

# Anti-fascists regroup to signal direct action

By David Rose

An organisation planning to take direct action on the streets against a feared upsurge of organised extreme rightwing activity will be launched this month.

Anti-Fascist Action is seen by its founders as a "non-sectarian" successor to the Anti-Nazi League, which flourished and collapsed in the late 1970s after being taken over by members of the Socialist Workers Party. The organisation already has a secretariat and 4,000 supporters in a network spread across the country.

AFA has been formed by several organisations which have fought organised fascism in different ways over the years. At its hub is Searchlight magazine, which collects and publishes intelligence about British fascists and fascist groups.

Mr Sundar Kangesan, a worker at the Newham Monitoring Project which organised the Newham Seven campaign and a member of the AFA secretariat said that the new organisation had become necessary because organised fascists and racists were becoming stronger and better organised.

These groups, he said, were directly or indirectly responsible for the spate of attacks and arson against Asians during the summer.

He cited an incident in Barking, Essex on August 17 when a gang of 60 skinheads barricaded the main road by the station and called it a "wog-free zone." Two black men were attacked and seriously injured, and some of the skinheads had emblems and

tattoos indicating membership of far-right groups.

Mr Kangesan said that one aspect of AFA's work would be educational, with the publication of leaflets and posters designed to counter fascist propaganda, now being targetted on schoolchildren in areas of East London. The organisation would also protect those in danger, with a telephone service which families could use when necessary.

At an inaugural meeting attended by more than 200 people in July, a resolution was passed stating that AFA would also oppose fascism physically. Mr Kangesan said this would mean breaking up meetings of extreme right parties, and confronting violence directed at ethnic minorities.

"The increase in fascist attacks means we need a common front," he said. "We will work with the police but the slogan of the Newham Seven campaign still stands: self-defence is no offence."

Any attempt by a political group to take over AFA as the Socialist Workers Party took over the Anti Nazi League would be immediately resisted, Mr Kangesan said. At the inaugural meeting, an SWP member had been booed and forced to leave: "We're not interested in ideologies," he said.

The majority of the AFA secretariat is black, unlike that of the ANL, He said.

The group has already been tested. After the meeting in July, a gang of skinheads from the British National Party and other fascist groups tried to ambush AFA Members at Kings Cross station in London. They found themselves outnumbered and fled, badly worsted, Mr Kangesan said.