

Letter to the Morning Star

Thursday 3 August 2010

From: Paul Mackney, PO Box 56959, London, N10 9AZ – 07974 353 709

I write with a heavy heart. I never thought I'd live to see a successor to Maurice Ludmer at Searchlight saying that we should, essentially, put our faith in the state, the police and the government to stop fascist elements terrorising our communities. If that is all that is needed, then the very reason for Searchlight's existence has gone.

Hope Not Hate did excellent work in the General Election but it complemented and did not replace the work done by Unite Against Fascism. Despite claims to the contrary, Margaret Hodge will confirm the importance of the latter in the routing of Nick Griffin.

Nick remarks "while we found it slightly surprising that activists in key BNP-threatened areas would travel to oppose the EDL in other parts of the country only weeks before the elections, we kept our thoughts to ourselves". Clearly this silent approach is no longer publicly adopted. Indeed, in the pursuit of funding for anti-fascist work, it has always been easier to raise cash for the seemingly politest option.

The remark is particularly unfortunate when two of the organisers of the 20 March anti-EDL demonstration in Bolton need our support because they face Shrewsbury picket style conspiracy to violence charges.

The problem with the strategy espoused by Nick Lowles in the Morning Star is not that he is trying to stop the EDL Rally taking place, but that he is "putting *all*" his "efforts into stopping the EDL protest taking place at all". We need imaginative tactics and strategy to deal with the EDL but what do we do if the EDL march is not banned or contained and these latter-day brownshirt hooligans go on the rampage through vulnerable areas?

No-one wants, to quote the headline, to 'give the EDL a riot', but equally anti-fascists should be prepared to prevent the terrorising of immigrant communities if fascist elements are allowed to go ahead with their provocation. It is important to try to get the authorities to prevent the EDL, but what do we do if – as has often happened before – they don't?

The leaflets calling for petitions etc to the Home Secretary should also prepare people for the possibility that she may not agree with us. Nick's article and approach effectively demobilise us in that eventuality.

I hope people will support both the Hope Not Hate and Unite Against Fascism actions to oppose the EDL in Bradford. I also trust many readers will send cheques made out to AFDC {to AFDC, PO Box 56959, London N10 9AZ} to help provide legal support for those who face long prison sentences for organising the 20 March Bolton anti-EDL demonstration.

In solidarity

Paul Mackney - Former General Secretary NATFHE/UCU 1997-2007