



British racism: the road to 1984

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CLASS**

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Editorial

Two years and an election ago the youth of the blighted inner cities of Britain rebelled against their lot and burnt down their impossible environs. But the gains of that rebellion have been distributed to the black petit-bourgeoisie and the police – to ensure that the never-employed shall not rebel again.

To the former has been entrusted the software of control, the programming of black youth – through ethnic media, ethnic education, ethnic hand-outs; to the latter the control, hard and soft, of all dissidence, black and white. Except that, now, information technology blurs the line between the hard and the soft, coercion and cooption, turns social service into social surveillance, neighbours into spies, and makes policemen of us all.

The schemes are there already – in the Police Bill, for instance, which puts the people within easy reach of the police and the police beyond the reach of the people; in the joint H.O./DOE/DHSS/DES and W.O. Draft Circular, August 1983, which invites ‘police, local agencies and departments’ to draw upon their ‘shared potential’ to control crime, and in the tell-on-your-neighbour and defend-your-property programmes known as Neighbourhood Watch and Property Marking. And the political will is there – in every throbbing vein of monetarism, of capitalism in retreat.

The corporate state is here; 1984 is at hand.

And nowhere is that more visible than in the relationship of the state to the black communities. Cecil Gutzmore examines that relationship in respect of the criminalisation of whole communities and of the Afro-Caribbean community in particular. Confronted by the growing rebellion of the young, the state has created a bogus category ‘black

youth' and, aided by the police, the media and sundry academics, fitted it out with a new crime, 'mugging', and then extended such criminality to the whole community. It is a strategy which Gutzmore locates in the larger game plan of crisis capitalism to blunt the political will of the working class as a whole.

Central to that plan of course are the police, whose powers have steadily increased under monetarism's aegis, till now, in the Police Bill, they assume such proportions as to redefine the nature of policing itself – from protecting society against the offender to putting the citizen at risk to the police. The evidence for such a judgement, argues Lee Bridges in 'Policing the Urban Wasteland', already exists, *de facto*, *vis-à-vis* the black community. The *de jure* powers will extend it to the whole of society and mark a stage to the police state.

But 1984 also means the incorporation of more and more state agencies in the policing and controlling of inner-city populations. In 'Psychiatry and the Corporate State' the Black Health Workers and Patients Group show how the 'caring' agencies of welfare are being used to coerce the black communities and, conversely, how the agents of coercion – police, courts and prisons – are being increasingly involved in 'welfare' itself. This argument is then taken up in 'Notes and documents' and reinforced with examples from schooling and childcare, revealing in the process the growing involvement of teachers in policing and of social workers in the punishment of 'bad' parents.

To identify the problems is to begin to deal with them – to work out plans, programmes, strategies to overcome them. And it is as a contribution to this effort that we publish A. Sivanandan's talk, 'Challenging racism: strategies for the '80s', to the Greater London Council earlier this year. (The Conference at which it was given was the opening salvo of the GLC's campaign to make 1984 an anti-racist year.) We publish it as the introduction to this issue because, in arriving at anti-racist strategies through an analysis of black and working-class struggle, the essay provides the necessary framework for connecting the issues raised elsewhere in the journal.

It is, finally, as a matter of strategy too – this time specifically in the field of education and, even more specifically, in language teaching – that Chris Searle challenges the ethnic ghettoisation of language and argues instead for the development of a common language that unites the commonly exploited and oppressed.

A. SIVANANDAN

Introduction

Challenging racism: strategies for the '80s

This is a revised version of a talk given on 12 March 1983 at the Greater London Council Ethnic Minorities Unit Consultation on Challenging Racism.

I am delighted that I have been asked to speak here today because what I want to say has to be said here, under the auspices of the GLC's Ethnic Minorities Unit – here in this very temple of ethnicity – because I come as a heretic, as a disbeliever in the efficacy of ethnic policies and programmes to alter, by one iota, the monumental and endemic racism of this society.

On the contrary. What ethnicity has done is to mask the problem of racism and weaken the struggle against it. But then, that is precisely what it was meant to do. It was the riposte of the system – in the 1960s and 1970s – to the struggles of black people, both Afro-Caribbean and Asian, both in the workplace and in the community, as a people for a class – extra-parliamentary and extra-trade union. It was the riposte of a system that was afraid that the black working-class struggles would begin to politicise the working-class as a whole. It was, in particular, the riposte of the class-collaborationist Labour governments of Wilson and Callaghan who sought in ethnic pluralism to undermine the underlying class aspect of black struggle and black politics. But the massive onslaught of Thatcherite Toryism on blacks and the working

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class has shown Labour – or, at least, the Labour councils in the inner cities – the error of their ways and the inadequacies of multiculturalism to combat the new racism. There is room for manoeuvre here, for a war of position if you like – and it is up to the black communities to return ethnic struggle to black struggle and socialism to Labour.

To work out the more immediate and short-term strategies, therefore, we need to go back into our history, black history, in this country and look at the changing nature of racism, the corresponding changes in the sites and locales of struggle – and in the process take a closer look at how the language of struggle was changed from anti-racism to multiculturalism.

Racism does not stay still; it changes shape, size, contours, purpose, function – with changes in the economy, the social structure, the system and, above all, the challenges, the resistances to that system. And to understand the dynamics of this racism and its relationship to the class forces in society, I want to take you back to the 1950s and 1960s.

Racialism versus racism

We came here when a war-torn Britain needed all the labour it could lay its hands on. It had stock-piled, through exploitation and another racism, whole reserves of cheap black labour in the colonies and it was inevitable that the countries in which they were stock-piled should supply Britain with the labour it needed for its factories and services. So that what we came to in the early period of the 1950s was a kind of laissez-faire discrimination and a racialism, a racial prejudice, which carried over from the colonial period. It was not structured, institutionalised – though colour was written into discrimination: the system discriminates in order to exploit, in the process of exploiting, it discriminates. Because Britain needed all the labour it could get, the discrimination that obtained was in terms not of getting jobs but rather in our social life, in housing, schooling and so on. We faced a racial discrimination which depended on market forces. Colour only gets written into legislation via the Immigration Act of 1962; and from then on it begins to get institutionalised. And that is a crucial difference: the difference between the racialism of the earlier period and the racism we begin to confront from 1962 onwards. It is a difference abjured in the higher reaches of sociology and by avant garde ‘theoretical practitioners’ of the left. But it is a distinction we need to make if we are going to understand how to sort out the struggles against people’s attitudes and the power to act out those attitudes in social and political terms. It is an essential distinction to make for the purposes of practical struggles and, as you will see, a distinction that came out of struggle. People’s attitudes don’t mean a damn to me, but it matters to me if I can’t send my child to the school I want to send my child to, if I can’t

get the job for which I am qualified and so on. It is the acting out of racial prejudice and not racial prejudice itself that matters. The acting out of prejudice is discrimination, and when it becomes institutionalised in the power structure of this society, then we are dealing not with attitudes but with power. Racism is about power not about prejudice. That is what we learnt in the years of struggle in the 1960s – when we met it in the trade unions, on the shop-floor, in the community, at the ports of entry. We learnt it as we walked the streets, in the social and welfare services, in the health service – we learnt it everywhere. And inevitably our struggles involved all our peoples and all these areas.

Black infrastructure

In the workplace and the community, Afro-Caribbean and Asian, we were a community and a class, we closed ranks and took up each other's struggles. We had such a rich infrastructure of organisations, parties and self-help projects. Self-help was what we did, exactly, because we were outside mainstream society. We built a whole series of projects which grew out of organisations in the community. And all the parties, like the United Coloured People's Alliance, the Black Unity and Freedom Party, the Black Liberation Front, the Black Panthers, had their projects, newspapers, news-sheets, schools. Organisations went to the factories and the strikes were taken from place to place – strike committees up and down the country learning from one another – and learning in the process to weave from the differing but common traditions of our anti-colonial struggle a common struggle against racism. We related both to the struggles back home and the struggles here, the struggles then and the struggles now, the struggle of Gandhi and Nehru, of Nkrumah and Nyerere, James and Williams, of Du Bois and Garvey – and the ongoing struggles in Vietnam and 'Portuguese Africa', in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde – and the struggles for Black Power in the United States of America. They were all a part of our history – a beautiful massive texture that in turn strengthened the struggles here and fed back to the struggles there – and of course we were involved in the struggles of the oldest colony, Ireland. And *black* was a political colour.

Defensive struggles

But as the 1970s began to dawn and the recession began to bite, labour was being laid off. It was a period on the international scene when capital was moving to labour in Third World countries, instead of importing it to the metropolis. It was a period when Britain, like the rest of Europe, no longer needed cheap black labour. The Immigration Act of 1971 stopped all immigration dead, breaking up families and damaging the whole fabric of family life; the 'Sus' laws criminalised the young – and our priorities became separated. The Asian

community, by and large, was concerned to get their dependants in before the doors shut on them; and struggles had to be waged too against arbitrary arrests and deportations. And because these were legal issues, issues connected with the law, the Asian community tended to take them on in a very legal way, a defensive way, through law centres and defence committees – one-off committees which no longer collated and co-ordinated struggles. The concern of the Afro-Caribbean community, on the other hand, focused predominantly around issues like ‘Sus’ and the criminalisation of their young, police brutality and judicial bias. That is not to say that there were no struggles in the work-places (take Imperial Typewriters, STC or Perivale Güterman, for example) or that Afro-Caribbeans and Asians did not continue to make common cause. But we did not have the newspapers which would have coordinated those struggles, we did not have the political organisations which had produced the papers.

The infrastructure we had built up was being eroded. It was only the black women’s movement that continued from the 1970s and into the 1980s to hold together the black infrastructure. It was the women – both Afro-Caribbean and Asian – who were to continue to collate the struggles, to connect with Third World issues, to publicise and organise and, above all, uphold the unity between Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities.

Ethnicity blunts black struggle

At the same time, on the ideological level a new battle was being mounted by the state against *black* struggles whereby they could be broken down into their *ethnic* and, through that, their class components. Ethnicity was a tool to blunt the edge of black struggle, return ‘black’ to its constituent parts of Afro-Caribbean, Asian, African, Irish – and also, at the same time, allow the nascent black bourgeoisie, petit-bourgeoisie really, to move up in the system. Ethnicity de-linked black struggle – separating the West Indian from the Asian, the working-class black from the middle-class black. (And a certain politics on the black left itself was beginning to romanticise the youth, separating their struggle from those of their elders – destroying the continuum of the past, the present and the future.) Black, as a political colour, was finally broken down when government monies were used to fund community projects, destroying thereby the self-reliance and community cohesion that we had built up in the 1960s.

Ethnicity began life as a pluralist philosophy of integration – ‘equal opportunity accompanied by cultural diversity in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance’ – floated by the then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins in 1967 and taken up by the other Roy, Hattersley, and by all the other roys and girls of the labour movement, and transformed into ethnic policies and programmes by the pundits of the Community Relations

Commission, the Race Relations Board and the Runnymede Trust, aided by bourgeois sociologists and educationalists, and funded by the Home Office's Urban Aid Programme. Government monies for pluralist plays – the development of a parallel power structure for black people, separate development, bantustans – a strategy to keep race issues from contaminating class issues.

Where that pluralist philosophy was first put into effect – where it was formulated and defined – was in education – in the schools – precisely because it was there, among the young blacks, the 'second generation', that the next phase of revolt was fermenting. And the name of the game was multicultural education.

Now, there is nothing wrong with multiracial or multicultural education as such: it is good to learn about other races, about other people's cultures. It may even help to modify individual attitudes, correct personal biases. But that, as we stated in our evidence to the Rampton Committee on Education, is merely to tinker with educational methods and techniques and leave unaltered the whole racist structure of the educational system. And education itself comes to be seen as an adjustment process within a racist society and not as a force for changing the values that make that society racist. 'Ethnic minorities' do not suffer 'disabilities' because of 'ethnic differences' – as the brief of the Rampton Committee suggests – but because such differences are given a differential weightage in a racist hierarchy. Our concern, we pointed out, was not with multicultural, multi-ethnic education but with anti-racist education, which by its very nature would include the study of other cultures. Just to learn about other people's cultures is not to learn about the racism of one's own. To learn about the racism of one's own culture, on the other hand, is to approach other cultures objectively.

But multiculturalism has become the vogue; it gives the 'ethnic' teachers a leg up and it exculpates the whites: they now know about my culture, so they don't have to question their own. Worse – and this was demonstrated clearly in a confrontation we recently had with a group of head-teachers who stumbled on the Institute in the course of their multicultural expedition – they know more about my culture than I do, or think they do! And this gives them a new arrogance, based no longer on feelings of superiority about their culture but on their superior knowledge of mine. One sahib even tried to talk Hindi to me – and I don't even know the language.

Education, however, was not the only area in which culturalism abounded. It began to spread to other areas too – like the media and policing – but let's look at these at a later period, after Thatcher's ascendancy, when they become more clearly defined.

Thatcher: the sites of struggle

The pluralist philosophies and ethnic programmes which had begun to set up parallel (ethnic) structures within society were, of course, part of Labour policies. What happened when Thatcher came into power was that she couldn't give a damn about blacks or pluralism or the working class. The Tories, in fact, had stolen the clothes of the National Front and moved this society so far to the right as to be near-fascist. (That is why the NF does not do well in the elections; they do better on the streets – look how racial attacks have become part of the popular culture, with the state as a party to it.)

Thatcher herself began life, her racist life – and she is a sincere racist – with a clarion call to the nation to beware that 'this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture' – a call which unleashed the fascist maggots of the inner-cities on our children. Her policy-makers spoke of internal controls and passport checks. Enoch Powell, the Permanent Minister of Black Affairs, spoke of 'induced repatriation' and local Tory authorities like Slough literally paid black people to go home.

The nature and function of racism was beginning to change. The recession and the movement of capital to the labour reserves of the Third World, as I pointed out before, had stopped the importation of labour. The point now was to get rid of it. Hence the rationale of racism was no longer exploitation but repatriation, not oppression but repression – forged on the ideological level through the media (directly) and the schools (indirectly and long-term) and effected on the political level through the forces of law and order: the police and the courts principally.

The sites of struggle, in other words, had moved from the (predominantly) economic to the ideological and political, and the protagonists were no longer the state and the 'first generation' but the state and the 'second generation', no longer employers and workers but the state and the workless.

And so the locale of struggle moved from the factory floor to the streets, from the one-time employed, now unemployed, to the never-employed. And that is a very important distinction to make when we talk about black youth – for they have not only, like their white counter-parts, never been socialised into labour and therein found some stake in the system, but have, unlike them (their white fellows that is), been kept out of work and indeed of society by the dictates of institutionalised racism. And so they take nothing as given, everything is up for question, everything is up for change: capitalist values, capitalist mores, capitalist society. And their struggles find a resonance in the struggle of the unemployed white youth and the cities burst a-flame.

And it is then – after the burning of Brixton and Toxteth and

Southall – that Thatcher sends for Scarman to rescue ethnicity for the Tory Party and create another tranche of the ethnic petit-bourgeoisie, this time in the media and the police consultancy business: chiefs for the bantustans.

Just look at the ethnic media today – especially the ethnic television (newspapers and radio programmes were there before, though in a smaller way). Look at 'Black on Black' and 'Eastern Eye' in particular. On the one hand, we have the idea of letting blacks get places, so that they can teach their young that they don't have to take on the system when they can become part of it. On the other hand, we have the idea of *positive* black culture, with Eastern cookery classes and Indian films, reggae and 'black humour'. These programmes merely replicate the white media; black plays and comedies do the same. 'No Problem' is a problem: we are laughing at ourselves. The system wants that type of replication and 'balance', presenting both sides of a question, as the BBC says it does. What we want on 'Black on Black' and 'Eastern Eye' is an unbalanced view. We don't want a balanced view. The whole society is unbalanced against us, and we take a programme and balance it again?

Look at what 'Eastern Eye' did with the John Fernandes case. Fernandes, if you remember, is the teacher who exposed the extent of racism in police cadets and in the teaching at Hendon Police College when its head, Commander Wells, refused to accept Fernandes' findings. 'Eastern Eye' gave both Fernandes and Wells a hearing and then, for good measure, allowed Wells the benefit of two black cadets (an Asian and an Afro-Caribbean, a man and a woman) who denied there was any racism at Hendon Police College. That's ethnicity for you. And the worst of it is that these media wallahs think they got up there on their own merit or because they huddled together and called themselves a trade union. Whereas the fact of the matter is that they got there on the backs of the kids who burnt down Toxteth, Brixton and Southall.

So too have the rebellions of 1981 helped to get more Afro-Caribbeans and Asians into the police force. Some police chiefs have even brought down standards of recruitment in the cause of 'positive discrimination' – all part of the Scarman scheme. And there are the community consultative committees, with blacks on them to help the police to police the community – a Scarman production, of course.

Such consultative committees should, in fact, be seen in the larger context of the other 'consultations' that are going on – between the police and the social and welfare agencies of the state – what is fondly termed community policing. But once Metropolitan Commissioner Newman's neighbourhood watch schemes get off the ground, spying too will be open to Thatcherite private enterprise.

The information society

These developments alone tell us why it is important to take on Thatcherism on the ideological and political terrain. But there are other more fundamental reasons connected with the massive changes in the capitalist system itself, which makes these two areas paramount. I do not agree with Ken Livingstone* that there is ever going to be full employment again. Full employment is a thing of the past, an artefact of the industrial revolution. What today's micro-electronic revolution predicates is unemployment. With the silicon chip, microprocessors, robotics, lasers, bio-genetics and so on, we are moving into an entirely different ball game, a different capitalist order if you like, where the division of labour is between the skilled and the unskilled and the classes are increasingly polarised into (simply) the haves and the have-nots. Of course, the technological revolution can also make for a society in which there is greater productivity with less labour (fairly distributed) improved consumption for all and more time to be human in. But Thatcher and monetarism do not allow for such a scenario. Instead, what you will have is micro-electronic surveillance, computerised data and centralisation of information – and Big Sister watching you. In such a society – and we come to the same conclusion as when we viewed it from the other direction, through the prism of racism – ideology and politics become paramount. The sites of our struggle, therefore, are in education and the media, on the one hand, and against Tory law and order, on the other – meaning not just the police, but unjust laws as well, laws which repress trade unions, women, gays, children and call for extra-parliamentary struggle.

And in that connection, we must not overlook the one positive thing that Thatcher has done – which is to throw up the contradictions within the Labour Party and move certain sections of it closer to us. Remember that the pluralist politics of division which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s came out of the Social Democratic wing of the Labour Party. The left wing (as it began to emerge) has been left with the ethnic baby; it does not know in which direction to turn, and I think that it is up to us to point them in the right direction. Don't let's be purists and stand outside, for we can't fight the system bare-handed. We don't have the tools, brothers and sisters; we've got to get the tools from the system itself and hope that in the process five out of ten of us don't become corrupt. If we've got to get the tools and Ken Livingstone's GLC is prepared to give them, we should not hesitate to use them.

Programmes and strategies

Now I'd like to go, quickly, into the programmes and strategies of

* Ken Livingstone is the leader of the left-wing Greater London Council.

struggle. In the field of education, as we have seen, it is important to turn ethnicity and culturalism into anti-racism. But this involves not just the examination of existing literature for racist bias (and their elimination) but the provision of anti-racist texts – like the two booklets, *Roots of racism* and *Patterns of racism*, that we at the IRR have published – and not just an examination of curricula and syllabuses but of the whole fabric of education: organisation and administration, methods and materials, attitudes and practices of heads and teachers – the whole works.

Similarly, in the media we need not only to combat racist bias, but stop replicating the white media and propagate instead radical black working-class values. To do that, ethnic programmes (the English language ones anyway) will have to stop tackling only ethnic themes and look at every aspect of British society from the vantage point of the black experience. Conversely, we should demand to introduce black views and analyses into the main-line programmes (like 'Panorama' or 'Weekend World') without being shoved off into ethnic slots.

Other speakers have already spoken on the police and on the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill which will extend to the rest of the population – certainly in the inner cities – the harassment and brutalities hitherto inflicted on the black communities. Here I want only to point out that even while local Labour authorities are making every effort to make the police accountable to elected police committees, the police themselves have deftly side-stepped the issue – first, as we have seen, by their version of 'community policing', and second, through media legitimisation of their actions. And, if you remember, it was ex-police chief Sir Robert Mark who made the studied cultivation of the media a central aspect of police policy. The GLC's police monitoring groups are, of course, looking into the whole question of police accountability, and we ourselves are doing research into the media and the police; but, if the Fernandes case is anything to go by, we need to look too at the training for that accountability – for how can we expect cadets trained in racism to be accountable to local black communities?

Cases into issues

The Fernandes case also suggests another strategy that we must look to: the turning of cases into issues. Cases are one-off, local, disconnected; issues are national and anti-state. The trial of the Bradford 12, for instance, brought to national prominence the issues of self-defence and conspiracy law; the murder of Blair Peach at the Southall demonstration brought into question the role of the Special Patrol Group and the validity of internal police investigation; the New Cross Massacre and the case of Colin Roach showed, among other things, the bias and inadequacies of the coroner's court.

We need to concentrate on cases which raise a number of issues and

so bring together the various aspects of our struggle and the different groups involved in them. The Fernandes case, for instance, raises a number of issues – education, policing, the media, trade union racism* – thereby providing us with a more holistic view of our struggle and a basis for mutual support and joint action.

And we need to mobilise blacks everywhere around our common experiences of racial attacks. Colin Roach should not just affect Stoke Newington – we should look at the whole aspect of struggle around Colin Roach, the Newham 8, the attacks in Sheffield, in Leicester. We must collate our struggles, cross-fertilising the Afro-Caribbean and Asian experiences, and find unity in action.

We must look, too, to the various levels of struggle – on the streets, in the media, in the council chamber. We must begin to see how we can take our issues into the media and make the media responsible to the communities, instead of legitimating the actions of the system. Similarly, we must make our black councillors responsible to us – they must be seen on the ground participating in our struggle (not just exposing themselves to it), using whatever power they have for the benefit of the community. We must make the black petit-bourgeoisie, which is a petit-bourgeoisie on (white) sufferance, return its expertise, power and education to the working-class blacks whom ethnicity has left defenceless.

Alliances and autonomy

And, finally, we must look at the whole area of alliances. Against Thatcherism, there is no question that the objective conditions are there for all sorts of alliances – and alliances do not mean the subservience of one group to another. But, at the same time, we must beware the opposing tendency – and it is a contradiction that has been growing for some time – of too much autonomy. In the 1970s black people said they would not subsume their struggle to the class struggle, that their struggle had got to be autonomous. But we made alliances with the white working class. For instance, during the trial and imprisonment of the Pentonville Five, when the trade unions were planning a march on Pentonville Prison, they appealed to black groups to join in the march. The Black Unity and Freedom Party agreed that the unions' struggle was also black people's struggle, but because of trade union racism they would not join the official march. Instead, they led a different march down a different road to the same spot on behalf of the Pentonville Five. That is what I mean by autonomy and alliances.

Too much autonomy leads us back into ourselves; we begin to home

* Fernandes' union, the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, refused to take up the issue of racism in the teaching of police cadets and ultimately sided with the police against both its local branch union and Fernandes.

in on our cultures as though nothing else existed outside them. The revolutionary edge of culture that Cabral spoke of is taken away, leaving us with a cultural nationalism that is ineffective in terms of social change. The whole purpose of knowing who we are is not to interpret the world, but to change it. We don't need a cultural identity for its own sake, but to make use of the positive aspects of our culture to forge correct alliances and fight the correct battles. Too much autonomy leads us to inward struggles, awareness problems, consciousness-raising and back again to the whole question of attitudes and prejudices.

Alliances between the anti-racist and the working-class struggle are crucial, because the struggle against racism without the struggle against class remains cultural nationalist. But class struggle without race struggle, without the struggles of women, of gays, of the Irish, remains economic.

Let me end by saying this: it's still possible to make use of the good offices of left-wing Labour councils and the ethnic minorities units which left-wing councils have got landed with and turn them towards anti-racist struggle. We must return ethnicity to anti-racism and socialism to Labour. And, in order to do that, we must begin, now, to collate and co-ordinate our struggles – so as to build, in 1984, here, in London, a mass movement. Why not?

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Capital, 'black youth' and crime

The phenomenon of 'youth' (white and largely male) has had an extraordinary hold over the attention of both popular writers and social scientists in Britain since the Second World War. And, since the late 1960s, a great deal of notice has been taken of the apparently related phenomenon called 'black youth', who have been effectively constituted as a special social category by some of the crucial ideological and repressive apparatuses of the British state. These include the House of Commons, acting through its Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration (SCRRI), later a sub-committee of the Standing Home Affairs Committee; the Community Relations Commission/Commission for Racial Equality (CRC/CRE), a quasi-governmental body controlled by the Home Office; the Home Office itself, through the CRC/CRE, the Home Office Research Unit and *Bulletin*, parliamentary answers and White Papers, particularly those replying to reports of the SCRRI, etc., the Metropolitan Police, which has exploited a specially nurtured relationship with the media; the media themselves; and, not least in importance, for they increasingly provide the objective academic authority for all of this, various university departments of sociology, and units of the Social Science Research Council. According to Fisher and Joshua, the category 'black youth' was

primarily intended for a special class (sic) of West Indian youngsters, usually in conflict with their parents' generation; 'often

Cecil Gutzmore is a black political activist who is also a researcher and writer.

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kicked out of their homes'; 'who do not register for work, who are aimless, rootless drifters; concerned with "hustling" for a living' ...; [in] 'culture conflict', 'alienated' and 'adrift from society' and 'from the instruments of law and order' ... As a group they had partly evolved and partly readopted Jamaican Rastafarian ideologies, symbols and practices, then constructing within the British environment a distinctive and compensating subculture.¹

Fisher and Joshua go on to treat the uses of this categorisation in relation to British social policy. But such policies primarily evolved in the context of a deepening structural crisis both for British national capital and the international capitalist economy. That is the framework within which the use of the concept 'black youth' has to be examined.

