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LABOUR PARTY BLACK SECTION PAPER ON THE INNER CITIES

"POSITIVE ACTION FOR CITIES"

March 1988

Conference is asked by the Executive Committee to endorse this as a position paper for wider discussion.

For the overwhelming majority of Black people the "inner city" is our home. Sixty eight per cent of Black people compared to 31 per cent of white people in Britain live in the metropolitan counties.* People of African and Asian descent were brought here to do the dirty, low-paid jobs. They were cramped into squalid housing in the ghetto conditions of the inner cities. When jobs became less plentiful, Black people were harassed by hostile officials and the police as Conservative and Labour governments pandered to racists by turning the screw of immigration laws. An analysis of Department of Employment figures shows that 32 per cent of 16 to 24 year old Black men are out of work compared to 18 per cent of white men in the same age group.

The education system has failed Black children. In the past it consigned "West Indian" pupils to the dustbin of schools for the educationally sub-normal. Bengali children are now being disadvantaged to become the new "under-achievers". Racist attacks have gone unpunished while, in contrast, Black people have been scape-goated for crime and pursued by special police squads. Discrimination at work has been sometimes perpetrated by employer and union official alike.

It is against this background that Black people have organised themselves to fight-back and survive. This resistance has taken the form of protest groups, self-defence campaigns and self-help voluntary organisations. Youth, totally alienated by the racism they face in the system, have rebelled through uprisings. Electoral action has so often seemed a fruitless exercise when the main political parties' unwritten consensus on race has led many Black people to feel they must choose between different evils at the polls.

Now the Margaret Thatcher wants to clinch top honours by putting the boot in more ruthlessly than any previous government. She posted her intent in 1987, after the Tory party's third consecutive General Election win, by saying she planned to pay "special attention" to the inner cities. Her proposals do not include the huge injection of cash for regeneration which is necessary to arrest the massive decay and despondency brought about by her government's destruction of manufacturing industries. That is clear from the glossy but totally empty "Action for Cities" package launched this month.

All Thatcher proposes is a screen of cosmetic initiatives behind which big business and law enforcement agencies will get to work on the real project of bringing the inner cities to heel. That means more attacks on local democracy because Labour authorities in these areas have progressive policies. And more strong-arm tactics against Black people - the Tories cast in the role of bullies sending in coercive police instead of launching a crusade against racism.

Much more significant than Action for Cities is the package of divisive new laws including the one bringing in the Community Charge or poll tax. A recent study says ninety two per cent of Black households in inner London will be worse off, with an average loss to them of £759 a year if this deeply unpopular measure is introduced.

Rate-capping has had a disastrous effect on the ability of progressive councils in the inner cities to provide a safety-net through the funding of Black voluntary groups. Vital services to the Black elderly, unemployed and youth have been axed. Now even the "creative accounting", which allowed some of the councils to lessen the impact of rate-capping, has been banned.

The Runnymede Trust's latest report notes that much of the "positive action" taken by local councils - denounced as "loony left" - were included in a green paper 10 years ago which was considered a modest and constructive document. It concerned a bill to expand local government's powers to offer grants for a wide-range of projects. This was never passed because of Thatcher's election victory in 1979.

The core of any positive action programme lies in training. But this government is left sorely wanting. Yet the national shortage of many skills should make the appropriate training of Black people doubly beneficial. Race monitoring is also essential because it provides vital data which identifies precise areas of disadvantage and a means of accurately checking progress.

We have warned that the government must take the responsibility when the powder keg created by them explodes. The Tory tactic of control, through the development of a small Black elite, and containment, through oppressive law-enforcement, will blow up in their face.

There is still time for the government to turn back from the current disastrous course. They could drop their objection to contracts compliance and begin compelling employers in the inner cities to hire Black workers in proportion to our numbers in the population. Research has shown that American companies subject to contracts compliance increased their Black work-force by 20 per cent compared to 12 per cent in other companies. We are not talking about "quotas" - they are illegal - but the "equality targets" without which there will be only negligible results.

The Tories must restore the ability of local authorities to raise the necessary cash - from central government and the rates - to combat racial disadvantage. They must tackle racism in the police and defend Black communities from the thugs bent on destroying our lives. They must cease their divisive policy of allowing white-dominated funding organisation to hold the power of life or death over Black voluntary groups. Black people must be granted responsibility for the running of our own affairs.

To rub salt in the wound, what we are seeing through initiatives like the Docklands and Merseyside initiatives is tiny pockets of yuppie privilege in the midst of our inner city islands of disadvantage. What could be more divisive?

