



Black sections

YES!



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INTRODUCTION

The moves to establish black sections in the Labour Party — that is independently organised bodies of black members of the Labour Party which have automatic representation on policy making bodies of the Party — are one facet of a wider movement to establish the independent self-organisation of black people in the structures of the labour movement. The most surprising thing about this general development to date is the bewilderment with which many sections of the British labour movement greeted it: 'divisiveness', 'segregationism', 'deviancy', and other accusations too numerous to recount.

Indeed the tumult of disapproval which came from the leadership of the Labour Party down to sections of the rank and file indicate that, at least in some quarters, there is a conspiracy theory of the emergence of black sections. Bob Lee, writing in *Militant* (22.6.84) ascribes the rise of black sections to the self-interest of a few black 'middle class careerists'.

Roy Hattersley implacably opposed black sections. Neil Kinnock has modified his initial opposition under the pressure of the movement's success. He now claims that he is not against the idea 'in principle', that is in the abstract, but he is opposed to changing the Party's constitution in order to accommodate them. In other words, *in practice* Kinnock is *against* black sections, and especially against them having any rights under the Party's constitution. It is ironic that the leaders of the Labour Party should display such conservative regard for the constitutional status quo against the demands of black Labour Party activists and yet be happy to fight for constitutional changes reversing Party policy on the re-selection of MPs.

In addition to outright opposition to black sections opponents are quick to point out *technical* difficulties over forming sections. So, Neil Kinnock, for example, agonises over the '*problems of racial definition*'. We would suggest that Kinnock, a white man of the purest water, leave the problems of racial definition to the self-organisation of black people themselves.

What, then are the objective bases for the rise of black sections?

Black people in Britain suffer from racism regardless of their country of origin. Therefore black people have suffered from isolation from the mainstream of social activity and politics and have met with hostility

and indifference from the organisations of the working class.

Black people have had to fight actions in defence of their communities and their right to organise in trade unions. As a result, the mainstay of black political organisation has been community-based — hence the intricate infrastructure built up in the black communities from the late fifties and early sixties were based around bodies arising directly from the communities.

However precisely because the black community consists of a multiplicity of different racial groups, religious groups and so on, it has been extremely difficult to overcome the divisions in the black communities and to develop united black organisation across the black communities. There have been steps in this direction, around the asian youth movements for a time, and around individual issues like the Police Bill but no ongoing organisation.

At the same time labour movement politics has gone through a series of changes since the late sixties culminating in growth of a current of Labour Party and trade union activists who are reaching the conclusion that the labour movement will not be able to fight off the attacks of the ruling class unless it is changed and rebuilt on new foundations as an alliance of the oppressed and exploited sections of society. This is not a finished political current but it exists and has influenced the politics of the labour movement creating a wing of it which supports the method of mass struggle and is open to the demands of the oppressed.

When understood in this light it is easy to see how the self-organisation of black people within the labour movement is posed. It coincides with the struggle for leadership in the black community and with the need to rebuild the labour movement as a fighting alliance of the oppressed, exploited and dispossessed people — that is the struggle for a fighting leadership in the labour movement.

Mike Wongsam. September 1984.

Why Labour needs black caucuses

THE BLACK Activists' Group was set up last year to combat racism in the Labour Party by fighting for black members' rights. RUSSELL PROFITT is a councillor for Lewisham, and a leading member of the group. He told Socialist Action how the group began and what it's fighting for.

Race is an issue everyone's aware of but no one wants to discuss. That applies to the Labour Party. A lot of pious resolutions are passed which mean nothing because they're not acted on. The Black Activists'

Group began with black Party members in London, concerned that black issues were largely ignored in the labour movement — by the left as well as the right. Our aim is to get a better understanding of racism within the Labour Party.

This will be profoundly uncomfortable for many party activists. There are parties in London you'd expect to have loads of black activists. They don't. It's been suggested the party doesn't go recruiting down black streets. That's the sort of overt racism we want to take up. But there's also another sort. The Labour Party is afraid to confront racism in the community. It's afraid to pick black people to stand for public office because this might turn off the electorate.