Capital and the criminal justice system

In approaching the issue of 'black youth' and the criminalisation of the black community, one has to begin with the middle years of the 1960s, when the long-term comparative decline of British capitalism began to demand fundamental changes in the domestic economy as well as in some aspects of that economy's relationship to international capital. Internationally, relations with the British Commonwealth – the basis of a 'cheap food' for British workers policy – were to be altered in favour of closer ties with western European capital, primarily, and with United States and Japanese capital secondarily.

Domestically, it became imperative to intensify the use of state power against the working class. A complex anti-working-class project which took effect at both the economic and the political-ideological levels was accordingly evolved. At the level of the economy, the key words signifying the trend in policy included the 'technological revolution', 'ministry of technology', 'selective employment tax', 'corporation tax', 'labour shake-out', 'national plan', 'national economic development council(s)', etc. This trend began in the final years of the Tory government of Macmillan, but was fundamentally the task assumed by Harold Wilson's Labour governments. In addition, there was a major attempt to shift the terms of the economic class struggle against the working class by disrupting or outlawing forms of workers' action (initially, those spoken of as 'illegal' or 'wildcat' strikes, 'restrictive practices', etc.)

The heightened role of the state in directly confronting workers was first demonstrated in Wilson's politically charged intervention against the (in fact official) strike of the National Union of Seamen in 1966. But it was his second government's attempt to legislate on the industrial relations proposals set out in its White Paper 'In Place of

Strife' which was central. From it, a passage can be charted directly from Edward Heath's Industrial Relations Act and the political battles with the National Union of Mineworkers, through the social contract of the Wilson-Callaghan governments with the Trades Union Congress, to the current assault, aided by the mass unemployment of monetarism, on the forms and structures of the economic class struggle of British workers.

At the political-ideological level, from the 1960s onwards, the beginning of a long-term movement can be traced to use the criminal justice system to increase the state's power over workers in their communities and in their 'political' organisations. This was justified ideologically in terms of the need to 'modernise' the legal system in 'society's interest' and in the face of the 'rising tide of crime'. It can be traced back to R.A. Butler's creation of the Criminal Law Revision Committee (CLRC) in 1959, and specifically to his successor Henry Brooke's request to it in 1964:

to review the law of evidence in criminal cases and to consider whether any changes are desirable in the interest of the fair and efficient administration of justice; and in particular what provision should be made for modifying rules which have ceased to be appropriate in modern conditions.²

The difficulty was that there was no evidence to support the case for tightening up the criminal justice system at the expense of ordinary citizens. Lord Devlin might state that:

If the success of a system of criminal prosecution is to be measured by the proportion of *criminals* whom it convicts and punishes, the English system must be regarded as a failure. Far too many people who have in fact committed crimes escape punishment.³

But, in reality, there was no good evidence for this assertion, assuming, of course, that Devlin was not referring to the failures of the police – detection rates were low even then. The problem was how to get round the stubborn fact that only 8 per cent of those brought before British courts were ever acquitted. If it could be solved, the path would be substantially eased towards the desired changes in the criminal justice system.

To find out how this solution was achieved, it is necessary to focus attention on one of the most influential Commissioners of Police in post-war years, who clearly recognised above all the importance of the connection between the ideological and repressive functions of the state. As Chief Constable of Leicestershire in the mid-1960s, Robert Mark had secured some national attention as a result of much-publicised work on Leicester's traffic problem which had left him:

'firmly established with ... my force, my watch committee, the city council and not by any means least important, the press'.⁴ Invited, in the wake of this, to give a lecture at Oxford in October 1965, he called for four far-reaching changes in the criminal law: 'majority verdicts in jury trials; pre-trial disclosure of defence alibis; abolition of the caution against self-incrimination, and the requirement for the accused to enter the witness box'.⁵

It was, however, a book sent to him for review that set Mark working on the use of statistics – statistics which could be used to give substance to the claim that there was a type of 'criminal', 'clever', 'mobile' and 'knowledgeable-as-to-legal-rights', who was able to escape justice even after being caught, charged and brought before the courts; statistics which, in other words, could supply an important and necessary ideological justification for tightening up the criminal justice system.

What Mark discovered, in that book, was that 'of all those tried on indictment for crimes of violence 39 per cent were acquitted'. Did this then mean that there were areas of acquittal which, if given special attention and publicity, could be used to stymie the inconvenient truth that 'the proportion of acquittals was so low [only 8 per cent of the total] that there could be no possible justification for shifting the balance of the criminal trial in favour of the prosecution'? In *contested* cases, he discovered, after some investigation, that '80 per cent plead guilty, 20 per cent plead not guilty and of those 40 per cent are acquitted'. Very close, it seemed, to Mark's newly discovered 39 per cent acquittal figure for 'crimes of violence'. It would thus be possible to shift attention away from the objectively low acquittal rate overall by turning the glare of publicity on to another aspect of that rate: taken as part of a smaller whole, that 8 per cent became 40 per cent. But more 'evidence' was needed first. Mark therefore asked for figures from his fellow Midlands Chief Constables who, with one exception, obliged – they too had 40 per cent of the 'criminals' their forces took to the crown courts acquitted by juries bound by the need for unanimous verdicts. Their 'findings' were obligingly published by the *Guardian* in May 1965. Mark, with the help of the Home Office, then arranged for his statistical manoeuvre to be extended to England and Wales generally, thus making his 40 per cent figure national. The 'national' results were published in a report in the *New Law Journal* in the middle of 1966.⁶

Mark had succeeded in demonstrating that a little statistical manipulation backed up by good publicity goes a very long way. In subsequent years, the technique was repeatedly extended to other areas of the criminal justice system, and the ramifications of this initial 'break-through' are now inescapably with us almost twenty years later

— most strikingly in the provisions of, and the justifications provided for, the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill.

Mark himself was to claim that the results of his efforts included legislation brought forward by the then (Labour) Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, to require the pre-trial disclosure of alibi defences and the adoption of majority verdicts by juries. The jury system has since been subjected to intermittent attacks: the defendant's right to peremptory challenge of jurors was drastically cut by the Criminal Law Act 1977.⁷ Ex-Master of the Rolls Lord Denning continued the attack with his libellous outbursts against black jurors who served in the trial that followed the Bristol uprising in 1980.

There have been other important related changes in the criminal justice system. Perhaps the most comprehensive are those included in the Scottish Criminal Justice Act 1980.⁸ Mention can also be made of the substantial reduction in the right to trial by jury. Defendants' rights in respect of the choice of their own legal representatives and to have assistance under the Legal Aid scheme have been greatly reduced in recent years by a series of Regulations. Instances in which it has been determined that Legal Aid shall be withheld at the discretion of magistrates' courts include many which result directly from police operations ostensibly directed at reducing crime, but actually intended to increase their control of the streets. Sentencing policy also has been changed to the disadvantage of ordinary people. Thus there has been a deliberate attempt to reduce the use of custodial sentences against certain types of offenders (white-collar crime) while increasing its use for other types of offence such as assaults on the police (too often proved merely on the word of police officers) and the possession of offensive weapons (ranging from combs to bangles). The most outrageous uses of sentencing policy were seen in the aftermath of the April 1979 demonstration in Southall and again after the July 1981 uprisings, when persons swept up in droves from the streets by the police were herded into the prisons (some of them specially opened) with scant regard to legal niceties.⁹ And the revival of old laws for use in current circumstances has been quite common. 'Sus'¹⁰ is perhaps the best known: but the revival of 'affray', 'conspiracy' and even 'blasphemy' laws is now prevalent.

In other words, since the mid-1960s there has been a steady increase in the use of the state to reduce the rights of the working-class people. Except for the objections raised by the 'civil liberties lobby' and by certain political formations in and of the black communities, including Black People Against State Harassment and the Institute of Race Relations,¹¹ these changes have not been contested.

'Mugging': the creation of a black crime*'Mugging' and the police*

Statistical manipulation generally is the base upon which the major aspect of the criminalisation of the black community, connected to so-called 'mugging'/'robbery and other violent thefts'/'street crime'/'crime against the person', has rested.

'Mugging', as has been demonstrated by Stuart Hall and others,¹² is a crime without legal status or definition. The term was imported from the US in the late 1960s; around 1972-3 (the time also at which Mark became Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police) it began to be blown up into the 'crime' which most menaces urban Britain. It must be noted, though, that it was the news media – especially the press – and the courts, rather than the police, who initially orchestrated the popular campaign about 'mugging'. It was also they who first successfully presented the link between 'mugging' and 'black youth'. This was to take us beyond the period when the criminal stereotyping of the black community was limited to its alleged connection with drugs (ganja/marijuana), prostitution (pimping) and the illegal selling of drink or gambling in unlicensed premises – a stereotyping which was largely confined to local newspapers. It inaugurated a new period in which the national news media came to present the whole black community in terms of the posited involvement of a part of it ('black youth') in the perpetration of a 'bestial' (read black) crime menacing 'society' (read white).

Both the media and the courts initially built the campaign about 'mugging' around dramatic 'deterrent' sentences passed on specific cases. What was still lacking was the statistical evidence, as Mark realised. Accordingly, in his 1972 Annual Report he presented what one commentator has generously referred to as '“reconstructed” statistics for its [‘mugging’] incidence back to 1968’.¹³ These 'reconstructed' figures were instrumental in inducing the then Home Secretary into asking police forces nationally to provide similar statistics – almost a repeat of what had occurred in the mid-1960s in relation to acquittal rate statistics. The 'reconstructed' 1968-72 figures had said nothing about the 'race' or 'colour' of those allegedly perpetrating the 'muggings' – this had to be interpreted from the press coverage. The only way to fill that lacuna henceforth would be with racially coded statistics.

Within three years it was to be revealed (at a major trial in 1975 following a police raid on the black Carib Club in North London) that a 'race code' was in use on the Metropolitan Police's criminal record office form which comprised the following categories: IC 1 White-skinned European type; IC 2 Dark-skinned European type;

IC 3 Negroid type; IC 4 Asian type; IC 5 Oriental type; and IC 6 Arabian type.

There were still a number of further unsolved problems. First, police perception and practice were to be the determinant of the 'race' of offenders. Second, it has never been clear that the 'race code' on the criminal record office form is completed in respect of all persons charged: if it has, then the question: 'Why have the published statistics shown the breakdown of only those "crimes" in which blacks are purportedly over-involved?' gains added force. Thirdly, the forms as described above are only used for persons actually charged with specific offences. They are/were, therefore, not a source of crime statistics for offences where no one has been charged. Yet, if the alleged disproportionate black participation in 'mugging' was to be fully dramatised, a higher figure than that for either black people (however dubiously 'coded') actually charged and/or convicted of relevant offences needed to be presented to the public.

Mark's Metropolitan Police solved this in three ways. In the first place, it continued the practice of conflating crimes which neither logically nor actually belonged together.¹⁴ Second, since even after such conflation the crimes in which black people were allegedly over-involved remained no more than a miniscule proportion of actual crime, every conceivable means had to be exploited in order to highlight them and to suggest their peculiarly menacing nature. Third, the source of such statistics was shifted away from the criminal record office form to the crime report sheet, to which the practice of 'race coding' was extended. The Met was thus able to ask the victims of 'muggings' to supply information as to their perception of the 'race'/colour of their assailants. Such information was then formally recorded for statistical processing.¹⁵

By the mid-1970s, the Met was in a position to release statistics which were used to persuade the public that 'mugging' was increasing massively, that black youth were principally involved in such 'mugging' and that the victims were mainly elderly white women. Crucially, the Met had complete discretion as to how and when these figures were used, 'made available', published, leaked, submitted to appropriate bodies, etc. It also began to develop a more sophisticated, and would-be academic, body of work, based on its own figures and according by and large with its own interpretations. These were carried out either by its own statisticians, or undertaken on its behalf.¹⁶ The most substantial of them, by an ex-police official turned sociologist, Pratt's *'Mugging as a social problem'*, was published in 1980, and generated massive media publicity of the most simplistic and scare-mongering kind.

In March 1976 the Met submitted a memorandum to the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. It made two key claims. The first was that criticism of the police by the black community was

totally 'unjustifiable' and only put 'most officers on the defensive'. This was put forward in all seriousness, despite the weight of testimony and evidence – recorded in local newspapers, the black press, ad hoc pamphlets, memoranda submitted to Select Committees, radio and TV programmes – documenting lawless police behaviour against the black community from the 1950s on.¹⁷ The memorandum acknowledged 'a growth of the tendency for members of London's West Indian communities to combine against police ... In the last 12 months forty such incidents have been recorded.' And it identified that 'unjustifiable criticism' together with a number of other factors – prominently 'socially alienated, unemployed black youth', along with 'political demagoguery' – as making the 'potentiality for conflict ... inherent in every law enforcement situation between police and West Indian ... currently a source of considerable concern'. There, then, was 'black youth' again – identified in contrast to the 'vast majority of West Indians, who are hard-working, law-abiding people' – somewhere near the source of the trouble.

The second key claim was over 'West Indian crime rates'. In its 1971-72 Report on Police/Immigrant Relations, the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration had stated that: 'coloured immigrants are no more involved in crime than others: nor are they generally more concerned in violence, prostitution and drugs. The West Indian crime rate is much the same as that of the indigenous population.'¹⁸ This, insisted the Met, was wholly wrong and the mistake was entirely the fault of the Select Committee, for in 1972 its attention had been drawn, by police officers, to 'the disproportionate involvement of black youth in crimes of "theft from the person" and "robbery" ',¹⁹ though in 1971-2 that force can have had no racially coded statistics on which to base this assertion. In any event it was *now* (in 1976) possible 'from police records to categorise persons arrested by racial type and in respect of certain crimes to classify offenders by skin colour from the evidence given by the victim of the crime'. It will be noted that this distinction accords with the account, given above, of the two sources of police statistics evolved by the Met under Mark.

The memorandum went on to present its figures – first based on the criminal record office forms (i.e., figures of those arrested and charged). Aware of the weaknesses of such figures, it immediately raised the possibility of the counter-argument that 'police discriminate against black people when enforcing the law'. The Met was therefore not going to rely exclusively on those arrest-based figures: the second source – the criminal record sheets (based on victims' perceptions) – would be brought into play. In order to give weight to this source, the following claim was made:

During 1974 [following] concern [which] began to grow both in police and community circles about the degree of involvement by

black youth in robbery and theft [from the] person in some areas ... an internal study was undertaken by officers of the Community Relations Branch.

The result of this was to show 'that 79 per cent of robberies were alleged to be committed by people described by their victims as "black", "coloured" or "West Indian" ', while in respect of 'theft from the person offences', 83 per cent were similarly described. The memorandum went on to claim: 'Further analysis showed that 70 per cent of the victims were females and 20 per cent were aged over 60 years ... Of the victims, 89 per cent were white' (figures completely at variance with Pratt's later study of the same evidence). The memorandum expressed no doubts whatsoever about these victim-perception based statistics which were, in the eyes of the Met, necessarily acceptable in so far as they 'avoid the charge of discrimination by the police which could be raised in the use of arrest figures'. Indeed, 'it also provides a yardstick for testing the validity of the [police] discrimination charge'. Having said this, the memorandum then presented figures (arrest/CRO based) for robbery: '62 per cent were black ... for theft from the person 82 per cent were black'. The inevitable effect of the memorandum's open publication was massive media coverage in which 'black crime against old white victims' was the main object of extensive press descriptions. This was one of the ways in which the Met's control of the release of 'crime figures' served to orchestrate the campaign for the ideological criminalisation of the black community. Identical figures could be used and re-used to fuel intermittent but always dramatic coverage of the 'black youth'-'black crime' issue.

'Mugging' and the press

The Met's next tactic regarding 'black crime' figures was to release them for specific areas – those known to contain large concentrations of black people (Hackney, Lambeth, Lewisham, Peckham, etc.). These were then taken up by the press (and the media generally) both locally and nationally. Such figures were used, for example – again to confirm the menace of black youth – in the aftermath of the defensive battle fought against the police at the 1976 Notting Hill Carnival. There was also an intention to engender more basic day-to-day fears than those which could be squeezed from the image invoked by Mark after Notting Hill, of black people trying to establish 'no go areas' in London.

The press teemed with 'black crime' stories. Pearson Phillips wrote of 'mugging':

What makes this activity a social hot potato is the fact that an estimated 80 per cent of recorded instances in some parts of inner London are the work of black teenagers ... Peckham police entered

the arena on Monday with a hand out issued from Scotland Yard's press bureau headed: 'Police Crackdown on Peckham Muggers'. It stated: 'From January to June this year, there were on average about 25 muggings in the area each month. But the figure has risen steeply to over 50 a month ... most of the victims are elderly women ... the muggers, who are almost exclusively coloured youngsters between the ages of 12 and 17, appear to hunt in gangs of twos and threes ... of 339 "muggings" between January and September ... 285 of the victims said that their attackers were non-European.'²⁰

That same story made the *South East London and Kentish Mercury* (14.10.76), the *Daily Telegraph* (12.10.76), the *London Evening News* ('Muggings: MPs Demand Inquiry', 13.10.76) and the *Daily Mail*, *Guardian*, *South London Press* and *Sunday Telegraph* within the space of a few days. The *Daily Mail* on 13 October 1976 ran not only an editorial on 'mugging' entitled 'The Sad Ballad of Peckham Rye', but also a 'Portrait of an old woman living dangerously. She had an evening out in Peckham.' The *Sunday Telegraph* of 17 October 1976 was able to report on virtually London-wide figures and characterised the 'vast majority of muggers' as 'second generation immigrant West Indian teenagers without job prospects, many of them homeless, without recreation or any sense of purpose'. As October wore on new twists were to be given to this single story. The *London Evening Standard* (21.10.76), for example, stressed that a person ('you') who is burgled in Brixton is unlikely to have the thief caught 'because so many of the policemen there are otherwise engaged, fighting the muggers'.

A few days earlier the CRC had chosen to publish its rebuttal of the 'evidence' put forward by the Metropolitan Police in its memorandum. But this, given the bias of the media and its virtually one-way coverage of such issues, simply added fuel to the fire. The *Daily Telegraph*, for example, first reported the CRC's views under the headline 'Police accused of "arranging" figures on black crime'²¹ – in other words, it was framed as an attack on police integrity which might be thought guaranteed to go down badly with *Telegraph* readers. Set beside the police, the CRC had little if any credibility in such quarters. Even so, the opportunity was taken to restate the figures given by the police as well as presenting the CRC's case through long, quasi-academically argued quotations. In addition, on the following day the *Telegraph* returned to the issue: 'Yard denies race chief's "predictable charges"'. It quoted Scotland Yard on its inability to 'suppress information' which was felt to be 'in the public interest' as a matter of 'duty', despite its 'dilemma' over whether to 'expose experience and facts to public debate' with the attendant risks of 'feeding prejudice' or, alternatively, losing the 'definition of social problems and consequently apathy about their resolution'.

In the context of the press campaign of October 1976, the judiciary re-entered the fray – most notably in the person of Judge Gwyn Morris – but not as they had done in the 1972-3 'mugging scare', that is, by passing excessive sentences which were themselves the object of sensational media reporting. Gwyn Morris's approach was one of deep 'concern'. The *Standard* on 22 October gave its front page over to him: 'Judge takes weekend to ponder sentence ... What should I do with mugger pack?' As he put it: 'the facts speak for themselves. The youths – aged 16 and 17 – are all black and their victims were all white women.' The massive publicity generated over the weekend ensured that he received

hundreds of letters from women in that area about this type of conduct. It is pitiful to read them. One elderly lady wrote to me saying she lived two streets away from her married daughter but could not go out at night to visit her and nor could her daughter come to visit her mother.

Gwyn Morris's 'agony' also made many national newspapers including *The Times* which devoted many column inches to it under the headline: 'Packs of thieves part of immense social problem, says judge'.

Again, in the context of the press campaign of October 1976, the Home Office caught the attention of the press when one of its ministers of state in a written answer stated that 'mugging' offences had risen by nearly half in three years. He reminded the House of Commons that the Met kept a log of such offences, defined as 'offences of robbery of personal property which follow sudden attack in the open where there is not previous association between the victim and the assailant'. He also confirmed that despite a request, said to have been made four years earlier, by the Home Office to police forces for figures on 'mugging', 'Manchester and Liverpool police do not keep statistics for mugging alone. Liverpool could only supply overall figures for robberies, while Manchester lumped together a range of crimes from murder to rape.'²² This tends to confirm the role of Sir Robert Mark and the Metropolitan Police in generating the inordinate attention paid to statistics for so-called 'mugging' and 'robbery and other violent crime' in the London area, and, in essence, providing a statistical base for the state's campaign of criminalisation.

But such almost ad hoc announcements are by no means the whole of the Home Office story. Through its research unit it has had a considerable additional impact. Among its reports have been studies on 'stops, searches and arrests' (one of which purported to show no significant differences between 'West Indian' and white experiences); and on 'public disorder' carried out in Handsworth, Birmingham, in the aftermath of the 1981 uprisings. One of the most significant was a study on 'race, crime and arrest'. The study had been conducted despite the fact that:

Published material available, much of it from police sources, appeared to suggest that towards the beginning of the decade, ethnic minority involvement in crime, taken as a whole, was similar to that of the population at large in areas of predominantly West Indian settlement ... In areas of predominantly Asian settlement the crime rate of ethnic minorities was thought to be below average.²³

The research was accordingly directed to the one area of the country where considerable 'evidence' apparently contradicting the general situation was known to exist, that is to the Metropolitan Police District. 'The research therefore examines Metropolitan Police District arrest data for the year 1975, the first year for which reliable information about the racial or ethnic identity of persons arrested by the Metropolitan Police was available.' They supplied no criteria whatever that such data was 'reliable'. For after all, as we have already seen, the Met itself acknowledged at least one major basis of doubt about its figures. Despite this, the publication attracted considerable press, radio and TV coverage for its 'findings' which amounted to nothing more – quite literally – than a regurgitation of police statistics.

* * *

The campaign to criminalise the black community through 'mugging' and the emphasis on 'black youth' continues unabated in the 1980s. In 1982 the Metropolitan Police released crime statistics (racially coded for certain categories) which aroused the predictable press campaign; the same obtained for the 1983 figures, except that this time they were released through an MP and not directly by the police themselves.

But the crucial feature of the use of such statistics, indeed of the whole criminalisation campaign in the early 1980s, is that its objectives have changed. It is part, it will be recalled, of an overall restructuring of the state and its apparatuses in the context of an economic decline. That decline has intensified despite the discovery of oil in the North Sea and the oil price revolution. At the political-ideological level, however, this restructuring has achieved significant success. Both failure and success alike necessitate an even more ruthless pursuit of the capitalist project. The effects of this necessity have for some years been visible in the monetarist policies both of the former Labour and current Tory governments (mass unemployment, cuts in social benefits and services, etc.) and in more repressive legislative and other state practices (Police Bill, Data Protection Bill, the retention and proposed extension of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, a more militarised police force.) Now, given further that these measures, vis-à-vis the black communities, are pursued in the context of a racism which permits almost unbridled lawlessness in police behaviour towards them, as well as ensuring that many of the effects of monetarism (especially chronic unemployment) disproportionately affect them, and that no solution has been found to the political demands of the Irish national movement in the Six

Counties of Northern Ireland, there will almost inevitably be increased physical resistance to the British state.

Such has been the resistance seen on the streets of mainland Britain since 1976, when black youth at Notting Hill, on the occasion of the huge annual black carnival held there, fought a pitched battle against a police force which had for two days, in huge numbers, heavily and aggressively policed the affair. (Earlier carnivals far less menacingly patrolled had always been peaceful.) It culminated in the generalised uprisings of April through to July 1981 and continues in smaller scale outbreaks – primarily spontaneous, sometimes more organised and which go virtually unreported – in Liverpool 8, Brixton, Notting Hill, Stoke Newington, etc. Nowhere can it be truly said to have been mindless or pointless violence – violence 'for its own sake' as it were. Everywhere it has been of a defensive nature, being prompted and produced by the aggression of the state as expressed largely through lawless policing practices.

The response of the various apparatuses of the state has been to intensify the criminalisation campaign, increasingly through mobilising the 'black youth'-'black crime' couple. The purpose here has been and is to legitimate the increasingly aggressive machinery of suppression which since 1976 has been adopted by the police, to say that the resistance has no justification and can only be explained by the unremitting attempts of 'black youth' to keep the streets free of police so as to indulge in their 'criminal activity'. This approach was first developed in 1976 when, shortly after the Carnival uprising in Notting Hill, post hoc evidence of 'muggings' from the previous Carnival (1975) was produced by a Metropolitan Police Inspector in a letter to *The Times* in early September. This, he said, explained the style of policing in 1976 – a style which had directly contributed to the defensive violence directed against the Met and which had, up until the publication of that letter, been justified in terms of the size of the event and its location, which made it a threat to public order requiring massive numbers of police to control. Since then, the alleged involvement in 'crime' by 'black youth' has become the explanation for the whole plethora of police misdemeanours and police practices characterised as 'hard' policing.

It was precisely for this reason that first, Counsel to the Scarman Inquiry into the uprisings and second, the Metropolitan Police itself set out to convince Lord Scarman that it was the rising tide of 'crime' by 'black youth' in Brixton (Lambeth) which drove the police into acting like 'an army of occupation'²⁴ against the local black community. Certain black 'community leaders' supported the 'rising crime' line of argument:

Young people around the streets all day, with nothing to do ... and the 'successful' criminal has a story to tell. So one evil has bred

another, and as unemployment has grown in both older and younger generations crime has become more commonplace and more acceptable. This is a vicious circle to which there is no present end in sight.²⁵

Whatever the effect of such 'evidence' on Scarman, he certainly made the 'rising tide of black crime' the cornerstone of what he termed 'the policing dilemma', as well as of his account of the 'Brixton story'. Essentially then, it is the police line on 'black crime' which informed Scarman's authorised version of the 1981 uprisings and their causes.

