

National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns

ANNUAL REPORT 2000/2001

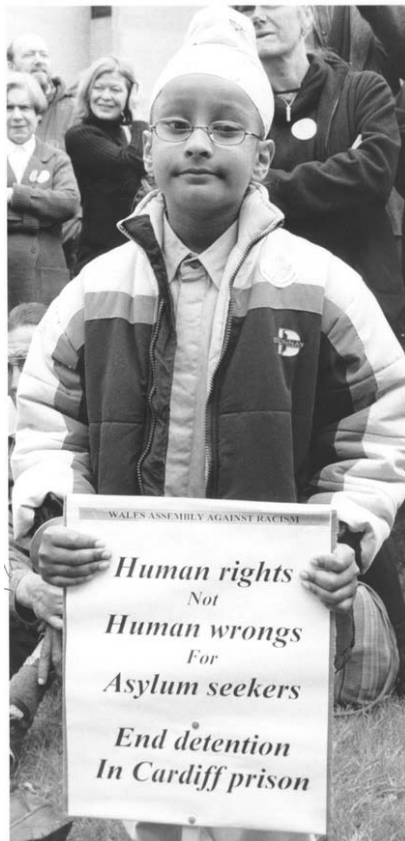
Chair's Annual Report 2000 / 2001

Introduction

Since the last AGM in June 2000, we in the National Coalition have continued to uphold our mission to bring families together and fight with them the threat of deportation. We continue to expose Britain's divisive and racist immigration and asylum laws and their effects on deportees and asylum seekers. We are to the fore in demanding the scrapping of the voucher system altogether and the current practice of dispersal of asylum seekers. We deeply regret that the New Labour government has taken on the Tory mantle (only in fear of the Tories) in its promise to tighten asylum procedures and promises more draconian measures as a qualification for a second term in office. We hold the view that the operation of a hit-list for denial of asylum is not in the spirit of the 1951 Convention, which the outgoing Home Secretary has threatened to re-write. The proposal to use leased planes solely for deportation of overstayers constitutes a misplacement of priorities in the use of tax payers money. The streets search in certain cities by immigration officials in expectation that overstayers will turn themselves in for deportation is an abuse of the intelligence of those concerned and neighbours who have formed living bonds with them.

The last year has witnessed many backward events: asylum seekers were accounted for like sheep for the slaughter, persecuted and despised, beaten and imprisoned. Some have died - either at the hands of racist murderers, from the neglect of profiteering traffickers or from the misery of neglect, abuse, uncertainty and incarceration inflicted on them by the authorities. This treatment of those who are different is not new - but it has reached a new intensity in recent years. It was also the treatment that Oliver Cromwell's government meted out to far-sighted British citizens on account of their unique practices as far back as 1659. The same group - known as Quakers - was in the vanguard of humans who provided the insight that eventually surfaced in the abolition of the infamous slave trade.

Britain in 2001 announced an Orwellian dimension to its immigration policy by which skilled migrants could be encouraged to live and work within its territory. The Strawian dictum appears to be: some



migrants are more equal than others! For a healthy attitude to migration, which characterises all life forms, Britain appears to be just finding its feet, remains very mean and was only this year condemned by the Council of Europe and the British Medical Association. From within and outside, this government's treatment of asylum seekers is found to be unacceptable. Our AGM is an apt platform to restate that we have told the government this all along - although it is unclear if any one important enough is truly listening.

Despite these odds, we have recorded another remarkable year. Those who have kept faith with us by reading our quarterly newsletter know that we are perpetually on the ball in immigration matters. The evidences detailed below are self explanatory.

Successful Campaigns

Our first set of star awards this year go to Paramjit and Mukhtiar, Sikh gentlemen, who won their campaign against deportation in July 2000. The Special Immigration Appeals Commission at the Old Bailey ruled that, under Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights, there was a risk of torture to them, if deported to India. We are highly gratified for all those who fought with us for their victory, most especially Stephanie Harrison - our honoured Guest Speaker at this AGM - and her colleagues Duran Seddon and the case solicitor David Burgess.