Photo: Laurie Sparham (I.F.L.)

Russell Profitt

There's no way black people will join and be active if they're not fully involved. We want the black point of view recognised and taken account of in the party. And we want adequate black representation at *all* levels in the Labour Party.

The Black Activists' Group decided the issue needed highlighting on the floor of annual conference. We set up a steering group responsible for organising our intervention and sorting out the necessary constitutional changes. First, black people have the right to organise separately within the party. We proposed constitutional amendments to allow this. We also organised a fringe meeting. There's never been such a black-led initiative before.

The resolution was submitted with an undertaking from the National Executive Committee to set up a working party. But there is an ethnic minorities working party, and it seemed they would be discussing the issue. As usual, very few of its members are black. A number of us decided to make a black input, so we attended the last meeting — even



Photo: Andrew Ward (Report)

Under the last Labour government black people had to organise independently against racist and fascist attacks in areas like Brick Lane in East London.

though we weren't invited — to make sure the right decisions were taken. That meeting decided the original party *should* be set up, with black representatives from the across the country. Now that's going to the NEC, and we're still waiting for the outcome.

In London, we decided to act as though black caucuses are in existence whether the constitution recognises us or not. We've got a regional structure emerging. We're encouraging constituencies to set up black sections. Some exist, with a relationship with the general committee like that of the women's and youth sections.

This might not be nice and proper constitutionally, but it shows the commitment black members have on this issue — it shows the degree to which we're starting to organise. We're not waiting until the white institution called the Labour Party says it's okay, we're going ahead now.

We are learning from the success of women's struggle in the labour movement. We emulate that. Our constitutional changes would create black sections in local constituencies and representation at regional level. We also want to create a national black's conference along the lines of the women's conference.

We've put down resolutions for the London region conference asking that black activists' right to organise be recognised. And we call for discussion on racism within the Labour Party. We're determined this issue won't stay under the table, or at the back of the agenda. We hope it will be carried — people have been passing anti-racist resolutions for years, and do nothing about them — so we're under no illusion that it's going to be easy.

All black activists must campaign inside the party, especially outside London. We will assist where we can: with speakers for meetings, or help on formulating constitutional changes. But, in the end, it's down to them to make contact with other black members in their area and begin to discuss the problem and organise locally.

Whichever way you look, black people are at the bottom of the pile.

6 It's up to black members to fight to change the Labour Party.

Socialist Action 10 February 1984

A real step towards class unity

By Mike Wongsam, member of the Labour Party Black Section steering committee, in a personal capacity.

UP UNTIL now a controversy has raged among the British left, both black and white, about the desirability and significance of Labour Party black sections. This controversy will intensify up to and beyond the coming Labour Party conference.

Whatever is said about them one thing which must be thoroughly understood is that black sections are an established fact in London, and will soon become so in other parts of the country. Therefore, despite the reticence of the national leadership of the Labour Party to formally recognise them, the essence of the debate must be to clarify what attitude one takes to such a development.

In my view this is impossible without an assessment of the relationship of the black community as a whole to the rest of British politics and in particular to the developments taking place in the labour movement. Nobody on the left can deny that the Labour Party has a lot to answer for in relation to black people both here and in other countries. And yet black people remain the most implacably loyal supporters of the party in election after election of any section of the working class. But what is essential and new is the tendency for black people to join the party in numbers and organise as black people. In order to understand this one must look back over the past history of the relationship between black people and the Labour Party.

The first large black communities to settle here this century were mainly composed of seafarers in Liverpool, Manchester, North Shields and Cardiff. Economic decline and unemployment followed the First World War and ushered in a protracted period in which riots and systematic street violence broke out notably in Manchester. The black population were forced to form 'self-help' communities and were prevented from organising within the structures of the labour movement.

