

COMBATING RACISM THROUGH THE BALLOT BOX

**MEETING THE CHALLENGES OF THE RACIST FAR
RIGHT**

**MONDAY 15 MARCH 2004, AT THE
BESCOTT STADIUM, WALSALL**

CONFERENCE REPORT

**Conference organised jointly by
The Commission for Racial Equality
The Trades Union Congress, Midlands Region and
Race Equality West Midlands**

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1. Purpose of the report

This report is not intended as a blow-by-blow account of conference proceedings. While attempting to provide a summary of the main points emerging from the conference, it is deliberately slanted to draw out the implications of speakers' contributions for effective action against the electoral threat from the racist far right.

On the assumption that conference delegates who chose to attend needed no convincing of the threat, nor incentivising to take up the campaign, it focuses on providing concise practical guidance on what we might usefully do to stop racist candidates making gains in the local and European elections scheduled for 10 June 2004.

What follows are notes of two kinds: observations and action points, with the report deliberately skewed to draw out the practical action that we can all engage in to stop the electoral rise of the racist far right and expose its political myth-making.

Since the conference in March, the initiating partners have met to establish a standing networking and monitoring group of organisations committed to opposing the racial divisiveness of the racist far-right. We shall try to keep you informed about our work.

Should you require further information on the Commission for Racial Equality's policies on how to deal with the racist far right, for example, on whether councils can refuse candidates permission to use rooms in schools for public meetings during an election, please contact Zahid Nawaz at the CRE, 0121 710 3000, or Frank Reeves at REWM, 0121 250 3859.

2. Chair's welcome

by Jane Slowey, Chief Executive, Birmingham Voluntary Sector Council

Observations

Main-stream parties are disconnected from local communities and are not listening to or tackling their concerns.

The failure to deal effectively with local people's needs provides space for the racist far right to exploit.

Local turnout in elections at both national and local level is a serious problem for democracy.

BNP leaflets often spotlight issues which matter to the community and are community orientated.

Trade unions have resources which could be used to campaign against the racist far right.

Action points

- Mainstream political parties must begin to tackle the racist far right at local ward level, by reengaging in micro-community politics and dealing with the often reasonable community grievances that the far right are positioning themselves to exploit.
- BNP propaganda, often in the form of targeted leafleting campaigns, have to be responded to.
- Alliances between anti-racist individuals and agencies are essential.

3. Opening Address

by Tom Ansell, Leader, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council

Observations

Walsall is immensely proud of its different cultures and of the harmonious way its communities relate to one another.

Diversity, in Walsall and our society as a whole, is something to be celebrated.

Inter-communal hatred and racist far-right activities are a challenge for the Black Country, with its tradition of tolerance.

The BNP's success is based on its claim to be the voice of the silent majority.

The mainstream parties should reestablish their right to be the voice of the community.

The tensions that have arisen are due to the failure of government policies to impact on certain local areas.

Action points

- It is important for local politicians to provide leadership and publicly to declare their support for diversity.
- Community relations need to be worked at.
- Mainstream parties have to earn their position as the servants of local communities.
- Mainstream political parties should step up their local ward work and campaigning efforts.
- Improvements in the quality and effective delivery of public services would remove many of the local grievances currently exploited by the BNP.

4. The political far right

By Eric Seward, Head of Specialist Projects, Commission for Racial Equality

Observations

Far right performance in general elections

The far right's performance in recent general elections has been as follows:

- In 1979, the National Front contested 303 seats and averaged 633 votes per constituency.
- In 1983, the British National Party stood 54 candidates and averaged 271 votes per constituency.
- In 1997, the British National Party stood 57 per candidate and averaged 629 votes per constituency.
- In 2002, the British National Party stood 33 candidates and averaged 1498 votes per constituency. Its best results were in:

Oldham West with 16.4% of vote share.

Burnley with 11.3% of vote share.

Oldham East with 11.2% of vote share.

Barking with 6.3% of vote share.