The next award goes to Ben Amoah, who after 19 years here was granted Indefinite Leave to Remain in November 2000. Ben's campaign victory should be an inspiration to people currently under threat of deportation because he lost appeal after appeal but never surrendered.

The story of Francisco Rose is equally remarkable, being the first case to be heard in Manchester under the 1998 Human Rights Act. Francisco had been served with a Notice of Intention to

Deport at the end of a ten-year prison sentence. He could have been a victim of double punishment but the adjudicator found, under Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights, that Francisco has the right to respect for his private and family life. In allowing the appeal the adjudicator also found that: "...deportation at the end of a ten year sentence may indeed come close to a double punishment - and one that would appear to be



largely reserved for persons from the ethnic minorities."

We in this coalition of anti-deportation campaigns have always maintained that, where the Home Office Immigration Rules are concerned, the dice are always heavily loaded against black people. At this moment, it is the police that are exposed as tainted by institutional racism, not yet the judiciary or Home Office. We rejoice with others who may be winning as we are going to press. As is our practice, we congratulate each and all.

Unique Campaigns

We mention a special category of on-going campaigns which caught the public eye in the year under review. Despite the fact that those concerned have not been granted the right to stay (two of them were eventually removed), aspects of the cases of Amanj Gafor, Charles Obinna, Salim Rambo, the Su family, Shafiq-ur-Rehman and George Ekontang stretched our campaign thresholds to become historical.

Amanj Gafor, an Iraqi-Kurd, was removed by boat from the UK to Germany on Sunday 13th August after a four-and-a-half year struggle seeking asylum in 6 EU countries. His deportation ended a seven-month battle in the UK that saw activists stop two removal attempts on British Airways and one Lufthansa flight. In the end, the British government was forced to resort to deportation by sea. Amanj went - but not without a struggle! Though Amanj has been removed from the UK, his friends and comrades have not given up the fight for him.

Another asylum seeker, Nigerian Charles Obinna, unfolded a dramatic deportation experience. As we held our last AGM on Saturday 3rd June 2000, Charles was taken from Haslar to Stanstead Airport to be put on a KLM flight the next day. He was, however, not put on the plane due to a technical hitch which was actually caused by Charles removing all his clothes just before the flight was due to take off! Stripping bought Charles Obinna delay as he was promptly transferred to Campsfield for several weeks before being finally deported in August 2000.

Salim Rambo, an asylum seeker from the Congo, was due to be deported on 18th July 2000. Under the Dublin Convention, he was to be removed to Germany, which would have subsequently sent him to certain death in the Congo. However, by direct action, 11 activists successfully prevented his deportation. Salim was removed to Harmondsworth from where his solicitor bailed him while his Judicial Review hearing was pending.

The Su Family, inclusive of three school age children, who escaped their native China following involvement with



Tiananmen Square students in 1992, were threatened with removal in July 2000. Following nationwide publicity, inclusive of articles in educational journals regarding the practical effect of imminent removal on the children, their case recently benefited from a 6-month reprieve.

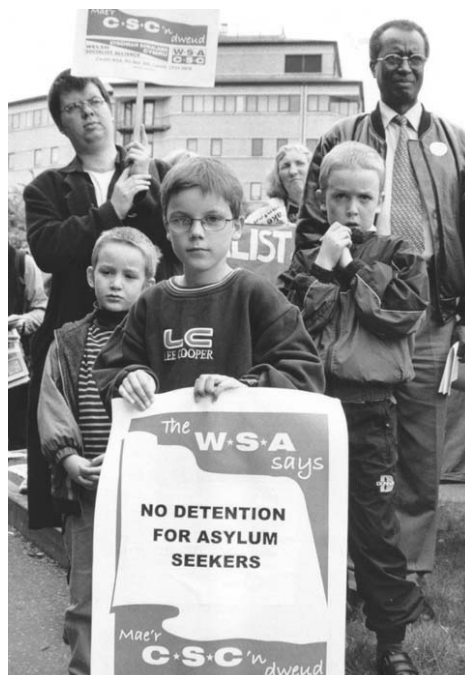
The Oldham-based mullah, Shafiq-ur-Rehman, recorded a ground-breaking victory before the Special Immigration Appeal Commission in September 1999. Initially a Home Office bid to appeal against his victory was rejected by the High Court, but, by a U-turn, the court heard the Home Office appeal based on the submission that the case affects national security. The Home Office appealed the SIAC decision and the case has recently been referred to the House of Lords.

