

### The Caribbean Community in Britain—Introduction

Readers of the African-American Journal *Freedomways* were privileged in 1964 to read one of the first substantive publications on the post-World War II Black settlement in the UK to come from within one of the communities, the Afro-Caribbean, created by the process of migration-settlement. Entitled *The Caribbean Community in Britain* (*Freedomways* vol. 4 no. 3, pp. 341–357, 1964), its author was the remarkable daughter of Africa and communist militant, sister Claudia Jones, whose tragically early death in December of that year deprived us of one whose individual energy, ability and organisationally mediated commitment would, beyond question, have helped to advance our struggle to a point well beyond its current emasse

Claudia Jones was born in Trinidad in 1918 and lived in the United States. There she played a leading rôle in the *Black Liberation* and *Civil Rights Movements* and was the *National Women's Organizer* for the *Communist Party*, USA. Deported under the provisions of the McCarran Act, sister Claudia Jones settled in London in 1957 where she founded and Edited the influential *The West Indian Gazette*. Until her death, Claudia remained a member of the *Communist Party of Great Britain* (CPGB)—increasingly in conflict with their treatment of *Black presence* in the United Kingdom and with their political position on the major question of *national liberation* by the technique of *people's war*. It was clear to her that orthodox CPs resistance to these two problems rested on their collusion with imperialist domination

*TBL* here reprints sister Claudia's text. We do so to pay tribute to her memory. We do so to bring it to another audience. We do so, also, to give an opportunity to re-appraise both where Black theorising about our struggle had reached in 1964 and how it has moved on in the decade and a half since then. We do not propose, however, to perform the task of re-appraisal here: this text, after all, appears between the same 'board' as a number of current texts from within the Afro-Caribbean and Asian Communities in the United Kingdom, while earlier editions of *TBL* taken together with much of the output of Journals such as *Race Today*, *Race and Class* etc., make accessible the current *positions*. It is worth remarking nevertheless, that a reading of Claudia Jones discloses the gap which has, in the intervening period, opened up between militants of the African and Asian communities in the United Kingdom and the major organisations of the (left of) labour movement here. Sister Claudia's communism was expressed through membership of CPGB: this is now a politically impossible position for us. She related to the left-wing of the British Labour Party: this is now for us absolutely discredited politically by economism, reformism and racism. The existence of this gap is a matter of political importance: by what organisational means shall we of the Black communities now relate to the white working class? And, if by no means, how shall we escape the pressure for a '*community self-sufficiency and/or survival*' rather than a '*people's war*' politics? And what shall prevent even our major acts of physical resistance from being merely easily defeated acts of *insurrectionary politics* rather than *moments of insurrection* in a *protracted peoples' war*?



Claudia Jones

## The Caribbean Community in Britain

Over a quarter of a million West Indians, the overwhelming majority of them from Jamaica, have now settled in Britain in less than a decade. Britain has become, in the mid-1960's, the center of the largest overseas population of West Indians; numerically relegating to second place, the once superior community of West Indians in the United States. This new situation in Britain, has been inimitably described in the discerning verse of Louise Bennett, noted Jamaican folklorist, as 'Colonization in Reverse'

Immigration statistics, which are approximate estimates compiled by the one time functional *West Indian Federation office* (Migrant Services Division) in Britain, placed the total number of West Indians entering the United Kingdom as 238,000 persons by the year 1961. Of these, 125,000 were men; 93,000 women; 13,200 were children; and 6,300 unclassified. A breakdown of the islands from which these people came, showed that during the period of 1955-1961, a total of 142,825 were from Jamaica; from Barbados, 5,036; from Trinidad and Tobago, 2,282; from British Guiana, 3,470; from Leeward Islands, 3,524; from the Windward Islands, 8,202; and from all other territories, the sum total of 8,732

Distribution of the West Indian population in the United Kingdom indicates that by mid-1962, over 300,000 West Indians were settled in Britain. The yearly immigration and the growth of community settlement illustrates the rate of growth of the West Indian settlement. For example, the emigration of West Indians to the United Kingdom in mid-1955 totalled 24,473 and by 1961, this figure soared to 61,749. Corresponding to the latter, was the fear of family separation due to the then impending *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*

In the industrial city of Birmingham, by mid-1955, 8,000 West Indians formed the community there, while in mid-1962, this figure stood at 67,000. Similarly in London, where in Brixton the largest settlement of West Indians exist; the mid-1955 figure of 85,000 had by 1961 grown to 135,000. West Indians were also to be found in the North of England (Manchester, Nottingham,