Far right performance in local elections

The far right's performance in recent local elections has been as follows:

- In May 2001, it stood 16 candidates but won no seats.
- In May 2002, it stood 67 candidates for 25 councils, with three British National Party candidates gaining seats in Burnley.
- In November 2002, the BNP won a council by-election in Blackburn.
- In May 2003, the far right stood 221 candidates for 85 councils with the BNP winning 13 seats overall.
- In 2003 council-by-elections far right contested 18 seats, won three of them and came second in six.

BNP councillors

In March 2004, the British National Party had councillors on the following councils:

Burnley District Council	6
Calderdale Metropolitan Borough Council	3
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	2
Stoke-on-Trent City Council	2
Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council	1
Kirklees Metropolitan Borough Council	1
Broxbourne District Council	1
Thurrock District Council	1
Total:	17

(Since then, a BNP councillor in Blackburn, has quit to become an independent, denouncing the Blackburn BNP as a party of drug dealers and football hooligans. A BNP councillor in Burnley has left the party saying the BNP had 'shamed our town')

BNP membership

The BNP has an estimated 5,500 members organised in the West Midlands, West Yorkshire and the North West, and holds an annual conference.

BNP staff

The BNP has a full and part-time staff of 29.

BNP style

The BNP carefully targets local wards and is often well organised. Campaigners dress in New Labour-style suits and engage in Liberal Democrat-style pavement politics.

June 2004 election: BNP's likely approach

In the June 2004 elections, the BNP are likely to stand candidates for local councils (an estimated 600 candidates), the European Parliament and the London Assembly.

BNP areas

The BNP won votes in wards with a largely white electorate next door to black and minority ethnic communities.

BNP voter appeal

The BNP appeals to people with the following characteristics:

- 18 to 33 year-old males who do not normally vote.
- C1 voters with something to lose.
- the disgruntled, including the middle class.
- those who are more concerned about asylum seekers/refugees/immigrants.
- those who are more concerned about crime.
- those with a low opinion about the public services.
- those with no contact with the black and minority ethnic population.
- those who view local race relations as poor.

BNP approach to campaigning

The BNP seeks to participate in local community groups and to campaign on local issues. They present themselves as the party of common sense, appealing to the silent majority.

BNP beliefs

The BNP is a party of race hatred as evidenced by the following quotes from its literature:

- One being British: ‘The native people who have lived in these islands since before the Stone Age and the relatively small numbers of peoples of almost identical stock such as Saxons, Vikings and Normans and the Irish who have come here and assimilated.’
- On mixed-race relationships: ‘When whites take partners from other ethnic groups, a while family line that stretches back into deep history is destroyed and, of course, the same is true of the non-white side.’
- On membership: ‘Only individuals of British or closely-kindred European stock.’

BNP campaign issues

Common campaign issues are:

- no asylum seekers.
- Muslims mean authoritarianism and terrorism.
- white individuals and areas not getting fair share of services/benefits/grants.
- enforced multi-culturalism in schools.
- official blindness towards racial attacks on white people.
- opposition to planning applications for mosques and bme facilities.
- claims that white people's medical treatment is delayed because of asylum seekers.

Action by the Commission for Racial Equality

The CRE has taken the following action:

- supported the Side-by-Side Project in Oldham.
- monitored far right activity and identified issues.
- provided guidance to race equality councils.
- supported research into who votes for the BNP and why.

The CRE is now:

- raising public awareness of the BNP threat.
- giving a strong lead through its chair's statements.
- supporting trade unions' attempts to stop BNP entryism.
- adopting a policy approach.

BNP and the law

The Race Relations Act makes it unlawful to discriminate in housing, education and public services (thus curtailing some far-right activity).

There is a statutory race equality duty on most public authorities to promote good relations between persons of different racial groups (in contrast to far-right political values and activity).

Human rights law recognises that the most important of fundamental freedoms, freedom of speech, is subject to limitation where its exercise unjustly interferes with others' rights (highly relevant to race hate activity).

The Public Order Act 1986 gives powers to limit or ban marches or processions and makes incitement to racial hatred and offensive leaflets, posters or behaviour a criminal offence.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 makes racially-aggravated harassment a criminal offence.

The Football Offences Act 1991 makes racist chanting at football grounds a criminal offence.

