM?

Whilst the sentiment therefore is quite clear, the decision to imprison a large number of individuals from one community, particularly those who are young and first time offenders, could have a significant and quite detrimental impact on Bradford's future. The process of sentencing the community therefore could have much more damaging long-term ramifications than might at first be envisaged. As Yousif Al-Khoei of the Al-Khoei Foundation put it, the imprisonment of such youngsters could be their first step on "the spiral of descent" into further criminality.⁷

⁷ Personal interview

In fact Home Office statistics would appear to offer some justification for this particular viewpoint. Whilst many of those convicted were first-time offenders, irrespective of their pre-prison convictions, 54% of imprisoned adult males will reoffend within two years of their subsequent release. This figure increases even more dramatically with regards young males, where the likelihood is that up to 76% will reoffend within the same period.⁸ If the perspective is increased slightly to incorporate the likelihood of reoffending within three, four or five years, then the probability, one must assume, would increase even more sharply. In recognition of this, the Government has recently announced a scheme to combat reoffending in the region of £230 million.⁹ For such a previously decriminalised group of individuals, the prospect of further criminal activity must be one that needs serious attention.

⁸ HOME OFFICE (2000) *The prison population in 2000: a statistical review*, RDS 154. London: Home Office.

⁹ "Blair plans more jails as England tops crime league". *Daily Telegraph*, 25 February 2001.

Whilst the judiciary, police and government have apparently decided to press ahead by dealing with the Asian-Muslim community and the disturbances as a purely law and order situation, the policies adopted by establishmentarians may unfortunately have also further criminalised that same community. Rather than taking steps to de-criminalise those individuals that felt inclined to respond, the situation could have been made increasingly worse by a further series of ill-informed and draconian responses.

The evidence to suggest that community sentencing, and by consequence, community criminalisation is most definitely apparent. What makes such evidence so damning though is that any form of community demonisation must hinder the attempts to strive for community cohesion. Action taken or directed towards an entire community can only hinder rather help bridge that gulf between communities divided on far too many different lines of segregation. Community reconciliation must incorporate justice, fairness and equality: demonisation and victimisation cannot be incorporated within any understanding of community cohesion whatsoever.

But whilst this would appear to be a reality, it must also be recognised that the harshness of the sentencing has and will continue to affect people at levels below community and societal levels as well. The effects and consequences will affect many families detrimentally for the foreseeable future. At the heart of this appalling situation, the greatest injustice has been the seemingly inappropriate and deliberately severe sentencing regime that has targeted and punished mothers, sisters, wives, sons and daughters that played no involvement in the disturbances of July last year. This is one of the most distressing consequences of such community directed actions.

PREMEDITATIVE POLITICAL MOTIVATION

What remains unclear however, is the extent to which the harshness of the sentencing has been politically motivated; whether any political involvement has been direct from local or indeed governmental level; whether there has

been any collusion between say the Home Office, the police and the judiciary; and if any of the above suggestions are indeed accurate, then for what purpose these decisions were made. One final and wholly relevant point is to ask to what extent the sentencing was pre-determined.

Only Margaret Eaton, a senior member of Bradford council has explicitly suggested that such collusion has been apparent and that the ensuing consequences have been politically driven. As she stated, “they [the sentences] were passed by the judiciary because the Prime Minister and Home Secretary David Blunkett had set a clear framework for sentencing”.¹⁰

¹⁰ “Outrage at this judge’s sentences”. *Socialist Worker*, <http://www.socialist-worker.co.uk/1808/sw180806.htm>

Whilst numerous reports and commentators have offered their opinions and recommendations for the communities in Bradford, the questions and indeed gaps in the understanding of these situations has been consistently overlooked or avoided. However, if as Margaret Eaton has suggested, and indeed anecdotal evidence would appear to reinforce this, it would be further evidence to suggest the belief by many that it is the Government’s intention to deal with Muslims as criminal entities rather than civil or socio-economic ones.

In fact, since 11 September 2001, Islamophobia, explicit anti-Muslim rhetoric, profiling and targeting of Muslims or perceived Muslims, and widespread suspicion are all becoming increasingly acceptable within many sectors of the public domain.

BRADFORD VOICES: A MOTHER’S

“...when the rioting was happening, I didn’t know he had gone down town that day where the trouble was happening, till later when I happened to be at his house where he told his family and I of his actions...I wasn’t happy with what he told us...

...I told him that he will have to pay for his actions, and when I came back from abroad and found that his pictures were in the papers, I spoke to him and he said that he handed himself in to the police straight away...