The same pattern followed the next wave of immigration after the Second World War, due to the labour shortage and the destruction of the colonial 'one-crop' economies. There was a re-emergence of racism in the '50s and '60s, with riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham in 1958. In all of this, the mass organisations of the working class played a reactionary role and black people fought mainly rearguard actions in defence of their communities. The direction taken by black political organisations reflected this reality.

development which was essentially from necessity outside the structure of working class organisations. However, the changes taking place in working class politics today open up the possibility of a new period in black political organisation. Against the background of economic depression, within which the black community is a particularly oppressed sector of society, the results of the last general election show that electorally Labour has been pushed back into its traditional strongholds: the big metropolitan centres.

In this context a section of the Labour left has grasped that the only credible way to rebuild Labour as the mass party of the working class is to assemble forces such as the peace movement, the women's movement, the unions — and now the black movement — under the banner of Labour. It is the existence of this minority current on the left, but with mass proportions, which marks a breach in continuity with the traditional outlook of the Labour Party. This makes a space for black political activity inside the party. It is not insignificant that the most advanced expression of this is the Livingstoneite left in London, where the largest concentration of the black population is (according to the 1974 census, 57.7 per cent of black people live in the south east).

The increased activity of black people within the party is the impetus for the demand for a Labour Party black section. Over 200 black activists attended the black section conference in Birmingham. It is now crucial, if this progress is to be developed, that the Labour left as a whole takes up and champions the demand. It is perhaps not surprising that Kinnock and Hattersley are opposed to a black section. They realise, as with the women's section, that a black section of the party would not only apply pressure on questions that affect black people, but would probably become a permanent left pressure on the party on all questions.

In this context, while the *Militant* tendency's position against black sections is not surprising given their position on other similar questions, their arguments must be refuted, as they provide a 'left' cover for Kinnock and company's opposition to the black section.

Bob Lee explained in the *Militant*:

'Such sections, effectively separating blacks from the rest of the party might actually serve to undermine the unity between black and white workers who are already active in the party at a grassroots level'.

The fact is that very few black people are active at any level in the party, despite the fact that a growing number of black people are joining. As an oppressed minority they need to organise to ensure that their demands are taken up in a serious way by the mainstream of the party.

8 But more serious in *Militant's* argument is the claim that black and white unity already exists in the party. This is patently not the case. At



The founding of the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination and the Universal Coloured Peoples' Association started a continuous line of party conference the black faces are few and far between, black candidates are not put forward at any level of the party. Outside the Labour Party black people have to confront deeply ingrained racism within the working class itself, and this is reflected inside the structures of the labour movement.

A black section is precisely an instrument to overcome the existing disunity. By talking as though black and white unity already exists *Militant* cover up the real problems confronting black people, and the fight that will have to be waged within the working class to create a basis for real class unity.

The *Militant* argue that a 'bold commitment by the Labour Party to carry out a genuine anti-racist policy' would solve the problem. But unless the black section is organised to fight for such a policy, it will never happen. Finally, they argue that a black section would take black people out of the mainstream of the party. The problem is that they are not there now. As Diane Abbott said at the Labour Party Women's Conference:

'It is hypocritical for people to go on about the black section creating separatism, when they haven't complained about the white separatism that exists in the party today'.

Given the process of realignment in British politics today the black section begins to act as a bridge between the black community and the Labour Party. It begins to pose the real issues of class unity in a more profound way than at any time since the abolition of slavery. But class unity can only be built on the basis of complete and absolute equality of representation at all levels of the movement. Any other kind is only disguised disunity.

The argument that all that black sections are about is lobbying for more MPs or councillors both misrepresents the stated aims of the black section itself, and totally misunderstands the nature of British politics today. The black section is the first step in the fight against the racist division of the working class, and therefore a step towards the kind of unity the working class needs to build to take on the Tory and ruling class offensive against our rights and living standards.

Socialist Action 22 June 1984

'If blacks want power they should take it!'

DIANE ABBOTT is a Labour councillor in the Paddington area of London, and in 1984 became the first black woman to stand for Labour's NEC. Jude Woodward talked to her about why black sections are so crucial.