Wolverhampton, Derby and Leeds) and in such cities as Cardiff, Liverpool, Leicester, Bath, Oxford, Cambridge and in other provinces

*What constitutes the chief features of this unprecedented migration to Britain? To what factors may we ascribe this growth of overseas West Indians away from their original homelands?* Emigration from the West Indies has served for over two generations as a palliative, a stop-gap measure to ease the growing economic frustrations in a largely impoverished agricultural economy; in which under colonial-capitalist-imperialist relations, the wealth of these islands is dominated by the few, with the vast majority of the people living under unbearable conditions. It was the outstanding Cuban poet, Nicholas Guillen, who — noting a situation (also observed by other West Indian writers) in which the young generation, most of it out of work, 'chafing at the bit', seeing as their only hope a swift opportunity to leave their islands — lamented thus: '*Scant, seagirt land, Oh, tight-squeezed land . . .*'

Indeed, as with all migrant populations, here is mirrored in extension the existing problems of the nations and territories from which the migrants originally spring. West Indian emigration to the United Kingdom is no exception to this phenomenon. Furthermore, this emigration, as with many other Afro-Asian peoples, has occurred almost immediately prior to the achievement of political independence in two of the largest of the West Indies islands. *It is because prospects have not yet qualitatively improved for the vast majority of the West Indian workers and people, inhibited by the tenaciousness of continued Anglo-American imperialist dominance over West Indian economic life, that this emigratory movement of people from the West Indies continues.* History will undoubtedly evaluate this development as, in part, attributable to the demise of the *West Indian Federation* and the consequent smashing of wide hopes for the establishment of a united West Indian nation in which freedom of movement would have absorbed some of our disinherited, disillusioned, and unfilled people who were compelled to leave their homelands in order to survive



Up to a decade ago, West Indian immigration was directed to America rather than to Britain. But this was sharply modified when, in 1952, the *United States Federal Government* enacted the racially-based *McCarran-Walter Immigration Law*, which unequivocally was designed to protect the white 'races' purity, and to insure the supremacy of Anglo-Saxon stock; limited to 100 per year, persons allowed to emigrate to the United States from each individual Caribbean territory. Henceforth all eyes reverted to Britain. This is not to imply that West Indian immigration to Britain was wholly non-reciprocal. Another influence, was that post-war Britain, experiencing a brief economic boom, and full employment, needed overseas and cheap labour to staff the semi-skilled and non-skilled vacancies, the results of temporary postwar economic incline. Britain sought West Indian immigration as an indispensable aid to the British economy; indeed, encouraged it!

The presence of West Indian immigrants (who together with other Afro-Asian peoples total nearly a half million people) represent less than one per cent in an overall Anglo-populous of 52 million. But even this small minority has given rise to a plethora of new sociological and analytical works such as *Newcomers*<sup>1</sup>; *Coloured Immigrants in Britain*<sup>2</sup>; *The Economic and Social Position of Negro Immigrants in Britain*<sup>3</sup>; *Black and White in Harmony*<sup>4</sup>; *Coloured Minorities in Britain*<sup>5</sup>; *Colonial Students*<sup>6</sup>; *Report on West Indian Accommodation Problems in the United Kingdom*<sup>7</sup>; *Race and Racism*<sup>8</sup>; *Dark Strangers*<sup>9</sup>; *They Seek a Living*,<sup>10</sup> and the like

Extreme manifestations of the racialism which underlies the present status of West Indians in Britain were graphically witnessed in late 1958, when racial riots occurred in Notting Hill and Nottingham. These events, which followed the as yet unsolved murder of a St Vincentian, Mr Kelso Cochrane, claimed world headlines. Clashes even occurred between West Indian and other Afro-Asian migrants with white Britons. The firm handling of the provocateurs by the authorities, following the wide protests of immigrants, labour, Communist and progressive forces, and the intervention of the West Indian Federal leaders, for a time quelled the overt racialists, and the 'keep Britain white', fascist-propagandists. But the canker of racialism was now nakedly revealed. It exposed also the smugness of official Britain, who hitherto pointed to racial manifestations in 'Little Rock' and Johannesburg, South Africa, but continued to deny its existence in Britain