'Mugging' and the sociologists

The criminalisation process, however, has not rested solely with the police, the media and the institutions of government. It depends in a very real sense for its validity on the work of a number of sociologists, not only of the right but self-proclaimed 'radicals'. Their work is an important and increasingly prominent element of the criminalisation process as it is being carried out in the 1980s, and for that reason merits further examination. They have made use of, and further refined, a cultural approach to the study of social reality which is not merely compatible with the police's own ideology but is informed by it – the academics share both language and concepts with police ideologues. Exponents from both groups speak and write in such a way that 'black youth' is confirmed as the key image in a framework in which the alleged 'violent proclivities' of black people are taken as an established fact – established on the basis of the purported practices of the youth. It is a culturalism which on occasion goes over into a quasi-geneticism.

On one side of the coin is Sir Kenneth Newman, who has been described as using 'the language of sociology and "preventative policing"' as fluently as John Alderson, its best known exponent,²⁶ and who is on record as having stated that, 'In the Jamaicans you have a people who are constitutionally disorderly. It's simply in their make-up. They're constitutionally disposed to be anti-authority.'²⁷ On the other, are two sociologists, self-identified as radical, who go even further:

There is a penchant for violence within West Indian culture, possibly stemming from the days of slavery when the only method of retaliation was doing physical damage to the overseer, agent or even slave-master ... Whatever the source of this proclivity there can be no denying its existence: black youth do have a certain fascination for violence. The almost incredible enthusiasm for movies in the Kung Fu idiom and the massive numbers involving themselves in the martial arts (as well as more conventional contact sports) tells us something about young blacks' interest in violence, as do their

celebrations of a range of archetypal violent anti-heroes, 'Dirty Harry', Chuck Morris and the late Bruce Lee.'²⁸

The quick shift away from the initial apparently culturally deterministic explanation; the revelation on their part of a consciousness in which slave resistance is seen as having been no more than 'retaliation'; the swift dance from 'penchant' to 'proclivity', 'fascination', etc.; the daring suggestion that sport and preferences for types of movies can be talked of as 'violence' are all worthy of the yellow press and exemplify a strange notion of what amounts to social scientific evidence. This is capped by their eagerness to add a splash of sexually differentiated colour, in asserting, with no greater regard for evidence, let alone proof, that 'Street attacks used to be the sovereign operation of black boys, but more recently, girls have organised themselves into gangs and have demonstrated a willingness to engage in such tactics.'

In the face of such an identity of language and perspective, it is difficult even to begin to distinguish between the function in the class struggle in Britain of those, on the one hand, whose role is openly that of repression* and those, on the other, whose ostensible role is that of objective academic research. The 'black youth'- 'black crime' linkage, with its undertones and overtones of violence, is crucial to the research framework of two other self-proclaimed radical academics, whose published work sets them squarely in line with the criminalisation process being carried out against the black community:

the fact that inner-city black youth culture is a counter culture of despair and resistance to discrimination and deprivation and the fact that it involves simultaneously soaring rates of crime ... set the scene for the development of a vicious circle whereby the relations between police and community deteriorate in such a way that each step in the deterioration creates pressure for further deterioration. Changes in police tactics in recent years (increasing use of stop and search, 'sus' etc.) cannot be seen as the result of gratuitous police prejudice. Such a view would assume that the basis of consensus policing still existed.³⁰

Lea and Young quite explicitly quote police testimony to Scarman as their main evidential source. Their work revolves around a myth that 'consensus policing' once existed and that 'black crime' then drove the police away from it towards 'hard policing'. 'Consensus policing' is certainly a socio-historical myth. 'Hard policing' is equally mythical. It in no way encompasses the range of brutalities and lawlessness committed against black people by the police which

* Witness the evidence, validated by Amnesty International, the European Court of Human Rights and even in part by the British government's Committee of Inquiry into Police Interrogation in Northern Ireland,²⁹ of the torture of suspects.

have centrally framed the relationship between us and the police. Since Lea and Young do not admit the overwhelming weight of evidence in this area, it follows that the police are not seen as racist and that therefore racism does not explain in any significant way the police behaviour towards black people or the latter's defensive – if dramatically explosive – response.

Given such an approach, it is not surprising that their concern is to help focus attention on the effects of 'street crime'. They are currently attempting to carry out a so-called Criminal Victimisation Survey, under the auspices of several of the Labour-controlled inner city boroughs of London.* This 'survey' has as its main object that other creature of the criminalisation campaign, the 'victims', (old, white) women and 'Asians', who, they say, are being attacked not only by white thugs but also by 'black youths'. We have already seen above the type of conceptual framework which would give shape and form to their findings. In so far as their findings, however shakily grounded, create an impression of a rise in street crime, their result will be to justify even more intensive policing. As for 'black youth', Lea and Young see them as their own worst enemies: they have allowed themselves to become hopelessly 'marginalised' by shunning the traditional options of the white working class and adopting a violence which appears mindless. Lea and Young go on to speak of:

the relatively less acute marginalisation of Asian youth compared to West Indians. It has been observed that the Southall violence of 1981 was of a different order to that of Brixton and Toxteth. Asian youth in Southall were on the streets for an explicitly organised purpose: to defend their community against gangs of violent hooligans from outside the area.³¹

Apart from the fact that the black people of Liverpool 8 have become 'West Indians', worse things are happening in that text. Lea and Young's conceptual framework forces them to put forward the image of a non-racist, almost blameless police. They therefore extract them from Southall 1981: the Asian community was organised solely to defend itself from external gangs. But this flies in the face of the evidence. In Southall, Coventry and East London, there is a documented history of police condoning racist violence against Asian communities.³² On 23 April 1979 the Asian community of Southall suffered an organised attack by the Metropolitan Police, and in July 1981 Asians did not merely protect themselves against civilian hooligans, they also defended themselves against police thugs. Even Scarman acknowledges this. It is hard to comprehend how Lea and Young can suggest that the other major uprisings of 1981 were not similarly

* To date these attempts have been resisted by the local black communities.

defensive. No amount of talk about 'black youth', 'crime' or 'marginalisation' can change this. Instead, it only demonstrates how such sociology serves capital and its ruling class against workers (black and white).

Summary and conclusion

'Black youth', as we have seen, is a social category that has been fabricated and manipulated by the British state. Both its creation and its use have to be understood in terms of a project by capital developed at the economic level and the political-ideological level to save itself from chronic decline. A significant element in it involves the tightening up of the criminal justice system and the criminalisation of the black communities. The alleged disproportionate involvement of 'black youth' in 'crime' has been fundamental to that criminalisation, which has been carried out in a campaign which is now entering its second decade. The essence of it is the use of bogus statistics, developed on the basis of techniques of manipulation first used by Sir Robert Mark in the mid-1960s. The measure of his success is that these techniques, deployed in close co-operation with the media and a variety of other state apparatuses, can contrive to make less than 1 per cent of crime in London more important than the 99 per cent plus there, and all crime in the rest of the country. In recent years – since the mid-1970s – the intensified pursuit of capital's project has led to physical resistance of a defensive sort against state aggression. The state and its apparatuses have not hesitated to use the 'black youth'-'black crime' couple in a new way, that is to explain such resistance so as to shift the blame for it back on the the black communities and legitimate forms of militarisation of the police which have been adopted on a wide scale. The crisis of capital remains. The aggression of the state is undiminished. The defensive resistance of the black working class (employed and unemployed) is very likely to continue and to take on subtler and more deadly forms.

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- 6 *Ibid.*
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- 8 See *State Research Bulletin* (No. 28, 1982), p.70.
- 9 See *Legal Action Group Bulletin* (November 1982), pp. 10-12.
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LEE BRIDGES

Policing the urban wasteland

There are ... limitations on the power of the police. First and foremost, the law. The police officer must act within the law: abuse of power by a police officer, if it is allowed to occur with impunity, is a staging post to a police state.

The Scarman Report, 1981¹

The police are ... the thick end of the authoritarian wedge, and in themselves so authoritarian as to make no difference between wedge and state. That authoritarianism had been perfected in the colonies, in Ireland, in the fields of British racism, and, as it grew, it found ways to by-pass its political masters and become accountable to no one but itself ...

A. Sivanandan, 'From resistance to rebellion', 1981²

In the wake of the urban rebellions of 1981, the British state was quick to re-arm its police with new weaponry in the form of plastic bullets, CS gas and mobile water cannons in order to quell any further outbreaks of major disorder. But the 'riots' also set in train a more fundamental review of urban policing policy. The results of this re-thinking appeared only fitfully at first by way of specific innovations in police tactics and localised experiments in 'community policing', but

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more recently the pace and scope of change have increased significantly. Thus, the government has moved in its Police Bill* to enshrine within the very citadel of the law authoritarian powers for the police, while the police themselves, most notably in the plan of London's new Metropolitan Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Newman, have set about re-organising their forces the better to penetrate and spy on the community and to suppress social and political unrest.

In these measures we can see the main parameters of the policing strategy required to uphold the monetarist economic and social order, in which the new technology and Thatcher/Reaganite policies of enforced inequality combine to produce permanent mass unemployment, growing social polarisation and spreading urban decay. Such conditions must inevitably result in the short-term in all types of social disintegration, including rising rates of crime. But, more significantly, they imply a shift in the focus of opposition in society away from the point of production and the representative institutions of the still-working classes in the trade unions and Labour Party, and more into the community and towards the extra-parliamentary politics of previously marginalised groups such as women and blacks and the swelling ranks of the unemployed and never-employed youth. In order to meet this threat to what Lord Scarman refers to as 'the normal state of society',³ the state must take extraordinary measures in gearing up the police physically, legally and ideologically, not only to crush such opposition when it surfaces on the streets, in demonstrations and other popular forms of protest, but also to pre-empt it by extending their influence and tentacles of surveillance ever wider into the community, its schools and social and political institutions, and even the family, instilling 'discipline' and keeping tabs on increasingly large sections of the population.

As in the past, it has been the black population locked within the inner city wastelands – because of their structural position in the economy, the effects of institutional racism, and their traditions of community-based political resistance⁴ – that have been the first to experience the harsh realities of this new policing strategy. Of course, there is a long history of systematic police harassment of the black community in Britain, as evidenced by a series of reports dating back to the mid-1960s and culminating in 1979 in the Institute of Race Relations *Police against black people*⁵ and the 1980 *Report of the working*

* Originally introduced in Parliament under the full title of the *Police and Criminal Evidence Bill* in November 1982, this legislation subsequently completed its Committee Stage in the House of Commons, only to fall as a result of the calling of the General Election in June 1983. However, the Tory government, returned to office with an increased and even more right-wing majority, is fully committed to re-introducing the Bill in the current parliamentary session.

*party into community police relations*⁶ published by Lambeth Borough Council in London. *Police against black people*, for example, documented 150 separate incidents from different parts of the country concerning police malpractices in such areas as raids on black clubs and meeting places; mass stop-and-search operations conducted against black communities by Special Patrol Groups and the Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit; arbitrary and violent arrests of black individuals and entry of black homes; and the subjecting of black persons held at (or even visiting) police stations to violence and verbal abuse, long periods of detention without access to lawyers and relations or even basic medical attention, forced confessions and fabricated evidence, and routine fingerprinting and photographing. It is precisely in these areas that it is now proposed to confer extensive new powers on the police under the Police Bill.

But legal powers, as much as they may contribute to police harassment of individuals or particular groups, do not in themselves create a police state. It is through the medium of police organisation and training, backed by an ideology of repression and a political culture that identifies certain sections of the community as a temporary or permanent threat to society, that police powers become translated into instruments of oppression. The point is well illustrated by the powers in the Immigration Act to detain and deport persons suspected of being 'illegal immigrants'. Although similar provisions have been in force for many years in respect of aliens, their statutory extension in the 1971 Immigration Act was itself underpinned by a political culture defining immigrants as 'swamping' British society and, more specifically, by the creation of the specialist Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit, supported by modern surveillance techniques and computer technology, to effect their enforcement. It is this combination of factors, further backed by an amenable judiciary, that has enabled the Immigration Act to be used as the basis for mass raids and passport checks, resulting in the detention of thousands of persons over recent years, and serving generally to oppress the Asian community.⁷ Similarly, in order to grasp the full significance of the Police Bill and how its powers are likely to be implemented as part of the wider political control of the community, it is necessary to locate it within the politics of policing, particularly as they have developed since the 1981 rebellions, and to relate its provisions to other changes already taking place in police organisation and tactics towards inner-city, working-class communities generally.

The politics of policing: From Mark to Newman

As shown elsewhere,⁸ the ideological confrontation of black youth has formed a key element in police politics in Britain and their pressures for

increased powers, at least since the period of Sir Robert Mark's tenure as Metropolitan Police Commissioner in London in the early 1970s. While promoting a reactive, 'fire-brigade' style of policing on the ground, involving the use of mobile patrols backed by advanced technology and specialist centralised squads, Mark also sought through his cultivation of both politicians and the media to project the police into a position where they might influence more directly the content of the law itself.⁹ One eventual outcome of this was the setting up of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure (RCCP) in 1978 and the highly pre-emptory evidences presented to it by Sir David McNee, Mark's successor as Metropolitan Commissioner, and bodies such as the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and the rank-and-file Police Federation. The RCCP Report, published in January 1981, went a considerable way in conceding to these police demands for new powers.¹⁰

The rebellions that took place in over thirty British cities in the spring and summer of 1981 temporarily placed the police politically on the defensive. The government, while re-arming the police and backing their harsh methods in suppressing the uprisings, nevertheless held back from an immediate increase in police legal powers, deciding instead to set up and await the outcome of the Scarman Inquiry. The government's reaction owed little to the strength or nature of the British Left's response to the rebellions. The general reaction of the Labour party was to exploit the 'riots' as an occasion for further condemning the government over its economic policies, while being fairly muted in its criticisms of the police. It was only among more radical elements in Labour-controlled local authorities such as the Greater London Council, whose campaign for police accountability was given popular impetus in the community by the rebellions, that the opportunity was taken to re-open the debate on police powers and the RCCP proposals in this area. By contrast, the main intellectual response to the 'riots' from the Left came from those sociologists and 'radical' criminologists who used them to put forward highly invidious theories of the socio-cultural proclivities of black youth towards crime, thereby rationalising long-held police prejudices in this regard.¹¹

But it was the Scarman Report, published in November 1981, that prepared the ground for a renewed political assertiveness by the police and for the eventual emergence of a new policing strategy combining the openly repressive tactics of 'fire-brigade' policing with the more insidious, and pervasive (but nominally supportive) methods of community policing. This the Report did by not only baldly denying the existence of institutional racism in Britain, but also by treating as analytically separate issues of police organisation, powers and conduct from the question of 'racial disadvantage' in society. To Scarman, this latter term signified not systematic discrimination but a set of general

processes of social and cultural deprivation, many seemingly with their origin within the black community itself. Thus, Scarman's description of the black community in Brixton¹² notably starts off with the traditional stereotype of the 'matriarchal' West Indian family in which men are 'seldom dominant' or 'of little or no significance' and even women, because of their wage-earning commitments, are frequently 'absent from the family home'. This is seen as leading to high rates of West Indian illegitimacy and children in care, followed in turn by their low achievement at school and eventual failure in the job market, where Scarman does at least admit to their facing some additional problems of discrimination. But significantly absent from this list is any notion of police racism, other than the individual prejudices of a few officers, or of selective policing policies as having contributed to the oppression of the black community.

Indeed, to Scarman the police were more victims than perpetrators of 'racial disadvantage', having to deal with its effects in the West Indian community in terms of 'hostile and resentful ... young people' and an idle 'street culture' with opportunities for 'endless discussions of grievances' and for involvement in crime. And whatever the need for social ameliorative measures, it was this propensity towards crime and disorder in the black community that Scarman saw as posing the most immediate threat to the 'normal state of society'. Scarman's endorsement of the government's decision to provide the police with extra riot-control equipment and training and of the RCCP proposals for increased police powers followed from this, as did his support for special saturation policing operations in the black community and the retention of the heavily criticised Special Patrol Group. His main concern was that these powers and operations be carried out in future with greater discretion, especially so as to ensure that the anger created among black youth did not continue to infect 'the attitudes and beliefs of older, more responsible, members of the community'.¹³ So he proposed the introduction of multiculturalism in police training, the better to alert the police to the peculiar sensitivities of the black community. This boost to the 'racial awareness' training of police cadets, combined with the 'ethnic' stereotypes on which Scarman based his arguments, significantly complemented and reinforced the culturalist approach to race matters. Other measures included to the same end were the recruitment of additional black police, statutory police 'consultations' with the community and the disciplining of racially-prejudiced conduct among police officers.

Scarman's refusal to link these proposals to a need to combat institutional police racism or to limit their powers enabled the police subsequently to portray them as special pleading and the whole of his Report as a recipe for the 'soft' policing of black areas. In fact, any idea of 'soft' policing was belied by the tactics adopted in inner city-areas

following the 1981 rebellions, involving saturation foot patrols backed by newly formed Instant Response Units, consisting of teams of specially trained and equipped mobile riot police based in each local police district in London. At the same time, the police followed up the Scarman Report with a major political counter-offensive against their critics and the black community generally in the form of a highly publicised release in March 1982 of racialised crime figures, carefully manipulated to show both a further dramatic rise in 'muggings' and a predominant involvement of black people in 'such offences'. If the release of the racial crime statistics and the general 'law and order' campaign that followed were designed to counter the Scarman Report's more liberal proposals,¹⁴ then they also served to reinforce his identification of crime and disorder as the most pressing social problems of black, inner-city areas. Clearly, this view supported renewed demands for greater police powers, while at the same time providing a rationale for a 'community' or 'multi-agency' approach to policing in which the police themselves would take a more active role in coordinating the work of statutory agencies and community-support services, redirecting their activities towards the control of crime and unrest.

One immediate result of the March 'law and order' campaign was the government's appointment of Sir Kenneth Newman to take over as Metropolitan Police Commissioner from October 1982. Newman's assumption of office itself coincided with renewed rank-and-file police pressure for tougher policing measures against the black community. Thus, in a speech to a fringe meeting at the Tory Party conference a Police Federation vice-chairman said:

In every urban area there is a large minority of people who are not fit for salvage. They hate every form of authority – whether it is the police or anybody else. The only way that the police can protect society is, quite frankly, by harassing these people so that they are afraid to commit crime.¹⁵

And lest there be any doubt about the identity of such persons in the minds of the police, this was later confirmed by another Police Federation spokesman:

There are two conflicting demands. One is to stop harassing young blacks in the inner cities. The other is to stop young blacks harassing other people in the inner cities. Which demand do you respond to? It has to be the second.¹⁶

Once in office, Newman quickly responded to this pressure, announcing a new system for 'targeting' street criminals which would involve the building up of intelligence on specific persons and subjecting them to constant surveillance. At the same time, 'community

representatives' would be enlisted to work alongside increased beat patrols in the more sensitive inner-city locations, no doubt to provide better intelligence on which to 'target' particular individuals.

The Police Bill: licensing police oppression and non-accountability

It was in this context of a rapid intensification of policing in inner-city areas developing in conjunction with a more vociferous and explicitly racist police politics that the government published its original Police Bill in November 1982. The Bill was found to go well beyond the recommendations of the RCCP in its proposals for extending police powers, being based rather on the various police evidences to the RCCP and on their well-entrenched practices in policing the black community. Certainly, in legitimating such practices and extending police powers, the Bill represented an open invitation by the Thatcher government to the police to continue their 'post-riot' clamp-down on inner-city areas and their black population in particular. Of equal if not greater significance, however, is the capacity these new powers will give the police to increase their surveillance and political control of the community at large and the Bill's overall effect in statutorily safeguarding police discretion and the autonomy of local police commanders in pursuing selective policing policies against certain areas and groups. In these latter respects, the Bill will establish a legal basis for attacks on organisations now campaigning to protect the community from police abuse and harassment and stand in future as a constitutional barrier against the establishment of more effective, democratic control of the police.

Although it is not possible here to review in detail the contents of the Police Bill,* it provides for massive extensions in police powers across the full range of their operations. To begin with, it will establish for the first time on a national basis a power for the police forcibly to stop and search persons and vehicles on 'reasonable suspicion' of carrying not only stolen goods (as currently exists in a few localities, including London) but also 'offensive weapons' and articles for use in stealing – the legal definition of both being open to arbitrary interpretation and widescale abuse by the police. The police will also be empowered to set up roadblocks, sealing off an area for up to seven days, whenever a local police superintendent considers that 'the pattern of crime in that area' justifies it. It has been widely noted that these provisions will give legal sanction to such mass stop-and-search operations as Swamp 81,

* Although some changes to the Bill when it is re-introduced may be expected, especially as regards police powers to search confidential professional records (see below), it is assumed that the main provisions will remain the same as before.

in which nearly 1,000 persons were stopped on the streets of Brixton in the days immediately preceding the April 1981 uprising, or that carried out over several weeks by the Special Patrol Group in Lewisham in South London in 1975 that resulted in no less than 14,000 stops and over 400 arrests.¹⁷ Nor should it be overlooked that stop-and-search and roadblocks have become an increasingly routine part of policing in inner-city areas, the more so under the saturation foot patrolling and operations of localised Instant Response Units introduced since the 1981 rebellions. Already in 1978 the Metropolitan Police were stopping an estimated 40,000 persons each month in London under their existing powers,¹⁸ and recently published Home Office research has confirmed that black men are three times more likely to be stopped than whites.¹⁹ This discriminatory use of stop-and-search powers and the very low proportion of those stopped who are subsequently arrested, let alone legally convicted, has led some critics to question their usefulness in directly combating crime. On the other hand, constant stop-and-searches directed at increasingly large sections of the population are crucial to the building-up of intelligence on the community and in providing a basis for 'targeting' operations against particular individuals or groups, a factor which no doubt explains the government's persistence in seeking to extend police powers in this field.

In their operations on the street, the police will be further backed up by new statutory powers of arrest and to enter and search premises. The Bill defines a very wide range of offences as 'arrestable' and the police will also be able to arrest a person committing even the most minor offences where certain highly subjective 'arrest conditions' apply, such as that the person concerned is obstructing the highway or that the police do not trust the name and address he or she has given. The police will also be empowered forcibly to enter premises to arrest a person for one of the 'arrestable offences' or subsequently to search their premises, and they will have power immediately to search premises on which an arrest for *any offence* has taken place. These provisions need to be seen in the light of the long history of police tactics in which black community events, social facilities and political meeting places are placed under constant surveillance and the making of arrests for minor offences is used as a pretext for frequent large-scale raids and searches.²⁰ Again, this type of police operation has intensified in the 'post-riot' period, especially in what the police have identified as the politically sensitive 'symbolic locations' in the inner city.

The police's capacity for political control of the community will also be greatly enhanced by a new legal power to conduct general searches for evidence in premises of organisations and persons not themselves suspected of any crime. This was the element in the original Police Bill that attracted the greatest controversy, particularly in its application to

the confidential records held by professional persons, and it is likely that in an attempt to separate their critics among the professional bodies and other elite pressure groups off from more popular opposition to the Bill, the government will make further concessions in this area. If so, then non-professional advisors and all other individuals and organisations in the community will still be liable under the Bill to general searches of their records and premises on the warrant of a single magistrate. A telling sign of the possible future targets against which these general search powers may be used can be found in Sir Kenneth Newman's recent, widely publicised outburst against the 'small minority of police watchers' and other 'activists on the Left' whom he accused of 'a campaign of dedicated denigration of the police', including 'zealous dredging for any incident that can be exploited as a cause célèbre and tendentious accounts of complaints against the police'.²¹ In singling out community-based defence campaigns and local police monitoring groups in this way, and further officially labelling them as a 'destabilising influence and a threat to public order', Newman would appear to have given a clear lead to his forces on the ground to attack these groups, and one means of undermining their work would be to subject them to regular searches of their offices and seizure of files and other documents.

The final area in which the Bill provides the police with extensive new powers is in the detention and interrogation of suspects. Thus, the police will be empowered to hold a person without charge in order 'to secure or preserve evidence ... or to obtain such evidence by questioning him', and they will also be granted increased powers forcibly to search, fingerprint and take body samples from detainees. In most cases, such detention can extend for up to thirty-six hours on the police's own authority, during which the detainee may be denied access to a lawyer or relations, and for a further sixty hours on order of a local magistrates' court. Of course, these new powers of detention will operate alongside the Bill's other provisions giving the police a wider scope to gather evidence in the community, and they will therefore be in a much stronger position than at present to obtain and use information about detainees or their families and friends in order to induce them into making confessions. And even where it is not possible using the vastly increased powers in the Bill to induce confessions or obtain other evidence upon which to secure a legal conviction, the ability to detain innocent persons over long periods, to subject them to often humiliating searches, and continually to re-arrest them on new 'suspicions' will constitute a powerful weapon of summary punishment in the hands of the police.

