THE BNP ON QUESTION TIME

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Category: Politics

Last night, Nick Griffin of the British National Party appeared on the BBC's flagship discussion programme, Question Time.

The programme itself was actually rather dull. Almost all of the questions concerned the BNP and it's policies. It would have been much better to have had a more wide ranging discussion around the issues of the day; Afghanistan, the postal strike, the economy etc. That way we could have seen the shallowness of the BNP as a political force. As it was, Griffin failed to explain why he had denied the reality of the holocaust and defended a leader of the KKK while attacking Islam. It wasn't his finest hour.

However, the big question was whether Griffin should have been given airtime in this way. A lot of people said that as a racist and fascist he should not be allowed a platform on the BBC. The news bulletin immediately before the programme showed scenes of protesters trying to storm the BBC to prevent the programme from being recorded. I have to say, that I am never impressed by people who want to use violence to stop free speech. Iain Dale had a good comment on this yesterday. For my part, there are three good reasons why it was right to allow Griffin his hour on TV.

- He is an elected official, a member of the European Parliament. Around a million people voted BNP in the last round of elections. I may not like their views, but they are a part of the system and have a right to be heard in the same was as other minority parties have a right.
- Allowing him time on TV allows us to see how ill thought through and small minded he is. It was a delight to see the good humoured and utterly calm Bonnie Greer demolish so many of his arguments. It's a shame that the elected politicians didn't do as well.
- I also have to claim self interest. As a Christian, I have views that many people find offensive. I believe in ultimate truth, I believe that all people, regardless of race and creed are rebels against God and in need of salvation through Christ. There are those who find my views almost as objectionable as those of Nick Griffin and if we are to stop him speaking in public; how long will it be before other voices are silenced.

Perhaps the most concerning thing from my point of view was that Nick Griffin referred to himself as a Christian and talked about the need to preserve a Christian nation. It would be hard to imagine anything further from the multiracial, multinational, multicultural church of Jesus Christ than the narrow minded, nationally biased ideology of the BNP. The heart of the Gospel is about Christ breaking down human boundaries and reconciling all nations to himself without a separation between Jew and Gentile (or English, or Polish or...). Jonathan Bartley has some interesting reflections on this question - and some alarming statistics about the religious affiliation of some BNP members here.

In amidst all of the furore surrounding Question Time, very few people have commented on what must have been the most bizarre moment on British TV last night. On the ten o'clock news bulletin, there was a very well done piece on the four year drought in Kenya and its impact on the Turkana

people. These incredibly poor people are having to sell of their last remaining animals in order to keep body and soul together. From that item, the news sequÃ©d straight into a piece on giving expensive designer handbags to the wives of FIFA officials as an inducement to get them to stage the 2018 Word Cup in the UK.

Nick Griffin shows one ugly side of life in the UK, but our indifference to the suffering of others, while we enjoy the trappings of a rich lifestyle is a far greater indictment on the values of our society.