Today, new problems, underscored by the Tory Government's enactment, and recent renewal of the 1962 *Commonwealth Immigration Act* (one which ostensibly restricts Commonwealth immigration as a whole, but in fact, discriminates

heavily against coloured Commonwealth citizens), have established a second class citizenship status for West Indians and other Afro-Asian peoples in Britain. Accompanying the general social problems confronting all new migrant workers, West Indians, stemming as they do in large measure from African origins, are experiencing sharper colour-bar practices. In common with other workers, the West Indians take part in the struggle for defense and improvement of their working and living standards, but the growing intensity of racialism forces them, as it does other Afro-Asians, to join and found their own organizations. In fact, their status, is more and more a barometer of British intentions and claims of a so-called 'Multi-racial Commonwealth'. As put in one of the recent sociological studies of the absorption of a West Indian migrant group in Brixton, financed by the *Institute of Race Relations* and the *Nuffield Foundation*: 'Now that the whole equilibrium of world power is changing, and the Commonwealth is, by virtue of conscious British policy, being transformed from a family based on kinship, to a wider multi-racial *familia*, the presence of coloured immigrants in Britain, presents a moral and a practical challenge. The people of these islands face the need not only to reformulate their views of Britain's role and status in such a Commonwealth, but also to apply the new relationships in their dealings with coloured Commonwealth migrants here at home. And not only the colour-conscious migrants themselves, but the newly-independent Afro-Asian countries and the outside world as a whole, show an inclination to judge Britain's good faith in international relations by her ability to put her own house in order'<sup>11</sup>

## The Commonwealth Immigrants Act

Far from heeding the advice even of sociologists whose studies themselves show a neo-colonialist bias in its precepts (the Sheila Patterson study, for example, is full of pragmatic assertions that xenophobia is the 'norm' of British life, and hence, by implication 'natural', etc.), the Tory Government has shown utter disdain for putting its own house in order. Faced with the coming general elections in October [1964], having suffered from local government defeats, mounting criticism rises towards its ruinous domestic and foreign policies. Internally, these range from housing shortages and a *Rent Act* which has removed ceilings on rentals, to the failures of providing new houses; high interest rates on loans, to the rail and shipbuilding closures, mergers and the effects of automation

The external policies of the present British *Conservative Government* also suffer similar criticism. As a junior partner it supports the



United States, imperialist NATO nuclear strategy, continuing huge expenditures for colonial wars in Malaysia, North Borneo and Aden. Its subservience to US imperialism is also demonstrated in the case of its denial of long over-due independence to British Guiana, on whom it is imposing the undemocratic system of Proportional Representation which aims further to polarize and divide the political life in British Guiana in order to depose the left-wing, thrice-elected People's Progressive Party under Dr Cheddi Jagan. As an experienced colonizer, shopping around for a scapegoat for its own sins, the British Tory Government enacted in 1962, the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*. The Act sets up a voucher system allowing entry only to those who have a job to come to. Some of its sections carry deportation penalties for migrants from the West Indies, Asia and Africa, which it especially circumscribes. Its passage was accompanied by the most foul racist propaganda perpetrated against West Indians and other Afro-Asians by Tory and fascist elements. Thus, it coincided with the futile efforts then engaged in by the British Government to join the European Common Market. It was widely interpreted that these twin events demonstrated the dispensability, in Britain's eyes, of both the needs of the traditional market of the newly independent West Indian territories, for their primary products, and the labour supply of West Indians and other Afro-Asian Commonwealth citizens. On the other hand, the doors would close on coloured Commonwealth citizens, while open wide to white European workers.

The pious and hypocritical sentimentality accompanying the 'bill's' passage was further exposed when the Tory legislators removed the non-Commonwealth Irish Republic from the provisions of the Act, revealing its naked colour-bar bias. The result, following a year of its operation, showed that eighty to ninety per cent of all Indian and Pakistani applicants were refused entry permits; and West Indian immigration dropped to a little over 4,000, qualifying for entry. The latter occasioned cautious queries, whether the West Indians had either turned their backs on Britain or had become bitter with the Act's passage. What the figures showed, of course, was that the main blow fell as intended, most heavily on the *coloured* Commonwealth citizens.

So much for the facile promises of the then Home Secretary, now Britain's Foreign Minister, Mr R A Butler, that '*we shall try to find a solution as friendly to these people as we can, and not on the basis of colour alone*'. (my emphasis, C J)

All Tory claims that the Act would benefit either Britain or the immigrants are, of course, easily refuted. The most widely prevalent Tory argument was that coloured immigrants were

'flooding Britain'. At the time of the Act's passage, the 1961 British population census showed a two and a half million increase, during the very period of the growth of the immigration of West Indians and Afro-Asians, and this increase was easily absorbed by the British economy. The coloured migrant is less than one in every hundred people. Yearly emigration of Britons shows that for every single person entering Britain, *three* leave its shores.