Apart from these specific new powers, an important feature of the Bill is that, far from clarifying the law in this field and establishing a firmer basis for challenging police abuses through the courts, it will

actually entrench police discretion more deeply by giving it statutory backing and make judicial review of police activities even more tenuous than at present. A good example of how the Bill achieves this effect is to be found in the concept of a 'serious arrestable offence'. The exercise of various of the more exceptional powers in the Bill is technically restricted to situations involving a 'serious arrestable offence'. Yet, as originally drafted, the Bill defined this as 'an arrestable offence which the person contemplating the exercise of the power considers to be sufficiently serious to justify his exercising it', thereby turning a supposed safeguard for the protection of the citizen into a license for the police arbitrarily to extend their powers at will. In an attempt to remedy the self-legitimizing nature of this definition, the government later added a list of criteria against which police decisions as to 'seriousness' might subsequently be reviewed, including such generalised conditions as 'the harm caused or likely to be caused to the security of the state, the administration of justice or public order' or 'the prevalence of similar offences' in an area. Given the example of Sir Kenneth Newman's recent labelling of police critics and other 'activists' as just such a 'threat to public order' and the widely-held police and judicial conceptions (evidence the Scarman Report) of inner-city neighbourhoods as 'high-crime' areas and their populations as prone to disorder, it is not difficult to see that these additional criteria will serve only to reinforce the Bill's effect in licensing a very wide degree of police discretion in their operations against such areas and groups.

In view of the current campaign for greater accountability of the police to elected local authorities, it is also important to note the level within the police hierarchy at which this wide discretion will be located, especially in relation to the structure of local government itself. In the Metropolitan Police area covering Greater London, for example, there are twenty-four police districts, most of which include the area of one or more London boroughs, the smallest unit of elected local government in the capital. However, police operations are further sub-divided into seventy-five local police divisions in London (with a further 250 in other parts of the country), and as a recent report on the Metropolitan Police has noted:

it is the Chief Superintendent, in charge of each local division, assisted by a Superintendent, who decides how to deploy the officers under his command and what operations to mount. It appears that the Chief Superintendent has considerable autonomy.²²

Significantly, it is the Superintendent who, under the Police Bill, will wield substantial legal discretion, being empowered on his own accord to authorise such measures as roadblocks, detention for up to thirty-six hours, and the forcible taking of fingerprints and body samples, while

it will require only an Inspector, based at each local police station, to sanction the entry and search of an arrested person's premises. Even in those few instances where the police will require the prior permission of an external body before exercising their new powers, relating to detention for up to four days and searches of innocent parties' premises, this will be from local magistrates who can be expected readily to endorse police operational decisions. Thus, the present informal autonomy of divisional and lower level police commanders will be given legal force, and in this respect the Bill will provide them with a statutory umbrella beneath which they will be able to maintain full control of their operations, even in the unlikely event of formal structures of accountability to local authorities being imposed above them.

The Newman plan: mobilising the police state

Even before its introduction in Parliament, the government had anticipated the Police Bill in their appointment of Sir Kenneth Newman as Metropolitan Police Commissioner. Newman's own career spans all aspects of the authoritarian tradition of British policing, from his initial service with the Palestine Police Force, to his earlier period with the Metropolitan Police when he was responsible in the late 1960s for policing anti-Vietnam War demonstrations and introducing new methods of crowd control, through to his six years in Northern Ireland in the 1970s, including a period as Chief Constable from 1976 to 1979. In this latter capacity, Newman 'developed one of the most sophisticated intelligence networks of any police force in Western Europe'²³ and also introduced a new regime of interrogation which led to several adverse reports on the maltreatment of detainees. Newman is also well versed in 'community policing' as a former commander of the Metropolitan Police's Community Relations Branch and, most recently, as head of the national Police Staff College, where he re-oriented courses for senior police officers towards the study of a 'multi-agency' approach to the problems of crime control and 'order management' in inner-city 'ethnic flashpoints'.²⁴ Newman was, therefore, a perfect choice to forge on behalf of the state a new policing strategy drawing together these different elements, a task he was given immediately on taking office by Home Secretary Whitelaw in his capacity as the police authority for London.

At first sight the Newman plan, announced in January 1983, seems to represent a compilation of recent diverse innovations in police tactics such as 'targeting' and police-community consultative committees, with some additional imported ideas like neighbourhood watch schemes, all combined under the cloak of corporate planning/management and actively sold by way of public opinion surveys

and the Commissioner's own 'give-away' newspaper.* Beneath the rhetoric, however, lies an acute awareness, born of the 1981 rebellions and Newman's experience in Northern Ireland, of the contradictions in urban policing thrown up by spreading economic and social decay and the need to make strategic choices in police priorities, as well as to combat the growing popular opposition to the police in certain sections of the population. Indeed, this latter objective is made quite explicit in Newman's introduction to his plan:

the social and political demands on the police in the Metropolis have changed and developed. In recent years, there has been a substantial increase in the number of formally constituted associations and groups representing a range of special interests ... while the police still stand high in opinion polls, these are pitched at a very general level, and perhaps obscure the fact that the pattern in London is variable ... it is already apparent that the Metropolitan Police must guard against a deterioration in public confidence, and that there is a problem with young people, particularly young West Indians ... In some areas, there is a brand of obstruction and hostility which has led to deliberately engineered confrontations with the police. It is, therefore, *a priority to restore order to such areas* (emphasis added).²⁵

In translating this political objective into operational terms, Newman has followed the logic of the Scarman Report and the prejudices of the rank-and-file police and popular press in directly associating the problems of political and social disorder with specific categories of crime, singling out localities with a high incidence of 'street robberies, street disorders and burglary' for the heaviest concentration of police organisation, manpower and other resources. Of course, these 'high-crime' locations are precisely the inner-city areas with substantial black populations that have been subject in the past to exceptional policing measures, particularly in the operations of centralised squads such as the Special Patrol Group. Under the Newman plan, however, there is to be a shift in emphasis away from centralised operations, which are seen to have produced 'a serious imbalance in the deployment of manpower between New Scotland Yard and police districts' and have also become a focal point for political opposition to the police. In their place, Newman is promoting a more comprehensive policing strategy encompassing three key elements: the reorganisation of the crime control and public order functions of the police so as to be permanently

* *Strategy 83*, a monthly supplement now being distributed free with the Metropolitan Police's in-house newspaper, *The Job*. In his attack on 'police watchers', Newman spoke of their campaigns being 'bolstered by a variety of hostile broadsheets and give-away newspapers', this latter a clear reference to the Greater London Council Police Committee Support Unit's *Policing London*.

and even more intensively 'targeted' on the inner-city 'high-crime' areas and the dissident elements in their populations; the vast expansion of police surveillance and intelligence-gathering through a combination of increased foot patrolling and various 'community policing' initiatives; and the more open and sophisticated legitimisation of police priorities and activities, again through 'community policing' and such measures as divisional policing plans and localised crime and public opinion surveys.

Thus, the previous role of the Special Patrol Group is being displaced in part by new Intelligence and Surveillance Units operating in each of the four areas, into which the Metropolitan Police District as a whole is divided, and by new plainclothes crime squads being set up in each local police district. It is on these units that the new 'targeting' strategy of dealing with street crime, involving 'improved information-gathering, analysis and targeted action' against both individuals and particular locations, will be centred. This tactic is drawn directly from Newman's Northern Ireland experience in combating the IRA and its political supporters in the community, and it is notable that when the first such area-based 'targeting' squad was created in south London late in 1982, it drew officers from the centralised Criminal Intelligence Branch and Anti-Terrorist Squad. In addition, under the Newman plan the Instant Response Units set up in each police district following the 1981 uprisings are to be renamed as District Support Units (DSUs) and made permanent. While retaining their riot-control capabilities, the DSUs will have their functions expanded, almost in direct parallel with the new powers contained in the Police Bill, to include 'anti-burglary patrols, rowdyism patrols, searches, roadblocks, observations, [and] execution of warrants'. In effect, then, the DSUs will become localised versions of the Special Patrol Group, carrying out stop-and-search operations, manning roadblocks and conducting raids on premises. Indeed, figures recently released by the Metropolitan Police indicate not only the scale of DSU operations, but also how, in line with the political objectives behind Newman's strategy, their activities are directed primarily at controlling social and political 'disorder' rather than conventional crime. Thus, in only the first four months of 1983, DSUs were responsible for 5,735 arrests (about one-sixth of the Metropolitan Police's normal total of arrests), of which only thirty nine were for street robbery and 207 for burglary, but no less than 4,000 for what is described as 'street disorder', despite this having been a period of relatively few major disturbances. For its part, the Special Patrol Group is being retained with its role also re-defined in terms of 'anti-burglary patrols', possibly to be directed more at the large, 'problem' housing estates on the edges of the inner city.

The aim in future will be to ensure that these strategic-level crime control and public order operations impinge on the community and

dissident groups within it more selectively, and to achieve this divisional-level police commanders are to be given a more prominent role in managing and coordinating police activities in their localities. The Newman plan speaks of the need to re-examine the role of Chief Superintendents and Superintendents, and this is echoed in a recent Police Training Board report which points to these ranks as requiring 'a thorough and sympathetic knowledge of the political context in which they work' and proposes training in such topics as 'cultural relativism and equality before the law' and 'the basic sociology of different social and racial groups'.²⁶ Given the police's rejection of anti-racism in their training at other levels* and the general context in which such 'multiculturalism' and sociology will be taught, it is not difficult to imagine its effects in confirming police stereotypes and informing their prejudices about the propensities of certain sections of the population towards crime and disorder. Moreover, in line with their position under the Police Bill, this type of training may serve only the better to educate local police commanders to treat all policing problems in inner-city areas as 'serious' and therefore as potentially justifying the fullest exercise of their new legal powers.

But the effectiveness of strategic police operations will depend on more than the social or political sophistication of divisional-level commanders. These operations will also be tied in directly with what is termed the 'ground cover and crime prevention' aspects of the Newman strategy, under which an expanded system of surveillance and intelligence-gathering on the community and its political activities is being put into operation. At the heart of this system lie new beat patrols in the inner cities, including saturation coverage for areas of 'special difficulty', which will serve to build up a picture of each street and locality and their inhabitants, feeding this information up through a computerised network to be used as a basis for area and district-level crime control and public order operations and those of other specialist squads such as the Illegal Immigration Intelligence Unit. A telling picture of the modern 'bobby on the beat' now operating in one area of London emerged recently:

Working as part of reliefs and responsible to the duty officers, they will nevertheless be directed to patrol a grid square. And as an additional aid to their task they will be carrying a concertina-fold plastic-encased 'crib' which provides them with a pocket guide:

— map of the grid square they're covering;

* Most notably in the case of John Fernandes, a black lecturer at the Metropolitan Police's Cadet Training School, whose attempts to introduce anti-racism into the curriculum were rejected. He was subsequently barred from teaching at the school when he exposed wide-spread racist attitudes among police cadets as evidenced by a set of their essays.

- list of the key points needing a special eye ...
- priority days and priority names;
- names, addresses and PHOTOGRAPHS of active criminals living in the square being patrolled.²⁷

But if the beat patrolmen are thus linked directly with 'strategic' police operations, they will also be at the centre of an extension of police influence and spying deeper into the community itself. The Newman plan calls for the specific 'tasking' of individual officers to promote and become involved with neighbourhood watch schemes, victim support groups, tenants' associations and inter-agency links with other service organisations and professionals working in the community. Of course, such initiatives can serve to supplement police manpower, especially in the 'low priority' outer urban areas and in terms of police public assistance functions where Newman admits that police activity will need to be curtailed in order to concentrate resources on the inner city. But these aspects cannot be isolated from the primary role of 'community policing' in improving police intelligence on society at large, for example, by recruiting 'community representatives' to assist in beat patrolling of the more sensitive 'symbolic locations' identified in a recent police statement²⁸ or in organising schools, local authority housing and social services departments and other statutory and voluntary agencies to provide regular information on their clients and to pick out potentially 'disruptive' elements in the community.

Of course, another purpose behind 'community policing' is to activate media and public opinion in support of police operations. This legitimating function is to be expanded under the Newman plan with consultative committees, soon to be made statutory under the Police Bill, singled out as a 'vehicle for directing overall strategy', albeit under the careful direction of the District Commander who will 'identify specific problems *to the committee*' (emphasis added). For this purpose, local policing plans are now being prepared in each division and district in London, with all the accoutrements of 'participation' by lower-ranked officers and 'consultations' with the public through local crime and opinion surveys. In a situation of monetarist cutbacks in community-support services and general social disintegration in the inner cities, these surveys will inevitably result in 'findings' of growing concern over rising levels of crime, and therefore provide further rationalisation for increases in police activity. Also, by concentrating on specific forms of intra-communal crime, they will serve to promote generational, ethnic and other political divisions in the community on policing issues. In a similar vein, Newman has now made it clear that only the views of the 'law abiding community' need to be considered, presumably intending to exclude from public consultations those groups who are most active in defending the community against police

abuse and harassment. In this respect, Newman has recently issued instructions for a more 'open' information policy to improve the general image of the police with the local press and other media and has also urged local police commanders to follow his lead in directly attacking the political legitimacy of monitoring groups and other campaigns on policing issues in their areas.²⁹

It is important to bear in mind the overall political context in which this attempted de-legitimation of police critics is taking place. The Thatcher government, in its pursuit of the new monetarist economic and social order in Britain, has entered its second term of office even more firmly committed to attacking and, if necessary, abolishing all institutional forms of opposition to its authority. Already there have been massive inroads into the independence of local government and the trade unions, as well as a general undermining of welfare state support for the community at large. And the government is now pledged to the direct abolition of the Greater London Council and other Labour-controlled metropolitan county authorities on which the campaign for the democratic accountability of the police has been based. Even in advance of this, as shown above, the Police Bill will undercut claims for formal police accountability by providing statutory authority for a vast increase in police powers and for the extensive operational discretion of local police commanders.

Newman's strategy for policing London represents the application of Thatcherite authoritarianism to the inner cities as the location of growing, non-institutional protest and opposition in society. Put another way, Newman has set out to marshall the racist prejudices and reactionary politics of the police rank-and-file and harness them to the requirements of monetarism for increased repression and for surveillance and political control over ever larger sections of the population. In doing so, Newman has recognised that, with Labour Party and trade union abilities to protect basic civil liberties substantially eroded (their will to do so in relation to black people's rights was never strong) and the campaign for formal accountability being rapidly eclipsed, the main challenge to his strategy and that of the state lies, as in 1981, in the community and their continuing resistance to the police state being imposed over their lives. It is, therefore, imperative on him not only to crush popular expressions of that resistance on the street when they arise, but also to defeat those groups struggling to create a more organised, political opposition to police repression. By the same token, in their campaigns against the Police Bill and the general policing policies that lie behind it, and beyond this in beginning to forge a new popular politics of resistance to the ravages of monetarism and Thatcherism, these groups are waging a struggle that has much wider significance for the anti-racist and socialist movements as a whole.

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Psychiatry and the corporate state

The Nationality Act of 1981 sets the seal on a change in the nature and function of state racism, which has been in the making since the passage of the 1971 Immigration Act. It is a change which spells out that Britain, having virtually ended black immigration, is now looking to the control and repression of black people already settled here and their children. This has called for new strategies: some, like increased coercion, have been brought directly from Northern Ireland; others, like racism awareness training (which suggests that racism is a kind of prejudice which can be wiped off the face of Britain's pluralist society), are imported from America, and yet others, like the currently fashionable sociology with its drive to understand and connect with black people, are home-grown. Out of all these is evolving a new racism, at the base of which lies a new notion of black culture – one which sees it not as an organic aspect of the ongoing struggles of black people, but as something static and definable, providing easy, stereotyped formulae that the state could draw on for its strategies of control and pacification, coercion and consent.

New strategies call for new operational methods or new developments in old ones. Crucial among these is psychiatry, which, acting through the Mental Health Act, uses both coercion and consent and links the sphere of law and order to that of welfare.

The *Black Health Workers and Patients Group* aims to support black health workers' struggles for better conditions; black patients' demands for humane care: to challenge the use and misuse of psychiatric diagnosis, and to monitor racism in medical, nursing and paramedical education and training.

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Psychiatry like most other fields of medicine has long been expropriated from lay discussion and intervention and has, in the process, been depoliticised. Here we would like to demonstrate and briefly explore the political role of psychiatry. Who is subjected to psychiatric practice, under whose orders, how and at what stage? What are the attitudes and theories relating to black people developed by psychiatry – how, for example, are stereotypes about ‘ethnic culture’ increasingly used to target black people as potentially mentally ill? It has become increasingly evident that there is a disproportionate number of Asians and Afro-Caribbeans in Britain’s mental hospitals – nearly a quarter of the inmates of hospitals serving inner-city catchments are said to be black. Is this because more and more black people are becoming mentally ill? Or is it the culmination of decisions made not only by psychiatrists but by all agencies who refer people for psychiatric attention – police, courts, prisons, social workers and GPs? What, finally, is the role and responsibility of psychiatry in the criminalisation of black people? And what of the nature of psychiatry itself – does it have a methodology or merely an arbitrary conglomeration of rules and techniques dating back to its origins in an earlier period of crisis when the workhouses disintegrated and their population were redistributed in prisons, asylums, voluntary schools, etc; does it have a theory or does psychology provide it with a series of pseudo-scientific hypotheses which are both anti-working class and racist; is it, as it claims to be, a scientific area of study or a twilight zone where pseudo-science begins to shade into myth?

To understand the context within which psychiatry operates in relation to black people, it is necessary briefly to examine how the notion of black culture and ‘ethnicity’ has been used in the new phase of racism by various parts of the state apparatus. This has occurred partly through policies of ‘multiculturalism’ which, on the one hand, objectify black culture and lifestyles and, on the other, try to divide the black community into separate and competing ethnic groups. Such divisions have been replicated in almost all the agencies of the welfare state (including even self-help groups), making black organisations – segregated off as Asian, Afro-Caribbean, African, etc, and subdivided even further into Bengali, Muslim, etc – literally compete for resources. It has also meant the establishment of ‘ethnic’ experts, social workers, community workers – ‘leaders’ who can take on board the rhetoric of black nationalism without rocking the state’s boat, and who for the state’s purposes provide a potential collaborating ‘class’ and a means of influencing and manipulating the black communities. Multiculturalism has led, too, to the mushrooming of and justification for research projects (many of them involving black researchers) which study and monitor and, of course, indelibly record black people’s ways of life, intelligence, fertility and now even their tendency towards

criminal activity. These projects, which seem to be the only things that flourish during a recession, define and redefine black culture – gathering information which is either used directly for surveillance or is stored for the justification of future policies. These policies may be of direct control (through the police, the immigration authorities and the courts) or of indirect control (through such agencies as the National Health Service (NHS) which have the power to decide how and where to allocate and cut resources). The projects also serve quite simply to give ‘scientific’ legitimacy to popular racism.

Another category of ways in which the notion of black culture or ‘ethnicity’ has been used concerns the ‘integrative’ and containment role of the welfare state – i.e., education, health care, social services, social work, community work, youth training and the voluntary sector, whose ‘primary areas of unifying interest are centred round those social institutions which foster integration and discourage alienation’.¹ These areas of welfare, through the logic dictated by the primary significance of ethnicity, have selected two institutions to be penetrated by the ‘integrative’ objectives of British society – the family and the community. With immigration and policing policies becoming increasingly authoritarian, state intervention in the welfare of the black population can only mean social control. As part of this control, the ideology of ethnicity has been used to justify the state’s desperate attempts to ‘integrate’ those intractable elements in an otherwise ‘domesticated’ minority – black youth.

Now there are more black school-leavers than ever before, and this, combined with the deepening economic depression, has thrown up black youth not only as symptoms and scapegoats of the crisis but also as that group resisting and refusing the conditions of dependency and control created by welfarism. They are seen by the ethnic theorists as ‘youth in crisis’ and this notion has become an inexhaustable resource drawn on for both the coercion and the consensus strategies. There is not a single voice in the whole discourse of ethnicity which does not invoke their ‘alienation’ or mention that they are torn between two cultures or that they are perpetually locked within inter-generational conflict. From which, of course, it follows that the political action they take to attack the collective problems of their communities is nothing else but a search for identity. And by so defining black youth as a psychological problem, the welfare agencies, in their drive to normalise and integrate, are able to open up new lines of entry into the black family.

The concept of the ‘black family’ is used not only for its ability to divide generations but to hold up one community as a negative reference point for another. Rather than examine the distinctive features of the black household with relation to white working-class family groups (a third of whom have single parents and where women

are more active in the labour market), ethnicity holds out the image and ideology of the bourgeois nuclear family as the universal norm against which other structures and types of family are to be evaluated.

The 'black family' is also to be known and made knowable by playing off respective 'differences' against each other. What distinguishes and explains Asian behaviour is the 'strength' of Asian cultural tradition made dangerously 'strong' after migration and exemplified in the institution of arranged marriage, while the Afro-Caribbean family is distinguished by its 'lack of heritage' and endless pressure.² Migration is projected backwards as the negative 'acculturation' of slavery, and the plantocracy is responsible for the 'disintegration of authority' in the Afro-Caribbean family. A number of themes and stereotypes – the over-aggressive hysterical African woman, the withdrawn Asian wife and, of course, the 'youth in crisis' idea – originate from and develop within this handy concept of the black family. In turn, the psychological hypotheses which are woven into and support the concept inevitably call for psychiatric intervention. And such intervention through the welfare services performs the role of normalisation and 'integration'.

Two complementary racist categories relating to youth in crisis illustrate this role of psychiatry quite clearly. There is, on the one hand, the 'hysteric' young Asian woman in dread of arranged marriage – 'girls who turn up from time to time on the doorsteps of social service agencies, police stations or hospitals, who sometimes come to the psychiatrist after taking an overdose'.³ And, on the other hand, there is the vicious and violent Afro-Caribbean male youth, perhaps already implicated in the 'social psychosis' of Rasta, who is inherently 'anti-authority' and thus inevitably involved in educational failure, unemployment, crime and, naturally, madness.⁴

We have indicated how ideas of ethnicity instilled into the welfare state are inevitably and increasingly drawing on psychological 'knowledge' and psychiatric intervention to fulfil the social control aspect of welfare vis-à-vis the black working class. In return, as it were, psychiatric thinking has taken on board the idea of ethnicity. It is important to understand the process through which this occurs, first, because it illustrates the role of multiculturalism in propagating racism; second, because it demystifies the medical status of psychiatry, and third, because it tells us a little about the ethics of psychiatry – what, for example, enables the psychiatrist to continue to believe in individual professional responsibility in a situation where the need for treatment is decided in the first place by law and order agencies?

Psychiatry and ethnicity

Psychiatry claims to be a scientific discipline within medicine, but its origins had little to do with either medicine or any kind of science. The psychiatrist was, to start with, a gate-keeper or administrator of the asylums which co-existed with workhouses. Later, after the disintegration of these workhouses, psychiatrists became the guardians over the insane and developed their 'discipline' on a medical model. They established wide-ranging theories – about women, for example, concerning their 'small brains' and aptitude for hysteria. Psychiatry's interest in black people developed, perhaps predictably, out of the ideologies of slavery and colonialism. Its role was to justify and prove; and also to sensationalise and so popularise, ideas of racial inferiority. New diseases were discovered like drapetomania, which made slaves prone to an irresistible urge to run away. Black facial angles, sexuality and body odour were all studied and so was the 'small size' of the black brain. It was a continuous process which lent respectability to even the most overtly racist ravings and fantasies. Even as recently as the 1950s, the highly thought of Carruthers was able to theorise that the Mau Mau uprisings in colonial Kenya were the result of the infantility of the Kikuyu and their 'need for firm direction'.⁵

These types of theories (even those now officially discredited) form not only the racist history of psychiatry's relationship with black people, but provide the pool of 'knowledge' which the majority of modern psychiatrists implicitly or explicitly draw upon. They still propagate and adapt this colonial racism in their everyday practice, theorisations, and even in the so-called humour of their medical journals. The way in which such crude racism permeates psychiatry's dealings with black people can be illustrated from an article in *World Medicine* (circulation 43,000) which was so commonplace that it passed unremarked. Under the title 'Begum syndrome', the author tells the readers that she has been out 'East', establishes that she is a jolly, charmingly naive English doctor and that this itself makes it all right for her to describe in an overtly racist way the 'amusing problem' of treating Asian women. Having drawn the mythical stereotype of an extremely rich 'fat Indian lady in a voluminous sari' suffering from inexplicable 'nervous tension', she goes on to describe her 'pallid face, simian with misery' and her 'lowing like an animal in pain'. After casually claiming that a visitor can get free treatment on the NHS (this was not true even in 1980), she describes successful treatment of her patient with valium, which works because of the ignorant faith of the patient in western medicine. But the most important aspect of the article is that the author is in fact a consultant in Birmingham, in a hospital where a large proportion of psychiatric patients are black.

However, the crudely racist attitudes of so many psychiatrists

coupled with the underlying assumption of medical ideology – that the doctor has individual professional responsibility for the patient's care – has led to the growth of a fairly vigorous strain of liberal psychiatry which, with a gasp of guilt-ridden relief, embraces the notion of black culture and ethnicity. These liberals have evolved two essentially consecutive strands of thought (though both currently coexist). The first of these is exemplified and in fact led by the work of Philip Rack, who established the Transcultural Psychiatry Unit at Linfield Mount Hospital in Bradford. Rack has concerned himself mainly with the 'problems' of Asians caused by their 'culture'. These problems consist of 'illness', on the one hand, and 'misdiagnosis', on the other, where 'doctors, nurses, social workers and those whose job is to offer help ... come into contact with people whose cultural background is unfamiliar'.⁶ And because the typical white practitioner is ignorant of the cultural peculiarities of the 'ethnic client', he or she finds it difficult to tell the difference between normal and pathological black behaviour. In other words, it is the 'culturally different' who somehow *cause* the misunderstanding and errors made by white people, prison officers, social workers, nurses, doctors and psychiatrists. And one of the main ill-effects of this misunderstanding, in the eyes of the Transcultural Psychiatrists, appears to be the damage not to people's lives but to the image of psychiatry's scientific credibility, upon which is based the class power and professional privileges of psychiatrists as a group.