'When I was first selected as a Labour councillor in my area, Paddington, I was very concerned not to fall into the trap that many other black people elected to such positions had fallen into. That is to become cut off from other black people. I wanted to be accountable to black people in the area. But when I looked at my local party there were no black people there, even though the majority of voters are black. So I organised a black caucus of party members in Paddington constituency, as it was then. The main thing that we found was that there were actually rather a lot of black Labour Party members. They came out of the closet so to speak and became active for the first time.

'The organisation of the black caucus helped channel black people into the mainstream of Labour Party activity. People who wouldn't have had the confidence to do that without a group of black people to relate to. Since then Westminster North, as it now is, has become one of the CLPs fighting for the formal recognition of black section.

'In my view there are four main aims to black sections. Firstly, as I've said, they encourage black people to feel confident and able to talk. Secondly it gives them a framework to discuss and form policy on things of concern to black people. Thirdly they allow black people to organise to fight for those things in the mainstream of the Labour Party. And fourthly through them we can organise for more black councillors, MPs, school governors and so on. But to get more in a framework where they are accountable to black people.

'I don't think white people are going to *give* black people anything in the Labour Party. If black people want power they will have to take it. And all the waiting for the paternalistic whites to help us, as we are constantly urged to do, has got black people nowhere.

'I think it is very important that women's conference has passed the resolution on black sections. It adds to the force being brought to bear on the leadership on this issue.

'It appears that the leadership of the party is against black caucuses. They seem to be saying they'll be infiltrated by the left. It's funny that *Militant* are against them because they think they are a diversion and will be taken over by the right! But the real issue is about white power in the Labour Party and people never give up power willingly — whites,



Photo: G.M. Cookson



men or the ruling class. That's why it is important for black people to organise.

'Black sections are not a separatist thing. The idea is to maximise black people's contribution to the mainstream of politics. It is very hypocritical of people who have not been bothered about an all-white conference and all-white CLPs for years to start saying that black sections are separatist. We've de facto got separatism already.'

Socialist Action 25 May 1984

Militant **against black sections**

SINCE THE national black section conference, Bob Lee has taken up a lot of space in the *Militant* newspaper denouncing the idea of the black section of the Labour Party.

In this article, MIKE WONGSAM, a member of the black section steering committee from Manchester, takes up some of the *Militant's* arguments.



Photo: John Sturrock (Report)

In trying to unleash a scathing criticism of the movement to set up black sections, Bob Lee in fact ties himself into the most amazing logical contortions. Instead of applying the Marxist method of contradictions (and he claims to be a Marxist), he instead uses a contradictory method.

He starts by identifying black people as the victims of a deep-rooted and specific type of oppression (double oppression, as he calls it), and then proceeds to transform the victim into the criminal simply for daring to do something about that oppression. For make no mistake, Bob Lee never once concedes that black people have actually to struggle inside the party in order to make it responsive to the needs and concerns of the black community.

An example of Bob Lee's reasoning is when he says:

'Many of the filthy prejudices that thrive in the cess-pool of capitalism — constantly played up and reinforced by a powerful media — must inevitably rub off on some workers. The labour movement, however, by its very nature, does not base itself on these prejudices, but stands implacably opposed to them.'

And yet earlier he has admitted:

'But the loyalty of black workers has not been returned in kind by the Labour leadership. The right wing of the party

have always demonstrated a disgraceful complacency in regard to the special needs of black workers and their lack of involvement in the movement.'

And a little later:

'Labour's 1968 Immigration Act was actually more discriminatory than the previous laws passed by the Tories ... It has been this fundamental failure of Labour governments to combat the rising tide of racism, along with all the other problems that has created tremendous discontent among blacks.'

Why didn't the labour movement, which 'by its very nature' is 'implacably opposed' to racial prejudice call it to account? Why didn't white workers complain of the 'lack of involvement of black people in the labour movement' despite the loyalty of black workers? Our eminent Marxist is at a loss for answers to these questions. Indeed, all that he is able to offer black people is the all too familiar *Militant* tendency phrasemongering:

'The basic solution to the problems faced by the blacks therefore lies in the labour movement being committed to implement socialist policies.'