Action points

- In dealing with the BNP threat:
 - Don't ignore it.
 - Be prepared.
 - Take effective action.
 - Win the argument in your locality.
 - Don't let untruths go unchallenged.
 - Mobilise community groups.
 - Seek the support of local media.
 - Stand firm on your race equality agenda.
- Remember that the majority of people do not like the far right and that the aim is to make sure this is shown at the ballot box.
- The main lesson for mainstream political parties is to out-campaign the far-right.

5. The importance of good race relations

by the Rt. Hon. Bruce George, MP for Walsall South

Observations

Immigration and asylum issues should be debated in a rational way and not manipulated by the BNP and others.

Racist far right parties should be challenged along with all extremist views, including religious extremism, likely to cause division in communities.

The far right has a tradition of glamourising violence and seems to act as a magnet to persons with criminal convictions.

Britain has a long history of immigration: 'Most people's family history shows they are descended from immigrants.' Immigration has become a part of British identity.

By opening a book of remembrance after the Madrid bombing, the Birmingham Central Mosque has show the way to build bridges.

Other political parties have also been responsible for circulating election literature that deals in a very negative way with race and immigration issues. Political leaders have a responsibility to ensure their literature promotes good race and community relations.

Action points

- All of us have a responsibility for promoting good race relations: we cannot afford to stand by and let a handful of wreckers, like the BNP, divide and destroy our communities, and we will not allow it to happen.
- We must actively campaign against BNP lies.
- Political leaders must pledge themselves to avoid the opportunistic use of the race card in political campaigning.

6. The role of the Commission for Racial Equality in relation to the Racist Far Right

by Khurshid Ahmed, Commissioner, Commission for Racial Equality

Observations

As a resident of Dudley, as well as a CRE commissioner, Khurshid is acutely conscious of the local threat posed by the BNP. In Dudley's Castle and Priory Ward, Simon Derby, the BNP's regional organiser was elected in May 2003 as a borough councillor. Simon Derby has talked of immigrants 'hijacking the country'.

Political leaders are not standing up as they should against the BNP and right-wing propaganda on asylum seekers and refugees. They run the risk of confirming the view that all immigrants pose a threat to the country.

It is not for the Commission for Racial Equality to engage in party politics but it regards the danger from extremists on the right as clear and present.

The CRE intends to act as a reliable source of intelligence about their actions and to be a prompt to the mainstream political parties to act against the far right.

The Commission wants to make it as hard as possible for far-right parties to peddle their racism as legitimate political expression. It will produce guidance on how to deal with political parties whose objectives could be in direct conflict with the legal duty to promote good race relations.

Action points

- The conference and any action arising from it should generate further ideas for the Commission on how to combat racism and deal with the threat from the racist far right.
- The Commission is producing guidance for local councils, schools and community organisations on how to deal with applications from the racist far right for to use public or community buildings, and how to challenge the dissemination of false or misleading information harmful to good race relations.

7. Trade Unions against Racism

by Roger McKenzie, TUC Race Equality Officer

Observations

Political leaders should make public their views on the positive contribution of ethnic minorities to Britain and should be held accountable for their decisions on race.

The absurd business of blaming refugees and asylum seekers for everything that is wrong in Britain has got to stop. The mainstream political parties and especially those on the left must not capitulate to this kind of racism.

The task of countering the racist far right must continue long after the June 2004 elections. What is needed is a long-term political strategy and plan.

The BNP can be seen as a group of criminals and terrorists and must be exposed as such. But they are also involving themselves in community parties and have to be tacked in this respect, too.

The TUC is pledged to oppose fascism and will be rallying its members and supporting those unions who take a hard line against fascists in their ranks.

It is essential for the health of the community and the democracy for people to register and cast their vote.

Action points

- Don't turn a blind eye, or pander to racism and fascism.
- Speak out for the truth when asylum seekers are blamed for society's problems.
- Don't make public statements about your opposition to racism, then say nothing, or something very different, on the door step.
- Organise and form alliances against racism with the mainstream parties, trade unions and, most importantly, the local community.
- For the health of our democracy, help to register the local vote and persuade it to turn out on the day.
- Trade Unions will be willing to help in any campaign to stop the Right.