Rack's work is also an interesting example of how psychiatrists inevitably draw upon a racist tradition in formulating new ideas and hypotheses. In his recent book *Race, culture and mental disorder*, he refers back to the hypothesis that immigrants and migrants are potentially schizophrenic and devotes a whole chapter to a new method of 'therapy' – repatriation.⁷

The second and, in our view, more modern strand of liberal psychiatric thought reaches its frontier in the work of Littlewood and Lipsedge, who have so far focused mainly on Afro-Caribbeans. Littlewood and Lipsedge essentially see black culture as pathological and project this view through their interest in ethnic religions, Rasta and Pentecostalism. In their book *Aliens and alienists*, a chapter on Pentecostalism is titled 'A prelude to insanity'.⁸ Traditionally, of course, psychiatry has focused on individuals rather than society. But what Littlewood and Lipsedge have done is to transfer the onus from the individual on to his or her particular culture, which then become one and the same. So, if a previous generation of psychiatrists regarded blacks as the problem, the new ethnic school views blacks as having problems. If the former sought to blame the victim by saying black genes were responsible for our individual oppression, the latter simply substitutes black culture as the same cause of our collective oppression.

It is pointless, however, to claim that the Transcultural Psychiatrists

are unaware of racism; in fact, they use it for pacificatory demands (for black people in decision-making posts in psychiatry, for example). But they do not, for all their concern about 'misunderstanding' black people, see race or class as issues which condition or structure people's lives. The way in which they perceive 'the occasional failure' of their therapies illustrates this. The following example was given at the Transcultural Psychiatrist's conference last October. We described it in issue 4 of our bulletin *Black Health*. A black psychiatric nurse and a white psychiatrist from Guy's Hospital who had been 'working on' a woman called Josephine for the past six months explained the reason for their failure to build a 'therapeutic alliance' with Josephine. The centre of Josephine's life was her flat – she is a single parent with a 5-year-old child – and it was a break-in to her flat which precipitated her 'breakdown'. Unable to understand the concrete material threat to what was, after all, the necessary basis of Josephine's life, and unable to understand the importance of housing for a single black woman in a society where black people are systematically denied access to social benefits (Josephine had had to struggle hard for her flat), her therapists interpreted her attachment to it as 'symbolic' – an element in a personal world of 'mistrust' which could only be alleviated by 'therapeutic alliances'. And they viewed her resistance to their ministrations as Josephine 'acting out' her 'fantasies about ethnic differences' in order to avoid 'interpretations' offered by her therapists.

Psychiatry and welfare

As we have said earlier, psychiatry has penetrated every aspect of the welfare state from schools (which call in the community psychiatrist to sort out 'troublesome' schoolchildren) to family planning clinics, social workers, community workers (who make referrals) and, of course, hospitals (who, when confronted with a patient suffering from a physical illness, may well decide to call in a psychiatrist). Below we present three examples to illustrate how cases reach the psychiatrist; how the role of the psychiatrist links up with other parts of the welfare state; how the psychiatrist frequently acts to confirm the judgements and provisional diagnosis of other agencies; and finally, how the psychiatrist acts to place the patients position on record.

Case 1

Mrs D is a 54-year-old Afro-Caribbean woman who has suffered from high blood pressure (hypertension) and diabetes (high blood sugar) for ten to twelve years.* During the first six years she controlled her

* It should be explained that doctors tend to treat high blood pressure in black people as genetic (to be treated with drugs). The relationship to stress or the environmental

medical condition by dieting. Then, three years ago she was referred by her diabetes consultant to have a hysterectomy (removal of the womb) with comments such as 'her womb is now pointless, she has had seven children'. Her medical recovery after removal of the womb was good. Her emotional recovery was somewhat slow, which is fairly normal because of hormone changes, but she was not given the hormone supplements (made available to white middle-class women) which could have helped this.

On her regular visit to the diabetes consultant, whom she had known for many years, she confided that since her operation she did not 'feel quite a woman' and that she thought her husband was having an affair. As a result, a social worker was sent to assess the 'family environment' and her husband was assessed as a 'typical Afro-Caribbean male'. The diabetes doctor then referred Mrs D to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist diagnosed Mrs D as a schizophrenic needing treatment and prescribed tablets of Largactil. But because the psychiatrist felt that Mrs D did not trust him, he asked her diabetes doctor to prescribe them. The doctor did so. The side-effects of the tablets are that they make one lethargic and slow and cause incessant hunger and automatic facial movements and smiling. Because of constantly being hungry, Mrs D was unable to control her diabetes through dieting. Finally, her psychiatrist and diabetes doctor bluntly told her that she must do something about her 'weight problem and emotional state' and stop going on 'yam binges'. All these things were recorded on her case notes, but what was never mentioned was the side-effects of the tablets. Also recorded on her medical notes was the fact that Mrs D's son had a police record. Mrs D has now been reduced to a vegetable and is still receiving treatment as a schizophrenic. At every stage in Mrs D's case each of the four specialists treating her reached straightaway for the harshest and most punitive treatment available to them. The diabetes doctor, for example, could have referred her to a marriage guidance counsellor as a first step; instead he called in a psychiatrist. That such an approach should be independently adopted by each professional can only be understood in terms of a structural racism so deeply imbedded in the tradition of western medicine, in its collective unconscious, so to speak, that it overrides the professional's conscious commitment to the patient's well-being. In effect, they colluded against her.

Case 2

A is a 19-year-old Afro-Caribbean youth. He was brought into hospital having taken a large overdose of his mother's blood pressure tablets in

management of blood pressure is rarely mentioned to black people, because they are considered too stupid to understand. On Mrs D's case notes her 'low intelligence' was noted when she first went to her doctor.

mistake for Panadol. He was incoherent and extremely unwell. He was immediately diagnosed as schizophrenic and this diagnosis was entered in his record by the junior doctor treating him. When nurses questioned this diagnosis, they were told, 'he is the right age, sex and race and he is unemployed'. (His experience illustrates the way in which the very routine of hospital admission makes the enforcement of commonsense racism possible.) Later, when the effect of the drug he had accidentally taken had worn off, doctors realised that he had not a psychiatric condition but a medical one which required urgent *medical* attention. However, what the junior doctor had written on his record could not be crossed out.

Case 3

If Mrs D's experience (case 1) shows how the different aspects of hospital care conspire against black people, Mrs K's case shows how this is replicated on a bigger scale through all the agencies of the welfare state.

Mrs K is a Bengali Muslim. She has three children and lives in a housing estate facing a morgue. There have been several racist attacks on the estate, living conditions are very poor, rooms very small and damp. Her husband has a girl friend who lives in the house. He works unsocial hours in a sweatshop. The first intervention was a home visit by the social worker, made on the basis of 'concern' from the school teacher. (Social workers often go into people's homes without saying who they are.) This one reported as follows: 'Found the place in a filthy state, woman is neurotic. Doesn't seem to care about the children. Doesn't do any housework. Speaks very little English. We'll keep an eye on her.'⁹

Meanwhile, her doctor sent Mrs K to a psychiatrist who spoke no Bengali and did not use an interpreter. Mrs K speaks very little English. His report was: 'Obsessional personality, very little motivation. Appearance — make-up caked on, glittery clothes, totally unsuitable for day-wear. Putting her on tranquilisers three times a day. Mogadon — Nocte.'¹⁰ The next visit was from a white community worker who runs a day-centre, has worked with Asian women and runs an Asian women's group which includes make-up classes, cookery classes and outings. She realised that Mrs K had marital problems and referred her to Women's Aid, simultaneously suggesting to Women's Aid that they help her to leave home immediately. This community worker was also in touch with the eldest child who complained that her mother was beating her and, because of this, she had contacted the school teacher.

The school teacher, who had in fact started off the whole cycle, produced a written report which found the child 'unsettled and disruptive, complaining of the hard work she is put through and the fact that she is not allowed to go out with her friends'.¹¹ In addition, the teacher took

it upon herself to liaise with the social worker about the unfair treatment of the child, suggesting that the child was at risk and that she be put into care. She also asked the social worker to look into the welfare of the other children. At this stage, the Department of Health and Social Security stepped in, stating that it was suspicious of the woman and of her 'marital problems', that it was questioning her immigration status and might contact the Home Office.

The last step was a multi-disciplinary case discussion at which the psychiatrist, social worker, white community worker, housing welfare officer, teacher and Women's Aid worker were present. They found Mrs K to be a 'neurotic obsessional person' who was not a 'good mother', and recommended that the children be taken into care, the hospital continue to see her as an outpatient, the psychiatrist involve social workers to get her to go into a group home and her social worker keep in touch with all agencies and make reports for further recommendations.

If the three cases above illustrate what amounts to a racist attack on black people, they show too the helplessness of black people in an area where almost all struggles have been individual ones, because of a general acceptance of the notion that the caring arm of the state cannot be coercive – thereby excluding 'welfare' from the arena of political struggle.

The examples also illustrate the way in which help is withheld until the individual or family members cannot cope. This means that what is then given, however punitive it may be (whether incarceration, chemotherapy or ECT), comes into the sphere of consent not coercion. It serves to illustrate the thin line between the two.

Psychiatry and law and order

Up to 40 per cent of patients in NHS hospitals are mental patients, but unlike other branches of medicine and health care, psychiatry relies heavily upon the law in its day-to-day practice. The majority of those hospitalised suffering some form of mental distress admit themselves voluntarily for psychiatric treatment – in 1979/80 only 30 per cent of the total psychiatric population were admitted under the compulsory admission procedure provided by the 1959 Mental Health Act. In contrast, in 1959 80 per cent were admitted against their will. In 1939 90 per cent and in 1930 it was 100 per cent.¹² These changes show that psychiatry is not an autonomous medical speciality but a social practice heavily dependent upon the law in order to function. The 1959 Mental Health Act distributes power and responsibility for the mentally distressed to a number of institutions. On the one hand, the agencies of law and order – police, courts, prisons – are empowered to detain

distressed persons in custody and to make decisions as to 'offender patients'. On the other hand, legal powers can be drawn upon by social workers who, together with family doctors and family members (whose consent is not always necessary), have the right to compel distressed persons into psychiatric 'care' – 'in their own best interests'. The major trend over the last decade shows a decrease in the use of section 136, which gives power to the police. Indeed, it was this increasing involvement of the police and the increasing use of coercive powers by various welfare service professionals in matters of psychiatry which concerned pressure groups such as MIND and made them demand reforms of the custodial powers of psychiatrists. The result – the 1982 Mental Health Amendment Act – falls far short of any real move towards accountability of the police-psychiatry set up and is no more than a cosmetic exercise.

One of the most significant aspects of the 1959 Mental Health Act is that it sets out the conditions and limits of the legitimate use of force at the disposal of a variety of non-medical institutions. Mental patients have fewer rights in hospital than if they were in prison, and the black experience of psychiatry demonstrates the most extreme violation of personal and civil rights. This is hardly an accident, but is caused directly by the structural connection between psychiatry and law and order which, in extreme cases, has led to the deaths of black people.

In 1982 Paul Worrell was found hanged in his cell in Brixton Prison. He had been charged with grievous bodily harm. He was also diagnosed as schizophrenic. It has been alleged that he was murdered: at the least, he suffered racist neglect. But there is a further line of enquiry that should have been followed up – namely, that Paul Worrell was crushed between the criminal law and psychiatry.

First, he was charged with grievous bodily harm after being arrested for an 'unprovoked' attack upon a man. Police termed this offence as 'totally out of character' with Paul's previous record and concluded that he was mentally disturbed. Yet he was remanded at Brixton prison, as a criminal, to face court hearings and, presumably, conviction and sentencing. At the first court hearing, prison doctors reported that Worrell was 'normal and sane' (i.e., a criminal). His defence lawyers were dissatisfied, though, and Worrell was remanded again, pending a further psychiatric examination. At Brixton, he was then diagnosed as *schizophrenic* by a psychiatrist from Guy's Hospital. On the advice of prison officers, the psychiatrist deemed Worrell 'dangerous' to himself and others. The offer of a psychiatric bed in a mental hospital was rescinded on the ground of Worrell's 'dangerousness'. At another court hearing Worrell was ordered under section 60 of the Mental Health Act to be compulsorily detained in a mental hospital. He was now officially *mentally ill*. His family and the defence lawyers found a place for him in Bethlem Royal Hospital, but

the hospital could not take him immediately. So Paul Worrell remained in Brixton prison in solitary confinement (the psychiatric wing of the prison was full) receiving large doses of Largactil. He was found hanged in his cell.

What is significant about this sequence of events is the manner in which the 1959 Mental Health Act was deployed in the procedures of the criminal court. And, as Worrell's case shows, the official status of the subject – are you a madman, a criminal or both – is uncertain until the legally codified place of that subject's detention is decided. Yet, like Steve Thompson in 1979 and Abeena Simba Tola in 1982, Worrell received in prison the same sorts of chemical technology to pacify and contain 'the problem' as he might have expected in a mental hospital. How is this made possible?

Another look at the 1959 Mental Health Act and the history it encompasses might answer this question, for its terms of reference do not appear to make a clear distinction between insanity and criminality. This is not merely a technical point, it is a necessary consequence of the assumptions that allow psychiatry to be a legitimate form of social control. It is because of psychiatry's failure to secure a universal, coherent and valid *medical* frame of reference that it requires the law to specify guidelines for the identification of the nature of the problems its expertise is called upon to treat and take responsibility for. This is because the mandate governing the practice of psychiatry is not medical but social: 'the norms against which madness or mental illness is measured, the demands for social competence, the requirements of constraint and control can never be a purely medico-clinical matter'.¹³ But where those demands for social competence involve not specifically medical or biological norms, but concepts of personality, normal thought and appropriate conduct, psychiatry is 'influenced by prevailing social categories and expectations, by the whole gamut of discourse and institutions concerned with policing and checking abnormality'.¹⁴ And hence, 'courts, the police and social workers constantly refer people to psychiatrists and hospitals for abnormalities which are identifiable as those of some functional disorder'.¹⁵ In other words, the question – are you a madman or a criminal – is not a subject for scientific investigation but for evaluation against social norms chosen by the state to maintain the status quo, and it is left to the 1959 Mental Health Act to formulate the mode of interdependence between medicine and law and order. It is this logic which underlies the definition of 'mental disorder' in section 4 of the Act.

For black people the most relevant parts of the Act are sections 136, 60 and 65. Section 136 empowers police to 'remove to a place of safety' (i.e., a police station) anyone found in a public place and judged – on the spot – to be dangerous to others or themselves. It may be used where police would ordinarily have no power of arrest, and no offence

need be committed to justify its use. It has been estimated that black people are three to four times more likely than whites to be so 'caught' by section 136.¹⁶ Not surprisingly, it has earned itself the nickname of 'the Mental Health Sus Law'. A smallscale study shows that blacks accounted for 35 per cent of mental patient admissions into Hackney Hospital over the period of one year.¹⁷

Once an offender is brought before the court, section 60 empowers the court to authorise his or her compulsory admission to mental hospital on the recommendation (either written or oral) of two doctors that the person falls within any of the categories listed in section 4. This may be done in the magistrates court before sentence is passed. Nor can 'offender' patients, unlike involuntary admissions signed by relatives or social workers, be discharged upon the application of a nearest relative. For, under this section, receiving hospitals have the capacity to detain a subject for up to a year if it is decided that he or she has not 'recovered'. Moreover, under section 65, even if the hospital decides to discharge such patients, on the grounds that they have recovered, the court may still restrict the hospital from doing so – and such orders are fairly common.

The rationale governing usage of this cluster of powers is almost always framed in terms of 'protecting public interests' and is dependent on assessments of the person's 'dangerousness' – a term so general and inclusive as to offer law-and-order agencies a wide scope for acting pre-emptively against what they consider to be potential disruption.

An indication of how these powers are used – there are no detailed statistics available – is shown by the case of Steve Thompson. In 1979, a few weeks before he was due for release from Gartree Prison, Thompson refused to have his Rasta locks shorn and was sent to Rampton security hospital for having resisted. Predictably, he was diagnosed as schizophrenic. Four months later, after legal action, he was given an absolute discharge, thus retrospectively showing how his resistance was redefined as a medical matter.

Steve Thompson's experience is not an isolated event; it symbolises the concentration of black 'offender patients' being re-directed and decanted out of a crisis-ridden prison system into the psychiatric circuit proper. His case illustrates the way in which medicalisation is being used in an attempt to neutralise the crisis conditions of the penal system – overcrowded, under-financed and at the sharp end of a populist, authoritarian policy of law and order. The prison psychological service has played a vital role in devising new techniques to contain the internal contradictions of the system, which otherwise might explode as 'riots'.

And, of course, in all this, black people, particularly young people, are affected most acutely – they are shunted into prisons in overwhelming numbers; and once there have to endure the horrors of prison compounded by racism within the prison system. Home Office figures

(April 1982) inform us that blacks constitute 50 per cent of prisoners at Ashford remand centre, from 25-35 per cent at Brixton and Aylesbury prisons and at Rochester, Dover, Hewell Grange and Blantyre House detention centres, and 10 per cent at Wormwood Scrubs, Parkhurst, Albany and Wandsworth prison.¹⁸

But for the 'ethnicity' liberals there is, as we have pointed out earlier, another alternative to prison psychiatry – repatriation. Both the 1959 Mental Health Act and immigration legislation provide for powers to compel mad black aliens to be repatriated to their country of origin. Between 1970-76 a total of fifty-seven people have been through this procedure. Significantly, in the provisions of the 'Charges to Overseas Visitors' regulation (October 1982) aliens brought into hospital on compulsory orders are exempted from charges – thus freeing the way for further repressive medicalisation. This has not escaped the attention of liberals such as Rack, who, discussing 'Repatriation as therapy', only opposes such a move on the grounds of the considerable bureaucratic impediments through which the 'caring professional' has to negotiate. On clinical grounds, the few follow-up surveys offer little by way of substantial evidence for the therapeutic advantages of repatriation. For all this, however, 'repatriation ... may seem to be an obvious solution to the problems of some immigrants'.¹⁹

Other methods of managing the working class include appropriating liberal strategies and using them against the people. This process is clearly seen in the field of law and order. Community policing, for example, which started off as a liberal demand, has been turned into a way of gathering information – and surveillance. The same process is replicated over and over again in agencies like the NHS. Two examples of this are community care and the basic issue of rights in health.

Community care, in the case of mental health, began as the demand for not locking people up, but has been turned by the state into an integral part of the strategy of cut-backs in public expenditure. In the case of caring for dependent people, it means that the responsibility is dispersed and reallocated, not to another part of the state but to working-class people themselves – to volunteers and unpaid domestic labour in the home. Thatcher's Victorian values mean that women are increasingly being expected to care for their mentally-ill or mentally-handicapped relatives.

As for the issue of rights, as we wrote elsewhere, in the case of black patients the very concept of rights itself is like a state-funded myth. And yet, with perfect timing, the Health Education Council has produced a pamphlet on just that subject – the rights to health of 'Ethnic Minorities'. Its message to black patients is that they will be better off if they accept what they are given by the NHS, even if it amounts to the most blatant medical abuse. Some health authorities are using it as the ultimate sick joke – they are handing it out to people in place of welfare services.²⁰

Of course, these state strategies, particularly that of community care, affect the entire working class. For black people, they are intensified by racism and, in addition, we have to cope with specific policies aimed at us. In this context, as we have shown (through the cases of Josephine and Mrs K, for example), if the law and the thugs don't get you, ethnicity will. So, it is no longer enough to leave the field to those liberal psychiatrists whose demands have been the further study of, and understanding for, black culture. As we have tried to show, these demands on our behalf are not only irrelevant but harmful, providing a new theoretical justification for the same old racism. What is needed is basic political action to bring psychiatry into the political arena – and make sure that all campaigns on police powers and accountability take on board the 1959 Mental Health Act, particularly section 136; that such campaigns be broadened to make accountable all those (social workers, etc.) who exercise coercive powers particularly under this Act; and that all those concerned with taking on the state's repressive law-and-order policies look also at the black people's experience of the welfare state – which, for so long, has been excluded from political action and organisation.

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A common language*

Let us begin by returning to 16th June, 1976 and the streets of Soweto, South Africa. The cry of the host of youth and children who demonstrated on those streets and marched towards the racist guns, which killed nearly a thousand of them, echoed around the world. They would not be ghettoised! They would not accept an education which sought to bantustanise them! They would accept no language which fragmented or insulated them from the rest of struggling humanity. They marched and died for the right to speak the words which would connect them to the world, which would lead them to understand the world in order to transform it.

They knew and they still know in every breath they take and word they utter that *language* itself, and the ability to speak fluently and achieve competence in a standard language that forges an unbreakable connection with the world, is not only one of the great catalysts towards the unity of the world's oppressed people, but is a *necessity* for the progress of a people. And we are not speaking of mere literacy but of *functional competence*, the ability to use language as an instrument to rationalise and analyse, to organise and mobilise, to study and understand the enemy, to march out of the ghetto, to make the island into the world, to cease to be a fragment and use language to embrace the other struggling people of the world, themselves, as the Caribbean

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* This article is based on a talk given to teachers in Hackney, East London, in May 1983.

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poet Peter Blackman has said, 'tireless to find some common ground' where men and women could meet.

Why do I, speaking in East London, begin with an evocation of Soweto? It was undoubtedly the most heroic action of our generation undertaken by organised youth and childhood, and it had its specific basis in the demand to speak and master *language* as a common factor between human beings. It was a shout for progress that the most backward elements in our world, whether they be manifested through Apartheid or the other agents and mechanisms for the protection of imperialist interest, were bound to seek to silence and repress. These young voices threatened and directly interfered with the arrangements and security of Barclay's Bank, of Rio Tinto Zinc, of Plessey, of British Leyland (South Africa) Ltd, and thus could not be allowed to be heard. A united, organised and articulate working people would be their expropriators. All over the world, those peoples who seek to use language to give that unity and consciousness to their peoples are being attacked and destabilised with a brutality that knows no bounds. In Cuba when the literacy campaign began, counter-revolutionaries identified the young literacy teachers, the *brigadistas*, as their prime targets. They had that much fear of the power of language to liberate the consciousness of the people. A 17-year-old teacher, a black youth called Conrado Benítez, was captured, strangled and sadistically mutilated as an example to the other thousands of young people. They were not, of course, intimidated or swerved one inch from their objectives, and the triumph of the campaign to give all Cuban people a common language of unity and purpose is now a part of Caribbean history.*

Two decades later, a young member of the National Youth Organisation in Grenada, on an internationalist assignment as a literacy worker of the Literacy Crusade in Nicaragua, bringing literacy to the English-speaking people of the Atlantic coast, recounted how everything backward in Latin America that is being trained in the US, and in particular the offscouring of the fallen Somoza tyranny, is being launched against the literacy campaign in Nicaragua to seek to prevent the people adopting language as a weapon of unity and progress that will de-limit their horizons and make them a part of the world:

The name of the place where I worked in Nicaragua was Barra de Rio Maiz. It was a very small village surrounded by river, sea, coconut plantations and swamplands. It had a population of about sixty people and fifty-five of them were illiterate when we arrived.

* The truth is that teachers, young and old, continue to face death and torture in many parts of the world — El Salvador being the most prominent contemporary example — in their attempts to bring a common, transformational language to their peoples.

To begin with, thirty-one enrolled for literacy classes and I personally was given five students. No news of Grenada had ever reached there, especially that place which was so underdeveloped. So I arrived from a country they had never heard of! But I told them that ours was a revolutionary country too, and what we were doing in our revolution here, and how we had been in the darkness ourselves under Gairy. So then they began to realise how much they had been in the darkness under Somoza and how their revolution could change their lives. One of the men there said: 'We had nothing, and we worked from morning until night and our labour was in vain. We was slaves, in other words.' Somoza only cared about the work they could do and how he could exploit them in that country. Even in hunting the people had to use their bare hands because Somoza took away their guns. He didn't care if they could eat or not, he only wanted the wealth from those people. And of course, that was the same thing Gairy was doing in our country – only exploiting the poor people, taking what they produced and sending it to richer countries. So I could show them the parallel between our experience in Grenada and theirs in Nicaragua.

Once, some Somozistas heard that there were some brigadistas in Barra de Rio Maiz. So they came in search of us, to kill us, so that they could stop the Literacy Crusade and try to overtake the government and turn back the revolution. So they came into the village armed with guns and asked for us. But by this time the people had realised that we were doing good for them and that the Somozistas would only harm them. So they didn't let them know who we were. We hid our uniforms and books around the lagoon at the backs of the houses and stayed there in the yards as if we were Nicaraguans. They came very close to us and passed by us with their guns while the villagers spoke to them in Spanish. But they didn't find us because the people in that community told the Somozistas that we were their brothers and sisters and even their wives. So they went away without knowing who we were. So the families of Barra de Rio Maiz were very faithful and loyal to us, and saved us from getting killed. And those Somozistas knew that the Crusade was very dangerous for them because it would expose all their tricks and oppression of the people.¹

'Would expose all their tricks and oppression of the people' ... key words! That is what our common language must do for us and our students. That is why English, Standard English, is the most important and fundamental tool which *all* our children must learn and have in articulate measure, not to leave school functionally illiterate, unable to construct a sentence or grasp a concept, or to sink into the ghetto and lies of the tabloids – but to be able to analyse and understand their

world and the economic and social forces which control it, to be able to fight back against the sophisticated, many-layered and profound evil that is Thatcherism, that is Reaganism, to give the basis of organisational unity between our people.

