

**ZAFAR
IS
INNOCENT**



PICKETS gather outside Sheffield Crown Court to protest at the wrongful conviction of Zafar Iqbal.

Conviction overturned

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AN ASIAN man fined £100 two months ago for carrying an offensive weapon won his appeal against conviction and sentence yesterday.

A picket of 30 from Asian organisations around Sheffield and Workers Against Racism gathered with banners outside the city's Crown Court, to protest against the wrongful conviction of factory worker Zafar Iqbal.

Judge Henham, who heard the appeal made for Zafar by barrister Sibghat Kadri, said there was not enough evidence to convince him the hammer handle found in the 23-year-old's car was offensive in itself.

After the hearing, Zafar's supporters said the case was typical of the way police harass blacks in Sheffield but leave whites alone, even if they are in the same group.

Zafar Iqbal was taken to West Bar police station for questioning

By SHEENA HASTINGS

after he and some white skinhead youths had been seen by police sitting in Zafar's car in Pond Street one night in February, 1983.

Police searched the car and found the steel and rubber hammer handle on the floor of the boot and a flail used in martial arts inside a sports bag.

Useful

Zafar was interviewed and said he had found the handle on land beside a school and thought it could be used to make a tool of some kind.

The police called the handle a cosh and said it could be used for anything, including an offensive weapon. Zafar said he worked at a factory where it would be easy to adapt the heavy bar of metal into a useful tool.

It was not until a few months later that police called Zafar in for a verbal caution. He refused to go because he felt he had nothing to answer. The police then decided to prosecute.

Mr Kadri said: "If this young man had wanted to risk his good character and join the skinhead fraternity, he already had an adequate weapon in the shape of the flail."

After the successful appeal hearing, Zafar, of Hinde House Lane, Firvale, Sheffield, said: "People who are racist use offensive weapons but are never charged with anything. We have been hit with bricks and bottles and worse by whites, but police turn a blind eye."

A spokesman for the Asian Youth Movement said: "We don't feel the hearing brought out the true issue, which is that white people would not have been harassed in this way."