...obviously I was angry and upset with him because I expected more from him as my eldest child...I brought them up with respect...

...that night [before his court appearance and sentencing] after returning home I was really upset and had an anxiety attack because thoughts of him

going into prison had really upset me and I could no longer handle my emotions...when I heard that he got four and a half years I was devastated, I couldn’t understand why such a lengthy sentence was given to him for only throwing two stones...

...I am not proud for what he did and I know I can’t do anything about the sentence. I will not see my son for a long time and any thing can happen in the years to come to me and the family and my son. Throwing two stones has changed our lives. It may seem that everything is OK and that he’s all right inside prison but I know he’s not, not being able to cope, he’s putting on a brave face, he’s my son and you know what is best for him.

He doesn’t deserve this long punishment definitely for throwing two stones”

[*A transcript of an interview with the mother of one of those convicted for their involvement in the Bradford disturbances. June 2002*]

Until such time therefore that speculation, assumptions and sometimes hard evidence is allayed, the fear of political involvement and community punishment will continue to circulate. It is therefore suggested that a clear and unequivocal statement denouncing such claims are made by the Home Secretary, the judiciary in Bradford, some quarters of the legal profession and finally West Yorkshire Police.

Harsh sentencing cannot be used as a blanket that covers the necessary and quite rightful calls that are being made to comprehensively address the underlying root causes of these disturbances. What community sentencing has achieved is to alienate those very same communities that assisted and co-operated with the authorities in order to bring those family members and friends to trial. What is left is another series of injustices where honesty and co-operation has been repaid with the consequences of deceit and mistrust.

HEALING THE WOUNDS

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the disturbances and the direct consequences of a harsh regime of sentencing those involved, despite the spotlight of officialdom being once again focused upon Bradford, it is a real possibility that the situation for those at grassroots, whether politically, socially and/or economically, may continue to deteriorate. From a situation that has been severely lacking, the fracturing of society, community and family could become even more widespread.

The cause of this ongoing process of fracturisation – along the lines of racial, ethnic and religious differentiation – has been due to a lack of understanding in addressing the core, underlying factors that initiated the tensions that culminated in the disturbances, including a lack of commitment, trust and foresight by the leaders at all levels, albeit locally or nationally.

This process has brought about a series of perceived injustices that have continued to wound those communities that have existed in social deprivation, exclusion and socio-economic hardship. It is the healing process for Bradford that FAIR is keen to help initiate and indeed continue to participate in, in order to begin to mend the relationships between all of Bradford's communities.

With regards the immediate situation, one must recognise the needs and concerns of those 250 or so young men that remain at the centre of this situation. The profound impact that this series of events has had upon them could in future years have serious ramifications for all of Bradford, irrespective of the lines upon which one might ultimately identify and define them. So pertinent is the issue, that the subsequent treatment of these individuals will also impact upon the wider society across the breadth of Britain as well.

It is important therefore that support is given to the legal campaign that the Fair Justice for All Campaign has already launched, and support the rightful legal challenges that Imran Khan and his legal experts are continuing to pursue. The developments made regarding the block of appeal applications that Mr Justice Wright has indicated is welcomed and wholeheartedly supported in the hope that fairness and justice may prevail. The ferocity and levels of the sentencing most definitely causes concern, and quite rightly these sentences must be challenged within those legal frameworks that have for so long

ensured that justice and equity is a right for all of the citizens of the United Kingdom.

It is also essential that adequate recognition is given to the current and ongoing needs of those that are already imprisoned. The continuing welfare of these individuals is imperative and FAIR recognise the need for the Fair Justice for All Campaign to continue the important role of providing a support network for them and their respective families. The support that these grassroots campaigners, in particular those that are the young and female of Bradford, will be the building blocks upon which the healing process will begin to be established. This aspect of community cohesion, one that emanates from traditional values within society of support and assistance, will be vital in ensuring the cohesion of all of Bradford's communities in the future.

However, within the Asian-Muslim community itself in Bradford, questions must be asked why such disillusionment has been so apparent in the leadership that the community has offered to its younger members. A lack of trust has evolved and this is an issue that must be addressed from within those quarters where mistrust and a severe lack of confidence exist. For those individuals that have spent time in prison, the leadership will have to be stronger and more dynamic in order to ensure that unlike the trends apparent within national statistics, these previously first-time offenders are not drawn into a spiral of crime. Such leadership can evolve from various sources, including mosques, cultural and community centres, councillors and other politically active individuals and groups, as well as those that are and could be seen to be role models for the community. Indeed those individuals that are running the Fair Justice for All Campaign with such dignity and sincerity would make excellent role models for others to emulate in order to provide balanced and respectful leadership.