Let us be clear that the English language has been a monumental force and institution of oppression and rabid exploitation throughout 400 years of imperialist history. It attacked the black person who spoke it with its racist images and imperialist message, it battered the worker who toiled as its words expressed the parameters of his misery and the subjection of entire peoples in all the continents of the world. It was made to scorn the languages it sought to replace, and told the colonised peoples that mimicry of its primacy among languages was a necessary badge of their social mobility as well as their continued humiliation and subjection. Thus, when we talk of 'mastery' of the Standard language, we must be conscious of the terrible irony of the word, that the English language itself was the language of the master, the carrier of his arrogance and brutality. Yet, as teachers, we seek to grasp that same language and give it a new content, to de-colonise its words, to de-mystify its meaning, and as workers taking over our own factory and giving our machines new lives, making it a vehicle for liberation, consciousness and love, to rip out its class assumptions, its racism and appalling degradation of women, to make it truly *common*, to re-create it as a weapon for the freedom and understanding of our people.

That is the strongest of challenges to us, for our words express our deepest and most political perceptions about the forces that surround us. They move between our gut and our brain in an incessant dialectic, but finally it is our brain that must lead us. And what does it tell us? That Standard English is not merely the code of imperialism and the ugly language of Thatcher and Tebbit, the sepulchral words of the City and Westminster. It is the language seized and transformed by N'krumah, Mandela, Garvey, Angela Davis and George Jackson, by Shakespeare, Milton and Shelley; by Rodney, Lamming, Mulk Raj Anand and Rajendra; by Robeson, DuBois and Brathwaite. It is the language of Bishop and Coard, a language capable of re-shaping and re-inventing experience, of conceptualising the structures of a new way of life right across the world, and a language of inordinate beauty and power. As teachers, our task is to contribute to that transformation of our common language.

As we realise this, we also realise that the state has seen and recognised how crucial to the resistance and dignity of our people their mother tongues have been. Thus it seeks to disarm their words. Under the camouflage of multiculturalism, we see them being appropriated, bought up and neutralised, and in the educational scramble to grab the multicultural pennies – like the tourist who throws his 5 cent coins over the side of the liner to the harbour urchins – Creole is set against

Bengali, Turkish against Greek. And while this continues apace, the new multicultural orthodoxy downgrades the value and usefulness of the one syncretic language that binds us together, allows us to analyse collectively the economic and political reality in which we live and underlines our struggle for unity as a people: Standard English.

For our aspiration must be – and I am referring to the working people of our country and those who are their allies, our working people who have the enormous potential strength of an international foundation that has brought their families from many parts of the world to help create the basis of life, production and service to the future of Britain – our aspiration must be, if we are seriously interested not only in our emancipation but in our very survival, *that we are one people*, that out of all this varied and microcosmic human material around us we must create one synthesis, that we have the massiveness of a common culture of enormous wealth of struggle and beauty, and that we have a common language: English. For unless we, as teachers, strive to give our children that common English capable of rising to analytical power, clarity and confidence, we are clearly failing them. This is, and has always been the crucial challenge of English teachers, progressive English teachers in our schools, to teach our children a language through which they can understand and begin to transform the world. Not just the world of their street, although it must begin there, but the world of their wider lives.

How can we help them to gain the language equipment to begin to understand and handle words like *imperialism*, *racism*, *fascism*, the words which carry messages like *First Strike*, *deterrent*, *Cruise*, *Pershing*, the meanings and experience behind names like *McGregor*, *Keith Joseph*, brutal and racist neologisms like *Argie*. *Argie! They are only Argies!* So when they are our prisoners of war we can send them out at gunpoint to clear up minefields, and when they are blown up and maimed we can put them out of their agony by shooting them like we would destroy a dog with distemper. Why? Because they are only *Argies*, just *Argies!*

What is the human stamina, struggle and love for justice behind such recurrent place names as *Palestine*, *El Salvador* or *Namibia*? What does *Ireland* mean? What is the real content and composition of the words which carry the meanings of the reality which circumscribes and bears down upon the lives and futures of our students? How can they begin to answer questions like ‘Who killed Colin Roach?’ What were the forces that directly caused his murder? Or the death of Michael Ferreira? Or Blair Peach? What killed them? Our students must know, they must be able to formulate their answers – we must help them. What is the tyranny behind an editorial in the *Daily Star* or the third page of the *Sun*? When our youth stare at those breasts, do they see the ghoul Murdoch? Do they see the brain-killers, who fit, as William

Blake put it nearly three centuries ago, 'the mind-forg'd manacles' on to our people, the multinational buyers and sellers of misinformation, lies and trivia, those who distort language in a way previously unparalleled so that they can re-define the word '*peace*' by making it mean that our country is occupied by 111 US military bases and installations so we are the first servile line of defence for imperialism. They can say that '*moderation*' means agreement to the wholesale destruction of schools, hospitals and benefits for our people, and millions of them unemployed. How can we, when we see the photographs of Prince Andrew disporting himself with a girl on a Barbados beach, strip away the camouflage and teach our children that he is there with the warships, the jump-jets and the helicopters as a part of the NATO fleet, to intimidate, bully and destabilise the progressive governments of the Caribbean region? How can we make language a source of revelation of these truths for our children? *This* is our struggle as teachers engaged in the instruction of language: to make language speak the truth again.

Why do I emphasise so emphatically the role of *Standard English* as a vital tool in creating this unity and consciousness among our people, for clearly the acquisition of any language resource contributes towards their enrichment. But in our context, standard English has a particular and historically compounding role. We are a fragmented people, an atomised people, and stand in danger of becoming more and more so. As much as we create more and more political and cultural fragmentation amongst ourselves, sometimes using apparently progressive conceptualisation in order to execute it, whether it is done in the name of 'multiculturalism' or the dozens of different and competing notions of cultural nationalism; as much as we split ourselves away from the mass, from the rock of our political and cultural unity as working people faced by a common enemy that would see us impotent, docile, de-intellectualised and accepting every order issued by an Edwards, McGregor or Heseltine, *including* the final order under gun-point to those who stagger out into the radioactive dust to dig mass graves for our own children and parents on London Fields or Victoria Park; as long as we fragment ourselves and lose the ability to organise rationally and humanly with a common purpose and in a common code to face up to and defeat the forces that would kill us all, our people will continue to be the fodder for the lies and darkness of the *Sun*. Our culture lies in the way we work and produce, the way we share each other's lives, the way in which we are socially inter-dependent, the common relationship we have with those who control us at work and the apparatus they have devised to control our wider lives. The basis of our language lies in our messages of work, our grasp to understand the forces which make up our society, the words which direct our resistance to those forces who own our work and dominate our urge to

shape it ourselves towards a new order of humanity which serves all our people.

Thus our major language thrust at our schools must be, as it has always been with progressive teachers who have struggled with similar problems, although perhaps not of such an *ultimate* nature, to teach our children how to *master* the tool of a common language. We are producers too, the producers of producers, and we have to seek to continue to produce, in the tradition of labour and resistance, more and more working-class activists and militants, like those in the past who have used language to analyse, to argue and persuade, to orate and pamphleteer, to organise and win great struggles like those of the dockers in 1889, the garment workers, the Matchgirls, the victories over fascism in the 1930s. Such men and women mastered the language of struggle, but they also discovered and expressed themselves in the great beauty and humanity there is to be found in the English language. In their poetry, their songs and their speeches they expressed their sparkling insights about the society in which they lived, their love for each other and their visions of a new society — Isaac Rosenberg, a Yiddish-speaking boy, learning English as a second language in a slum street in Stepney, in fifteen years achieving language magnificence scarcely matched by any other poet of his generation.²

Eighty years ago, within far more appalling constraints than those we live in now, thousands of people, many of them recent arrivals as refugees from Tsarist Russia, were learning to master Standard English in the school of struggle and the organs of the labour movement, having had the minimum of elementary education. Along with this, and through the Labour and socialist clubs, the Socialist Sunday School movement, through reading books like *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists*, *Merrie England* and the remarkably fertile and literary local labour press, the people also gained a political education. Language became a weapon. In the area of Bromley and Bow, for example, just one section of East London, 10,000 copies of the local Labour Representation Committee paper, *The Worker*, were read, written in clear and vigorous prose and including poetry of a very high standard. Jews, Irish, Lascar, Scottish and people from all over the rural districts of England, Chinese, Maltese, Poles were learning English and were using it not only as a weapon against fascist and ultra-nationalist groups like the British Brothers' League, but also in the battle to improve their lives and, through their trade unions, to bring real and lasting benefits to their people, all working people.

We come out of that tradition and must seek to bring it more and more forcibly into our schools. A part of the yearning of all working people, and in particular arrivant people for their survival has depended upon it, has historically been to *master the language of the country in which they live*, although traditionally this has been invested with a

much greater commitment on behalf of their children than on behalf of themselves. How otherwise could they contribute to changing and improving their own reality and that of their children? They would, in effect, be dumb in the face of the most articulate enemy. Thus, our major language priority must still be to teach not mere functionality but *mastery* of the standard language.

When we talk of 'bi-lingualism', we must mean language *competence* in two languages. How many thousands of our children leave school unable to express themselves clearly and confidently in Standard English and disinclined to read anything above a very basic exploitative level, even though they may be orally articulate in one of the Caribbean creoles, London Cockney, Bengali or in one of the 131 languages or dialects spoken by London children. They cannot correctly be called bi-lingual. Our priority must still be to struggle for mastery of Standard English for *all* our students. Certainly, we must re-create Standard English in the image of its users and its sexist and racist imagery must be exorcised. We also have to re-define our language continually in the process of making a new lexicon that will serve all our children. Our common language must take on all the muscle, the realism, the figurative and imaginative power to be found in the various mother-tongues of our children, all the strength that has been dammed up and suppressed for generations.

For it was these same mother-tongues that were the code of the struggle of the colonised peoples and the British working class over the centuries. These languages carried the conception, tactics and inner organisation of their massive resistance. That energy and genius must erupt out into our common language. But mother-tongue teaching must not be allowed to confuse the main issue of teaching a mastery of the common language, the Standard English, to all our children. For during the present period of loss of jobs and the redeployment of teachers, in the context of the disappearance of scores of posts of mainstream English, we see the token gift from the Inner London Education Authority of some forty mother-tongue teachers. This point is not to devalue the mother-tongues but to assert that the currency of power in Britain is Standard English and our students' fundamental grasp of power must include its necessary mastery. Certainly, everything that improves our skills in teaching English to our students must be unhesitatingly grasped, which is why our English teachers in particular need to study and understand the structure and grammatical systems of the main mother-tongues of our children. With this knowledge, we would be able with much more accuracy to predict and remedy the kinds of language problems they have in mastering Standard English, and be able to solve much more easily the areas of language interference and confusion. Thus it is essential that we plan in-service study of the mother-tongues, from the Caribbean creoles to Urdu to London cockney.

All over the world the progressive language teachers of our time have never sought to re-tribalise language, to fragment it or to keep it in mother-tongue or dialect ghettos. Paulo Freire could have done that in north-eastern Brazil with the number of dialects that his students spoke. But he sought to teach *one language* for consciousness and unity – in his case the standard language of Brazil, Portuguese – in order to encourage his students' awareness of their capacity to understand the forces around them and move to change them. The children of Soweto were not demanding that the language of their schools should be Zulu, Ronga, Xhosa or any sectional language, be it either a mother-tongue or Afrikaans. They were demanding English, the standard language that would connect them to the rest of Africa and the world and blast away the walls of any language ghetto or bantustan. As the revolutionary soldiers and militants of Mozambique organised the recently liberated areas of their country during FRELIMO's war against Portuguese colonialism, they did not teach tribal languages to the people to fall back again into being prisoners of traditional culture. They taught the standard language of Portuguese, even though it was the language of their colonisers, because it was a means of linguistically uniting a people who spoke scores of different languages and dialects. It was the positive choice of a people determined to be victorious over their oppressors and to achieve national liberation. The words they learned became the keys to their freedom: the insights they gleaned strike deep into our reality, here in London.

... words like grenades
 leaving the shrapnel of ideas in our body
 bursting walls of ignorance
 and patient
 and strong
 and constant
 they explained
 and in the words we discovered the truth!
 ... in the words we discovered the reality
 the price of gold made the price of my blood
 and the hunger of my child.
 ... and like stonemasons
 stone by stone
 raising high buildings
 word by word
 we built the thinking
 and in the words there was cement
 and in the words we found the way ...³

Our language in Britain now is subject to a new and terrifying content. We hear it used as the vehicle of the blandest yet most anti-human

expression of a million Jonesvilles, which instruct our people to prepare for mass death and the digging of mass graves in a scenario that would out-auschwitz Auschwitz uncountable times over. When William Morris wrote his *Death Song* in 1887 to commemorate the death of an unemployed worker of Bow, Alfred Linnell, who was trampled to death by the Queen's horses at a demonstration of the unemployed in Northumberland Avenue:

Not one, not one nor thousands must they slay
But one and all if they would dusk the day ...

How would he have known the new irony of 1983, that the garden of his own house in Walthamstow has now been designated the site of a mass grave?

In opposition to the code of imperialism and death – that language of Thatcher, Saatchi and Saatchi, of Rupert Murdoch and the *Sun* – as teachers we must bring into our words and into our classrooms a new language of life, to re-invent a language of meaning and hope, a language that means unity and struggle for our students and ourselves that will begin to sustain us and fight with us in the next crucial years against the advance of all that is backward and threatens to disintegrate us. In doing so, together we shall transform our language as we transform our world, and truly make our common words the messages of a new creation.

References

- 1 Quoted from C. Searle, *Words Unchained: language and revolution in Grenada* (Zed Press, forthcoming).
- 2 An outstanding contemporary example of such use of language is to be found in the recently published novel *Hand On the Sun* (Penguin, 1983), by the young Pakistan-born, self-taught and struggle-taught writer, Tariq Mehmood, one of the 'Bradford 12', who began to learn English at the age of eleven. The power and concreteness of his language and the universalism of its message goes directly back to those who likewise must read, learn and continue that same resistance.
- 3 Quoted from C. Searle (ed.), *Sunflower of Hope: poetry from the Mozambican revolution* (London, 1982).

Notes and documents

Teachers in uniform

In one week in September of 1982 there were three attacks on Asian schoolchildren at one school in East London by gangs of white racists. No action was taken by police, no protection offered to the children. But when local Asians came together to escort the children home from school, they were set upon by unidentifiable plainclothes police. They now face charges of assault and conspiracy. Their trial begins in October.

Two months previously, in July 1982, Hackney and Lambeth branches of the National Union of Teachers (NUT) decided not to cooperate with the police and to ban police from visiting the schools of their members. 'The police in inner-city areas are racist', Hackney Teachers' Association said. 'If we are to maintain credibility with many of our black pupils and parents, then we cannot be seen to be associated with the police.'¹ The branches' refusal to cooperate with the police reflected not only an awareness of police racism, but also that schools have increasingly been co-opted into the policing of young blacks since the rebellions of 1981.

Formal liaison between schools and the police was, until the mid-1970s, largely confined to police giving road safety and accident prevention talks in primary schools and occasionally helping in after-hours activities in secondary schools. Very few forces had schools liaison officers. Some had crime prevention panels on which local teachers might participate. But cooperation was a matter for the individual school or local education authority (LEA) and police force.

By the mid-1970s relations between young blacks and the police had almost reached the stage of open warfare, as black youth increasingly bore the brunt of state racism. Black youth clubs, cafes and meeting

places were targets of repeated and violent raids by police; 'sus' and stop-and-search powers were used to intimidate and harass black youth, while fiddled crime statistics and media vilification provided the justification for ever more repression.² Within schools a parallel process was taking place. Black children, confronting the racism in the education system that labelled them as stupid and put them in classes for the subnormal,³ now found themselves labelled as aggressive, violent troublemakers. By the mid-1970s 'sin bins' (special dumping classes for disruptive pupils) and suspension from school were commonplace methods of disciplining black children – and heads were increasingly calling in police to control or eject them.⁴

In May 1975 the Black Parents Movement was formed after three school students were harassed and bullied by police on their way back to school in the lunch hour and one, Cliff McDaniel, received a severe beating in full view of some of the teachers.⁵ In 1976 massive over-policing of Carnival in West London led to street battles between police and young blacks.⁶

By the late 1970s a more coordinated policy was being developed to involve the police in the education and youth service. A Home Office conference on police and juveniles in 1978, to which educationalists and social services officials were invited, led to a joint circular by the Home Office, the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the Department of Health and Social Security. The circular emphasised the importance of inter-agency cooperation in dealing with young people, and resulted in more police involvement in the curriculum, particularly at secondary level, with visits to police stations and fingerprint and dog-handling demonstrations designed to create the image of an avuncular, non-threatening police service. Some forces ran 'Special Agent' and 'Kiddie-Cops' schemes to involve young people in the 'fight against crime'; many schools started running a 'Police Week'.⁷

The Lozells Project in Handsworth, an inner-city area of Birmingham, was a foretaste of things to come. An experiment in community policing started in 1979, it put control of youth and community services into the hands of police by giving them control of funding. Police input into youth clubs was matched by their involvement in a local school, where they participated in a special course for fourth-year pupils.⁸

Two years later, in the wake of the rebellions, the Scarman Report spoke approvingly of the 'already very extensive' involvement of police in schools and suggested that 'Police assistance in the education of children in the fundamentals of an ordered society can ... be of great value'⁹ – thereby precipitating a massive and rapid escalation of all forms of police involvement in schools. Primary schools were inundated with 'Panda quizzes' and 'Paint-a-Policeman' competitions; secondary schools with police-run discos, clubs and sporting events.

Police officers started appearing on the management committees of youth clubs – in some cases taking control – or setting up their own in competition.¹⁰ Scotland Yard announced plans for the Met to visit every classroom in London at least once a year. In January 1982 a school in the north-east of England had four officers attached to it for twelve weeks to ‘halt the rise in crime’ there. In the same month Thames Valley Police announced plans to train 100 police officers to work in schools, to provide pupils with ‘a scenario of a well-ordered, law-abiding society tempered with fairness and equality’.¹¹ Some forces attached a police officer to each school in their area on a full-time basis. In early 1982 Sir Kenneth Newman, Metropolitan Police Commissioner, sent teams of senior officers to ‘ethnic flashpoints’ – Manchester, Birmingham, Glasgow and Hackney (East London) – to meet senior officials in a variety of state agencies. The police teams reported back to a conference in July 1982 that involvement in schools was a key area, and that ‘managers’ at a senior level in the education system should collaborate with the police to ‘facilitate multi-agency initiatives in appropriate schools’ programmes’.¹² In the same month Croydon’s Director of Education called on teachers and youth leaders to inform police of ‘rumours of racial unrest’ in schools or youth clubs.¹³

The local education managers were, it seemed, only too ready to cooperate. The Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) Director Peter Newsam (now head of the Commission for Racial Equality) sent out a circular to all heads of schools in London in July 1982 in which he instructed them to ‘provide the police with any factual information required on pupils under police investigation from the school record or from personal knowledge about the pupil concerned’.¹⁴

But not all teachers were ready to cooperate. Inner-city teachers, in particular, who had seen police racism at first hand, were determined to stop the co-option of teachers in the police’s service. They pointed to incidents such as the arrival in March 1981 of five police cars, a dog van and a helicopter at a north London school in response to a hoax 999 call, where police used racial abuse and violence on black pupils and told ‘interfering’ teachers to mind their own business.¹⁵ They wanted to know what information was given by those selected teachers who met with police under the new liaison schemes. They were concerned at the incidence of police questioning, and sometimes arrest, of children on school premises, as well as at the use by head teachers of the police as an arm of discipline in schools.

In opposition to them were, on the one hand, hardline teachers, who supported ‘law and order’ measures, were in favour of corporal punishment and had been agitating for a more disciplinarian regime in schools. On the other hand, there were the multiculturalists, who saw in the new liaison schemes an opportunity to educate the police, to get

them to understand the cultural backgrounds of their pupils, which in their eyes was the explanation for the unruliness they saw in the classroom.

In July 1982 Hackney NUT declared that it would continue its policy of non-cooperation with police (adopted in 1979, after local anti-racist teacher Blair Peach was killed by police in Southall). Lambeth NUT, whose members had witnessed some of the heaviest policing operations against young blacks in the country, from Special Patrol Group raids to Swamp '81, followed suit. Their stand against police co-option of teachers raised a furore. 'What kind of anarchic society do they think they are helping to build when they teach our children not to cooperate with the police?' screamed Rhodes Boyson, Under Secretary of State for Education. The National Association of Head Teachers branded the teachers as left extremists.¹⁶ At national level the teachers' own union, the NUT, refused to adopt the policy of non-cooperation.¹⁷

The DES then produced its own policy document (April 1983)¹⁸ expressing whole-hearted enthusiasm for all forms of cooperation with the police. It welcomed all opportunities to increase the 'mutual understanding' between teachers and the police, even recommending special in-service training for teachers who participated in police liaison. It welcomed, too, further police involvement in the curriculum, encouraging more joint preparation of teaching materials by teachers and police officers. It singled out for special interest a new teaching project for 14-16-year-olds (CLASP) involving police and magistrates, and funded jointly by the Home Office and an insurance company. The report also praised the Lozells project in Birmingham, and disclosed that it was to be continued and expanded to include other schools in the area.

The areas of concern noted by the report included the gap in police input to the crucial 11-13 age group; the tendency for some youth workers to defend the 'difficult' youth with whom they are involved (the report recommended that LEAs 'clarify' the tasks of such youth workers); and the over-visibility of schemes such as 'Police Weeks' (one had to be cancelled in the wake of the 1981 rebellions) – the report commented that the 'quieter, less spectacular' contacts with the police are better able to withstand 'acute pressure' such as civil disturbance.

Nationally and locally, the managers of the education system have responded to their new policing role with alacrity. Already the results are being felt. In Chingford (Essex), in July 1983, an 11-year-old schoolboy was seized by police on the way home from school and detained on suspicion of committing a robbery. In Kilburn (West London) another pupil was arrested and questioned about a robbery. Both boys were black. Both could prove their innocence. In both cases it was the school which had provided names, addresses and descriptions of black pupils, in response to a 'routine' police inquiry. In the former

case, the head justified the giving of the information in terms of the very routineness of the inquiry. In the latter case, both the local authority and the DES defended the passing of information, even though it led to a wrongful arrest.¹⁹

But these moves are being resisted. In the spring of 1983 youth and community workers in Moss Side (Manchester) launched a successful campaign to prevent police taking over play schemes for young children. The All London Teachers Against Racism and Fascism and the Socialist Education Association have been arguing for restrictions on police-school cooperation.²⁰ Concern among teachers about police questioning of children at school, and the passing of information about pupils, led to the ILEA issuing a questionnaire to a sample of London heads in March 1983, to find out the extent of these practices and the schools' attitude to them.²¹ Incidents such as those in Chingford and Kilburn can only serve to fuel the doubts and force more teachers to join their colleagues in expelling the police from our schools.

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- 2 See, for example, Institute of Race Relations, *Police against black people* (London, 1979).
- 3 See Bernard Coard, *How the West Indian child is made educationally subnormal in the British school system* (London, 1971).
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- 6 IRR, op. cit.
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- 8 Lee Bridges, 'Keeping the lid on: British urban social policy 1975-81' in *Race & Class* (Vol. XXIII, nos 2/3, 1981/82).
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- 13 *Croydon and Purley Advertiser* (2 July 1982).
- 14 ILEA circular No 82/139 (July 1982).
- 15 *Guardian* (19 March 1981).
- 16 *London Evening Standard* (4 August 1982).
- 17 *Observer* (15 August 1982).
- 18 DES, *Police Liaison with the Education Service* (London, April 1983).
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- 20 See *ALTARF Newsletter* (No. 1, March 1982).
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Racism and children in care*

A white, working-class father was describing – without complaint – the difficulties he and his wife had experienced making sure their six children got to three schools on time, by public transport. The magistrate, who had to decide whether one of the children should be allowed home from care, interrupted him to ask, ‘Why didn’t you think of that before you had them?’

Children are very rarely received into care because their parents do not want them. They are put into voluntary care, in the majority of cases, because of a crisis – illness, confinement, or an accumulation of problems whereby parents cannot look after them and have no one else to turn to but the authorities. Alternatively, they are taken into care, or kept there after an initial voluntary admission, because the local authority decides that it is in the children’s interests.

B is a young black single woman with a baby of 12 months. She was housed in the middle of an almost all-white council estate. She could not afford to keep the rooms heated on her supplementary benefit. She had no friends or relatives nearby, so she used to take her baby girl to the doctor whenever she was worried over minor problems. When the baby was six months old she had diarrhoea. B took her to the doctor, but this time the doctor contacted the social services and had the child admitted to hospital. The social workers arrived at the hospital with a ‘place of safety’ order and told B she could not have her back; they were taking her into care. No one had ever suggested that B was cruel or neglectful to her baby; everyone accepted that she loved her. The baby was removed from her mother on the word of one white doctor that this mother was unfit to care for her child.

M and H, a West Indian couple in their twenties, had a baby who regurgitated most of what he was fed. They took him to hospital where he was diagnosed as ‘failing to thrive’ due to ‘malnutrition’. This was put down to the mother’s neglect and was used against her in subsequent care proceedings. It was only many months later that the boy was found to be suffering from a serious illness which probably caused his failure to keep food down.

Decisions on whether to take children into care are taken by social service departments, who rely on information from doctors, health visitors, teachers and police. Often the accuracy of the information is not tested until the child has been removed and the parents have had to go to court.

In care proceedings, the case is between the local authority and the

* First published in *Searchlight* (No. 93, March 1983)

child; the parents are not parties. They are allowed to be there, and to answer specific allegations made against them, but they have no right to tell the court what *they* want for their child.

This procedure illustrates most crudely the contempt for parents which has been a feature of the system of care since its inception. Care rapidly became a mechanism whereby local 'boards of guardians' removed children from 'unfit' working-class parents. The system was developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century as part of a series of measures designed to build generations of fit young people to continue the task of running an expanding Empire. The government was appalled at the sickly state of the nation's children and blamed the mothers for ignorance and fecklessness rather than tackle the causes underlying the desperate poverty of working-class families. Nearly a century later, the same moral judgements form the basis of decisions to remove children from their parents, and the attitudes built into the system are compounded by racism.