Presumably our victims of 'double oppression' must endure philosophically until such time as the benevolent *Militant* tendency gains the leadership of the labour Party, and in the meantime 'restless natives' who actually constructively challenge the existing status quo must be subjected to searing criticism and violently denounced. For we are treated to the following:

'The advocates of this idea (black sections) openly flout the traditions of class unity by demanding the right for blacks to have self-determination within the party ... Marxists, however, must be implacably opposed to the proposal for the establishment of a national organisation of special black sections.'

But he adds:

'As a down-trodden, double-oppressed section of the working class, black workers who have been forced to struggle, even during the boom period of the fifties and sixties, have developed a much higher level of class consciousness than other sections of the workers.'

If this is the case how can a movement of class conscious workers seek to divide and weaken the working class? Simple! cries Bob Lee — they are 'mainly among middle class blacks'. One must therefore assume that in the current situation of deepening class polarisation, that the black sections movement as presently constituted would have an affinity for the right wing of the labour movement. And furthermore that the right

wing would recognise the utility of the black sections as a means of derailing the black movement! But to all interested observers it seems that on this question it is our eminent Marxist who has an open affinity for the right wing.

The problem for Bob Lee, as for the whole bunch, the *Militant*, is their theoretical poverty. Despite their rhetoric, and their huffing and puffing, they downgrade the struggle for black liberation to the status of a side issue — not realising that especially for the class struggle in Britain, black liberation is an absolutely central aspect.

The question of class unity is not reducible to organisational homogeneity and socialist policies, but consists of forging that unity through creating the necessary alliances between the different sectors of the oppressed and exploited masses. Contrary to Bob Lee's pronouncements, the actual situation is that as long as black people remain unorganised in the structures of the labour movement there will be persistent class disunity.

The self-organisation and self-activity of oppressed sectors of society is a question of absolute principle for the working class. It is the only guarantee that the labour movement can ever be made the political representative of *all* the oppressed. In other words, the struggle against racism will only be adopted as a major concern of the labour movement in a meaningful way by black people organising to make it so.

If comrade Lee continues to pit himself against the real dynamic of struggle unfolding in the labour movement then the *Militant* will find that they will increasingly come in handy as a tool of the right wing to be used to smash up the forces accumulating on the left — including in the black section.

Socialist Action 6 July 1984

Labour's dirty record

By Chris Guthrie

BLACK PEOPLE'S resistance to state racism has had its impact on the Labour Party. At the last year's conference, delegates deplored the past role of the Labour Government in implementing Immigration Laws, particularly the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act.

They went on to commit conference to repeal the 1971 Immigration Act and the 1981 Nationality Act as 'amongst the highest priorities for the next Labour government.'

Probably many blacks greeted this decision with a lot of cynicism. Past Labour governments have had a shameful record in their dealings

and legislation concerning black people.

After the Second World War, Britain relied heavily on black labour to staff those jobs which were ill-paid, involved shift work and unpleasant conditions in an economy where labour was short. White workers had left these jobs in increasing numbers to get better paid employment in more congenial conditions. By the late '50s and early '60s the emphasis had moved towards use of technology and away from the labour intensive industries and services. The cheap reservoir of Commonwealth labour had served its purpose. The 1962 Commonwealth Act recorded that by the introduction of a voucher system which differentiated between unskilled and skilled labour. Two years later the unskilled vouchers were abolished. Britain only wanted those immigrants who had been trained by Commonwealth countries.

The Labour Party opposed the 1962 Act. But the low turn-out of



Photo: I. McIntosh (Morning Star)

Labour government's have simply pursued the Tories' racist immigration and policing policies.

Labour MP's in the House of Commons when the Act was voted law showed that many Labour MPs either secretly sympathised with its aims or did not think the issue was important. When Labour got into office in 1964 instead of repealing the Act they toughened it up. Wilson brought in a White Paper which slashed the number of vouchers, introduced stricter tests of eligibility of children and most importantly gave the Home Secretary powers to deport illegal immigrants at his discretion without a court ruling.