The shibboleth that 'immigrants take away houses and jobs', when viewed in light of Tory responsibility for high interest property rates and the Rent Act makes, this claim likewise ludicrous. As for new houses, there is no evidence that West Indians or other coloured immigrants have taken away any houses. Allowed largely only to purchase old, dilapidated short-lease houses, it is the West Indian building worker, who helps to construct new houses, he makes an invaluable contribution to the building of new homes. Even the usual last retort of the racial ideologists that West Indians and other coloured citizens 'lower moral stands' also fails to stand up. The world knows of the exploits of Christine Keeler and the British Minister of State, an event which occasioned a calypso in the widely-read *West Indian Gazette*.

There has been no notable increase in jobs as a result of this Act. In fact, rail and shipbuilding closures, mergers and automation, continue apace. It is widely admitted that withdrawal of coloured workers from transport, foundries and hospital services would cause a major economic dislocation in Britain, and that they continue to make a contribution to the British economy. Vic Feather, leading trade union official, reiterated strongly this view at an all-day conference recently in Smethwick, a Birmingham suburb, where a local election campaign slogan was that to elect Labour meant '*having a nigger for a neighbour*'. One finally observes, regarding the asserted economic social burden of the migrant, that a 'tidy' profit has been made by the Ministry of National Insurance from contributions of the surrendered cards of thousands of immigrants who returned home after a few years in Britain.

In the eyes of the world, the Tory record does not stand any better when it is known that nine times they have blocked the Bill to Outlaw Racial Discrimination by the Labour member of Parliament for Slough, Mr Fenner Brockway. The main provisions of this bill would be to outlaw discrimination in public places, lodgings, inns, dance halls, and other leases; and also put penalties on incitement to racialism. The Bill has now gained the support of the Labour leadership who promised, if they achieve office, to introduce such a measure (although there are some indications that it may be watered down), as well as from



leading Liberal MP's and even from some Tory MP's. Thus, there has been witnessed a reversal of the former open-door policy to Commonwealth citizens, and speciously to coloured Commonwealth citizens. The result of all this has been a new degrading status and sufferance accorded to coloured immigrants who are likewise saddled with the responsibility for Britain's social evils.

There is a reluctance on the part of virtually all sections of British public opinion to assess the fundamental reasons for the existence of racial prejudice. The citizens of the 'Mother of Democracies' do not yet recognize that the roots of racialism in Britain are deep and were laid in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries through British conquests of India, Africa, and great parts of Asia as well as the British Caribbean. All the resources of official propaganda and education, the superstructure of British imperialism, were permeated with projecting the oppressed colonial peoples as 'lesser breeds', 'inferior coloured peoples', 'natives', 'savages' and the like—in short, 'the white man's burden'. These rationalizations all served to build a justification for wholesale exploitation, extermination, and looting of the islands by British imperialism. The great wealth of present-day British monopoly-capital was built on the robbery of coloured peoples by such firms as *Unilever* and the *East Africa Company* to *Tate and Lyle* and *Booker Brothers* in the Caribbean. The artificial divisions and antagonisms between British and colonial workers, already costly in toll of generations of colonial wars and ever-recurrent crises, have delayed fundamental social change in Britain, and form the very basis of colour prejudice. The small top section of the working class, bribed corrupted and benefiting from this colonial robbery, has been imbued with this racist 'white superiority' poison. On the other hand, progressive opinion rallied with the migrants' protests at the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*, for the Labour Party leadership had voted in opposition to its enactment; yet allowing its subsequent renewal to go unchallenged for fear of losing votes in the coming general elections. Labour offered the government an unopposed passage, on the condition that it agree to place the Act with new and improved legislation drawn up 'in consultation' with the Commonwealth countries.

The government, which had itself tried this tactic before, to the negative response of West Indian and other affected Commonwealth governments, refused to give these assurances. The Labour MP's voted against its renewal, but not before they made clear, to the dismay of the overwhelming majority of immigrants, that they too, stood for 'quotas' and 'controls'. In essence, this stand does not differ in principle from the attitude of the Tory Government and the

provisions of the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*. With the sole exception of the British Communists, who completely oppose the system of 'quotas' and 'controls' for Commonwealth immigration, all other political parties have capitulated in one or another way to this racist immigration measure. A recent statement of the *Executive Committee* of the British *Communist Party* declared its opposition to all forms of restrictions on coloured immigration; declared its readiness to contest every case of discrimination; urged repeal of the *Commonwealth Immigrants Act*; and called for equality of: access to employment, rates of wages, promotion to skilled jobs, and opportunities for apprenticeship and vocational training. It gave full support to the *Bill to Outlaw Racial Discrimination* and pledged its readiness to support every progressive measure to combat discrimination in Britain. It also projected the launching of an ideological campaign to combat racialism, which it noted, infects wide sections of the British working class.