George Ekontang appeared on the Jonathan Dimbleby Show in April where he criticised the Home Office for its treatment of asylum seekers coming to the UK and reminded the Immigration Minister Barbara Roche MP that he had been waiting seven years for his case to be decided.

These high profile campaigns could not be praised more highly. We hold the view that they have implications for the future of our aims and objectives as a coalition. For instance, specifically on air lifts, there are relevant developments viz. Vereinigung Cockpit - the German pilots association has urged its members to refuse to transport a deportee who does not agree to his deportation. We can now ask whether Charles Obinna could ever have told the pilot on June 3rd 2000 that he agreed to be transported or why street-wise immigration officials are not picking up overstayers all too eager to be deported, or why a vote of thanks to the out-going government is not on our agenda today in view of its decision to resort to leasing private planes to remove deportees.

The list of struggling campaigns is given as an appendix to this report. Needless to add, the story of each deportee is precious to us and regular updates are published in our quarterly newsletters.

The cases relating to overstayers appear to have slowed down as government attention is on what it regards as the influx of asylum seekers. In the past year, we have observed that the new campaigns are initiated by overstayers and asylum seekers from countries new to us, namely, Ethiopia, Columbia, Iraqi-Kurdistan, Kosovo, Lithuania, Roma and the Congo. This has led to us seeking to invite resources suitable for providing support in their specific circumstances. Perhaps this is precisely what the government is loathe to do just as it refuses to recognise that certain of its historic and current business practices constitute both directly and remotely to asylum seeking.



Improved Attendance

The attendance of our general meetings has remained impressive. The last general meeting in Manchester on 24th February 2001 featured another first - a councillor from Merseyside accompanied an asylum seeker to a campaign meeting. We have also identified new ways of managing journeys involving large numbers and opened a new account solely to encourage development of local anti-deportation campaigns.

Maintenance of High Profile

We have produced our new national poster and our presence at the Jonathan Dimbleby Show was one of a number of media outlets we took advantage of in the past year. One of our coordinators, an ex-deportee, shared the story of her struggling years on BBC Radio.

Other Coordinators have liaised with regional media with prompt results, the hold on the deportation of John Pops at Manchester Airport was a case in point.

Our quarterly newsletters remain newsy under the surveillance of the management committee. A member of the management committee found time to serve as a Volunteer Coordinator for a period of six months. This management principle of job rotation has been going on among us for a while. A past Secretary took a side seat as an ex-officio last year while as I vacate the post of Chair today, I have allowed myself to be nominated for a different post on the committee to facilitate the development of leadership skills in other members. At the end of the year, the management started to give attention to its voting practices in relation to proportional representation. We need to take account of the analysis of lay membership, former and on-going campaigns, structure of management committee members, the breakdown in gender and how they derive from the regions. We are considering incentives for attendance at management meetings, which lags behind the impressive attendance of general meetings already highlighted. Such is the quality of self observation among those I have been proud to serve among in the spirit of corporate responsibility.

We are going more places fast on account of multiple skills available in our rank and file - between 2 full time and 2 part time co-ordinators and 14 management committee members. One of



our funders has provided vouchers for enhancing the IT skills of our staff.

