



Britain First is small



Dowson and Golding



Britain First: fascist heirs of the BNP

Straight from the BNP

BRITAIN FIRST is a splinter group from the fascist British National Party.

It is very small, but has gained a worryingly high profile, with leader Paul Golding appearing on mainstream TV shows such as the BBC's *Daily Politics*.

The BNP has in recent years been the main fascist threat in Britain, but after a long campaign by anti-fascists, it has crumbled and looks to be finished. In July leader Nick Griffin—who lost his seat in the European Parliament at the elections in May—was dumped by the crisis-stricken party.

Griffin's BNP aimed to hide its real politics, but it is a white-power, Holocaust denying fascist party. It became riven with in-fighting as senior figures fell out with Griffin and left to form their own organisations, including Britain First. Britain First comes straight from the BNP, with its foul politics.

Ex-BNP leaders

Britain First was set up by former BNP communications officer Golding—who was also a BNP councillor between 2009 and 2011 in Sevenoaks, Kent—and Jim Dowson, who ran the BNP's substantial fundraising operation.

Dowson has criminal convictions that include possession of weapons and is well connected with Loyalist organisations in Northern Ireland, where he was involved in organising Loyalist "flag protests".

A handful of other senior BNP activists

followed Golding and Dowson into Britain First. Britain First also has links with ex-activists of the English Defence League, the racist and fascist street thugs who have particularly targeted Muslims. These include Paul Pitt, a former EDL regional officer who now has his own splinter group, the South East Alliance.

Squads on the street

Britain First has gained notoriety through sending squads of its so-called "defence force" of activists, kitted out in paramilitary-style in a uniform of jacket and flat cap, to stage "invasions" of local mosques. Its squads, complete with armoured jeep, have also staged provocative "patrols" in areas with large Muslim populations.

These actions have been small scale—Britain First cannot mobilise more than a handful of activists at a time—but they are aimed at intimidating Muslim communities and garnering publicity. The mosques and local communities have refused to be intimidated, but sections of the media have been worryingly ready to give airtime to the small band of racists and fascists.

Facebook presence

Britain First also has a very big Facebook presence, out of all proportion to its real forces. It puts out streams of often innocent seeming images aimed at exploiting people's sympathy, such as

pictures of murdered soldier Lee Rigby or denunciations of cruelty to dogs.

Many people like and share these items without knowing where they originate—but the Facebook presence helps Britain First to look bigger and more influential than it is.

Standing in elections

Like the BNP, Britain First aims to stand in elections. It put candidates up in Scotland and Wales at the European election, although they got derisory votes—1% in Scotland and just 0.9% in Wales.

The Electoral Commission was forced to apologise to the family of Lee Rigby for failing to prevent Britain First from exploiting his name by including it as part of their ballot paper description.

Bust-up at the top

In July 2014, Dowson suddenly quit Britain First, citing disagreement with the strategy of "mosque invasions". It is not yet clear what impact this will have on the party and how far it will be able to sustain its activities.

But anti-racists and anti-fascists should keep an eye out. It is important that Britain First or similar fascist groups are not allowed to grow. If the party stands in future elections or attempts to build on its "mosque invasions" to demonstrate in numbers, we will need to be ready to mobilise against it.