The processes of regeneration and reconciliation that will be desperately needed in this already ravaged city must therefore be supported and endorsed by all both within and without Bradford. FAIR offer their assistance, both wholeheartedly and unreservedly, in whatever way they can possibly can and call upon others to do the same. It is our objective to ensure that all sides participate in this process because only then will the healing process begin to become a reality to the many in Bradford that have suffered far too much in recent years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The need for an independent enquiry to be undertaken with regards the disturbances in Bradford must be fully acknowledged by all concerned. Only through such an enquiry can the underlying causes and factors be discussed and engaged with. The evidence that has been accessed would suggest that many issues that have not been of primary importance in the

various official reports into the disturbances need to be carefully reconsidered. It is not our intention to pass the blame or make accusatory judgments. On the contrary, FAIR wish to work for a fair, multi-cultural and multi-religious society, whether that be in Bradford or indeed elsewhere. However, it is imperative that such actions are taken. Not only will this send a resounding message to those Asian-Muslim communities in Bradford, but it will also acknowledge the sentiment that is being expressed about this situation in the wider Muslims communities across the UK. It will also send out a clear message to everyone in Britain that a fair and just society is a real possibility everywhere. The need for trust in Bradford for a better, cohesive future is imperative. Such an enquiry would go some way in restoring the lack of trust that understandably exists right now.

2. It is also recommended that any enquiry into the disturbances should address the role of the criminal justice system and the responsibility that its participation has had upon the whole issue of sentencing. The severe and unjust sentencing imposed in Bradford will have a deep and profound long term effect on the community as a whole, which in turn will bring about further problems for future generations, the authorities and indeed, the criminal justice system itself. As a result, the enquiry should ask questions not only about the apparent underlying causes of the disturbances, but also about the handling of the situation by all those in authority. This would again be a clear message to all those seeking a fair and just society.
3. The comments made by some in positions of power have not aided the situation in Bradford, or assisted the healing and reconciliation attempts that have so far been made. Inflammatory and highly controversial comments and statements, made primarily against those protesting peacefully, cannot be condoned no matter what position of authority that individual or group holds. It is on this basis that FAIR call upon all concerned individuals and groups at all levels – grassroots, media, political or other – to be responsible and mature in their rhetoric and condemnation and to restrain themselves from instances of name-calling, accusation and anything else that could once again inflame social tensions.
4. It is recommended that all concerned parties irrespective of their particular concerns, unite against the rising spectre of fascism that continues to raise its ugly head not only here in the UK in places such as Bradford, Oldham, Burnley and Blackburn to name but a few, but also across the whole of Europe. Unless the full role of the BNP, NF and other smaller far-right groups is investigated and countered, such groups will remain unchecked to target and persecute minority communities – in the contemporary climate this has been overwhelmingly Muslim – and bring about further social unrest and division. If community cohesion is a real and distinct goal for those in authority in this country, FAIR call upon all concerned to unite against this very real danger and work towards a British society where the extremist

views of neo-Nazism is no longer embraced by disaffected communities and where such groups find no more voices or platforms within the legitimate political processes of a multi-cultural, multi-racial and multi-religious country.

5. It is vitally important that the relevant agencies begin planning now for the time when a large number of individuals will be released from prison. As such, it is vital that a comprehensive programme is established that will ensure that issues of employability, training and self-esteem are all properly dealt with. One such consequence of this might be to reinstate some of the mistrust that these individuals may well have towards various institutions. FAIR therefore calls upon the probation service, the police, local industry, training agencies, academic institutions, Bradford Council and the Government to work together in order to ensure that steps are put in place now. The regeneration of Bradford as an area must be seen to include those individuals that have been imprisoned because of their actions as well.
6. Similarly, many of the recommendations made by Lord Ouseley need to be comprehensively addressed and tackled if the wounds of Bradford are ever to heal. The inherent Islamophobia that exists in some schools, the virtual apartheid in others must be seriously combated. The value and worth of all, in particular the young of Asian-Muslim descent must be incorporated and included in society. Education can begin to tackle this, and with the necessary investment, and internal criticism, cultural and religious divides can all be tackled and overcome. FAIR welcome many of the recommendations made by Lord Ouseley and call for their implementation as soon as possible.

FAIR call upon all to work towards reconciliation and community cohesion.

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