

Another day, another scare story. The papers say Britain is under siege from asylum seekers. They blame them for higher taxes, crime, rising house prices, hospital waiting lists, cheap labour, terrorism and AIDS. Mainstream politicians either agree or refuse to challenge these stories.

There are two possible reasons for this press campaign. Only one of them can be true.

The first is that fake refugees from Iraq, Afghanistan and Eastern Europe really are responsible for most of Britain's problems.

The second is that you are being lied to - deliberately, day in, day out - about asylum seekers.

Many people believe asylum seekers are one of our society's biggest problems. No wonder. The scare stories printed every day in the Sun, Express, Star and Mail are hardly ever challenged in the press or in parliament.

That's why, inside, we set out some facts that might make you see things differently. We think they show that asylum seekers are not causing these problems, but are being used as scapegoats.

If we're right, then whoever is responsible for society's problems is getting away scot-free. It's the oldest trick in the book. Blame the other fella. Divide and rule.

We didn't produce this leaflet because we're a bunch of bleeding hearts. We did it because we're fed up too. Fed up with services that get worse instead of better. Fed up with council tax hikes and impossible house prices. Fed up with schools and hospitals being run down and sold off piecemeal. Fed up with low pay and crime.

Above all, we're fed up being lied to about why this is happening. So let's look at what the papers say - and let's look at the truth.

## Why are they lying?

The people that benefit from the anti-refugee and anti-migrant campaign are the same people that benefit from the real causes of bad housing, long hospital waiting lists and declining education. It is the big bosses - the millionaire, even billionaire, financiers and industrialists - who want to pay less and less income tax and corporation tax.

They support running down services and then selling them off to private businesses. They want to restrict

public spending on affordable homes.

The millionaire tax scroungers know that after years of New Labour millions of people are getting fed up and want to see real change - so they make scapegoats of asylum seekers and migrants. They did the same thing in the 1900s when they blamed the Chinese, in the twenties and thirties when they blamed the Jews, in the 1970s when they blamed black and Asian people, and today, when they blame Arabs, Asians and Albanians.

## Who's behind the asylum lies?

**Richard Desmond** - owner of the *Express*, *Sunday Express* and *Daily Star*

Bought the Express for £125 million in 2000 with money he made in the porn industry. New Labour waved the deal through - and then Desmond 'donated' £100,000 to the party. Also owns Asian Babes, Readers' Wives and the Fantasy Channel. His personal wealth is estimated as over £550 million. Always campaigning for lower taxes... and lying about asylum seekers.

**Lord Northcliffe** - owner of *The Mail*, *Mail on Sunday* and the *Evening Standard*

The Northcliffe/Rothermere family's publishing empire goes back to the 1890s. It has been peddling lies about refugees for decades. The Mail campaigned against Jews fleeing Nazi Germany and central Europe, using many of the same claims its now makes against today's asylum seekers. In 1934 the Mail, which acted as a cheerleader for the likes of Hitler and Mussolini before the Second World War, ran a front-page headline praising Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists. So great was the late Lord Rothermere's love of Britain that he died in

Paris to evade UK taxes.

**Rupert Murdoch** - owner of the *Sun*, *News of the World* and *The Times*

One of the richest men in the world, Murdoch avoids tax whenever he can by shifting his money and profits around the world.

Between 1986 and 1996 he paid no British taxes at all, despite recorded profits of almost £1 billion.

A report in the Economist newspaper in March 1999 said that between 1994 and 1998, Murdoch's News Corporation and its subsidiaries paid only £128 million in corporate taxes worldwide. That's just 6% of his profits for the same period. At the time the corporate tax rates for the three main countries in which Murdoch operates - Australia, the United States and the UK - were 36%, 35% and 30%.

How many hospitals, homes and schools could have been built if Murdoch had paid his taxes like everyone else? Instead he avoids tax... and blames destitute asylum seekers for Britain's ills.

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SEEKERS

### ARE ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS ‘SWAMPING THE UK’?

An opinion poll last year showed the public overestimates the number of asylum-seekers in the UK by a factor of 10 - which means people think there are 1000% more asylum seekers in Britain than are really here.

After years of anti-asylum press stories, British people believe on average that the UK has 23 per cent of the world's refugees. The real figure is below 2%.

