

SPEECH BY BERNIE GRANT M.P. TO THE INTERNATIONAL  
SYMPOSIUM OF THE DANISH BOARD FOR ETHNIC  
EQUALITY , COPENHAGEN, 8TH MAY 1996,

**T**hank you chairperson. May I start by thanking the Board for Ethnic Equality for inviting me to address this symposium. Can I start by reiterating the point made by Peter when he said that we are here to teach and to learn. I certainly would support that view because I think it's important in today's world that people are able to communicate, that we are able to share our experiences, that we are able to learn from others.

I think I better start by introducing myself. My name is Bernie Grant and I am a member of the British Parliament. I came to Britain from Guyana in 1963 when I became involved in politics in a serious way, first of all through the Labour movement and then in local government, as a response to the wide spread racism that was prevalent in Britain during the '60s and the '70s. I eventually became the Leader, or mayor as you say in some countries, of my local authority in 1985 and was subsequently elected to Parliament in 1987, for my constituency of Tottenham, North London - a constituency in which about 40% of the population are from Black and ethnic communities.

In my constituency, we have people from Ireland, who consider themselves to be an ethnic minority in Britain, we have people from Africa and from the Caribbean, and from Cyprus - we have the largest number of Cypriots outside of Cyprus. We have people from the Indian sub-continent and we have people from the orthodox Jewish community; those are the main ethnic groups. We have the highest number of refugees in any constituency in Britain and this is due to the fact I suppose that we have a multi-cultural and a multi-racial community in my constituency. We have no racial conflicts whatsoever, and I think this is due to the actions and the attitudes of people over the past 20 years in my constituency.

I want to start off today by putting this conference in the context of the situation in Europe and the situation in the world. I believe that there has been a sustained world-wide attack on people of colour, in particular on refugees and asylum seekers. In the United States of America, we have had people who are seeking refuge from Haiti, from Cuba and from China. Some of these communities are being castigated by some of the politicians, people who are running for President like Pat Buchanan, of the Right wing of the Republican Party, who have used the whole question of immigration, and of refugees, to try to create problems within the United States.



Lets make no bones about it, they are not talking about refugees who are White, because in countries where there is a pre-dominance of White people, White refugees can just melt into the population and have no problems. The problems come when we have refugees of colour, when you have Black people, Brown people and Yellow people in those countries. In France, we have seen an attack on migrant peoples the like of which hasn't been seen for many years. The Pasqua laws are there to ensure that Black people know their place within France, in particular refugees and asylum seekers. In Germany there have been many attacks on migrants on one sort or the other, whether it's been in Hoyerswerde or in Solingen or many other places in Germany. We have also seen a tremendous attacks on refugees and asylum seekers in the United Kingdom, in my own country. At the government level we have seen legislation which will create serious problems for Black and minority ethnic peoples. The European Union of course is busy making new regulations requiring entry visas, and they are harmonising their laws so that if you are rejected from one part of Europe, all the other countries will reject you as well.

The first point that I want to make in relation to this is that a lot of European people see Black people as one mass of people, all the same. We all look the same and we are all the same - but that is not the case for many reasons, including historical reasons, which I shall now briefly talk about.

When I left Guyana in 1963 and went to Britain, I was not an immigrant and have never considered myself as one, because Guyana was part of the British Commonwealth. We were all part of the British empire. We were all citizens of the British empire, so that I don't consider myself to be an immigrant but a full citizen.

In Britain, people from the Commonwealth have the same rights as British citizens. If you are settled in Britain, you are entitled to everything that a British citizen born in Britain is entitled to, and we have a different status from refugees and asylum seekers. The Black people in France are French citizens, whether you come from Guadeloupe, Reunion Island in the Indian ocean or Martinique, you are French. You can walk into France whenever you please. That means we are in different categories and I think it's important for people who are dealing with race issues to begin to understand that within the whole question of Black and migrant people we have different statuses between ourselves. And of course you have migrant people who are here because of problems in their country or whatever. So when people talk about migrants and they include me and my children I get very upset about this, because we are not migrants, we are full British citizens and as such we are of course citizens of Europe.