8. Tackling the challenges of the Racist Far Right through the Media

by Tim Lezard, National Executive Committee,
National Union of Journalists

Observations

The two challenges facing the media from the far right are the personal one of avoiding physical attack and the professional one of accurately reporting the BNP's policies.

Four weeks ago, the BNP held a demonstration outside the offices of the National Union of Journalists accusing the media of being racist against whites. The BNP's 36 demonstrators were outnumbered 8 to 1 by the journalist counter-demonstrators.

The racist right attempts to intimidate journalists who expose its racist lies. A website called Redwatch recently carried a picture of a West Midlands photographer, together with his home and work email addresses, along with a plea for information as to where he lived. Run by far-right extremists, the website describes itself as 'a hit list' and states 'Remember places, traitors' faces: they'll pay for their crimes'.

The website also lists links with hard right groups such as Blood and Honour, Aryan Unity, Combat 18, National Front, Aryan Baby Drive, Weerwolf Nederland, Redwatch Sweden, and Combat 18 Poland.

The BNP denies any link, but photographs taken by the party's youth organiser, Tony Wentworth, have appeared on the site.

Redwatch threatens other activists, trade unionists and councillors, not just journalists. Those on the far right hate the truth and they are not afraid to intimidate those who expose their lies. This is a real threat faced by journalists when they report on the BNP.

The other threat comes from the newspapers themselves. Editors know only too well that scare stories sell newspapers and are only too ready to prey on their readers' ignorance, insecurity and fear, playing right into the hands of the BNP.

Some national newspapers carry inflammatory headlines attacking refugees and asylum seekers. What can journalists who disagree do about it? Why don't they speak out?

Who would dare to stand up to their boss, who might have no hesitation in firing them on the spot? Journalists with a conscience, journalists with a desire to tell the truth, journalists who are NUJ members, dare.

In January, the *Daily Express* ran a story saying all 1.6 million Roma families in Eastern Europe were planning to come to Britain at the expansion of the European Union. NUJ members at the paper wrote to the Press Complaints Commission, seeking their protection if they refused to write racist articles. But the PCC does not accept third-party complaints. It will not investigate complaints unless the person affected by the story makes a complaint.

The 'Swan Bake' story, printed in the *Sun*, accused gangs of Eastern European asylum seekers of killing and barbecuing swans from London's lakes. Similarly, the *Daily Star* ran a headline, 'Asylum seekers eat our donkeys', with a story about the disappearance of nine donkeys from a London park. The story went on to claim that donkey meat is a speciality in some East African countries and that there were 'large numbers of Somalian asylum seekers' in the area.

Both these stories resulted in complaints to the PCC, with neither paper able to defend them. Eventually, months later, the *Sun* printed a two paragraph piece admitting it may have got things wrong but refusing to apologise for it. These are examples of how the media can be used to spread lies to the benefit of the BNP.

Journalists subscribe to a code. They should ensure that information is fair and accurate and not present conjecture as fact. They should not mention a person's age, sex, race, colour, or creed, unless this information is strictly relevant.

So how are they to report the BNP? It can no longer be ignored in the hope that it will go away. Like it or not, it's a legitimate political party.

As journalists, we must take the BNP to task and expose it for what it is. It pretends to be respectable but a simple reading of its policies will reveal the truth. The thugs in boots have become thugs in suits.

As potential readers and viewers, you have more power than you think because newspaper bosses want only one thing: sales, or in broadcasting terms, market share. They take notice of anything that might threaten that.

If you challenge them, you can make a difference. This is especially true locally. The regional media tends to offer a more balanced view of affairs and better reflects its

local communities. It cannot dip in and out of an area and has to live with the consequences of its reporting.

As opponents of fascism, we have many things in our favour, not least sheer numbers. You must work alongside us in the media and together we will jackboot the racist far right into electoral oblivion.

Action points

- Engage with the media proactively and reactively. Proactive stories can be negative or positive.
- Tip off reporters of BNP activities in your area, how, for example, they have intimidate your neighbours while leafleting.
- Instead of reporting how divisive asylum seekers are, make the story about their advantage to the community.
- Stories can be got into a paper either by writing letters to the editor, or by contacting local reporters and telling them the story.
- If newspapers run analysis features (the story behind the headlines), push for a positive piece on, for example, the asylum issue.
- In regard to reaction, keep an eye on the local paper or listen to the local radio station and challenge assumptions made by contributors: columnists, chat-show DJs, or stories submitted by the public.
- The BNP often claims to be the only party brave enough to tell the truth and stand up for white people. Challenge the content of their leaflets: a rabid rant can be turned to advantage by a civilised accurate reply. A letter could begin: 'I am disappointed the editor allowed a letter from the BNP to be published without checking the facts'.