### Some Issues Facing Coloured Immigrants

That the Tory colour-bar *Commonwealth Immigrants Bill* has been enacted at the time when apartheid and racialism is under attack throughout the world—from the African Heads of State at Addis Ababa, to the half million Civil Rights March on Washington; from the United Nations and world criticism of South Africa and the demand for application of economic sanctions, to the condemnation of apartheid and Jim Crow racist practices in the US—bespeak the fantastic blindness of Britain's Tory rulers even to Britain's own national interests. But as with every exploiting class, as the example of Hitlerism shows, faced with a radical movement of the masses against their rule, they seek to split and divert this anger onto a false 'enemy'.

Added to the second-class citizenship status foisted by such a measure, West Indians and other Afro-Asians are confronted in their daily lives with many social and economic problems. Forming several settlements in various cities, the overwhelming majority are workers, with a scattering of professionals. There are 3,000 students. Throughout Britain, the West Indian contribution to its economy is undoubted. As building workers, carpenters, as nurses, doctors and on hospital staffs, in factories, on the transportation system and railway depots and stations, West Indians are easily evidenced. Lest the younger generation be omitted (without commenting here on the social mores 'guiding' the cultural orientation of today's youth) one of the most popular current pop singers is a 16 year old girl from rural Jamaica.<sup>12</sup> Indicative of their bid to participate in the political life of the nation was the recent success



of a West Indian doctor,<sup>13</sup> on the Labour ticket as *London County Councillor* for the second time, in an area composed, though not solely, of West Indian migrants. For the first time many thousands of West Indian and Afro-Asian voters have registered and will be eligible to vote. It is not accidental therefore as reflected in an article entitled *The Colour of Their Votes* in a leading Sunday periodical, that speculation is growing as to how they [Afro-Asian-Caribbean peoples] will use their vote. *The Colour of Their Votes* concluded that they would vote 'according to colour' but in consonance with their class interests. But this observation is only a half-truth. For the common experience of all Afro-Asian-Caribbean peoples in Britain is leading to a growing union among these communities as they increasingly identify an injury to one as being an injury to all. When added to this, one marks their pride in the growth of national-liberation achievements from the lands of their origin and among other nationally-oppressed peoples, they are likely to be influenced by this bond as much as by their particular mode of production. Most pre-election polls have indicated their leaning, if critical, towards Labour and other Independents.

Many acute problems face West Indians who seek jobs and shelter. There is as yet no overall veritable picture of West Indians' skills. Results from sample polls are given here, bearing in mind the West Indian economic colonial background, to indicate scales in skills. One such poll revealed that of 608 persons sampled for their skills, by their own characterization, the results among West Indians were as follows: Professionals—1%; other non-manual—13%; skilled—46%; semi-skilled—13%; agricultural—12%. In a further breakdown the professional and other blackcoated workers pre-dominated in the migrant groups from Trinidad and Tobago, while skilled workers were more numerous from Jamaica and Barbados. Considerable down-grading of skills frequently occurs and many unskilled workers have been unable to acquire skills, many from rural areas having formerly no industrial experience at all. But even where qualifications exist, many find it difficult to obtain jobs commensurate with their skills. Some employers have a secret quota system for the employment of coloured workers, based on the chauvinistic view that '*too many coloured workers*' even if qualified, will '*rock the boat*'. Others, even when inclined to take on coloured workers, have had to face English workers, in some cases, trade unionists, who have a definite policy of keeping out coloured workers. Even government *Employment Exchanges* accept orders from employers not to submit 'coloured' applicants for work. But this too, is being resisted and demands are being made for the Ministry of

Labour to rescind these instructions

In the background is the country-wide pattern of industrial-labour relations; the traditional view of 'keeping the labour force small', the better to bargain with the employers, and the real fear by trade unionists that non-union labour will undercut wages. Then too, there is the ambivalent right-wing trade union view which seeks to reconcile the principles of trade union brotherhood and non-discrimination with the antipathies of a large and vocal proportion of its rank-and-file members. Even in the early stages of the present West Indian immigration to Britain, struggles had to be waged for the acceptance of West Indian workers into the jobs they now hold. In the transport system, despite the agreements between the British Transport System and the Barbados government to train and employ workers, sharp struggles by progressive trade unionists, led by Communists, had to be waged for hiring and upgrading of West Indian workers, for their right to work in booking offices, or as shuttle-plate workers in railway depots, or for West Indian women to be employed as 'clippies' or bus conductors