Now, the reason of course that there are so many Black and migrant people in Europe is because the Europeans were in Africa, in the Caribbean, in Asia and all over the world. The Europeans used the whole question of divide and rule in order to rule the countries of Africa and, it's important that we look at the history of Europe and see that Europe, and especially Britain's, Industrial Revolution was fueled by the exploitation of the countries in the Commonwealth. For example, there was fruit from countries in the Caribbean - sugar, oranges, fresh fruit, bananas - that came into Europe bringing an unheard of improvement in nutritional standards. When the Industrial Revolution came, it came on the



backs of the colonial peoples and on the backs of the enslaved peoples, the slaves who were taken from Africa and this happened in all the countries.

Denmark itself had its colonies - St. Croix, St. Thomas and others in the Caribbean, that I know of. We have the situation with Belgium and France in Africa - Senegal, Togo, Rwanda. In fact, the question of Rwanda today is there because of the whole way in which the French and the Belgians dealt with the people of Rwanda, how they divided them up and ruled. The problems in Uganda today - the reason why there are Ugandan refugees in Europe today is because the British took Idi Amin, who was from a minority tribe in Uganda, and put him in charge of the majority, so that when the British left the majority of course rebelled. This is what the British did. In Cyprus, they took the Turkish people who were fewer, and put them in charge of the Greeks Cypriots and so on. This was a tactic that was used by all of the colonial powers. So, in fact we are here in Europe because you were there in Africa. That's the reason that we are here. The chickens are coming home to roost. I want to make that point clear.

Now, apart from what is happening in terms of race, there is what is happening economically and politically in the world. With the demise of the Soviet Union and the New World Order, there has been a setting up of trading blocks around the world. In the far east, around China and Japan etc., in the United States of America, around the US, Canada and Mexico, the North American free Trade Agreement and of course the European Union. And these three trading blocks are trading amongst themselves and amongst each other. In doing so they are setting up rules and regulations that are making it very difficult for countries in Africa and other parts of the world to exist because they are being squeezed by these three political, social and economic blocks.

One example of this is the GAAT regime, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. What that does is make it almost impossible for there to be any kind of protection for smaller countries from larger countries. The European Union for instance, has the Lome Agreement between the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries, some 59 countries altogether. They have preferential trade agreements in relation to sugar, bananas, rum, rice and so on and so forth. The Lome agreement has represented at least in part a recognition of an obligation towards the former colonies on the part of their former colonisers. What GAAT has done now is said that there will be no more of these special arrangements, and because of that it means there is increased pressure on those countries so they now have to compete. In the case of bananas, you have a small country in the Caribbean like Dominica or St. Kitts or Grenada, having to compete with Honduras, Panama and some of these huge multinational mega corporations run by the American multi-nationals like Chiquita and Dole and Del Monte and so on. That is causing problems.

The fact is that the European countries and the G7 countries are taking aid and moneys away from Africa and those other countries and putting it into Eastern and Central Europe, to the detriment of those countries, means that there is even more poverty being created in those countries, which leads to more animosity, more divisions in those countries. This leads to wars, and civil strife, which in turn leads to more refugees and asylum seekers trying to get out of those countries and a lot of those people choose to come to Europe



to seek refuge. And what we have is the European Union taking the position that they are going to try their best not to adhere to the 1951 United Nations Convention on Refugees and try to find all sorts of ways to ensure that those people do not get a safe haven in these countries.

I raise these points as a background to the situation that Black and minority people find themselves in, in Europe and in the rest of the world. And of course in Britain, there have been major waves of immigration in the 1950s and the 1960s, and there was a lot of overt racism at the time, racial attacks etc. Now, Black people and other people of colour in Britain have taken major strides to overcome this racism. We forced the government to set up a Race Relations Act, which is legislation making it unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of colour. Alongside the Act the Commission for Racial Equality was established, a body that monitors racism in Britain and has the authority to investigate public bodies and private companies if a complaint of racism is made. We have had a political movement of Black and other minority ethnic groups. That movement decided it would become involved in the politics of the country and as such we were then able to influence local authorities and municipalities who acknowledged the whole question of racism, including the cultural dimension and the language dimension. We have thus seen signs of progress.