THE COMMUNITY CHARGE

Upto 1987, the main weapon used by government was the system of taxation and the distribution of government revenue. The emphasis has shifted from direct to indirect taxation, followed by reductions in public spending, rate capping and the current proposals for the poll tax - all have broken the relationship with the ability to pay. To give just one example, local authorities in inner cities have lost over £2 billion in rate support grant, with some such as the abolished GLC and the to-be-abolished ILEA receiving no money from the taxes. The poll tax proposals come as a logical follow-up to the increasing pressures of Value-Added Tax.

The poll-tax which is emphatically called Personal Community Charge (PPC) is set by the local authority at the beginning of each financial year. The only people exempted from paying will be:

1. The 18 year olds still at school for whom child benefit are paid
2. Convicted (not on remand) prisoners
3. People with severe mental disabilities

Unemployed people receiving housing benefit and students will be liable to pay 20% of the poll tax.

The second method of collecting the poll tax will be the Collective Community Charge (CCC). This applies to some houses with multiple occupation and shared flats, for example, where there are many adults living together in households. In this case, the landlord will be given the responsibility of collecting or recouping the costs of the charge from the residents through collective community charge contributions. The individual contribution will be calculated on a daily basis and charged with any rent that is paid.

A third charge will be the standard community charge which is levied on second homes, holiday lets etc., at a rate higher than the PPC. In every case, the poll tax is not related to ability to pay. If arrears build up, a 30% or £50 surcharge as interest will be imposed after 3 months.

REGISTRATION

Each local authority area will have a poll tax register. This will contain the names of the people whose "sole or main residence" are in the area. The register will be a "rolling register" which means it will be constantly updated - unlike the electoral register which is produced yearly. Every resident over 18 living in the area will have to register. Certain "responsible person" will be nominated in each household to ensure that everyone in the house is included in the register. Failure to provide information properly is punishable by a fine of £50, rising to £200 for any further offences. Every source of

means, no limit, apart from social services and police record will be used to compile information with which to produce the poll tax registration. The registration will be the responsibility of the registration officer (RO). Any evasion of more than 20% will force inner city residents who register for the poll tax to pay more (less in affluent areas) to enable a local authority to collect the same amount of revenue. In time the widespread non-registration will lead to the issuing of passes - apartheid-style.

THE EFFECTS OF THE COMMUNITY CHARGE ON BLACK PEOPLE

The poll tax will have the devastating effect on Black people or households. For instance about 90 - 94% of Black people live in inner city areas, and most of these areas end up with the very highest poll tax bills. Unemployment is highest amongst Black people and as such, they are in the lower income bracket. Above all, Black people in most cases, because of their lower income and finding accommodation difficultly, tend to live in larger households. These people will be hit the hardest, since the poll is not related to the ability to pay. For example, the average poll tax bill for a Black family household can be as much as £800 or more compared to an average £400 for white households. There is no means of knowing or explaining how the rebate system help low income families.

THE EFFECTS OF COMMUNITY CHARGE ON THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The change to the poll tax system would force local authorities to cut spending to meet the central government's demand in minimum spending level, thus a further ratecapping on local authorities. This will put the restraint on the council to force cuts in services and lower standards to the detriment of those in need. Since, any expenditure would have to be financed through the PCC, any increase cannot be raised through the National Non-Domestic Rate (NNDR) as before.

It is difficult to assert how the system would affect each or different wards but there are strong indications and evidence that it will affect everybody and the number of losers will far out number those that will gain by it. For instance, 17% only pay more in some affluent areas while over 96% of households in the inner cities will be worse off. In effect, the poll tax system will mean bigger bills for the poorest, mainly Black families who are already bearing the brunt of inner city deprivations and smaller bills for the rich.

The transformation of the poll tax system is extended to 1990 so that traumas of the transition could be absorbed gradually. Such are the measures of harshness and the severity with which the poll tax system is anticipated.

The long term impact of the poll tax will be the migration labour from areas with a high taxation to those areas with the lower tax, thus emptying many inner-city areas and breaking-up families and communities. Those unable to move, will live in areas of decline, creating a

"docklands-type" situation which the Tory government can exploit by turning these areas into playground of the rich over the coming thirty years or so.

THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR: WHOSE AUTONOMY?

The voluntary sector, local groups/organisations that have already obtained charitable status or are seeking such status, play a very important role in society. Tory government and Labour local authorities have supported such organisations with opposing ideologies.

The voluntary sector often acts as a mediator between the people and the ruling class establishment. Under-resourced and strained voluntary organisations are filling the gaps in the social and welfare services i.e. providing a service for the community.

The constant revision of the criteria for grant applications has also made it very difficult for the voluntary sector to develop whilst the demands that are being made by the general public increase and the need for voluntary groups to participate more closely with local authorities so as to keep an eye on them has become more intense.

Amongst the various different pressures facing the voluntary sector a new threat has just recently risen its head to threaten the autonomy and accountability of all voluntary groups and especially Black groups. There are hundreds of such cases - one is described in detail below.