Many of these gains are today under fire. A recent vote by the London busmen served notice that they opposed the hiring of any more West Indian workers. What is more, a growing 'Blacklist for Jobs' exists, as an article in the *Sunday Observer* states. The article noted that thousands of West Indians born and educated in Britain will 'not be content to do shift work on buses' in a society which, 'despite their high academic levels, treats them as less than human beings', (the article detailed the difficulties experienced by school-leavers particularly in white-collar jobs). In banks, sales staffs, insurance companies, and newspaper staffs, a policy of 'tokenism' is operative. As one executive put it: '*If you have one in an office and she's pleasant, she fits in, but you put two or three there and you may find yourself losing some of your white staff*'. Facing stiff competition for jobs, they have it both ways: if undertrained, and if efficient, (the *too-well-trained*, may be rejected) in either case, they may face a colour bar

Excluded from skilled jobs and forced into lower paid ones, still another disability must be faced in the field of housing accommodation. In addition to the problems occasioned from the general housing shortage, the West Indian immigrant and other coloured Commonwealth citizens are widely rejected as tenants of advertised flats and lodgings on the basis of a colour-bar, and are obliged to pay higher rents, even than white tenants. '*So sorry, No Coloured, No children*', '*European Only*', '*White Only*', signs dot the pages of advertised flats and lodgings. A 'colour-tax'



meets the West Indian purchaser of property, often inferior lease-hold ones. No wonder estate agents, and unscrupulous landlords, some of them coloured themselves, have not been averse to exploiting for huge profits this housing shortage. 'Rachmanism' is a synonym in present-day England for this type of practice, alluding to the fortunes made by the man so named in North Kensington in the very area of racial riots of a few years ago [1958]. Through exorbitant rentals, resale of properties, the shortage of housing is widely exploited and the West Indian, Afro-Asian as well as white workers are the victims.

A Commons inquiry is now pending since the revelation of collusion of estate agents with Big Business, when a restrictive colour-bar covenant was discovered in Loriel Properties on whose board of directors are two Tory Cabinet Ministers and a leading Conservative Member of Parliament who led the racist attack in the House of Commons on the *Commonwealth Immigration Act*. This company has shareholders among the nations leading universities at Oxford and Cambridge and most of the other directors hail from *The Establishment*. Thus, the real origin of color-bar practices and policies stems from the City's financial barons to whom it is highly profitable, both ways. The Commons inquiry, it should be added, has been initiated by Mr Fenner Brockway who has nine times tabled his anti-discrimination bill to ban discrimination in public housing, leases, inns, pubs, hotels, dance halls etc. These and other examples more than confirm the urgency for this type of legislation in present-day Britain. Education policy is yet another field in which inroads are being attempted by the racial propagandists. Stemming from their central campaign, now sanctioned by the *Commonwealth Immigration Act* to oust West Indian immigrants from Britain, they have fastened on the growth of communities where children of Afro-Asian-Caribbean immigrants are at school. Encouraging the idea of schools segregation, they have attempted the organization of parents to get them to move their children to other schools. In Southall for example, where in two wards 5,000 Indian families live, this type of segregation propaganda began to make headway and the local Council, despite the relatively good stand of the Board of Education, began to weaken. Following an appeal however, from the Education Committee to the Minister of Education, Sir Edward Boyle told 400 parents, 'there will be no segregation in our schools'. A basis was adopted to spread the children over several schools so that there will be no more than one-third Indian children in the schools. Despite this, new calls are being heard for establishment of separate classes for coloured children on grounds of

'language difficulties', despite the well-known adaptability of children to become bi-lingual. This approach is being strongly resisted by West Indian, Afro-Asian, educational and progressive groups in Britain. For it is feared that such a wedge may establish an American 'Jim Crow' pattern of 'separate but equal education', an animal, (as we have learned from the Negro liberation struggles) that just don't exist. This fear was confirmed anew when a recent *White Paper* issued by the *Commonwealth Conservative Council* suggested that children of immigrant parents be regarded as 'immigrants' despite being born in the United Kingdom.

Consequently, whether as tenants waging anti-discrimination struggles; clubbing together to purchase homes to house families, the large majority of whom were separated for years until the necessary finances were raised; whether as workers fighting for the right to work, or to be upgraded; or as cultural workers engaged in the attempt to use their creative abilities on stage, screen or television, or to safeguard their children's right to an equal education; or as professionals, students, or in business pursuits, the West Indian immigrant community has special problems as a national minority. While the workers are heaviest hit, the disabilities cut across class lines.