### ARE IMMIGRANTS DRAINING BRITAIN’S RESOURCES?

The Government's own figures show that migrants and refugees make a huge overall contribution to national wealth. They made a net contribution of around £2.5 billion to income tax in 1999-2000. This means they bring in £800 million a year more than the cost of running the entire asylum and immigration system.

### ARE ASYLUM SEEKERS JUST ON THE MAKE? ARE THEY MAINLY BOGUS?

If so, they'd come from any poor country, not just ones where there is war and persecution. But the countries asylum seekers come from closely follows the pattern of wars, conflicts and repression around the world.

In 2002-2003 they mainly came from Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Zimbabwe. In the 1990s it was the Balkans. In the 1970s it was south east Asia. In the 1940s it was Poland.

The only thing these states have in common is war and repression. There is no other common cause of mass movements of people seeking asylum.

### AREN'T THEY MAINLY ILLEGAL?

No - there is no such thing as an illegal or bogus asylum seeker. Under the 1951 Convention on Refugees, which the UK has signed, anyone has the right to apply for asylum in the UK, and to stay here until there is a final decision on their application. Stories about “illegal” and “bogus” asylum seekers are designed to make you think that they have done something wrong by even applying.

### DOES BRITAIN TAKE MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE?

Far from it. Britain is 32nd in a worldwide league table of countries taking asylum seekers. The countries with the highest numbers are all poor, developing countries.

Pakistan has most refugees, with over 2 million. Then comes Iran with over 1.8 million - over 27 for every 1000 inhabitants.

Even in Europe, Britain comes eighth for the number of applicants for asylum per 1000 inhabitants - after Austria, Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Belgium. When you take size of population and the wealth of the countries into account, Britain comes tenth in Europe.

### BUT DON'T MANY ASYLUM SEEKERS USE FALSE DOCUMENTS?

Of course. A moment's thought shows why. False documents are essential to get away from a repressive regime like the Taliban's or Saddam Hussein's. That's why Article 31 of the 1951 Convention on Refugees prohibits governments from penalising refugees who use false documents.

### AREN'T ASYLUM SEEKERS JUST ON THE MAKE?

Then how come one in three applications succeed, even though the government keeps toughening up the rules to keep people out? This means these people were able to prove that they were being persecuted by oppressive regimes, despite very restrictive rules. And half of all applicants are found to be in need of some kind of humanitarian protection.

### BUT THEY MUST BE ABUSING THE WELFARE SYSTEM?

Hardly. Asylum seekers get just £37.77 a week - 30% below the poverty line. They are not allowed to claim other benefits.

### ARE THEY PUSHING UP COUNCIL TAX?

No. Services for asylum seekers are not paid for out of local taxes.

### DON'T ASYLUM SEEKERS AND MIGRANTS CAUSE CRIME?

Despite the poverty asylum seekers are forced to live in, there is no evidence that refugees and asylum seekers are more likely than other people to commit crimes. This is backed up by a report from the Association of Chief Police Officers. People trying to find protection from victimisation in their home country are likely to become victims of crime in the UK.

### ARE ASYLUM SEEKERS CAUSING UNEMPLOYMENT?

No. In fact few are even allowed to work. This is despite the fact that the UK's working population is declining and that the education and health services are crying out for staff. The EU estimates that Europe needs 1.6 million new workers a year.

### AREN'T THEY TAKING CHEAP JOBS AND UNDERCUTTING WAGES?

Some take casual work or jobs “off the books” - because of poverty and the ban on working. This means some are paid below the national minimum wage. If they were allowed to work legally, they would fall within the minimum wage and there would be no downward pressure on other workers' pay. The same papers that blame them for undercutting wages, like the Express, the Mail and the Star, actually opposed the minimum wage in the first place and are always against trade unions fighting to improve workers' pay and conditions.

### SURELY THERE’S NOT ENOUGH HOUSING TO GO ROUND?

The shortage of affordable housing is a real problem in Britain, but it's not caused by asylum seekers or migrants. It is caused by developers building profitable luxury flats and other schemes instead of decent cheap accommodation. Consecutive Tory and Labour governments have restricted the ability of local councils to build new homes making this worse. Last year only three units of new housing were built for every 1,000 people, the lowest level of new construction since 1945. If every asylum seeker left the country, there would still be a housing crisis.

### HOUSING - THE REAL PROBLEM

Over a third of council housing has been privatised

In 2000 to 2001, 53,000 English council properties were sold off - only 18,000 homes were built for affordable renting. In London, 11,182 were sold and only 3,000 built.