We have also had more negative experiences. We have had people rioting in the streets and of course the reason that people riot is because they feel they don't have a voice. They aren't able to get their feelings heard and I think that's an important lesson for people to learn. We've had our riots, but we've managed to make significant progress. We now have Black people in all the professions; Black lawyers, Black judges, Black politicians, Black people in sports representing Britain in all sporting activities. We have of course Black people in business, in academic life, and so on. More importantly, to me, is that we have had an absorption of Black culture by White young people in particular, so that the music, the language that is spoken in London and other areas reflects the language of Black people. Reggae music and the language that goes with that is all reflected in how all the youths speak.

However, the majority of Black people in Britain are still at the bottom of the pile and have huge frustrations, particularly with regards to the lack of opportunity. For example, in my constituency in Tottenham, 60% of Black young people aged between 16 and 24 years of age are unemployed. Sixty per cent. Now, I hear people talking about 10% and they start to panic - in Germany the unemployment figures are in double figures and the Germans are panicking. In my constituency in Tottenham, there is unemployment amongst 60% of Black young people aged between 16 and 24 years. That is a government statistic, I haven't made it up. So clearly there is a serious problem in relation to issues like unemployment.

I suspect that part of the reason for this the attitudes taken by the Government, particularly the government under Mrs. Thatcher. Her Government took away a lot of the gains that



had been made and enabled politicians at the highest level to legitimise racist views. For example, Mrs. Thatcher made a speech in which she said that Britain is in danger of being swamped by alien culture. You think about that. There are about 60 million people in Britain. There are about 4 million Black and Brown people and Mrs. Thatcher was afraid that the culture of 56 million is going to be swamped by the culture of 4 million. Well, I have never heard anything like that in my life. I have never heard of 4 million people swamping 56 million. I know that in Scandinavia in general, there is a view that if you let too many people into your country, it will change the country, the language, the environment and your culture. Well, I think that if your culture is so shaky that a hand full of people are able to change it, well then maybe it's not worth having at all !

We have seen therefore, a reversal, particularly in recent years, of some of the gains that had been made by Blacks and other minority and other migrant peoples. For example, we have seen a lot of deaths in police custody. Every year about some 20 or so young people, mainly Black, die in police custody in one way or the other. We have literally thousands of people who are stopped and searched and harassed by police officers for no reason every year.. In fact, if you are living in London, you are 10 times more likely to be stopped and searched by police if you are Black than if you are white. These are statistics that have been confirmed in Parliament. We have also heard statements from people like the Metropolitan Police Commissioner who says that young Black people are responsible for muggings, as if you can put certain crimes to certain races. The Metropolitan Commissioner doesn't say that in parts of Britain where there are no Black people, 100% of the muggings are committed by White people, but he turns around and he says that in London the majority of the muggings are committed by Black people and that's wrong. You cannot attach certain crimes to certain races. You can't have race tagging of crimes.

So clearly the struggle in the United Kingdom needs to go on. We now have a new phenomena that has just come on the scene in Britain and I call it Corporate racism. This is racism by the big corporations. For example, Ford motor company, the big multinational, the other day took a picture of it's workforce, which included people from Africa, the Caribbean, White people, Indian people, people from Pakistan and so on, a picture of about 20 people who were all there looking very happy and smiling. And Ford decided that they were going to advertise in Poland. And would you believe it, you know what they did? They took all the Black faces and Whitened them out. They turned the White people into Black people in the picture because they wanted to sell cars to Poland and Poland they say doesn't have many Black people, so they decided to change their workforce into an all-White workforce.

Hence, a man that was wearing a Sikh turban, had his turban removed and his face painted White - it was absolutely disgusting. That is the kind of thing that is happening, because large corporations are saying now that if they have to sell their products to Eastern Europe, Central Europe and other areas where there aren't many Black and minority people, then their advertising is going to be White, the pictures they use are going to be White and the sales people they are going to send down there are going to be White - and this is not on. In this instance, Ford quickly apologised and paid compensation to the workers who had



had their faces distorted.