In the early and mid-1960s it was West African parents who, by and large, bore the brunt of racist attitudes. Most West Africans in Britain came as students – often in couples, one partner usually working full-time to support the other's studies, and often studying part-time as well. Given a society in which it was customary for young children to be looked after by someone other than the parents – often an elderly relative who needed the help and companionship a child would bring – informal fostering was continued here. Since the family was not available, couples turned to private foster-parents. Social workers often reacted with horror, assuming that the parents must be uncaring, selfish or ignorant.

Since then, race relations and the study of 'ethnic minorities' have appeared on the curricula of social work courses. But however much the new, 'ethnically aware' social workers might know about the culture of black parents, when it comes to the crunch, of deciding whether a child should be removed from its parents, and where it should be placed, the old white, middle-class values still predominate. In fact, recent remarks from social workers reveal a whole gamut of attitudes of superiority towards black people, ranging from the idea that blacks are uncivilised – 'They require more help with simple things like hygiene' – via paternalism – 'I try to educate minorities to understand the different values and patterns of behaviour so that they fit in better' – to the idea that assimilation *must* be the unspoken goal – 'If you pick up a social worker's case file, you will not be able to tell the colour of the client's skin.' Peppered throughout social workers' attitudes* is the strong conviction of their innate cultural and moral

* The remarks are authentic quotes from social workers from a Commission for Racial Equality survey and our own research.

superiority over their black clients: 'Their beliefs about how children should behave are very different, I don't think we get through to them'; 'In some child-care problems the parents won't bend because of inborn attitudes: "The child is mine, I'll treat it as I think fit" '; 'There is a lack of purposeful recreational activity in the home'. Knowledge of black cultures is divorced from a discussion about racism in Britain. This absolves social workers of examining their own role in racist practices, and provides them with an 'explanation' of black family problems. Multiethnic multicultural studies have lent authority to a pathology of the black family – 'West Indians' attitudes to their children cause problems, they dominate them by force', 'West Indian adolescent girls figure highly amongst one-parent families, and West Indian boys tend to appear before the courts ...'

It is the West Indian extended family that is on trial now. Parents, particularly young single mothers, are accused of yo-yoing their children when they send them to their own mothers for short periods and then have them back. Grandparents who want to look after the children permanently often have to do battle with local authorities – and sometimes lose. In a recent case, the health visitor's concern for a child living with her grandmother was based on how well-behaved the child was. Another local authority wanted to remove a child to long-term foster-parents because, although the child was 'well cared for', she called her grandmother 'mum' and her mother was always round at the grandmother's, who 'appeared to be looking after both'.

Asian families have so far been able, by and large, to resist social worker encroachment on their lives, largely because very few social services departments have any professional staff who can speak Asian languages. Where they have intervened, however, a similar pattern of racism emerges. When parents can't cope, it is unthinkable for social workers to allow the older, teenage children to look after the younger ones and so young Asian children are shipped off to white foster-parents.

Racial statistics on children in care are not, it seems, kept any more. But enough were kept in past years to show that, in the decade from 1959 to 1969, the proportion of children in care in Birmingham who were black rose from 9.7 per cent to 31.3 per cent. In 1974, of the children in care in Tower Hamlets (London), 21 per cent were black, and in the same year, in Wandsworth (London), 54 per cent of the children from 0-9-years-old in care were black. More worrying still is the figure from a study in Leicester in 1975, that black children were twice as likely as white children to be in care as a result of court proceedings (i.e., not placed there voluntarily).

Mr and Mrs D, a Bengali couple, had a very sick child who needed several operations on her heart. Shortly after her return from hospital, Mrs D was shopping with her child when her pushchair caught in a

drain and tipped over. The child fell out and was badly bruised. Mr and Mrs D did not object when the child was put into care, but were extremely distressed when they heard that they were suspected of beating the child. In two other cases known to us, the shame and stress of court proceedings led to deaths; in one an Asian mother killed herself, and in the other, the father died of a heart attack during the proceedings.

Mrs C, bringing up three teenage sons on her own, was struggling with bad housing, a low-paid hospital cleaning job, which exacerbated her bad health, and police harassment of her children. When she approached the social services for help, she was referred to a psychiatrist who told her she was mentally ill and should go to a mental hospital. Her children, she was told, should be taken into care. Mrs C chose to struggle on alone.

Mrs C's story illustrates the use of the *threat* of removing children to make the parents control them better, or behave in a way more acceptable to the white social worker.

Nowhere is this more evident than in cases where the local authority has already taken the children and puts the mother 'on probation' to see if she will be allowed to have them back. The most common index of 'improvement' is the degree of 'cooperation' the parent displays towards the social worker who removed the children in the first place. The person who was originally sought by the parent as a source of help and support has been transformed into a *judgemental* authority figure who must be satisfied at all costs.

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Book reviews

Ain't I a woman: black women and feminism

By BELL HOOKS (Boston, South End Press, 1981). 205 pp. \$7.00
(London, Pluto Press, 1982). 216 pp. £3.95.

This bridge called my back: writings by radical women of color

Edited by CHERRIE MORAGA and GLORIA ANZALDUA
(Massachusetts, Persephone Press, 1981). 261 pp. \$8.95.

All the women are white, all the blacks are men, but some of us are brave: black women's studies

Edited by GLORIA T. HULL, PATRICIA BELL SCOTT and BARBARA SMITH (New York, The Feminist Press, 1982). 401 pp. \$8.95.

Women, race and class

By ANGELA DAVIS (New York, Random House, 1981). 271 pp.
\$13.50 (London, The Women's Press, 1982). 271 pp. £4.95.

The publication in recent years of a number of books by black feminists in the US, both fictional and analytical, marks the beginning of a systematic documentation of black women's individual and collective histories that highlight the common concerns of black women both here and in the US. Dominant amongst these are the rediscovery of ourselves; our place in the black movement; the boundaries of our sisterhood with white feminists; the forging of analytical tools with which to interpret our experience, direct our action and develop the appropriate forms of organisation.

In both this country and the US the emergence of a black women's movement was integrally bound up with the movements for black and women's liberation. But though the impact of these movements on the lives of black women is undeniable, there has yet been a singular failure on their part to integrate the experience of black women into their political analyses. The endemic racism in the women's liberation movement and the sexism of the black movement resulted in the desire on the part of political black women both here and in the US to fashion a

movement whose central concern was the transformation of social relations based on class, race and gender. And over the last five years, even as we – black women activists in Britain – have become more sure in our feminism, we have begun the attempt to define a black feminism significantly different from the dominant trend in the women's liberation movement.

One of our major concerns has indeed been to define the boundaries of our sisterhood with white feminists. In order to understand the differences and conflicts between black women and white women today, it is vital to look at the historical forces and processes that have shaped present day realities. In particular, the points of difference between ourselves and the women's liberation movement have turned on both our historical experience of colonialism and the need for us, as black feminists, to challenge the ever intensifying racism of the British state. Similarly, for black feminists in the US, their particular history of oppression and the rampant racism of the present are central concerns. The authors of the books under review concur that the racism of white women, collectively and individually, has led to alienation and conflict between black and white women. Where they disagree is over the consequences of this for the present day organisation and political advancement of black women.

As part of this re-assessment, black feminists have begun to examine the patterns of our absence in historical writing. Angela Davis – like Bell Hooks – takes as her starting point the study of the relations between black and white women in the abolitionist and women's suffrage movements. Women's historical writing, she shows, has been woefully inadequate when it comes to the experience of black women. She begins by contextualising women's resistance to slavery and is strongly critical of how that resistance has been misrepresented. She traces the birth and development of both the anti-slavery and women's rights movements, examining why so many white women joined the abolitionist movement, and what the growing influence of racism in the suffragist movement revealed about its class basis.

The first female anti-slavery society was formed by black women in 1832 in Massachusetts. In 1833 white women activists, who were mostly from the rising bourgeoisie, joined the abolitionist movement. Davis links the participation of white women of this class in the abolitionist campaigns to the era of industrial capitalism. These women faced the paradoxical situation of being denied their former economic and social status as producers of exchange value in domestic production, even as this new era conferred on them the time to become social reformers. More importantly, abolitionism afforded them a platform from which to launch an implicit protest against their oppression in the home. In asserting their right to oppose slavery, they protested against their own exclusion from the political arena; in order to fight for the emancipation

of black people, they had to fiercely defend their rights as women. They also gained political experience, 'without which they could not have effectively organised the campaign for women's rights more than a decade later'.

Davis cites the example of the outstanding Grimké sisters who, through their active involvement in the anti-slavery movement, came to the recognition of their oppression as women when attempts were made by men to stop them from speaking publicly against slavery. They developed an understanding of the dialectical relationship between the two causes and were profoundly conscious of the inseparability of the two struggles. To their credit, they were never caught in the ideological trap of insisting that one struggle was absolutely more important than the other. While some of the details of the American experiences are no more than points of interest, the political lessons to be learnt are as important for us now as they were for black women then. Foremost among them is the need for black women to guard against the appropriation of feminism by white women and of black liberation by black men.

Bell Hooks also begins by looking at black women's experiences during slavery. While she too discusses the activities of white women abolitionists, her main focus is on the divisions between black and white women imposed by male definitions of the different sexualities of black and white women which allowed of the (white male) idealisation of white women as innocent and virtuous, while at the same time subjecting enslaved black women to mass sexual exploitation. And, 'given the strains of endless pregnancies and the hardships of childbirth, it is understandable that nineteenth-century white women felt no great attachment to their sexuality and gladly accepted the new, glorified, desexualised identity white men imposed upon them'.

No notions of sisterhood for these women: when, in desperation, slave women attempted to enlist the help of their white mistresses against sexual exploitation, they often responded by persecuting and tormenting them. For example, 'A white mistress ... returned home unexpectedly from an outing, opened the doors of her dressing-room and discovered her husband raping a 13-year-old-slave girl. She responded by beating the girl and locking her in a smoke house. The girl was whipped daily for several weeks.'

Hook concludes, however, that the racist views and practices of white women were the direct result of the imposition of a patriarchal culture and ideology over women and thus she absolves the women themselves of any responsibility. By so attempting to analyse racism and its implications within her particular overarching concept of patriarchy, Hooks is guilty of prioritising woman's oppression as woman above all others; whereas we would argue that only a synthesis of race and gender within an overall class analysis can lead us forward

— for race, class and gender form the matrix of our lives and it is difficult to separate out any one as having primacy.

It is the same one-dimensional approach that leads Hooks to another fundamental error — her assumption that black women have failed to challenge the sexism woven into our private and public lives. On the contrary, black women have long confronted the sexism of black men, both in the movement and in our personal lives. In fact, it was the failure of black organisations seriously to consider the oppression of women which provided one impetus for the development of autonomous black women's organisations, and it is crucial that we challenge Hooks' notion that black women have universally accepted the negative stereotypes about ourselves. Her analysis is weakened considerably by a glaring omission of the historical resistance of black women against our multiple oppression.

Not so the two collections, *But some of us are brave* and *This bridge called my back*, which attempt to examine and reveal the fabric of our daily lives so as to arrive at a political analysis and practice which is true to our past and present. *But some of us are brave* begins the task of collating the existing work on black women and, though it is uneven in parts, it is excellent as a resource book, outlining the parameters of black women's studies. It covers (among other things) racism, black feminism, black women's literature, black women and the social sciences — it tries to cover, in fact, every aspect of black women's lives, because 'the politics of black women's studies are totally connected to the politics of black women's lives in this country' and 'the opportunities for black women to carry out autonomously defined investigations of self in a society which through racial, sexual and class oppression systematically denies our existence have been by definition limited'. (Black women in Britain are similarly aware of the fact that much white feminist literature uses Eurocentric models and frameworks. One tendency within feminist scholarship has been to see no differences where differences exist, and all women are talked of as a unified category, even though much of the analysis is only relevant to white women's situations.)

This bridge called my back is an anthology of writings by 'women of color' — Asian, American, Black, Latina/Chicana and Native American — who see, in their common oppression as minorities in a white Anglo-Saxon-dominated society, the common denominators of their struggle as women. Their testimonies of childhood experiences, of political isolation within the white women's movement etc, all have resonances in the experiences of women from minority communities in Britain. Black women in Britain similarly share an experience of discrimination with women from other minority groups such as Chinese, Fillipinos, Cypriots and (white) Latin Americans. We too could build a movement based on 'identity politics', a politics of

personal experience – in fact, the Combahee River Collective believes that ‘the most profound and potentially the most radical politics come directly out of our own identity as opposed to working to end someone else’s oppression’. But a common experience of discrimination is not of itself a sufficient basis from which to bring about the structural and institutional change essential to our liberation. Indeed, a focus on deprivation seen in purely ethnic or ‘cultural’ terms is the fashionable weapon used to depoliticise and disarm black political struggle.

What Afro-Caribbeans and Asians in Britain have been concerned to unite around is an experience which is both historical and contemporary, both collective and individual. What unites us is not only the economic basis – rooted in colonialism – for our presence in Britain, but also the ways in which the racism of the British state structures and determines the conditions of our existence. But to work towards such unity is not, of course, to say that our cultural diversity is not important and significant to us. This is where ‘identity politics’ can be valuable, since it reveals the subjective/individual impact of racism. It also highlights and, therefore helps us to overcome, the internalisation of oppression which often obstructs unity.

Both *This bridge called by back* and *But some of us are brave* reflect the fact that black women in the US have found consciousness-raising – the coming together in small groups to share experiences and so reveal the dimensions of their oppression – an appropriate form of organising. Indeed, it has been seen as a specifically female form of organising since the beginning of the women’s liberation movement in the US and in Britain. And the use of consciousness-raising by black women in the US has opened up a broader spectrum of issues by the very fact that the women were black. The Combahee River Collective (in *But some of us are brave*) puts it like this:

In our consciousness-raising sessions ... we have in many ways gone beyond white women’s revelations because we are dealing with the implications of race and class as well as sex. Even our black women’s style of talking, testifying in black language about what we have experienced has a resonance that is both cultural and political.

But although many black women in Britain have gained as individuals from consciousness-raising, it has never taken off here as an organisational form among us because of the ever-increasing urgency to address ourselves to the racism of the state in all its aspects.

That black women in Britain have understood the limitations of consciousness-raising as a means of instituting political change has not, however, been seriously taken on board by the women’s liberation movements, whose attempts to tackle racism are limited to personal consciousness-raising. By and large, they have continued to believe that the political transformation of social relations is *dependent on*

personal awareness and personal change. Consequently, institutional and state racism is not only completely ignored, but racism itself becomes relocated as a personal problem.

Some writers in the four books are aware of the dangers of this approach. Quintanales, in *This bridge called our back*, warns us against thinking

that social and institutional racism could be eliminated by simply 'becoming' personally non-racist, by becoming 'integrated' in our private lives ... that a long history of slavery and every other kind of oppression, that an *ongoing* and *insidious* reality of social, economic, political exploitation could be magically transcended through a few individual choices ...

Angela Davis is concerned to show that consciousness-raising is a limited tool which, at best, reflects the political priorities of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois women whose concerns are fundamentally different from those of black and white working-class women: the successful transformation of gender concerns can only be achieved by hitting at their root – economic exploitation.

In effect, Davis fails to move beyond the formulation of the problem as presented by Engels. Consequently, she sees the crux of women's oppression as lying in their role as domestic labourers and the key to their liberation as lying in their incorporation into social production and the socialisation of domestic labour.

It may well be true that 'slavery' to an assembly line is not in itself 'liberation from the kitchen sink', but the assembly line is doubtlessly the most powerful incentive for women to press for the elimination of their age old domestic slavery.

The problem with this is that subordination to wage labour is seen as a progressive step for women. No account is taken of the fact that women's participation in such labour is often an outgrowth of their role as domestic labourers, as is witnessed by the sexual stratification of occupations. In addition, Davis is unable to address herself to the tension which exists between women's dual role as producers of use values in the home and exchange values in the labour force and the possible implications this may have for their consciousness as waged workers. Other questions are also left unanswered, such as the role the state plays in reproducing the conditions of women's oppression; the question of whether domestic labour and the ideology surrounding it is the only source and manifestation of women's subordination; and the question of the reproduction of sexual division at the point of production. These are some of the pressing issues for those concerned with the emancipation of women.

For black women in Britain there are still other aspects to consider.

Some of these are economic, for example, the way in which the value of black women's labour power is determined by the fusion of race and sex. Further, there is the question of the way in which the state intervenes on behalf of capital's economic and political interests in order to create the conditions for the reproduction of sections of a disaggregated labour force. Then there is the question of the construction of black women's sexuality, which Davis completely ignores but which is a central focus in the two readers.

Overall, then, we are left between two points of departure, neither of which by itself enables us to analyse and overcome our oppression as black women. It is not enough for us either to subordinate our struggle to that of the working class, or to explain our position by reference to personal experience alone. Both have a part to play. 'Race' and sex are social realities which at particular historical moments structure class relations in as much as class relations structure them. While these books are essential reading for all black women and men, we are still left with gaps in our analysis and practice which it is increasingly crucial to fill so that we can make appropriate alliances without subsuming the specificity of our struggle.

London

GAIL LEWIS
PRATIBHA PARMAR

You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down

By ALICE WALKER (London, The Women's Press, 1982). 167pp.
£2.50 paper.

The Color Purple

By ALICE WALKER (London, The Women's Press, 1982). 245pp.
£3.95 paper.

In a famous episode from Ralph Ellison's *The invisible man*, the novel's black protagonist cringes with shame at the encounter between a respectable white man and the black sharecropper whose wife and daughter are each carrying his child. This, he knows, is the kind of thing white people want to know about black people, and which, therefore, black people want to hide from them. For when any people are stereotyped, and oppressed on grounds of this stereotype, such information, it is assumed, can only do them further harm.

Thus, in Alice Walker's story 'Advancing Luna – and Ida B. Wells' (in *You Can't Keep a Good Woman Down*), the narrator is advised to 'say nothing' about a black man's rape of a white woman: 'no matter what you think you know, no matter what you feel about it, say

nothing.' But this, reflects the narrator, 'is virtually useless advice to give to a writer'. She does not take it, but neither does she ignore the risk in not taking it in a society where black men are lynched by white at the mere whisper of the word 'rape'.

The narrator is a black woman whose white friend, Luna, had been raped by a fellow civil rights worker and had done 'nothing that required making a noise' to stop him. The black woman wants not to believe it, is then embarrassed, and then 'very, very angry', for 'a black woman's first thought is to protect the lives of her brothers, her father, her sons, her lover'. But to 'say nothing' is not only to collude with the violence of sexism, from which black women suffer at least as much as white women, and at the hands of those very brothers, fathers, sons and lovers whose lives they must protect; it is also to write off the possibility that the truth is not as simple as it seems to be and the fact that, whatever the truth, it has to be sought for and faced for there to be any possibility of change.

So this story ends inconclusively, with the mysterious emergence of the rapist from Luna's bedroom some months later. But then it does not end. The narrator records her thoughts upon the story, and then offers two possible explanations: that, used and rejected by the movement leaders as 'nothing: a broken man, unschooled, unskilled at anything', he turns to Luna in desperation and is led by her to talk through the 'stumbling block of the rape' as a precondition of any real relationships between black men and white women and between black women and white women; or, that he was a government agent used to disrupt the inter-racial harmony of the civil rights movement, that the individual's 'lust and rage' matter less than money and power on a national scale.

In this story, Walker confronts the dilemma facing a writer who is both black and female: a dilemma which is the product of society's racism and sexism, and their interaction. For how can she explore the meaning of her experience without speaking the unspeakable and thus reinforcing racist and sexist stereotypes? But how can she render herself visible without realising this experience in all its contradictions? How, therefore, can she not write about the oppression of black women by black men as well as by white men and women? How not write about the oppression of white women too?

Only by breaking the hold of conventional forms of thinking about the facts, about how they relate, how they can be interpreted and how they can be expressed. In this, as in other stories in the volume, the story form itself cannot hold the tensions and possibilities and it breaks. So too in 'Coming apart' and 'Porn', which discuss the meaning of pornography in the sexual lives of black people, not just through the fictional lives of two black couples, but through quotations from actual essays on sexism and pornography and from pornography itself.

And in 'A letter of the times', written by a black woman to her white friend, the relationship between the real history of slavery and media presentations of sado-masochism in inter-racial relationships is discussed more in essay than in story form.

What this breaking of the story form achieves is an opening up of the dilemma itself, so that its terms are seen to be imposed as a straitjacket on our thinking and feeling, aimed at preventing us from realising that huge and oppressive as racism and sexism are, they are structures within the larger structure of class power and exploitation. For a writer to allow herself to be silenced by the dilemma is to accept its validity; to confront it is to begin to destroy it, as Walker does, and to enable oneself to identify the 'larger forces at work' in our oppression.

But if the black woman is positioned at the intersection of the structures of class, race and sex, and thus perhaps most acutely aware of their interactions and contradictions, she is also traditionally rendered silent by them. For if women generally have been silenced by our man-made language, black women have also been silenced by white lies. 'You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy.' Thus reads the epigraph to *The Color Purple*. So Celie, the young black girl raped by her father, writes her letters to God, and in her own grammar speaks to him of the miseries of her poor life.

This novel is the articulation of the inarticulate: in two senses, because Celie is truly of the silent majority, schooled only in submission, and because her experience is literally 'unspeakable', consisting as it does of incest, loss of her children, sterility, forced marriage, domestic violence and general contempt; atrocities perpetrated upon her by the black men closest to her — her father and husband. But in the community of other black women she gives and receives love — with relatives and friends, and especially with her husband's mistress, Shug, and her absent sister, Nettie. And with love she finds self-esteem, and with self-esteem finally she finds happiness.

We may be tempted to read Celie's winning through poverty to comfort, isolation to community and self-contempt to self-esteem as a somewhat contrived utopianism. Especially with the miraculous return of her long-lost children and the revelation that her 'father' was merely a stepfather; we may feel that the author cannot bear at the end to deny her character any element to complete her happiness, and if so, we may enjoy the happy ending as we enjoy the resolution of a fairy tale, guiltily aware that life isn't like that. But is that true? Some of Celie's happiness is given, but more of it is earned. As she grows older she grows, even if unconsciously, in her capacity to control her life. If as a child she was powerless against her father's lust and her husband's violence, she is not condemned by this to perpetual oppression as an adult. Through her love for Shug she frees herself from her husband's violence, then from him and finally from her hatred for him. In

speaking of her father's lust and her fears for her children, if only to God and her sister, she can learn that these fears are unfounded; the rape remains, but not the incest. And eventually she can confront and so deny the concept of 'God' as a force external to herself, imagined as 'that old white man' and re-imagine 'him' as inside herself, and 'inside everybody else', as life itself, asking repeatedly to be loved and lived:

I think it pisses God off if you walk by the color purple in a field somewhere and you don't notice it.

What it do when it pissed off? I ast.

Oh, it make something else. People think pleasing God is all God care about. But any fool living in the world can see it always trying to please us back.

The Color Purple can then be read less as a realist novel than as an allegory of the black woman's learning to speak. Knowing from the start the nature of her experience (the dumb are not stupid), she can speak it only to herself (to God), but she can speak honestly, and love honestly, though only other black women, to whom she learns to speak as well and with whom she learns to reinterpret her experience, until she can recognise that it is not all suffering, and that she has within her the responsibility and the right to refuse to suffer, to notice too 'the color purple', so that finally she can speak to everyone and everything: 'Dear God. Dear stars, dear trees, dear sky, dear peoples. Dear everything. Dear God.'

This is a hopeful book. And hope is a risky thing; it can too easily be dismissed as naivety. But only by taking risks can the writer open us up to possibility. This Alice Walker does supremely, in making us aware that only by facing up to the meaning of blackness and femaleness in a racist and sexist society can we hope to relate honestly not only across the barriers of race and sex, but within them. We have it within us, she says, to try.

Canterbury

MARGARET MARSHMENT

The Empire Strikes Back: race and racism in 70s' Britain

By CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES
(London, Hutchinson, 1982). 324pp. £5.95 paper.

Editors' note: We publish below a further and essential corrective comment by Lee Bridges on The Empire Strikes Back. We wish to make it clear that we share, as editors, the responsibility for the political error in publishing the original review in our last issue. 'To treat comrades like enemies is to go over to the stand of the enemy.'

It is necessary to return briefly to *The Empire Strikes Back*, as my review in the last issue of *Race & Class* was unbalanced and wrong in some of its criticisms of the book.

My major error was to take too much for granted and therefore to undervalue the political significance of the book in directly challenging the dominant sociology of race relations in Britain and the white British left in its studied ignorance of racism and frequent arrogance in subsuming race to class. Nor does *The Empire Strikes Back* merely assert a contrary view, as my review may have implied, but rather goes a considerable way towards establishing, on the basis of detailed and wide-ranging research, the centrality of racism (as it inheres in both state institutions and the working class) as a defining feature of contemporary British society, as well as exposing the growing complicity of both sociologists and white leftists in that racism. In doing so, the authors have staked an important claim for the autonomy of black struggle and cut out a ground upon which others can in future develop a comprehensive and critical black scholarship in the service of the people.

But if this book does represent a significant step towards such committed scholarship, it must still be said that the more abstruse and overly-academic contributions undermine that commitment by their sheer inaccessibility. And that, in fact, was what led me into the error of my ways in the first place.

University of Birmingham

LEE BRIDGES

Black Youth in Crisis

Edited by ERNEST CASHMORE and BARRY TROYNA (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1982). 176pp. £4.95 paper.