### Future Perspectives

Conscious therefore of the need for alleviation of their second-class citizenship, determined to live and work in human dignity as is their natural right, the resourceful West Indian migrant, in common with all peoples involved (either consciously or not) in anti-imperialist struggles, are also thinking about their ultimate direction. That they are only now at the stage of tentatively formulating their views may be ascribed to three main factors: 1) to the constant pressure and concern with daily problems of survival, 2) to the groping in their own minds for the fundamental significance of their national identity and, 3) to the lack of an organized perspective for a progressive, united West Indies at home. Linked to the first factor is the urgent necessity to organize and unite the West Indian community in Britain around their fundamental demands. The level of organization in Britain is not yet commensurate to fulfil this urgent need. The West Indian worker, in common with all workers, is confronted with the necessity to engage in struggles, supported by their allies, for his own survival in a new environment. This also means engaging in the general struggle for peace, trade unionism, democracy and social change. While clinging strongly to his own roots, he is mindful of the conditions at home and the reasons for his emigration, and



mindful too, of the disabilities which face him here. But his economic situation is relatively better and he views as a practicality that his children will grow up in England. If to this is added the recognition that as with all migrations, this too, will form a permanent community, it is only natural that steps should be taken to implement the recognition: that with permanency comes the growth of new institutions with all its accompanying aspects

It is true, of course, that some measure of organization exists. West Indians are organized largely in social and welfare groups in the United Kingdom, established originally to meet the needs of incoming migrants. Only a smattering have thus far joined political movements or play an active role politically. This is undoubtedly attributable to the false twin ideas that they should only become politically active with their 'return home', or the apolitical view that they should eschew politics. More fundamentally, it is traceable also to the lack of previous political activity at home and the fact that for most West Indians their political baptism is occurring in their new environment. There exists such organizations as the *Standing Conference of West Indian Organizations*, a council composed of fifteen social and welfare groups in London boroughs, as well as Freemason Lodges in areas of large West Indian settlements. There are also similar organizations existing in the Midlands, all of which have close supervision by the *Migrant Services Division* of the Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Barbados, Leeward and Windward Islands government offices in Britain. In addition there are a growing number of inter-racial committees and groups engaged in dealing with the problems of West Indians and other migrants, besides the students organizations

There are also special organizations based on island origins beginning to develop. The Church forms a center for many religious West Indian groups, choirs and the like. Yet questions are now arising as to whether these organizations fully meet the present needs of this community. This is evidenced in the concern being expressed by West Indians, as to whether integration in British life should be the sole aim in Britain or whether the self-organization of West Indians should not likewise be emphasized. Questions are being posed too, as to how to harness the national identity of West Indians towards this end

An interesting example of attempts to concert these trends among West Indians on the basis of reliance on their own efforts, was shown in Bristol last year, when in midst of the MCC-West Indian Test Match tour, a young university student<sup>14</sup> graduate led a successful struggle following threats of a bus boycott by West Indians when one of

their number was refused a job by the Bristol Bus Company. Here was witnessed too, the classical intervention of 'do good' liberals who 'advised' the young West Indian militants not to be too 'hotheaded' and, themselves sought to designate who were the 'good boys' and the leadership to be followed. But this ruse didn't quite succeed. Their action, widely publicized in the press was won when following the intervention of the then High Commissioner for Trinidad and Tobago, Sir Learie Constantine, and Mr R C Lindo, Jamaican Minister of Trade and Industry, trade union and student groups, the bus company climbed down and revoked its stand

A major effort designed to stimulate political and social thinking has been the launching, six years ago, of the progressive news-monthly, the *West Indian Gazette*. This newspaper has served as a catalyst, quickening the awareness, socially and politically, of West Indians, Afro-Asians and their friends. Its editorial stand is for a united independent West Indies, full economic social and political equality and respect for human dignity for West Indians and Afro-Asians in Britain, for peace and friendship between all Commonwealth and world peoples. It has campaigned vigorously on issues facing West Indians and other coloured peoples. Whether against numerous police frame-ups, to which West Indians and other coloured migrants are frequently subject, to opposing discrimination and to advocating support for trade unionism and unity of coloured and white workers, W I news publications have attempted to emulate the path of progressive 'Negro' (Afro-Asian, Latin-American and Afro-American) journals who uncompromisingly and fearlessly fight against imperialist outrages and indignities to our peoples. The *West Indian Gazette* and *Afro-Asian-Caribbean News* has served to launch solidarity campaigns with the nationals who advance with their liberation struggles in Africa and in Asia. The present circulation and readership of the W I publication, would be larger, but for the usual welter of problems faced by most progressive journals. A campaign of support for financial aid among its readers and friends has recently been launched to help its expansion to a weekly and to establish its own printing plant. It counts among its contributors and supporters, many West Indian writers, who live in England, trade-unionists, and members of Parliament