Now, corporate racism is a new phenomenon. British Airways is another corporation that has been caught - recently they were caught photocopying the passports of Black people - and Black people only - who were booked onto their flights.

I think that if we are to move forward together in Europe, I think that there are five or six principles that must be followed. First of all, racism has to be openly discussed and there must be an acceptance that racism exists. I think that's the first principle that I'd like to put forward to you. I've been to several national and international conferences which were supposed to have been about racism, but at which it was never actually openly discussed. It is dressed up in terms of a cultural problem and people talk about "intolerance," and "assimilation" and integration and so on - in fact, there's an American who's of Indian origin, a Mr De Souza, who is currently touring Britain giving lectures. He has a theory that in America racism no longer exists, that's it the question of culture that's the problem, so that the people who are most discriminated against, he says, are Muslims for instance, and other people who have a different culture from the dominant culture in the country. I want to say that I disagree totally with that gentleman and if he happens to come to Denmark, I hope you'll send him packing because he's talking rubbish.

We want to be clear what we're talking about, particularly at this conference. We're talking about discrimination on the basis of the colour of a person's skin. Nothing more and nothing less. That is the major problem. The visible minorities, people you can see a mile off, those are the people who have difficulties within a White society.

We're not talking about culture - cultural issues are there but they are secondary, they are the second phase. The main issue is the question of colour. For example, if you are a White South African and you know the culture of South Africa, or if you are from the Caribbean and you are White and you walk down the street in Britain or in Denmark, the fascist isn't going to attack you, and you can melt into the population. But if I am walking down some streets in Britain and I assume some streets here as well, when they see me they don't ask me if I'm a refugee or if I can speak Danish - because you are Black immediately you are a target for attack and that is the difference. This is the difference for Black people and people of colour. I think that we need to remember that. So, we're talking mainly about the colour of a person's skin. And we're talking about the ignorance and the psychological baggage which White people have about Black people.

We're not talking about integration either, because this in itself is no solution. We know from the United Kingdom that some of the brightest people around are Black - and when I say Black I use the term to mean Indian, Pakistani and so on, Black and Brown people - they are some of the brightest people. In fact according to recent statistics, 40% of African people have qualifications of degrees or slightly under, and the list continues - 20% of Caribbean, 35% of Indian, 26% of Bangladeshis and so on. 15% of the White population have the same qualifications, and so in terms of qualifications per se, University



degrees and so on, the Black population has a higher percentage in Britain, than the White population.

However, when you look at unemployment, you see that Black graduates are four times as likely to be unemployed than White graduates. Therefore, something is wrong. It cannot be a question of culture, for they all went to the same schools, they all got the same degrees, they all speak English - some of them even have English names. Yet when it comes to jobs, the Blacks are ten times more likely to be unemployed than their White counterparts. Now that has nothing to do with culture, that has to do with racism, that's to do with the colour of a person's skin when they turn up for an interview at the work place. Hence, people can be as integrated as possible, but they will still face racism because of the colour of their skin, so it's not a question of culture - although that is also a problem, and cultural racism is a problem that has to be dealt with.

Hence, it must be accepted that racism on the basis of the colour of a person's skin exists. If you don't accept that, then if someone comes to complain of discrimination, then of course you will say that they don't have anything to complain about; like the French do. The French say, "well, in our constitution it's equality and fraternity and so on," but when you go to France and you look in the ghettos, you see that the ghettos are all full of Black people. The worst public housing is for Black people - so you ask, "Well, where is the equality, and the fraternity?" It's not there, it's only there in their minds when the reality is much different. It's all a question of having a colourblind approach. I was speaking to an employer the other day who was particularly bad in terms of hiring Black people. He said to me, "I don't look at a person's colour, they can be green, they can be pink, they can be polka dot, we have them here." I said, "Yes, but you don't have Blacks, and you don't have Browns and you don't have yellows. You might have polka dots, I haven't seen any, but you certainly don't have any Blacks here." This question of colour-blindness is a nonsense, it's there just to try and confuse people and to try and lead people astray. So, the first principle that has to be followed is that in White societies wherever they are, racism exists and it has to be dealt with and it has to be openly discussed.

