

BNPGATE:

The Andi Ali interview

Introduction

Imagine what it must be like to be a journalist and given a story which seems so incredible to be true that you don't for one moment believe it, but then, when you do some digging, you find out that not only is it true, but the police, Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), Civil Service Commissioners (CSC), and Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) have gone out of their way to hush it up. Well if you can then perhaps you might understand what it was like for me when Andi Ali a former Civil Servant at the Tax Credit Office in Preston came to me with one such tale. When he told me that Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs had misused thousands of pounds of public money by charging him with being an extremist for heckling the British National Party (BNP) at a peaceful protest in Burnley, after his details had been put on a Neo Nazi hit list called Redwatch, and after he had been stabbed outside Downing Street and left for dead, I thought he was joking, having a laugh, but it soon became clear it wasn't. Fair enough, I've been a journalist for over thirty years, and should not have rushed to judgement, but this story seemed so far fetched to be true, what else could I do. I found myself standing up, waving my finger at him and saying, look here Mr Ali, the BNP are a racist vile party who wants to remove all non whites from these shores, as well as Jews, no government department would label you an extremist for heckling those Neo Nazis at a peaceful protest

I should have listened to my old editor Dominic Mason in the 1970's, who told me when I was a young journalist in Fleet Street that some stories are so bizarre they must be true because nobody could possibly make them up. Three years on, and many of the Civil Servants who

testified against Andi, or found him guilty of being an extremist for heckling the BNP, have been rewarded with promotion and better pay. Yet Andi was sacked, marched out the building, and treated like a common criminal after raising concerns of malpractice within Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs under the Civil Service Code, and Public Information Disclosure Act 1998 (PIDA). My head still shakes in disbelief. The story of how Andi Ali became the first Civil Servant to be dismissed for heckling a Neo Nazi party is a national disgrace which needs to be investigated. The victimisation he was subjected to, was unacceptable, racially motivated and unlawful.

Facing unemployment as he did, at the relatively young age of forty, and not long after he was diagnosed with prosaic arthritis - he never stopped claiming that there was nothing extremist about heckling the BNP. More importantly, however, he was determined to pursue the matter with the Civil Service Commissioners, whose job it is to ensure that Civil Servants behaved in accordance with the standards of behaviour outlined in the Civil Service Code, and which under paragraph 26 states that staff "must not suffer a detriment as a consequence of raising a concern". I asked him when he was still waiting for the Civil Service Commissioners to make a decision what he would do if they continued to try and brush the matter under the carpet when I last saw him about a year ago, and his answer was simple. "I will take it to the Prime Minister" he said, "the Prime Minister is the head of the Civil Service and he has a duty to investigate this matter", - and I must admit I thought he was joking until I bumped into him a week ago and discovered that is precisely what he had done.

Though Andi was able to convince me of the truth of his story early on, by producing internal HMRC documents, letters and e-mails, it was when I read classified Civil Service transcripts of the investigation and saw how HMRC investigators had admitted, even boasted, to

other HMRC investigators of switching off tapes against standard procedure, and encouraging staff to put in complaints against Andi before switching the tape back on and asking them if they had anything to say, that convinced me the most. That was a despicable thing to do and when you've read this interview I conducted with Andi only last week, I sure you will agree with me that this was not the only thing that HMRC said and did that was despicable. The Prime Minister must take action and he must take action now, to launch an investigation in to what is fast becoming known as BNPGATE.

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