WORKSHOPS

9. Community involvement workshop

Observations

Contributions were discursive and it was not always easy to draw a relationship between them.

The following factors were identified as the cause of tensions in the community and giving rise to issues exploited by the racist far right:

- parallel lives that do not overlap at any point.
- key agencies failing to work together.
- the funding of regeneration programmes causing divisions, with white communities believing they have been left out.
- failure of community leadership and to engage communities in decision-making.
- absence of a frank and honest dialogue on the local issues that need to be faced.

A local united front should be established to deal with the racist far right.

The racist far right is infiltrating community associations and capturing positions, which may lead to ethnic minorities being denied access to, and use of, community buildings.

There is evidence that the racist far right is seeking election to school governing bodies, with a view to disrupting the multi-racial curriculum.

Community development workers seem to make a distinction between party politics and community politics, leading to a reluctance to talk about racial issues or asylum seekers and refugees, which are felt to belong to the first category. BNP campaigners, nevertheless, are presenting themselves as local community activists (working hard on household grouses) rather than as politicians.

There is a popular view that matters of religion and policies are private matters and should be avoided by community development workers.

Young people should be recognised as members of the community. They need to be involved.

There has to be a multi-level approach to community involvement in order to deal with the racist far right.

Action points

- Guidelines are needed to assist public authority and voluntary sector employees determine the extent to which they can oppose in the course of the job, racist campaigning.
- Efforts need to be made to prevent the racist far right capturing community positions in community centres or on school governors.
- Imaginative ideas are needed to win young people to oppose the BNP.
- Make sure legitimate community grievances are dealt with: street cleaning, parking, speeding, outreach youth work.

10. Education workshop

Observations

Many different points were made in the education workshop.

All agreed on the importance of engaging and educating young people and explaining to them the right and responsibility of voting.

Citizenship classes had to incorporate race equality issues.

Drama and the arts were an important medium to harness.

There was a role for student councils.

Community cohesion was an important issue: segregated schooling contributed to mythology about others.

Schools might be in a position to encourage interaction between asylum seekers/refugees and the host community.

Schools needed to keep in close touch with religious and community leaders.

Action points

- Accurate information packs should be produced to assist with myth-busting.
- Develop more cross-community and inter-school initiatives.
- Teacher unions should develop guidance for teachers on how to deal with members of the far right and their ideas. Students, parents, other teachers and governors could be BNP members.
- Resources and information from other organisations could be used for educational purposes. Race equality councils, trade unions and other agencies could be used as a resource.
- Information and advice should be made available to children and young people on the threat from the far right.

- There should be leaflets to inform parents of the divisive nature of racist far right policies.

11. Mainstream political parties workshop

Observations

The mainstream political parties have to act as a bulwark against the rise of the racist far right.

The mainstream political parties can no longer ignore the BNP and have to make a public stance against all manifestations of racism. One way of doing this, is to sign a joint declaration agreeing not to exploit race issues, immigration or asylum seeking in any election campaign.

All candidates should be challenged about their stance by members of the public, the churches, and voluntary and community associations.

We should unite and work together to form an anti-racist front against the far right.

Action points

- Most of the above apply here, too.
- Brief canvassers about how to respond on the doorstep to questions about racial issues, asylum seekers, refugees and immigration.
- Work with the local Trades Council and community groups to form an anti-racist front.
- Ask questions on the candidates' position on racial issues at councillor candidate selection meetings.
- Campaign among students and young people.
- Gather information (including leaflets) on far-right political parties and plan strategies for dealing with them in areas where they are active.
- Seek statements from all local candidates and publicly criticise and campaign against those that are unacceptable.

12. Media workshop

Observations

Journalists aren't enemies: some are trying hard to challenge extremism and can play a role in exposing the lies of the far right.

