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Open season on scapegoats

Anarchist Federation

1995

World-wide as the crisis in capitalism deepens, handy scapegoats are looked for. Nationalist and extreme right political currents, along with religious fundamentalists are the instruments of this scapegoating and division of the working class. Anti-Semitism, anti-gypsy and anti-immigrant views are peddled, and physical attacks up to and involving murder are carried out by extreme right groups. This climate of fear has the added effect in Western Europe of strengthening the walls of fortress Europe. In France this has been helped by the actions of Algerian Islamic fundamentalists, allowing the State to increase its measures of repression against not only the immigrant population, but against the working class as a whole.

In Britain, the largest scapegoating involves legislation currently going through Parliament, which would tell those working in education, health and social security to act as grasses for the home office in fingering illegal immigrants. This would mean that anyone suspected of being an “alien” would have to produce a passport if they were applying for a course in education or for medical treatment. Bans on claims for Child Benefit and Family Credit would

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be imposed, to sit alongside those already in operation for Income Support, Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit.

There would be training for social security workers to more readily spot illegal immigrants. In reality this means that anyone who appears non-white or has a “foreign” accent will be harassed.

Alongside these practical measures comes the ideological assault. Dr. Tate, chief adviser on the school curriculum has called for a “British cultural identity” and attacked “watered-down multiculturalism”. He supported the need for “common culture” and “national identity” to be pushed in education. Coupled with this were the allegations by Home Secretary Michael Howard that illegal immigrants could be claiming £100 million a year in benefits.

These figures were plucked out of the air, with no concrete evidence to support such an allegation. Social Security supremo Peter Lilley announced a clampdown on income support claimants. He announced cuts of £4 billion to rise to £14 billion with pension cuts. He then went on to claim that 1 in 10 claims were or “could be” false claims, again another figure out of the air. He targeted single parents, and said that £450 million was claimed by those allegedly single whilst living as couples.

Another nice little money-saver, is the plan by Education Minister Gillian Shepherd to create extended work placements for 14 year olds, which would mean 2 days a week would be spent by school students working for nothing.