Secondly, I think that there has to be an acceptance that Black and minority people have a place within a changing, cosmopolitan Europe, which will never again be all White. I will repeat that - there has to be an acceptance that Black and minority people have a place within a changing, cosmopolitan Europe, which will never again be all White. So, if you are a fascist who's looking

for the glory days when the Whites ruled the world, when they went all over the world and exploited the world and so on, well then you are going to have to find somewhere on the moon, not on this Earth, because Europe will never be the same again. Black people are here to stay in Europe and people had better believe it and better become accustomed to it. This is important. Now, if that is accepted, therefore the rights of Black and migrant peoples have to be addressed, otherwise there will be an underclass of people who will always be at odds with the rest of society.



So I would suggest that there has to be education in society at all levels, especially in schools. The education will have to be about history. About the process and consequence of enslavement, of colonization in particular and the immediate reasons why migrants find themselves in this country and in the rest of Europe. I think that there has to be truth in this matter. I don't care how unpalatable the truth might be to some people in this matter. Some people might want to forget that people were transported in hundreds and millions like cattle - worse than cattle. You know there's all these animal rights people in Britain protesting about how live calves are transported across the continent. Well, Black people were transported in much worse conditions than this and nobody, very few people, complained about that, and we want people to know about it.

We want young people in Europe to understand what that meant for Africa to have all those people taken away from her, and also what it meant for those people who were sent abroad from Africa. I include the people who were taken by Denmark and the rest of the Scandinavian countries and sent to places abroad. That story has to be told and it has to be told truthfully. I think that if these matters are not explained properly, then the racists - who we all hate - will be able to make easy propaganda and they will use this ignorance to influence people politically, like in France with Le Penn and in Germany with Shonhuber and so on. Because people will say, "well why is it that these Black people keep coming to Europe, why is it? There must be something wrong with them. Why is it that Black people are in the lowest positions in society, there must be something wrong with them." And you could easily begin to rewrite history and put the blame on the victims, rather than on the perpetrators who created that situation. I think that the history of what transpired during enslavement and during colonization still has to be told. Unless it is we will never understand the present.

I think that people must be reminded constantly of the dangers of ignoring the rights of Black and minority peoples, and of the consequences of racist philosophies, for example Nazism. There can be no let up in this. Recently in the United Kingdom the two major political parties, the Conservatives and the Labour party, decided that they aren't going to have much to do with race, they're going to put it on a back burner. They aren't going to talk about race, they aren't going to encourage equal opportunity - they're going to forget about it because it's uncomfortable and so on. As a result, in certain areas in London, fascists were elected for the first time. For example, in Tower Hamlets in East London, we had fascist councilors elected for the first time and there was talk that there is going to be a racist MP elected soon. When the fascist councillor was elected, on a pure race ticket, no other ticket, he broke all the laws by doing this and they never prosecuted him by the way. Then everybody started to shout and say "we're all against racism" and so on. But by then it was too late. He'd already been elected - luckily now however, it seems he has been removed. The lesson that I learnt from that is that if politicians don't tackle the question of race honestly, truthfully and openly than of course the fascists will move into the space that has been created and create the conditions that will allow them to flourish, which none of us wants.



The third principle that I think we should look at is this. I think there needs to be a recognition of the positive contribution that Black and migrant peoples can make to the economy, culture and life within European society. Let us take for instance refugees. Most refugees who come into Europe are from middle-class backgrounds. They're doctors, they're lawyers etc. They are usually from a professional class who are at odds with the political party or whoever is in power. They have good education and when they come to these countries, instead of using that education, most countries in Europe put them in refugee camps and hostels, don't give them any jobs. They give them maybe some welfare benefit of some sort, but do not allow them to contribute to society.