In 1967/68 Labour rushed through the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act. At that time the media was whipping up hysteria — a disease the Labour government was specially prone to — about the Kenyan Asians. These were people who the British had taken to Kenya in the days of the empire and had been given British passports with Kenyan independence. Many Kenyan Asians wanted to come to Britain. But Labour's act only allowed entry to United Kingdom citizens who had a parent or grandparent born in Britain. This was a cynical move by Labour to keep out the Kenyan Asians, most of whom could not satisfy this criteria.

The Tories' 1971 Immigration Act removed all rights of black Commonwealth citizens to come to Britain and extended the powers of deportation. Roy Jenkins, who was destined to be Home Secretary in the next government spoke for Labour in the debate on the then Bill. He said:

'This is a highly objectionable Bill. If the government had any self respect they would withdraw the Bill and start again'.

Unfortunately Mr Jenkins never got around to finding his own self-respect because as Home Secretary in the Labour governments of 1974-79 he forgot to repeal the act. This was the act that was used to deny Anwar Ditta's children the right to join their mother in Britain. The Labour government also published the Nationality Paper upon which much of the 1981 Nationality Act is based.

Even Labour's new policy of repealing the existing Immigration and Nationality acts has its drawbacks because it talks of replacing them with 'non-racist laws'. Immigration laws which are there to deny people the right to work and live where they choose discriminate against people of other countries. By their very nature in a country like Britain, they must be racist. Anwar Ditta's children were not kept from her for six years because of some clause on 'patriality' but because the racist Home Office officials decided they were not her children.

Nevertheless, Labour's pledge to repeal the acts is a good step forward. Labour Party activists and militants in the black movement must make sure that such conference decisions are not reneged on.

Labour's pledge to repeal the acts must be prominent in its publicity and general election material. Labour must commit itself to an amnesty

the formation of its rules. for all suspected illegal immigrants and guarantee it will bring together all the divided families. Local Labour parties must get involved in an active sense with black people campaigning against the acts and against particular deportations.

Neither black people nor the labour movement can sit back and wait for the return of a Labour government. The fight has to go on now. Not only is this the best way to stop racial harassment and deportations and defeat the Tories. It is the surest way to stop Labour selling out if it gets back in office.

Socialist Action 25 March 1983

Should black people support Labour?

IN THE last election the Labour Party selected black candidates in only a few areas. At the same time a number of independent black candidates were standing.

Socialist Action interviewed two black candidates with long records in the fight against racism — BEN BOSQUET, Labour candidate for Kensington and ROY SAWH, Consortium of Ethnic Minority Group's candidate for Brent South and a leader of the black nationalist movement in the sixties. (These interviews took place before the American invasion of Grenada).

Ben Bosquet

Given the Labour Party's poor record on racism, why should black people vote Labour?

Within the Labour Party we can articulate our problems and we are able after a time to influence policy and effect change. It also means that as black people we are able to get through to the biggest political force which is active in the working class, the Labour Party.

In what way can black people make the Labour Party represent their interests? Is there a role for a black rights campaign within the Party?

I see a tremendous role for such a campaign. We can effect change by actively going into the party, this is one thing I would stress. We must get into the national executive, the General Management Committees (GMCs), and the various committees within the party and participate in

Staying outside and criticising is possibly the easiest thing to do but we must go into that kitchen and get the steam blown into our face, that's what really tells.

Black people must start becoming more political and go into parties. If you want to call that infiltration, let's call it infiltration, so long as we can get what we want articulated.

Some black activists outside the Labour Party say that if you go into the party you will be ignored and integrated.

If these people hold this view, it means they never really cared about black people. If they did they would not allow themselves to be ignored.

It's like walking down the road and coming across a showroom and seeing the most beautiful cars inside. You cannot do anything by looking from the outside. You have to break that window to get your hands on those cars. Maybe that's what we've started doing, we're breaking the system down and letting it know that we are around, that we are not going away, that we won't be pushed away.

Does Labour do enough to help third world struggles?

The Labour Party does not do enough, no, although I must admit that in this new manifesto it seems to be given quite considerable space. It probably needs a few black MPs to emphasise this problem. If elected, I would like to be a member of the foreign affairs subcommittee of Parliament to be able to point a finger at South America, at Africa, at Asia and say that these are places where things must be done.