Homes sold off are not replaced because councils are only allowed to keep a quarter of the money from sales for repairs and new building.

This makes a mockery of the idea that asylum seekers cause the strain on social housing.

### AREN'T THEY DRAINING RESOURCES FROM THE NHS AND ADDING TO WAITING LISTS?

No. Migrants have made a massive contribution to the NHS from its start in 1948. Today, 23% of doctors and 47% of nurses were born outside the UK. Many nurses were trained in their countries of origin, paid for by the taxpayers of poor nations like Zambia and Nigeria.

Asylum seekers and migrants do not block doctors' waiting lists. GPs are allowed to refuse any new patients if their lists are full. Asylum seekers that are refused by GPs have to go to the Accident and Emergency ward at their nearest hospital if they need treatment- which is far more expensive.

### HEALTH - THE REAL PROBLEM

According to the treasury's own website, Britain's health spending as a share of gross domestic product is lower than in any other similar country

In 1998 UK total health spending was 6.8 per cent of GDP, compared with an EU average of 7.9 per cent and an income-weighted average of 8.4 per cent.

A report by the Office of Health Economics (OHE) revealed that the UK spends £970 per person on health - compared to £1,400 in France and £1,700 in Germany. A review of 30 developed countries revealed that globally only Mexico, Turkey, Korea, Ireland and Luxembourg spends less than we do on health provisions.

This dispels the myth that asylum seekers are the reason for the drain on NHS resources.

### BUT I READ THAT THEY BRING DISEASE AND AIDS INTO THE UK...

The General Medical Council says there is no evidence that asylum seekers pose a threat to public health or that they are more likely to carry dangerous diseases than anyone else.

Press stories about TB are propaganda. The British Medical Association has concluded that substandard housing and poverty in the UK cause TB among asylum-seekers.

Some infectious diseases do of course come into the country from overseas. This would be so even if all immigration were stopped because millions of UK citizens travel abroad on holiday and business every year.

### THE ASYLUM SYSTEM CAN BE USED BY TERRORISTS

It's not surprising that there is no evidence for this. No terrorist would choose to go through the highly regulated and controlled asylum process.

### SO WHY ARE SO MANY PEOPLE AGAINST ASYLUM?

Because politicians haven't countered the massive press campaign. They are either trying to use asylum fears to get elected, like the Tories, or are too scared of the millionaire press barons to stand up for the real interests of the people (like New Labour).

That's why so many people's ideas are so far from the actual facts. 48% believe that “few asylum seekers are genuine” and 58% of 15-to-24-year-olds believe they do not make a positive contribution to life in the UK (MORI Poll, June 2003).

Despite the propaganda, though, an overwhelming majority - 78% - agreed that Britain “should continue to let in people seeking asylum if their claim is genuine”.

### THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ASYLUM SEEKERS IS NOT RACIST, THOUGH, IS IT?

Yes it is. The press campaign is just one stage in a long history of attacks on immigrants, using inflammatory terms like “scroungers” and “parasites”, “swamping” the country in a “flood”. The tabloids back up their lies with cartoons showing refugees as dirty, lazy, violent criminals. They did the same to earlier generations of refugees and other immigrants to this country.

### ISN'T THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST ASYLUM SEEKERS STANDING UP FOR ORDINARY WORKING CLASS PEOPLE?

No - it's an attack on the interests of working class people. The campaign against asylum seekers won't lead to a single affordable house being built, a single hospital waiting list being reduced, a single school being built.

The campaign relies on ignorance and fear. Polls show that working class people in integrated areas show less hostility to migrants and refugees than they do in all-white areas.

Anti-asylum propaganda diverts attention away from the real causes of poverty, bad housing, underfunded hospitals and schools. It blames working class people from other countries for the problems here. It divides working people against one another and weakens movements to change things for the better.

That's why it's trade unions and the working class movement that often takes the lead in opposing racism. Some unions - like UNISON and the FBU- are producing their own articles to answer the press lies.

## What can we do?

Answer the lies. Show this leaflet to your friends, family and workmates.

Order extra copies of this leaflet from us.

Send donations to help us produce extra copies - every penny helps.

Join us distributing this leaflet at your local shopping centre, on your estate, at work, at football grounds and concerts.

**You are being lied to... it's time to answer back!**