Recently the Home Secretary, Douglas Hurd and his underling John Patten began a clinical and co-ordinated campaign to get dismissed from post a young Black activist who was working for a recently formed development agency in St. Pauls Bristol, scene of the very first disturbances in the 1980's and most recently a drugs raid called Operation Delivery in 1986.

Kuomba Balogun had been employed by the St. Pauls Local Development Agency in March of this year with the comprehensive task of co-ordinating the response of Black voluntary organisation to the various schemes and other proposed actions of the present government and a lot more beside.

His crime in the government's eyes was that he had a criminal record, his opposition to the use of a community centre built 3 years after the 1980 disturbances because of its lack of facilities. His outspokenness on issues of racism and police brutality and a host of other issues which were affecting Black people.

Douglas Hurd and John Patten with other MP's called for his dismissal claiming Kuomba was unfit to head the agency and publicly requested that BS 1000, the sponsoring body should dismiss him or jeopardise 70 LDAs up and down the country.

This was resisted passionately by the National Fund that paid the grant to Bristol for as long as it possibly could. The government pressured BS 1000 long and hard and when that was not successful enough, underling John Patten introduced new rules that was to come into immediate effect so as to dismiss Kuomba from his post setting a very serious precedent for every other voluntary organisation nationally.

EMPLOYMENT

The government has sought to create a smoke screen in order to counter some of the criticisms that it has faced. The "Enterprise Culture" which was implemented in the United States in the sixties has been adopted lock, stock and barrel by the government. One of the mainstays of this enterprise culture is the establishment of schemes by liberal-minded businesses - usually under the glare of television spotlights - for the unemployed to work for benefits or to live in poverty. Black youth in Britain have rejected this and are opting out daily and are suffering incredible hardship or hustling for a living. Far from improving the conditions, these measures are exacerbating the problems they seek to solve.

SPECIAL EMPLOYMENT MEASURES (SEM)

Task forces are the most notable manifestation of SEMs so far. They have been put into 16 areas up and down the country and seek to work directly with the community. In fact they have generally ignored the needs of the Black community and created a lot of tensions within those communities. The most sinister aspect of task forces is that they are linking up a number of agencies that relate to crime prevention and information gathering. The Black Caucus have organised a series of meetings around task forces and are soon to publish their findings. The Black community must develop an organised response to these measures and the Black Caucus are facilitating these responses.

It is crucial for us that we begin to develop strategies that allow us at the moment to monitor the situation. We believe there is a fundamental flaw in the overall strategy in promoting enterprise culture as a major means of employment generation and we are certain that the measures that have been adopted are harmful to the welfare of the Black community. For example the Enterprise Allowance scheme has meant that Black people attempting to start businesses in a depressed economy with a lack of development capital and a dearth of support services to help with marketing accounting and management. In short they are bound to fail. Yet job centres and employment agencies are steering unemployed Blacks in droves to start these businesses. It is notable that the £40 a week allowance on the scheme is a lot less than most people are eligible for under social security.

TRAINING FOR EMPLOYMENT

A major block of government employment strategy is skills training YTS is largely unsuccessful. The new J.T.S. is worst still. The government is now using forced recruitment tactics for the scheme by linking benefits with willingness to attend these schemes or a job club. The unemployed have very little choice.

If the Black community is to be successful in regenerating their communities we have to devise means of controlling resources, people, money and land. By controlling these vital resources we can begin the task of deciding the priorities and financing them to the level required. The economic development group of the Black Caucus is currently working on these issues with Black sections and other organisations.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

PREFACE

Mainstream health care and its facilitating the Black inner city areas (Black Community), cannot be examined without looking at the historical perspective if the Black sections are to adopt an effective strategic for the inner cities.

The arrival of Blacks from the Caribbean and Asian continents in the 50's and early 60's and how they were used to prop up the ailing state system, post war.

Predominantly Black female labour was used as and became the 'blackboen' of the working force although it was never officially recognised as such. Later, doctors from the Indian sub-continent, Africa and the Far East joined the NHS in areas of speciality which white doctors had shunned.

The images that were, and still are generally, pertain there stereotypes to this very day, where currently able and highly qualified Blacks, targeted in these areas of employment.

The NHS has never been directed to develop health care for Black people - numerous conditions caused either through heredity or through changes in life-styles have not been addressed by government agencies, for example, the efforts to counter the effects of sickle-cell anaemia and thalassaemia have been led by Black people themselves. The occurrence of rickets and heart-disease have not been adequately researched and specific strategies have not been developed. The Black staff of the NHS have been exploited mercilessly by the system; the Black section would advocate the intellectual liberation of the widespread skills and knowledge of the Black staff of the NHS in order to address the health needs of Black people.