In Britain, in my area, we have done the opposite to that. There are a lot of refugees from Somalia, Kurdistan, Zaire, Ethiopia and so on. We set up a refugee consortium, funded by the local authority, that looks at employment prospects, that uses the cultures of the people to a positive advantage. For example we have people making all sorts of nice clothing and embroidery, which they sell and they are able to account for themselves. We did something in the field of health. We set up a refugee health consortium and they had two things to do. First of all, some of them were doctors, and they began to work with local doctors and to explain to them the type of ailments that were likely to occur within the refugee community how they recognise and treat

The second job that they had to do was to get to the refugees themselves and tell them what is expected of them in Britain, to show them how to use the health service and to explain the kind of information doctors may require when they go to see them. That is a positive use of the resources that can be found within those communities. Best of all, by giving them a little more additional training, those doctors themselves are able to look after people from their communities. There are, then, positive aspects to this in terms of the economy. We have decided to set up in my area a Global Trading Center, using the refugees, the asylum seekers, and the Black and the migrant people, who contact the people they know in their countries of origin in order to do business with them. We have set up all sorts of communication with the people in Tottenham and the people that they know abroad, with many beneficial effects and that is proving very popular and very successful for the economy of my neighborhood. It creates employment and of course the culture, music food, the restaurants, the arts and crafts that are there, and the whole community benefits. And people like living in a multi-cultural area because they are able to do things that people in the countryside, for instance, can't do and they experience things that many others cannot. I think that young people in particular grow up with a much more enhanced perception of the world if they are able to meet with people from other communities. The world is no longer a place where people in Europe, for example, are isolated from people in America or people in Africa. Nowadays people travel much more and so on. Young people in my area learn a huge amount from their own their school friends, what these other countries are like.

The fourth point is that legislation has to be enacted to protect the rights of Black and minority ethnic people. In Britain we have the Race Relations Act and the CRE as I mentioned before, and I think that there needs to be set up a body which monitors both private and public sectors. There should be no exemption for any of these bodies. The



police in particular need to be monitored. There needs to be an independent body that looks specifically at complaints made against them, because of course a lot of Black people suffer from abuse and from harassment at the hands of the police. The police are like no other section of society in that they have the power to take away the freedom of the individual, which is the individual's greatest right. The police can deprive you of that right, so it is important that they are monitored and that there is transparency. In Britain we are now talking about installing in police stations, in police vehicles, in the yard where the vehicles come in, video cameras that will record the police. We started off having tape recordings when police interviewed suspects and now, as a result of a number of cases where the police have blatantly mishandled their authority, the Metropolitan Police have agreed to install these video cameras. This will make the police more transparent and the police themselves are asking for this because they need to have the support and confidence of the public if they are to fight crime. The police can't run a crime-free society without the full support of the public and in order to do that they need to be transparent.

I also say that customs and immigration authorities need to be monitored properly by an independent body. We are trying at the moment to have a new law enacted in Britain, and that is one concerning racial violence. Racial violence can include abusive words, threatening behavior, physical attack or incitement to racism. We think that that is quite important. The Conservative government have been trying to resist this, but we shall continue to press for it, especially when the new Labour government is elected. Another important issue regarding the law is the fact that the Treaty of Rome and the European Charter of Human Rights only have fleeting reference to the issue of racism and people's rights in relation to race. I think that racism is a denial of human rights and therefore it should be in all of these treaties. I belong to an organisation called SCORE, the Standing Conference on Racial Equality in Europe, and it is a part of our agenda to try and get a European directive that will make racism a specific crime within the EU Countries. It is very important to get proper legislation to assist in the fight against racism.

Finally, Black and migrant people have to be given the right to self organisation and self determination. They also have to have the right to participate politically in the system of voting, they have to have the right to vote. I don't think that in today's Europe, being anti-racist is enough. It is not enough to go on demonstrations against racism. This is good, yes, and it is appreciated, but it is not enough. I have known many people who are strong anti-racists, who go on demonstrations etc., but who when you start talking about the rights of Black people and the right to vote etc., start to get alarmed and say that that is going a bit far. This is a crucial area that has to be tackled and I think that a true test of any anti-racist organisation is whether or not they are prepared to give power to Black people. I'm not talking about giving a few handouts, I'm not talking about welfare benefits or a bit of cultural training and so on - I'm talking about real political power to Black and other migrant people. Of course, if you don't have the vote, then you don't have rights, serious rights, because all these are political rights and if you are to change or improve them you need to be able to influence the political parties. The only way you can do this is if you have the right to vote. I can tell you that as a politician, most of my colleagues will take no notice of people who don't have the right to vote. They may feel sorry for them, but in the scale of priorities they will not take them seriously. It is hard enough to get