In the year under review, we acquired limited liability status and looked carefully into taking up charitable status. Despite our General Meeting taking a recent important decision to stay clear of the acquisition of charitable status on account of our unique

campaign ethos (tantamount to or interpretable as political activity) we have sought independent advice in case we should re-consider our stance.

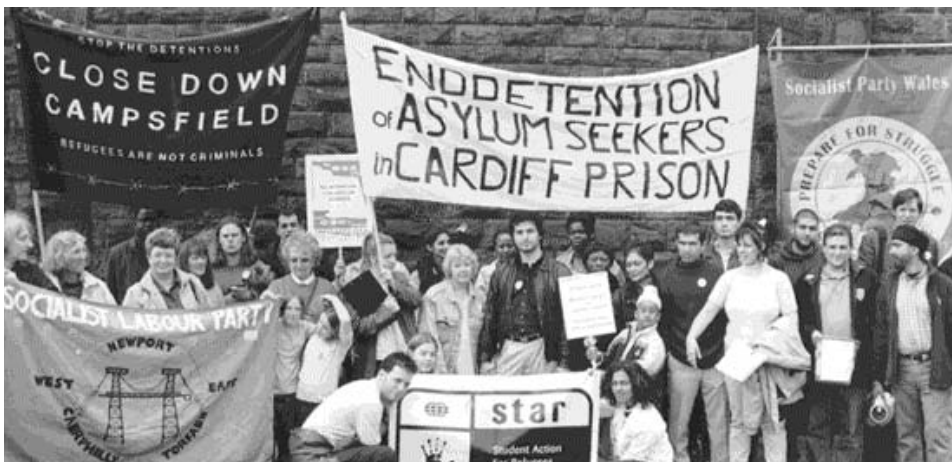
Our web site remains active with more than 17,000 visitors. We make regular finances available for its maintenance and enhancement. By updating the stories told on the web site in line with topical issues, we remain highly contemporary. We continue to network with groups that share our conviction.

We received peer recognition from other campaigners and journalists credit us with keeping their minds supple and sensitive on the theory and practice of asylum seeking.

We featured articles on the 58 Chinese migrants who died in Dover Harbour in June 2000 and published a poem in their memory on the cover of our issue 20 last October.

We also participated in the Barbed Wire Europe conference in Oxford in September; many of the excellent protests organised by the Close Campsfield Campaign at Campsfield Detention Centre, protests at Oakington Detention Centre and other places where asylum seekers and migrants are incarcerated; in the

International Day of Action Against Sodexho on April 4; and in many of the demonstrations and protests organised by the Committee to Defend Asylum Seekers and the Speak Out Against Racism - Defend Asylum Seekers campaigns around the country.



Networking with other Agencies

In the interest of our campaigns and precisely in pursuance of our commitment to those affected by the government's draconic immigration and asylum laws and policy, NCADC networks with kindred groups. Examples in the current year include: ARROW, Asylum Welcome Oxford, AVID, Birmingham Campaign Against Criminalising Communities (BCACC) Race Action Partnership, Refugee Forum, Bosnia & Herzegovina Network, Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) and Family

Immigration Rights (FAIR - UK); Coalition for Asylum & Immigration Rights (CAIR), National Assembly Against Racism (NAAR); Human Too, Bail for Immigration Detainees, CCRJ, Cambridge Refugee & Asylum Network (CRAN), Amnesty International, Oakington Concern, Cambridge Against Refugee Detention, Justice and Peace, One World Week, Oxfam, People & Planet, Student Action on Refugees and United Nations Association, local Committees to Defend Asylum Seekers, Campaign Against Racism and Fascism (CARF), among others. Lastly, with the General Election pending, Christian Action for Justice in Immigration Law has renewed its commitment to work for improvement in legislation through campaigning at all the levels that matter. We want to salute the pioneering effort of Stanley Hope and wish him a rapid recovery as CAJIL's last newsletter indicated that he is poorly.