Can the media be changed? We have to believe that they act out of self-interest and can be persuaded to change damaging and divisive story lines.

Journalists should be expected to abide by their code of conduct.

Public bodies should also play a role through the media in challenging the lies of the far right.

The media takes personal stories and angles.

Action points

- We can all challenge the story lines of the media, for example, by writing and speaking to them.
- We should expect journalists to abide by their code of conduct and hold them to account.
- A local protocol could be drawn up between public authorities and the media in relation to stories that might adversely affect community cohesion.
- Community groups might be able to develop supportive partnerships with local journalists in order to expose far-right lies and divisiveness.
- Develop alternative community newsletters.

13. The main recommendations emerging from the conference

1. Establish and devise a long term strategy to tackle the racist far right, and to involve community groups, race equality councils, and trade unions.
2. Encourage political leaders to make public statements that they will promote good race and community relations in their election campaigns.
3. Persuade politicians of the need to intensify their campaigns to prevent the racist far right exploiting the vacuum created by the low level of mainstream political activity and any inadequacy of local services.
4. Ensure that all political leaders and candidates for June 2004 are briefed about the facts of asylum seekers and refugees in their localities. The CRE may be invited to facilitate such a briefing.
5. Monitor by local community the level of racist far-right parties' activities and the content of their election materials.
6. Ensure that local arrangements exist to compile and disseminate intelligence on racist far-right activities and to determine counter-strategy.
7. Provide advice to relevant institutions/mainstream political parties on issues arising from the presence of the racist far right in your area and how they might be addressed.
8. Monitor levels of racial harassment and violence locally in order to gather evidence of the effects of racist far-right activity and its impact and to devise preventive action.
9. Bring together the widest possible range of local organisations to campaign against racist far-right parties.
10. Publicly rebut racist lies, exaggeration and inaccuracies propagated by far right parties about the state of race and community relations in your local area.
11. Monitor the local media and respond to them in order to rebut racist lies, exaggeration and other inaccuracies.

12. Develop positive relationships with the press and media in order to intensify efforts to promote race equality and good race relations.

14. About the speakers

Khurshid Ahmed

Khurshid is a non-executive director of Dudley Group of Hospitals NHS Trust. He was previously Assistant Chief Executive and Head of the Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Unit at Birmingham City Council.

He has also served on the official enquiry into the Danall disturbances in Sheffield in 1995/6. He also chairs the National Association of British Pakistanis, the Dudley Race Equality Council and the Dudley Community (Strategic) Partnership. Khurshid is Chair of the Dudley North constituency Labour Party.

Tom Ansell

Born in Walsall, Councillor Ansell has been married for 36 years, has two sons and 3 grandchildren.

Although Councillor Ansell has worked within the engineering industry most of his life, his main interest has always been politics - joining the council in 1980 as an Independent and joining the Conservative Party in 1987.

For the past two years, Councillor Ansell has been the Leader of the Conservative Group and Leader of Walsall Council.

Rt. Hon. Bruce George MP

Bruce George is a very long serving MP, having sat in the House of Commons since 1974, he is Chair of the House of Commons Defence Committee, ex-member of the committee on violence in the family, Hon Parliamentary Advisor to the Royal British Legion, Honorary Vice President of the Council for Education in World Citizenship. He is the President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, is a author and a international authority on Mediterranean Affairs. He has initiated the Mediterranean Forum within the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly to enhance relations between Mediterranean countries and the OSCE PA. Bruce George is the Chairman of the British-Azerbaijan all party Parliamentary Group. Throughout his personal and Parliamentary career he has always supported equality legislation and has supported local and national initiatives aimed at promoting good community relations. His policy interests include Defence, International Affairs, the private Security industry, Police, Terrorism, Health, Unemployment, Race Relations, US/British relations.

Tim Lezard

Tim Lezard has worked in the media for 15 years. A reporter for several newspapers, including The Citizen, Gloucester and the Western Daily Press, he has also edited satirical cricket monthly JM96* and The Big Issue South West. Currently working as a freelance, he is the press officer for the South West TUC and UNISON SW and serves on the NUJ's national executive council. He also sits on the advisory panel of the Refugees, Asylum Seekers and the Media (RAM) Project - a national body that promotes best practice in media representation of refugee and asylum issues.