Black Youth in Crisis claims to be 'an essential book of our times [which] may well prove to be the most important race relations book of the 1980s'. This is a bold claim even for such seasoned blusterers as Cashmore and Troyna, but its obvious absurdity should not divert attention from the pernicious nature of their work. Their feelings of self-importance are based upon their 'status' as 'professional researchers', '“veterans” of one major piece of research on race relations issues apiece' (note the mock self-deprecation) and upon the claim that they 'predicted' the riots of 1981. To be sure, they were too frightened to voice their prediction *before* the event in case they were 'presented as the new Powells', but, as rioting broke out, 'the responsibility of predicting, and perhaps precipitating, crisis was suddenly taken from us'. Considering that the 1970s had witnessed numerous riots and that any number of people were 'predicting' more to come, it would hardly

have been controversial had Cashmore and Troyna added one more 'prediction' to the list.

No! Cashmore and Troyna's anxieties were not about the possible consequences of their prophetic powers. Rather, they were having second thoughts about the racist imagery of Afro-Caribbean youth contained in their work. It is not at all clear why they fail to comment on the widespread participation of white youth in the rioting, even in areas of negligible black settlement, but it is presumably their racist common sense about Asian 'passivity', as opposed to Afro-Caribbean 'violence', which precludes them from noting that Asian youth also rioted in the summer uprisings. In any case, by linking what they have to say about Afro-Caribbean youth, with the involvement of *these* youth in the riots, these self-confessed members of the non-revolutionary left – like the new Tory intellectuals gathered around Thatcher – now feel justified in 'saying the unsayable' or, to put it another way, they now feel able to let their racism hang out. Afro-Caribbean youth, they say, have consciously 'withdrawn' into black youth gangs and thereby 'promoted a social problem'. Their rejection of authority, education, society and family and their 'fascination for violence' heralds the prospect of more rioting and 'a further slide into the kind of ugly crisis of violence that we both find abhorrent, yet have unwillingly to concede is a menacing probability'.

The usual fate of prophets is, at best, to be laughed out of court, but, already, the media in the Midlands have zeroed in upon these apocalyptic images and elevated this 'collection of guesswork' (to quote Cashmore) into the status of a 'hard hitting ... race report'. However, it is not just the confirmation of violence and 'arrogance' that has drawn this interest, but also the fact that Cashmore and Troyna do not actually recognise racism. They only recognise 'discrimination and disadvantage'. 'Discrimination' quickly gets reduced to high levels of unemployment, which they say 'is not a cause of the problems surrounding young blacks' – it merely 'exacerbates them'. The real 'problems are entrenched in the furrows of culture, power and identity'. At this point, 'disadvantage' comes into play in the form of the 'disorganised' Afro-Caribbean family which, because of its 'inadequacies', allows the black youth gangs to become primary socialising agencies. Here the youth's understanding, apprehensions, proclivities solidify around Rasta ideas and their perceptions of their blackness, which are said to govern their 'reaction to British society'. There is no concrete knowledge here, you understand; thus, although the youth 'think', 'feel', 'perceive', etc., there is no sense in which their ideologies are actually connected with material realities. It's all in the mind!

The book has attracted the attention of the police as well; particularly since, as the reviewer in *Police* detected, this psycho/cultural drama

forms the basis for the argument that 'young blacks are not only active participants in the process of race-relations, their participation may often be far from helpful'. The police, on the other hand, come across as the 'conciliatory' good guys, 'well-intentioned' and 'willing to compromise'. The blame for deteriorating police/community relations is therefore to be laid at the door of Afro-Caribbean youth, whose rejection of policing methods is portrayed not as a rational response to police harassment, but as an expression of the 'penchant for violence within the West Indian culture'. As *proof* of this 'violent proclivity' amongst Afro-Caribbean youth, the authors cite their enthusiasm for *Kung Fu* movies, 'the massive numbers involving themselves in the martial arts' and 'their celebration of a range of archetypal violent anti-heroes'. We can hardly accept this as evidence, but even if we did, we would want to acknowledge that the martial arts are pre-eminently about controlled violence in self-defence!

Cashmore and Troyna assure us that they are being careful not to reproduce simplistic stereotypes of Afro-Caribbean youth. Not for them the unilinear division of the youths, along the lines of Ken Pryce, into 'Hustlers', 'Proletarian Respectables' or 'Mainliners'. Instead, they throw all the stereotypes into one persona and produce the complex Afro-Caribbean youth with their 'fingers in a number of cultural pies': 'So it would be feasible to expect the ostensibly docile bakery worker to be a hostile critic of white society, a part-time pimp, a Pentecostalist church member and the organiser of an all black, self-help group.'

Some of the other chapters (Cashmore and Troyna wrote a third between them) are of more interest than these crudities, if only because they reveal the limits of even 'radical' race relations sociology. It is one of the more comic ironies of this book that a number of contributors question the validity of some of the editors' central arguments. In particular, Malcolm Cross and Sheila Allen point out that there's no evidence for abnormally intense inter-generational conflict of the kind the editors claim to discover in the Afro-Caribbean community. And for their part, George Fisher and Harry Joshua find an 'underlying incoherence' in the inter-generational conflict thesis, as applied to Afro-Caribbean youth.

However, even the most critical of these authors cease to press their critique precisely at the point where they would be required to unmask the processes and practices of racism. Brian Roberts' competent but dull chapter on 'Sus' deals primarily with the issue in terms of civil liberties generally and loses sight of its specifically racial significance in the process. And Cross remains on the margins of commitment – arguing, on the one hand, that 'racial marginality', 'may be magnified by [state?] intervention in some spheres and manufactured by lack of it in others' and, on the other, that this 'racial marginality' is merely the

product of misconceived as opposed to racist policies. And yet Cross cannot be unaware of the historical circumstances in which racist assumptions have been elevated to the status of theory; neither can he be ignorant of the role that race relations sociologists and theorists within the 'official agencies' have played in this process.

Fisher and Joshua also fail to draw out the racism implicit (and sometimes not so implicit) in official definitions of the 'race relations problem': 'officially, racism and the race-specific could ... not be publicly conceded with regard to policy categories and structures for fear of alienating the silent white majority.' Actually, the 'race-specific' very definitely, consistently and publicly has been conceded in order precisely to *placate* 'the silent white majority', as the Immigration and Nationality laws show. Further, wasn't the 'bussing' of Asian children in Southall, which they mention, the outcome of a 'race-specific' policy? Again, Fisher and Joshua recognise that some aspects of black cultures have been encouraged while others have been viewed as threatening, but they are unable to see that it is precisely the spheres where black cultures are reproduced (e.g., family life, language) that have been the targets for racist state intervention.

Like Cross, their reticence on these points is linked to their political perspective which, seeing the state as neutral, prays for state intervention in the form of 'positive discrimination'. Thus, they regard the deterioration of 'race relations' as a product of 'the inadequacies of official policies' and 'the lack of the state's political will'. The assumption, of course, is that the state wishes to eradicate racism, but somehow lacks the 'political will' to do so. In the face of intensifying state racism, this is whistling in the wind.

Mary Fuller's aim in chapter 6 is to make Afro-Caribbean girls 'visible', and in the process to 'analyse rather than obscure female subordination'. The six girls around which the article is written were in the top stream and 'committed to education', but did not conform 'to the rules, regulations and routines of school'. True to her word, Fuller does analyse this ambiguous relation to school in terms of gender relations and conflicts, but her analysis of racism remains at a general level and, indeed, studiously avoids the issue where it affects black girls most directly; at school. She has nothing to say about the girls' relations to their white peers and is equally silent on the issue of how educational practices, informed by gender-specific racist perceptions of Afro-Caribbean and Asian girls, might affect the black girls in the school she studies. Thus, she is unable to entertain the possibility that the non-conformity to school routines, which she relates directly to the girls' 'fear' that Afro-Caribbean boys would ridicule them if they were seen to take school too seriously, might also be related to racism within the school. Because she does not explore the relations between this small 'subculture' and other Afro-Caribbean girls or the lines of

communication between Afro-Caribbean and Asian girls, she is not able in the end to recognise, let alone assess, the full range of responses and resistances to racism and sexism adopted by black girls.

Sheila Allen shares Fuller's concerns, but unlike Fuller does not even try to provide an analysis of racism, even as it affects black women. She first of all provides a sketchy and distorted history of race relations research in which 'black scholars' have failed to challenge the discipline's ethnocentrism. Maybe Professor Allen wasn't listening to or has simply ignored the criticisms that have come from black people over the last decade or so. In any case, she writes that it is white 'liberal social scientists' who have had to take on the burden of challenging the dominant definitions of the 'race relations problem', thus absolving white liberal social scientists, herself included, from complicity in reproducing those definitions. After a rambling history of youth sub-cultural theory, her account comes to rest on the question of the relations between gender, 'race' and class divisions. However, where in Fuller's account racism is subsumed under gender, in Allen's account it is gender and class that get elevated to the real determinations which 'provide the structure of divisions' in British society. 'Race' and racism simply slip through the middle to be relegated to the sphere of the 'cultural'.

All in all the *best* thing that can be said about this book is that it obscures the issues that face black people in this country. As such, it is perhaps the best demonstration to date of the bankruptcy of race relations sociology. Nowhere is this revealed more clearly than in chapter 1. Placed under pressure by some astute questioning by young blacks he was interviewing, Cashmore comes close to admitting that his work and that of others distorts black peoples' experiences and struggles. 'Why are you doing this research?'; 'Who's it for?'; 'Won't it just give whites the means to keep blacks down?'. Cashmore gives some pompous replies but never an adequate one. His equivocations drew this cynical response from one youth.

'What will you do next?' a black youth recently asked me. 'I suppose you'll finish this project and then look around and think, "Oh yes, there's the Asians, they've got a few problems. I think I'll go and study them".'

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- 2 *Police* (March 1983).

Hand on the Sun

By TARIQ MEHMOOD (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1983). 156pp. £1.75 paper.

This is the first authentic novel of the Asian experience in Britain – written in the taut, tense style in which that experience itself is lived in the interstices of a racist society. Inevitably it is a novel written by someone who – from his arrival here as a boy of eleven from a Pakistani village to his arraignment as a conspirator against the British state at twenty-five – has had his life forged on the smithy of his race, but, unlike Daedalus, finds therein the conscience of his class. And here, in the story of Jalib and his friends, the author charts the political journey of black youth in Britain.

Jalib's father is a mill-hand, like most of the adult Asian population of Bradford, forced out of Pakistan by poverty and brought to Britain with tales of the gold of its streets. He had hoped to go back to his wife and children when the gold of his labour was won. But there had been no gold, just ceaseless labour – made more ceaseless still by the growing fear that he would be parted from his family for ever if he did not earn enough soon enough to get them over before the gates of Immigration closed on them. By the time they join him, he has become a joyless man, his life all 'melted into the machines at the mill.' He had exchanged one poverty for another.

Jalib's history, however, begins in Britain. Of course, he too had dreamt as a boy of going to *Wallait* and one day becoming a white man. But the one thing he learns from the moment of his arrival – and at school – is that he is a wog and a Paki and fit only for being set upon by gangs of cowardly whites backed up by racist teachers, heads and policemen. And it is a lesson that is repeated over and over again throughout his young life – in the dole queue, on the streets, in the 'illegal immigrant' raid on his house for his cousin, in the arrogant marches of fascist parties through black areas – and in the lives of his family and friends.

Racism is the only experience that Jalib has or is allowed to have. It is his over-riding consciousness. Even his love for Shaheen, though conducted to the tune of his culture, is distorted by the tempo of racism. And it is only through his struggle against racism, his struggle for another reality, that Jalib gains a deeper understanding of duty and comradeship and love. Only through defending himself and his friends against racist attacks does he appreciate the value of comradeship. Only through defending their community against the incursions of the National Front do Jalib and his comrades understand the quality of duty. Only in the heat of struggle do they learn to honour Dalair Singh, the veteran of many battles against the British Raj, and arrive at an understanding of the continuum of struggle and learn to 'make our

history into a weapon'. And only, finally, through successfully mobilising their community against Ghulam's deportation (ostensibly as an 'illegal' but in reality to break the strike he was mounting at the mill) do Jalib and his friends come to understand that their struggle must be rooted in the people, uniting the many, isolating the few – refusing to be waylaid by 'revolutionary socialists' or reformist elders – working out in the process the dynamics of race and class and culture. But in the moment of their victory, Jalib also learns of the cooption and corruption that await a successful leadership.

Shaheen, too, is formed in the crucible of her people's struggle against racism. When she first baulks at an arranged marriage to her cousin in Pakistan, it is because she wants to be free to choose when and whom she marries and because she has seen how in Britain traditional marriages had locked up women like her mother and Jalib's mother within the four walls of their homes and left them prey to loneliness and despair. (They were afraid to go out and missed the company of women with whom they could 'sit and talk, laugh and joke, plot and plan'.) And yet she cannot run away: she owes her parents a duty and her younger brothers and sisters a guiding hand. But her personal problems begin to fade when little Malkit is savaged by skinheads and she determines to join the fight against them. 'It's no bloody good just eating ourselves up when these skinheads, coppers and others are doing so much wrong to our folk.' She had earlier 'seen her problem in isolation; now she was beginning to see it in relation to other people'. And through that she arrives at a higher duty, a duty to her people, a political duty and a resolution to her problem. She owes it to Maqsood to marry him so as to gain him entry into Britain, but she owes it to herself not to stay married.

It is unimportant that the author appears to make no conscious effort to weave the strands of his story together – or give it 'plot' or develop 'character'. He tells his story simply, truthfully, directly – in the oral tradition of the story-tellers of the Indian subcontinent, in the tradition of the *Panchatantra*.

Institute of Race Relations

A. SIVANANDAN

White Law: racism in the police, courts and prisons

By PAUL GORDON (London, Pluto Press, 1982). 159pp. £3.95.

As shown elsewhere in this issue, the past few years have seen a sharp intensification of racism in police ideology and practice. In response to this onslaught, there has been a tendency for campaigns in defence of the community to become more rather than less localised and therefore increasingly vulnerable to specific attacks by police spokesmen and the

press. What has been lacking, especially since the Institute of Race Relations's *Police Against Black People* went out of print and despite the efforts of bodies such as the Greater London Council's Police Committee Support Unit, is a single source of information and general analysis that would provide a basis for stronger political links between local groups and for wider campaigns on issues such as the Police Bill.

In filling this gap, Paul Gordon's *White Law* makes a timely and extremely useful contribution to the struggle against police racism and repression. His book brings together a large body of individual cases and general research material, spanning the period from the mid-1960s up to 1982, documenting all aspects of police harassment and maltreatment of the Afro-Caribbean and Asian communities alike. But Gordon's book does more than consolidate and up-date previous reports and research on these matters. For one thing, he extends his coverage beyond the police to the criminal justice system as a whole, including a section on the complicity of prosecuting authorities and the courts who, by their specific decisions and manipulation of procedures, have served to legitimate or at least cover-up for police excesses against black people and to undermine individual and community efforts to defend themselves. This is followed by a chapter on prisons, dealing with the racist sympathies of prison officers and their involvement with fascist organisations, more specific measures against Rastafarians and the neglect of those detained for long periods under the Immigration Act, and the official anxieties of the state over the growing numbers and militancy of black prisoners in general. Much of the material in these latter chapters has not been readily available previously, and to the extent that his book reveals a shortage of documentary evidence in these areas in comparison to that on the police, Gordon points the way to important fields for future campaigns and research.

Even more important than the wide scope and detailed nature of the book's coverage is the fact that Gordon provides a concise and highly readable political analysis in which to interpret this information. In this respect, his chapter on 'Understanding police racism' is outstanding, particularly for its excellent discussion of institutional police racism and of the developing phases over the past decade in the general criminalisation of black youth and of the black community as a whole, including the contribution of the media, sociologists of both the right and left and of the Scarman Report to this process. His analysis is unfortunately much weaker in dealing with what he terms 'police public relations' (as indeed it is in his earlier introductory discussion of the role of anti-discrimination legislation and the race relations industry in the development of state racism in the 1960s and 1970s). In particular, Gordon fails to discern here how the various aspects of 'community policing' fit into an overall police strategy aimed at controlling and repressing general social and political dissent in the community.

However, in his final chapter he does provide an excellent account of the increasingly explicit racism of British society and politics and of its functions in providing an ideological basis for a wider authoritarianism. Gordon would be the first to admit that in this and in other respects his book is derivative of other people's work, but in certain instances he has done these writers a service in distilling out their essential arguments and relating them directly to current political struggles and campaigns. It is in this role as a campaigning tool that Gordon's book will prove most useful in the months and years to come.

University of Birmingham

LEE BRIDGES

Immigration Law and Practice

By IAN MACDONALD (London, Butterworth, 1983). 572pp. £33.

Immigration and Race: know your rights: the questions and the answers

By MAGGIE WILSON (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1983). 229pp. £2.50.

Institutional racism in Britain starts at the front door in the immigration and nationality laws. From 1948, when labour needs rather than philanthropy determined that every Commonwealth citizen was a British subject, entitled to free entry to the UK, through 1962, when Commonwealth citizens were first subjected to immigration control, and 1968, when UK citizens from Kenya were first denied entry by the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, and 1971, when UK and Commonwealth citizens were divided into 'patrial' and 'non-patrial' (white and black) with rights of entry determined accordingly, to 1983 and the coming into force of the British Nationality Act, in which colour ('patriality') determines citizenship – in all of this is visible the legislative expression of state racism. In the mid and late 1970s the judiciary caught up, and reached a high point of compliance with the executive (the Home Office) in 1980 in holding that 'immigrants' could be held and removed from Britain if the Home Office *believed* they were 'illegal'. For the sake of this compliance the traditional remedy for unlawful detention, habeas corpus, revered by English jurists for centuries, was eviscerated. And the term 'illegal entrant' was extended to include anyone who failed to tell the Immigration Officer relevant information which the latter forgot to ask about. Lord Wilberforce justified this 'duty of candour' in terms of the privilege of entry to the UK sought by those who had no right to be here.

Ian Macdonald is a lawyer with twenty years' experience in

immigration and nationality law. In his latest book he has produced a definitive text for practitioners, magistrates, adjudicators and all those whose work brings them into contact with the confusing mass of statutes, rules, EEC directives and cases which make up the law. And he brings to his work, not just a mastery of the technicalities, but an illuminating understanding of the way in which the law is used as a weapon against black people – an understanding which comes from his unrelenting battle, as a lawyer and as an individual, against state racism and repression. Neither in the history which he traces of the changes in the provisions for registration as a British citizen, nor in the rules allowing businessmen or foreign husbands to settle here is the reader ever allowed to lose sight of the political meaning of the law. The February 1983 decision of *Khawaja and Khera*, which marks a House of Lords retreat from its position on habeas corpus and illegal entry, is used to illustrate the growing responsiveness of the higher judiciary to the ‘new mood, or new power’ within the black community marked by the 1981 Uprisings. Britain’s sixteen year delay in recognising the right of individual petition to the European Commission on Human Rights is put into the context of the colonial struggles for independence of the 1950s and early 1960s, when Britain derogated repeatedly from its human rights obligations and leaders of colonial independence movements were seeking international recognition of Britain’s human rights violations.

To recommend this book as merely a practitioner’s handbook, then, would be doing it a grave injustice, although that is ostensibly what it is (and it comes, alas, at a practitioner’s price). It is a superb reference work for those who want an insight into the law as a living, dynamic and, above all, political force.

By contrast, Maggie Wilson, in her little handbook, displays a conception of the law as a static ‘given’ to which black people must accommodate. Her book reveals an offensively patronising attitude towards black people (termed ‘minorities’) and is full of hints on how to ‘cope’ with British society. Her confusion as to who she is writing for is exemplified in this Question and Answer: ‘Where can I get help to learn English?’ ‘Ask the refugee agency with which you have contact for information about English classes in your area.’ Any refugee who understands that exchange doesn’t need English classes.

The only possible explanation for the publication of this addition to the growing ‘rights’ market is a publisher in search of a gimmick: the ‘ethnic’ approach is fashionable among law centre and rights bureau workers, and should guarantee the sale of a few hundred copies.

London

FRANCES WEBBER

The Police: autonomy and consent

By MICHAEL BROGDEN (London, Academic Press, 1982). 265pp. £21.

The Branch: a history of the Metropolitan Police Special Branch 1883-1983

By RUPERT ALLASON (London, Secker and Warburg, 1983). 180pp. £8.95.

The Policing Revolution: police technology, democracy and liberty in Britain

By SARAH MANWARING-WHITE (Brighton, Harvester Press, 1983). 231pp. £18.95 cloth, £7.95 paper.

At a time when the issue of police accountability has been forced into public debate, it is symptomatic of the state of the left and the civil liberties lobby in Britain that they have failed to produce one substantial piece of work to inform that debate. In this context, Michael Brogden's book, *The Police: autonomy and consent* is most welcome. That welcome, however, must be subject to major qualification, for the book is an academic text and its approach, style and price ensure that its readership will be a small and elite one.

Chapter 1 is a rather abstract discussion of the relationship of the police to the state and civil society, but having got that out of the way, Brogden begins his careful dissection and refutation of established myth about the British police. The nineteenth-century police, Brogden shows with an extensive account of policing in the city of Liverpool, were never under the real control of the local watch committee, the precursor of the modern police authority. From the outset, they were relatively free from direct political intervention, and by the end of the century had achieved a considerable degree of autonomy.

With changes in the economic and political structure of the country, in particular, the decline in significance of the local political elites which made up the membership of the local watch committee, police autonomy increased. By the mid-1970s, Brogden concludes, 'the police chief ran the Police Authority rather than the other way round'. While some police authority members are ignorant of their powers, much more important is the fact that the police, as an institution, are regarded as 'sacrosanct ... above criticism'. The idea of political intervention in policing is thought absurd, as both sides, police chief and police authority, share the interpretation of the policing task as that of maintaining the social order.

Some writers, including some on the left, have suggested that the decline of local control over the police was matched by increased control from the central state, in particular, the Home Office and the

Inspectorate of Constabulary. Brogden shows that this is not so. The power of central government to withhold the police grant is largely moribund, while circulars from the Home Office are either non-controversial regulations on such matters as rates of pay and rest-day allowances or, where they deal with more controversial matters such as law enforcement, have been discussed with police chiefs before being issued – ‘the authority of the Circular correlates directly with the degree of consultation’.

What enables the police to maintain their considerable degree of autonomy from both central and local state is not just the increased status of the chief constable, but the ability of police chiefs to claim that their powers and duties derive not from parliament and statute, but from common law and from the discretionary and permissive nature of such law. As Brogden says, understanding the class relations of the British police depends primarily upon recognising the crucial function of *law* in providing the link between the police and class society.

Of course, the police also point to the supposedly consensual basis of British policing to support their autonomy, and no belief about policing is more entrenched than this. Brogden is at his best in his dissection of the myth. He shows with a careful historical account that, while there may have been consent for policing from the middle classes who experienced policing largely at second hand, in the working classes there was never such assent, only a form of truce, occasionally disrupted. For the ‘lower classes’ (the unemployed, the young, minority ethnic groups), attitudes to the police ranged from the ‘passive to the violently hostile’.

Unfortunately, Brogden is much weaker when he deals with more recent evidence of the police-public contract. Insufficient attention is given to the relationship between the police and black people. For example, in discussing opinion polls and surveys as indicators of police popularity he fails to note that several surveys, such as the 1971 Marplan poll of ‘young immigrant males’ and William Belson’s 1975 study for the Metropolitan Police, have shown consistently less support for the police among black respondents. Similarly, there is insufficient attention given to the role of the media in providing what Brogden himself calls ‘a proxy form of accountability’, by which existing structures and procedures are by-passed by the police.

Notwithstanding these criticisms, this is a timely and important book of considerable scope. It offers no easy solution to the problem of accountability, but it deepens our understanding of the issue and may save us from mistakes. It remains for its contents to be made available – and therefore useful – to a wider audience.

The Special Branch is perhaps the least accountable part of the police, working in secret, its existence hardly even acknowledged. A

good history of the Branch would be welcome in this, its centenary year. But Rupert Allason, a former special constable, introduces his account by explaining that secrecy is necessary because 'the Branch itself is a favourite target of those who have most to fear from the Branch's surveillance'. Not surprisingly, given this inauspicious introduction, Allason's book, very much in the 'great events and great people' vein of most police 'history', explains little and questions even less. Thus, there is no discussion of the nature of 'subversion', which forms the basis of the Branch's work and which has been widened to cover even lawful political activity. Nor does the book even provide the little information about the Special Branch today (its numbers, distribution and activities) which is available.

The book does include some interesting material on the early official secrets legislation, the surveillance of anarchists, suffragettes and communists, and the early involvement of the Branch in the surveillance of aliens. It also illustrates, albeit briefly, the international aspects of British state security, with an account of the 1931 Westminster conference on the security of the British empire, attended by police chiefs from all over the British-ruled world, the head of the Indian Political Intelligence Department, the Director General of MI5, the security service and the head of the Special Branch. But these are nuggets in an otherwise dull and uninformative book.

The Policing Revolution could have been a useful if unambitious work, drawing together in one accessible place the existing information about police technology, special squads and surveillance techniques. As it is, it is an over-priced, disconnected collation of material, most of which is readily available elsewhere. The author appears to have made little attempt to update the information, some of which is now three years old. Critical analysis (or even critical description) is replaced by naive and wishful thinking. The book concludes for example, that part of the answer to the problem of contemporary policing lies in 'an energetic and positive parliamentary will to display a change of attitude ... above all to recognise that the twenty-first century needs a very different kind of policing than the nineteenth century.' The author's own reading should have told her that this recognition does exist – not in the way she intends and not in parliament, but in the police institution itself. And it is precisely that recognition that accounts for the 'policing revolution' of the last two decades.

London

PAUL GORDON

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MONTHLY REVIEW

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Letter to Supporters, May 1983

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