1. STRATEGIES: FOR EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT OF BLACK WORKING STAFF

- 1.1 Organising and affiliating Black nurses, auxillary staff to local constituency Black sections. This would, and should cover mainstream health care, nursing colleges, mental care, nursery nurses and Black management with a programme for organising their own agenda policies, criteria, with local constituency B.S. acting as the catalyst.
2. Where there is lack of awareness, concern without evidence, B.S. should provide the education and information in terms of resources although capitation and self determination must not be seen as the sole province of local B.S.
3. National Black Section should have a Health and Social Services sub-committee to overview and see to the implementation of a national plan outlining strategies in inner city areas, and the Black community as a whole.
4. B.S. must have access to Local Health Authorities, places must be set aside for members of B.S. who are nominated to represent their constituency. It must not be overlooked that any Black group who seeks or has its own independant means of self organising and determination may seek to equally gain representation on the above body.
5. Interim and annual reports should be submitted by Local B.S. and national B.S. with a view of gaining the local and national overview.
6. A/R policies should be adopted for all Health Authorities via local and National Black Sections, into all aspects of the service with particular view of parity and affirmative discrimination for Black staff.
7. Trade unions representing the Health Service should equally be approached to adopt A/R policies and provide information and update on all aspects of its endeavours and casework, by B.S. and Black Health groups.
8. Monitoring of the effectiveness of any strategy adopted by B.S. for Health care, should bear emphasis on any factor which sees an overpresentation, or disproportionate number of Blacks being treated, i.e. Mental Health Care should be highlighted, tabled at B.S. National Executive.
9. Recruitment of Health Service staff, for health care, B.S.
10. PRIVATE SECTOR

Deployment and employment of Black staff should be monitored, A/R policy adopted.

HOUSING

1. The principle aims of current government policy are:-

- a) End local authority housebuilding
- b) Fuller promotion of Council house sales
- c) Deregulation of private rented sector
- d) Dispose of Council housing to property developers, Housing Associations or private owners

2. HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

Black Housing Associations stand to be disadvantaged due to proposed reductions in Housing Association Grant, from the Housing Corporation. The shortfall is to be filled by private finance, but Black Housing Associations will find it difficult to raise private funds due to lack of security. Rents will rise to repay private sector finance. Government should provide 100% grants to new and small Black Housing Associations.

3. DEREGULATION OF RENTIS/PRIVATE SECTOR

The rent act will end new lettings. Landlords will let properties on an assured or shorthold tenancy basis.

Assured tenancy means any property can be let in any condition at market rate. A previous condition that the landlord must be reputable and the property in reasonable condition no longer apply. Shorthold tenancies are short-term (6 months to 1 year). After the tenancy ends the landlord can re-let on a new basis.

The government's proposals make no specific reference to racial harassment, prospect of landlords harassing tenants to force them out in order to re-let the property on higher "market level" rents.

4. DISPOSAL OF ESTATES

Pick-a-landlord proposals will give tenants the right to get for private landlord. Rents are likely to increase as a result. Black tenants, who are generally poorer, may want to stay with the Council but could be "outvoted" by other tenants.

CONCLUSION

1. There is a disproportionate number of Black people in Housing Associations and around 75% of Housing Association tenants are on Housing Benefit. Increased rents will not be matched by higher Housing Benefit.
2. There is no specific reference to racial harassment. The private landlords may harass Black tenants to force them out and re-let the property on a higher rent.

1. STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE DEPARTMENT OF BLACK PEOPLE

The Department of Black People is a key organization in the development of housing policy. It is responsible for the development of housing policy and the implementation of housing programs. The Department of Black People is a key organization in the development of housing policy. It is responsible for the development of housing policy and the implementation of housing programs.

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3. Access to new tenancies for Black people will become more difficult due to discrimination by racial landlords.
4. As Housing Associations become less dependent on local authorities due to private financing, it will be more difficult for councils to nominate Black people to housing Associations where the rents may be too high.
5. The Housing Act makes no reference to homelessness where Black people are over-represented.

The Black Section has recently produced policy papers on Education (1988), Policing (1987), Immigration (1987), Employment (1987), Racial Harassment (1986) and therefore these subjects are not included in this paper. This does not mean that these topics are not important in the lives of Black people in the inner cities, on the contrary, these topics are of (considerably) more importance to Black people and therefore merited early work on developing ideas and policies.

4. DISPOSAL OF ESTATES. The Department of Black People is responsible for the development of housing policy. It is responsible for the development of housing policy and the implementation of housing programs. The Department of Black People is a key organization in the development of housing policy. It is responsible for the development of housing policy and the implementation of housing programs.

5. There is no specific reference to racial harassment in the private housing sector. The Department of Black People is responsible for the development of housing policy. It is responsible for the development of housing policy and the implementation of housing programs. The Department of Black People is a key organization in the development of housing policy. It is responsible for the development of housing policy and the implementation of housing programs.