Roger McKenzie

Roger McKenzie was born in Walsall in the West Midlands in 1963. His parents are from Jamaica.

Roger has been an active trade unionist since leaving school in 1979. His first job was as a building labourer from where he progressed to be trained as a Painter and Decorator. Roger went from there to be a Trainee Housing Manager and then was responsible for managing Housing estates in the decentralised neighbourhood office structure in Walsall.

During this time Roger became more involved in trade union activities and began teaching trade union education courses through the TUC and the Workers Educational Association. Roger was then appointed to a trade union education lecturers post in Manchester before moving to teach in Tottenham.

In 1992 Roger was appointed as the National Education Officer for the National Union of Civil and Public Servants (NUCPS). This union, after two mergers, became the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS). During this period Roger undertook various posts including leading pay negotiating for the union in the Ministry of Agriculture and its Agencies. He has also negotiated Pensions and other central terms and conditions. Roger also took on responsibility for race equality and black members and within PCS was appointed as the Race Equality Officer.

Roger was appointed as the TUC Race Equality Officer in October 2000. Amongst his responsibilities are advising the TUC and its affiliates on race equality, assisting in organising black members of the trade union movement. He was also the Secretary of the Stephen Lawrence Task Group during its final year. Roger represented the TUC at the United Nations World Conference Against Racism in Durban South Africa in 2001. Roger was also a founder member and former National Vice Chair of the Anti-Racist Alliance.

Roger was a Councillor in a North London Borough from 1994 to 2002. He now lives in Oxford with his partner Kate and daughter Sojourner.

Roger was awarded a Masters Degree in Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management from Keele University in July 2001. He is now carrying out research towards a PhD at London Metropolitan University on the origins and development of black self-organisation in the UK labour movement.

Eric Seward

Eric Seward has been involved with race relations work for over 30 years since joining the former Race Relations Board in 1973. In the Commission for Race Equality he has held a variety of posts and his work has included directing a number of legal investigations by the CRE which found patterns of unlawful discrimination in housing and education. He was also a co author of the CRE Report " A Place for Us All" on the disturbances in a number of Northern Towns in 2001 and also contributed to a number of Government inquiries that also looked into these disturbances.

He is currently a Governor of a multi racial Comprehensive school and Treasurer of a local community group that has recently successfully won funding to develop a community centre on a deprived social housing estate. He has a long record of participating in local election campaigns having first knocked on doors for a political party in the 1970 General Election. He has served on a Metropolitan Local Authority as a Councillor and was also a Parish Councillor for 9 years. He was actively involved in the three local election campaigns in the Mixenden ward of Halifax in 2003 which initially saw the BNP winning the seat and then being defeated on two further occasions. It is this long and active experience in political party campaigning which Eric Seward is now bringing to his work in the CRE co-ordinating its work on Far Right political activity.

Jane Slowey

Jane Slowey has been Chief Executive of Birmingham Voluntary Service Council since February 1998. BVSC is one of the largest Councils for Voluntary Service in the UK, employing around 70 staff and providing advice, support and a voice for around 1500 voluntary organisations in Birmingham on a range of strategic partnerships including the City Strategic Partnership.

BVSC is a lead partner for a number of government funded programmes which promote and support voluntary and community sector involvement in regeneration.

Jane was closely involved in the establishment of Regional Action West Midlands (RAWM), a voluntary and community sector network which seeks to ensure that the voluntary and community sector has a voice at a regional level. She represents the RAWM Board on the West Midlands Regional Assembly and is currently one of the Assembly's Vice Chairs.

Jane has been involved in policy development affecting the sector at a national level. She represented the National Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS) on the Cross Cutting Review Capacity Implementation Team and the Compact Working Group. She was a member of the working group on Capacity which fed into the Treasury's Cross Cutting Review on the role of the Voluntary Sector in Service Delivery and a group looking at how to make the Future Builders fund go further. Jane is Vice-Chair of the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO).

Jane is Chair of the Birmingham Race Action Partnership (BRAP) and a member of Birmingham and Solihull Learning and Skills Council.