politicians to take seriously Black people who do have the vote, let alone those who don't have a vote. So this whole question of the vote is crucial. I don't know what the position is in Denmark, it's one of the things I hope to learn over the next few days. I do know there was talk of allowing votes in local elections, but I don't know where you got to in regards to that question. I hope that those discussions move on apace also, as I am talking about the national vote as well.

I think that another important issue is the question of leadership within Black and migrant communities. I really think that people have to allow Black communities to pick their own leaders, not to have them picked for them. There is a very corrupt practice in the UK where White politicians, government officials and municipal officials of one sort or another, get their pet Black people, people that they have themselves have groomed, and place these people at the table as leaders of their communities.

This is what the South Africans did with Chief Mangosuthu Buthe. In order to counter the ANC the National Party of the apartheid regime took this Buthe out of obscurity and made him a big chief amongst the Zulus. They gave him money, they gave him influence and then put him in charge of the Zulus even though the Zulus had their own King, Zwide, and their own royal family and so on. They managed to sidestep the proper leadership within the Zulu nation and put it in the hands of Buthe who was nothing but a errand boy for the South African racist regime. As a result of course, in Natal, there has been nothing but aggravation and fighting, because a lot of the Zulu people do not support Buthe - Buthe himself has got his paid operators who go in and kill people and maim them and so on and so forth. That is an example in terms of the worst possible practice in terms of this, so what I'm saying is that we don't need that kind of development help - allow the communities to pick their own leaders. Whether you like them or not is neither here nor there. If they genuinely represent the views of the peoples, then they are the people that you have to talk to. We have a name for those Black people who allow themselves to be used in this way. We call them "coconuts," - you know, they're Brown outside, but they're white on the inside. That's what we call them and that's what they will remain - we have no time for them within the community.

Now, in the UK, since Black people have gone into politics at a local and national level they have changed the whole face of Black politics in Britain. People genuinely feel now that they can get their issues aired. No longer is there the time when a White politician can get up in the House of Commons and say that Black people are all worthless, without some serious come-back, from one of the 6 of us - and there are only 6 of us Black members of Parliament out of 651, but you can rest assured that in any discussions of race, immigration and any of those issues, by the time we gather our forces around us to oppose it in the House of Commons, any discussion is based on the facts of the matter, not on emotion and not on racism. No White MP from any party dares now-a-days to get up in the House of Commons and say the things that they used to say many years ago. They know that the hostility they would get would be of such a magnitude that they would never be able to live it down. Now that it is televised, it makes it even more difficult. We can tell you therefore, directly from our experience, that the best way to deal with such issues is to have the people speaking for themselves.



I want to say to you that there is now a major challenge facing those of us who are prepared to be counted and are prepared to do something about the question of racial equality within Europe. I think that in Denmark you have made a real start by having such a conference. I have been to conferences around Europe and I have never seen a conference quite like this, with its variety of speakers not only from Europe and the minority communities in Europe, but also people from Africa who can tell us of their experiences first hand. I think that the experience to be gained from such a conference cannot be understated. It's a marvellous idea and I really want to congratulate the Board for Ethnic Equality in Denmark and of course the Government for allowing the conference to happen. I also have to say that even in Britain, where I think we are quite advanced in terms of race issues, I don't think we have had such a conference for many years, if ever. So I want to congratulate you.

