

Asians in storm over the 'Bradford 12'

by DAVID LEIGH

IN THE WAKE of Britain's urban riots prosecuting authorities are assembling the ingredients of a controversial trial in Bradford after the arrest of 12 young Asians charged with helping to make two crates of petrol bombs.

In two so-far undisclosed decisions, West Yorkshire police have successfully argued against bail being granted in the High Court on the grounds among others that political demonstrations are taking place and that the case is being used as a political platform by certain elements of the Bradford community.

At the same time, the Director of Public Prosecutions in London is asking the Attorney-General, Sir Michael Havers, to replace the existing charges with new charges under the 1883 Explosives Act.

The police round-ups focused on a small group of young Bradford radicals who style themselves the 'United Black Youth League.' The league was formed earlier this year after local campaigns against the Home Office over a number of deportation orders including a successful campaign on behalf of Mrs Anwar Ditta, whose children were not allowed to join her in this country.

They also supported a

West Indian college security officer, Mr Gary Pemberton, charged by West Yorkshire police with theft and assault on police and eventually cleared on appeal.

Nine of the 12 have been held in prisons or remand centres since their arrest seven weeks ago, and refused bail. Three eventually obtained bail on appeal to the High Court on condition they attended no political meetings.

At the most recent High Court attempt last week to obtain bail for others, it was refused after police prosecuting lawyers had referred to anti-police literature having been distributed and demonstrations mounted outside the court at remand hearings. They said there has also been a demonstration outside the Director of Public Prosecution's office.

The Bail Act does not allow as a reason for keeping untried defendants in prison that their supporters are mounting a political campaign asserting their innocence. The trial of the 12 is unlikely until next year.

But since the arrests, local campaigners have begun a widening campaign among what is one of Britain's largest and oldest-established immigrant communities, in which they describe the charges as a political attack on the coloured community by the police.

Today, representatives of

the standing conference of Pakistani organisations, the Indian Workers Association, the Black Peoples Alliance and the Asian Youth Movement, are meeting in Bradford in the hope of launching a national campaign among coloured people.

None of the evidence said to implicate those arrested has yet been tested in court, although police have said in bail applications that they have evidence the 38 petrol-filled milk-bottles might have been for use against shops, skinheads and police on the night of Saturday, 11 July.

That night, the week after riots in Southall against skinheads, and in Toxteth, mainly against police, there were minor clashes between police and small groups of black and white youths in Bradford city centre.

The following week, police say they discovered petrol bombs on waste ground. Two weeks later, they arrested the 12. Police say the decision to make the bombs was made at a meeting on 11 July.

All those accused deny the charges, and no petrol bombs were actually thrown in Bradford. But the police objections to bail and the plan to bring charges under the Explosives Act are providing new fuel for supporters of some of the 12 to address Britain's coloured community with the language of 'insurrection' and self-defence.