



Something of the white about him

The Tories immigration policy isn't just xenophobic, argues Gary Andrews - it's also a gift to the BNP

One of the more worrying trends to emerge from the recent General Election was the number of votes the British National Party polled across the country. Let's not mince words here, the BNP are essentially an odious fascist organisation that uses clever window-dressing to disguise the racism in all of their policies.

Although a good number of people will see through this deception and recognise the policies for what they actually are, a worrying number of people (roughly a thousand or over in each constituency) clearly have been taken in by these 'common man' claims and have voted BNP. Only a minority of the votes were actually cast by the dyed-in-the-wool fascists that make up the membership of this minority party.

There is one main reason why the BNP has attracted so many votes: Immigration. And the reason so many people are concerned about immigration can be firmly laid at the doorstep of two men: Conservative Leader Michael Howard and his director of strategy Lynton Crosby.

Immigration should not be an election issue. There are far more pressing

things to deal with. The state of the NHS, the funding crisis in universities, the environment and anti-social behaviour are just a few of the issues that should be given greater import. But ask most people what the main issue the Tories were campaigning on and they'll say immigration.

Let's debunk a few myths here. Immigrants aren't the biggest threat to our way of life since Communism/Hitler/insert other folk-devil here. If somebody is an immigrant that means they've been approved to live in this country and the government are happy that they satisfy the necessary criteria for living over here.

The same can be said for asylum seekers (and let's not confuse these with illegal immigrants). Once somebody's application for asylum has been approved then they are no longer an asylum seeker but a refugee. If their application is rejected they are no longer an asylum seeker but a person who does not have permission to be in the country.

Statistically, immigrants and asylum seekers are more likely to be the victims rather than the perpetrators of crime, and second generation immigrants often benefit the economy more than non-immigrants.

But then it's always nice to have a scapegoat. Seeing as both immigrants and asylum seekers often have little chance of redressing the lies told about them by politicians or national newspapers there's more chance the public will be more receptive to the Conservative party line: Immigrants = evil.

The Tories' policies border on racism and are merely fanning the flames of fear to cover up their lack of coherent solutions to the problems facing Britain today. After all, the thousands of immigrants claiming benefits are clearly crippling our country more than an illegal war that we had no business going into, right?

However, the rest of the



Conservatives' policies are close to Labour's and the party is still seen as incapable of governing properly by many. Their more right-wing inclined supporters will nod their heads in agreement with the immigration line but won't actually vote Tory, instead

The BNP may be a fascist party, but at least they're clear and focused about their aims

preferring to find another party that appears more focused in its aims as opposed to one that leaps on any passing bandwagon. The BNP may be a fascist party with extreme right-wing policies, but at least they're clear and focused about their aims and objectives.

In a way we should be thankful that parties such as UKIP and Veritas exist, otherwise there's a chance the BNP would have polled even higher in some constituencies. But thousands of disaffected Tory voters have clearly deserted to the BNP because Michael Howard has pushed the immigration issue so far forward in an effort to appeal to our less-than-savoury xenophobic inclinations. In that respect he's succeeded, as immigration clearly has Middle England terrified.

What he hasn't succeeded in doing is to suggest credible alternatives to deal with this mythical problem. His policies on immigration are designed to sound liberal enough to woo the open-minded floating voter, which doesn't sit well with those who want a more hard-line stance, a stance that the BNP provides.

By putting immigration at the top of the agenda, it also appeals to the right-wing press, like *The Sun* and *The Daily Express*, who demonise immigrants and asylum seekers in an effort to sell more papers and push their own brand of racism upon the public.

Michael Howard talks up immigra-

tion, it makes headlines in these papers. Readers will take most newspaper stories with a pinch of salt, if you tell people often enough that there's a problem then they'll start to believe it. Indeed, some *Express* front pages and editorials don't differ greatly from the BNP leaflets.

These same papers will then come over sanctimoniously horrified when the BNP increases its vote whilst at the same time publishing stories that play into the hands of the party - stories that are often generated by the Conservatives.

So farewell then Michael Howard. Your lasting legacy hasn't been to increase the Tory share of the popular vote, which barely differs from the performance under Hague, nor has it been to make the Conservatives a credible electoral force.

Instead your main contribution to this election has been to scare many of your ordinary supporters into voting for a fascist, racist party, thereby increasing their size of the vote and their importance in national politics, all because of a problem that is simply a creation of your campaign team.



GRIFFIN: BNP Leader

Identity crisis in the Tory heartlands

By Sofie Jenkinson

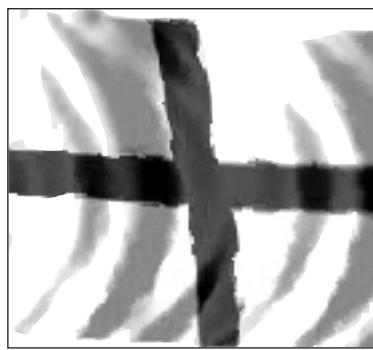
In the wee hours of Friday morning the Conservatives reared their ugly heads again on the Welsh map of representatives for the first time since 1997. It gradually became obvious that this was a situation mirrored throughout the rest of the UK, an unsurprising result considering the growing disillusionment with Blair's government.

Take a simple glance at the map of UK representatives and it's not difficult to see that England is the most right-wing province of them all. It is particularly interesting to focus on the capital cities; not even a whiff of a blue tie in Cardiff or Edinburgh, not to mention the surrounding areas, whereas London appears to be surrounded. So is it just that the Welsh and the Scots are more liberal?

Upon scanning the pages of *The Guardian* on polling day, I stumbled across a piece by Timothy Garton Ash. "Vote smart today and you can assist the strange birth of liberal Britain" he urged from the black and white pages.

This election, as everybody kept observing, was very much a three-party race, two of which were of liberal allegiance. As Mr Garton Ash pointed out in his article, the UK does actually possess a liberal majority these days. The problem, however, is that there are now two parties to choose from, which therefore splits this majority.

So this raises the question of why, when there are so many liberals amongst us, is there still so much blue on the map? Maybe it is just a matter of voting tactically, which does imply that Wales and Scotland are either better at this or are simply more liberal.



England is the most right wing province of them all

Some people have suggested that it is a lack of national identity on the part of the English which causes them to cling to the Conservative party, steeped in tradition, and allows them to accept such intolerant parties as the British National Party and the newly formed Veritas. This concept certainly goes a long way to explain the apparent willingness of some of the English to accept such rigid and naïve immigration policies, usually before even considering the mainly positive effect of immigration both socially and economically.

The Welsh and the Scots however have a deep and overflowing passion for their countries, you can see it in their eyes. This does not necessarily make them more tolerant but it may have something to do with their perception of being 'minorities' in the UK themselves.

The English never seem to match up to this cultural enthusiasm, unless violence is used as its measure.

Some people went into those voting booths knowing full well that their actions might cause that particular seat to fall to a party less interested in education, health care and equality and more interested in conserving an out of date culture and desperately clinging to a certain 'identity'.

If enough people had turned out and voted with the kind of intelligence Mr Garton Ash was referring to then maybe our society would finally have been freed from the shackles of tradition and this identity crisis.

Maybe England could have finally been able to get on with simply being a tolerant, vibrant and exciting multi-cultural place to live.