However, I also want to warn that it is easy to have conferences and talk a lot. The French, for example, are brilliant at talking, they theorize everything. I was speaking to a Black French politician the other day and he said, "Look, the difference between you English-speaking Blacks and us French-speaking Blacks is that you not only talked about it, but you went out and took action. You might have taken some action that may have been a bit unlawful or whatever, but at least you took some action about it. We, on the other hand, we sat down and we intellectualised the position with our oppressors. We sat down and we discussed it over cups of coffee. We sat around and we talked about the fight against racism and it was all theoretical, it was all in our heads, whereas on the ground it was a totally different situation."

So, what I'm saying to you is that you've made a tremendous start in terms of this conference, but please don't be like the French and keep it at the level of talk. We want to see some firm action taken as a result of this conference and from speaking to Peter, I see that he is also of the opinion that that is what needs to be done.

I also want to say that if in Europe we don't tackle this question of racial inequality, the whole issue of refugees, asylum seekers, immigration, if we don't tackle those issues seriously, we're storing up trouble for the future. People are not going to sit back and take whatever is handed out to them forever. You might get away with it for one generation, possibly two, but certainly as more and more generations come on stream, as more and more of the cultures of the old countries are forgotten and Black and other migrant people take on board the culture of the Europeans, they're going to demand extra effort on their part to stop this inequality, so that you might as well do it now rather than later. The later you leave it the more difficult it becomes. I think that over the next decade in Europe, the second biggest issue after unemployment is going to be the issue of race. The right-wing are getting more and more organised. They're migrating across the free borders of Europe and so on, and it's just a matter of time before there's a major serious race incident in one of these countries. We need to be vigilant and we need to take action.

But I also want to say to you that everything in life changes. People might think that



Denmark today is almost the same as it was 100 years ago - but there have been huge changes. These changes have come about and people have become accustomed to them and worked with them. Similarly, there has to be a change in race. If there isn't a change in anything in life, that thing stagnates and it becomes useless after awhile, so everything must change and we must not be afraid of change. We must meet change head on and we must also try to control change.

I'm not only talking about change in terms of Europe or this country, I'm talking about a genuine new world order where people all over the world are able to trade on an equal basis, where we cut out the huge debt that is owed by countries in the South to countries in the North, the huge amounts of money that keep pouring out of countries in the South of the world. I was speaking to the President of one of these countries in the South the other day and he said to me it is obvious that Europe is building a wall around itself, a fence around Europe. They are trying to stop people getting in and they're trying to impose their values and their views on the rest of the world. But, he had something to tell them. He said, "I come from a country where the rain-forest are the lungs of the earth and if Europe doesn't give us our just deserves, we'll cut down the damn rain-forest that converts Carbon Dioxide into Oxygen and we'll all die." He was so desperate, he said that is it. He also said that they can put up as many barriers as they like. They can call for as many visas as they like. They can call for as many passports as they like, but they can't stop diseases from travelling around the world. Unless they do something to assist us in stamping out diseases that are now becoming very prevalent in our countries, then they are in danger themselves of importing those very viruses. The virus doesn't have to have a passport, the virus doesn't have to have a visa. He was not threatening Europe, just putting the plain facts on the table.

When I talk about racial equality, I'm not only talking about equality for people living here, I'm talking about equality for people living in the South who are suffering from exploitation, from super-exploitation through exploitative commodity prices, of the Third World debt, of the interest payments that these people have to endure in order to keep Europe happy and healthy and booming. I'm talking about a more equal world where the environment is taken care of, not only in European countries, but countries in the rest of the world, who also want to look after their environment, but because of the pressures on their economy have to cut down hard-wood timber in order to sell it to the West. This guy from South Africa said to me, "I really like elephants, and I know that we shouldn't kill them and so on, but if it comes to a choice between my family and the elephant, the elephant has to go." That's what he said, and I think that environmentalists and policy makers in Europe should take on board the implications of what he said. If say , we want a better world, we want a cleaner world, we want a more environmentally-friendly world - then we have to do something about the economies of the countries in the South. If we do do something about these economies, then a lot of these problems will disappear, because nobody in their right mind would want to come to Europe in the middle of December, when they could be enjoying themselves somewhere in a sunny climate on a nice beach, in a free country, where they have a reasonable standard of living.

I leave you with that thought. Thank you very much for listening to me.