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A BLACK AND WHITE CASE

by ANNA BRIGGS

ANWAR DITTA was born in Britain in 1953. But she had the "misfortune" to return to her father's native Pakistan at the age of 10, there to marry Shuja ud Din and to give birth to her three children, Kamran (10), Imran (8) and Saima (7). Finding it difficult to get a job in Pakistan, Shuja ud Din arrived in Britain in 1974 and found work. Anwar joined him in 1975, leaving the children with relatives so that they could be sure of providing a proper home for them. "I didn't know that I could bring my children and the Home Office would have provided them with accommodation, money and everything" says Anwar. "If I had known that I wouldn't have been going through all this trouble now".

FIVE YEARS

For five years the couple have been trying to get permission for their children to join them from Pakistan. But the Home Office, first under a Labour Government, now under a Tory one, has thrown up a smokescreen of reasons why they should not come. For most of that time they denied that the children *were* Anwar and Shuja's.

Anwar has supplied extensive documentary evidence that the children *are* hers, and even though the Home Office now accepts this, she lost an appeal against the decision not to admit the children last summer, and the Home Office declared the case closed.

WIDE-SCALE

But a wide-scale campaign growing around the case does not regard it as closed. Though Anwar's own MP (Cyril Smith) has declined to take it further, a local Labour MP is helping Anwar. Thousands of people in the Lancashire area have demonstrated and signed petitions on her behalf. Timothy Raison, the Home Office minister responsible for immigration, has promised to look at the case again and give his answer in February.

FOR OTHERS

"I'm doing it for my children of course," says Anwar "but also for thousands of other people. I know two people in Rochdale who've been trying to get their children for eight or nine years and have just given up. We're being denied the right to live a normal family life. We worry all the time and spend all our spare time and money on the case."

Anwar was born IN BRITAIN six years after I was. Like me, she has four children (her youngest, Samera, born in Rochdale, is with her). I try to imagine what it would be like if I had gone abroad and given birth to Nicholas, Daniel and Rowan, and then was denied the right to bring them back to the country of my birth. I can't. But the difference is, I'm white.

If you want to help, contact Anwar Ditta Defence Committee, 127 Crawford Street, Rochdale, Lancs (0706-39832). They'd welcome financial help, people to organise meetings with Anwar as speaker, to take round petitions, sell cards and badges.