I am particularly concerned about Central and Latin America. One of my brothers is editor of the *Freedom* paper of Grenada. Grenada is the only country in that part of the hemisphere apart from Cuba and maybe Nicaragua which does not have a policy based on keeping the people down. It says they want to raise the standard of living of our people, we want a form of government in which all our people can get all the benefits which we can afford.

I think this is something marvellous and a future Labour government should supply them with everything it can. It could send them a massive injection of aid — with no strings attached. We have had too many strings for 400 years. It could send them our young people to supply them with the skills they need.

You are a founder member of the Black Trade Unionists Solidarity Movement. How do you see its role?

We formed the BTUSM last year because we felt the unions were not representing black people. They only gave us lip service.

Having got this off the ground, forming groups in local government and various other places, we have now been able to put pressure in places where it is really needed. More and more black workers are com-



Under the last Labour government black people had to organise independently against racist and fascist attacks in areas like Brick Lane in East London.

ing forward and saying things. In this way we are making the trade union movement realise that racism is not something you just talk about but something you do something about.

The BTUSM may not get the sanction of the better known unions but nevertheless it is there. When we grow somebody better beware because we will not let our black people be used the way they were in the NHS strike, where the black people were the ones on the picket line.

When we call our people out we will close places down because our people will be effective and that's important.

How has your campaign been going in Kensington?

The campaign has been going well and the attitude of the electorate has been great, there has been no racism here. I think we've won it, but we're not going to be complacent. There is a damn good chance of taking Kensington for the first time.

Roy Sawh

What are the aims and objectives of the Consortium of Ethnic Minority Groups (CEMG)?

The CEMG came into being about a year ago and is supported by the West Indian Standing Conference, the largest West Indian organisation, the Confederation of Indian Workers' Associations, the Pakistani and the Bangladeshi workers' associations.

These people had supported Labour in the past but were fed up and disgusted with Labour's attitude to race relations and immigration. For instance, Labour did not repeal the 1962 Immigration Act despite publicly saying it would when it was in opposition. It passed two watered-down race relations acts when Roy Jenkins was Home Secretary and ironically the first seven people charged under them were black. I was one of them, and I was charged four times.

We also had the 1968 Immigration Act when Jim Callaghan was



Home Secretary which denied a lot of Asian people with British passports the right to come to Britain. We had the Rhodesia situation when Harold Wilson refused to send in troops but then did not hesitate to send in police and troops when two small West Indian islands, Nevis and St. Kitts declared UDI.

We saw the Labour Party drifting to an anti-black stand.

Don't you see a role for black people organising within the Labour Party to make it represent their interests?

There are already black people and black groups within the Labour Party and if they cannot get the party to come to its senses, to take a stand on anti-racist issues both nationally and internationally, then what is the point of more of us joining it? For 25 years Labour has not placed a black candidate in a safe parliamentary seat.

We are not forming a separate group because we want to oppose the Labour Party. We hope that we can at some point affiliate to the Labour Party as a group and use our position as a pressure group to bring about certain changes.

But then if we do get changes we are worried that a Labour government in power would ignore party policy. We are also worried when we see what is happening to *Militant*, Benn and Livingstone.

Shouldn't black people join the Labour Party as it will help them force the working class, their natural allies, to support black struggles?

How much longer must black people wait before white workers become non-racist so that we can work together to bring about a just society? Is this not the attitude of the old slave/master relationship where you always have to wait until the master does something for you?

If the white working class were political and non-racist there would be no need for the formation of black groups. If there is going to be any sort of meaningful relationship with the Labour Party it must be based on equality.

We are saying that if the Labour Party can show us that black people within the labour movement are given some sort of equality then we are prepared to talk of some meaningful relationship.

You mentioned Ken Livingstone. What was your attitude to the reselection battle in Brent East?

We were very disappointed that Ken was not selected and did not stand. If he had stood in Brent South my group would not have put up a candidate, because he must be one of the few white Labour councillors who has actually delivered the goods which he promised. It is not only a

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