Our Funders & Keepers

We wish to return special thanks to all our funders for enabling us to fulfil our objectives. We must give special mention to our regular funders - Barrow Cadbury Trust, the Churches Commission for Racial Justice, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the Leigh Trust, the National Lottery Charities Board and, lately, Comic Relief who funded our national poster. NCADC's Manchester Office attracted funding from Allen Lane Trust to extend the core hours in the North West Office by a full working day effective from 1st May 2001. We want to thank Allen Lane Trust for the much needed help and hope others will follow their footsteps. This is no place to set down the details but it will suffice to say that the NCADC Officers and Volunteers proved their mettle and satisfied the requirements for our limited liability status and maintaining the books to the satisfaction of our funders. We recorded effective and efficient corporate work in 2000/2001.

Staff & Management Committee

My thanks are also due to our 4 dedicated staff who carry out most of the day to day work of NCADC. They are a truly committed team. It is out of a grateful heart that I thank also my colleagues on the management committee for their individual sacrifice in time and other personal resources in their overview of NCADC in 2000/2001. As a group we have successfully presented a united front in defence of deportees and asylum seekers.

The Campaigns

The Campaigns are central to NCADC as they provide the focus and challenge to the resources - human and material - that could be annexed. The reports of Coordinators witness to the regular efforts made for more people to start campaigns. The origin of campaigners seem not limited to East & West Africa, the Asian sub-continent to Middle & eastern Europe and Latin America. To put NCADC ethos plainly, whoever plays sneak with the Home Office has lost before the game starts; it invariably produces results when its functionaries are met with campaigning tools.

Campaign Strategy Towards Open Borders

I like to end this report on a personal note and endorsement. I told my story at the maiden meeting in 1995. I was accepted as a lay member and at once a member campaign out of fellow feeling. NCADC has been as consistent as my trade union and Liverpoolians in fighting with and by me against the Home Office. In 1995, 118 MPs (mostly Labour) signed an Early Day Motion (EDM) supporting and praying with me that the Tory Government should not deport me. For the full life of the next parliament, most of those MPs, with a few honourable exceptions, were silent after their Home Secretary maintained the Tory decision and did not

conclude the review of my case. My conclusion is that blatant racism, travesty of justice, covert discrimination and poverty of economic ideas and ideals could be identified with immigration controls. Although I am still here, I have experienced betrayal in the use of the EDM, a parliamentary tool. In giving support to deportees and asylum seekers in this country, I wish to endorse the warm human network approach. This is the strategy offered by Ed Mynott of the Manchester Committee for Asylum Seekers whose full article entitled Open Borders could be found in our newsletter 22. I have picked up the warm acceptance by local citizens and served on many committees of day-to-day effectiveness, some of them professional despite a series of governmental let-down. It seems to me that human hearts remain open to those with unresolved Home Office issues while the borders were closed.

As I relinquish the post of Chair for personal reasons effective from today, I wish that you will note this endorsement of the heart-felt, open human network. All of us who live in the same period are contemporaries, whatever our status. Ours is a time of candour and fortunately we still live in a democracy. Hence, as campaigners, we owe a duty to work regularly at altering the prevalent biased world view for a more humane future for all who have crossed national and international frontiers and at sensitising the British public from the grassroots. Ed writes:

"Instead of wooing people at the top we need to concentrate our effort at persuasion of the people at the bottom. We need to encourage a different world view which promotes the free movement of people and has answers to peoples' day to day concerns. This will include idealistic students who have not succumbed to cynicism; volunteers in the Oxfam shops, trying to do their bit to make the world a better place; the churchgoers who are outraged by debt; rank and file trade unionists who know that an injury to one is an injury to all. In this way, we can build the movements which can stand up to the racists, on the streets and in the press, and turn the tide against them; which can send out a simple message to the migrants, refugees and asylum seekers: You are our Brothers and Sisters, and you are Welcome Here".

Aluta continua, comrades!

Bayo Omoyiola

NCADC Chair 1999-2001



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