Underlying what may be termed 'the search for a national identity', is the concern of West Indians to understand their historical and cultural heritage. This concern which arose with establishment of the new defunct *West Indian Federation* has become more widespread. The consequent polarization of West Indians into Jamaicans, Trinidadians, Barbadians, Grenadians, etc., has



certain unrealities in England where existing problems among West Indians are shared in common. A consequence of emigration to England, has been that Afro-Asians and West Indians have come to know one another as they might not have previously, separated by the distance of their homelands. Here, reference is not to some pseudo-intellectuals who, ignorant or unaware of a scientific definition of nationhood, deny the lack of a national identity on the spurious grounds of lack of a separate (not common) language. But rather to the leadership need to acquaint West Indians with their own history, and by a social interpretation of that history, better to arm them for future struggles by imparting a pride in their origins, struggles and future. This lack of historical perspective is at root, as Dr Eric Williams correctly noted, from a society which eulogized the colonialist, and whose knowledge of West Indian history was limited to that of Anglo-Saxon conquests, Sir Walter Raleigh, Captain Morgan, and the feats of royalty. The task remains to enhance the knowledge of the true history: of the Morant Bay anti-slavery rebellion, the glorious Maroons, the early anti-colonial struggles of Captain Cipriani, or of Chritchlow's trade unionism, or of the significance of the movement towards closer West Indian federation; all of which early struggles created the preconditions leading to the contemporary struggle for nationhood, which thus is something less than that for which West Indian patriots fought and dreamed. Such an understanding would likewise help to create awareness of the need for support and aid to the bitter struggle being waged for British Guianese independence against US imperialist intervention which fears social change along Socialist lines

Related finally to the continued lack of an organized perspective for an advancing West Indies, is the indication of floundering in West Indian political life since the Federation demise. The present political parties in the Caribbean advocating a Socialist alternative, the only ultimate course for the West Indies, are still small and ineffective. But they represent the hope of the future, if only because they challenge the perspective of the present bourgeois-nationalist leaders, who heading a titularly independent West Indies continue to proclaim their reliance on the West, not only geographically, but in political and social aims even to the shame of all West Indians, and Jamaicans in particular, of the unprecedented offer of Jamaica's soil for a US nuclear base. Such advocacy may ultimately inspire West Indians at home and abroad to leap the shoals of struggle necessary to transform the economy of the West Indians, and consequently to

establish a socialist West Indian nation that will play its role in the community of nations

Such a perspective would win inspiring participation among West Indians in Britain, who adjure the gradualist view voiced by many of their Ministers that the pace of West Indian advancement will be 'slow' and that the West Indian immigrants would do well to consider themselves primarily citizens of Britain and to cease to worry about their national identity. This idea is likewise based on the view held towards immigration by many bourgeois nationalist West Indian politicians who encourage migration as a 'safety-valve', fearing the growth of militancy for social change at home more than they do the loss of their most valuable citizens

A special importance attaches itself to the Caribbean, where there is evidenced the two paths to national liberation: either the path of obsequiousness to US imperialism and neo-colonialism, or the high road to Socialist advance as exemplified by Socialist Cuba. Particularly in the Caribbean, where United States imperialism threatens socialist Cuba; infringes on the national sovereignty of all Latin American peoples; intervenes in the internal affairs of British Guiana and Panama; and whose pretensions of a 'free America in a free world' stands exposed before the massive hammer blows of the mounting Negro liberation struggle which — as shown in our merged protests, Afro-Asians and Caribbean peoples—held a Solidarity March to the US London Embassy, in support of the Negro peoples' demands

The struggle for national liberation proceeds with singular emphasis

1 Ruth Glass and H Pollins, *Newcomers: the West Indian in London*, Allen & Unwin, for Centre for Urban Studies, London, 1960

2 A Sivanandan, *Coloured Immigrants in Britain, A Select Bibliography* (memo), IRR, London (date unknown)

3 *The Economic and Social Position of Negro Immigrants in Britain* (author and publisher unknown)

4 Clifford S Hill, *Black & White in Harmony: from a London Minister's notebook*, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1958

5 S Collins, *Coloured Minorities in Britain: Studies in British Race Relations based on African, West Indian and Asiatic Immigrants*, Lutterworth, London, 1957

6 A T Carey, *Colonial Students: a study of the social adaptation of Coloured Students in London*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1956

7 *Report on West Indian Accommodation Problems in the United Kingdom* by the Conservative Commonwealth Council (memo), London, 1957, 12pp

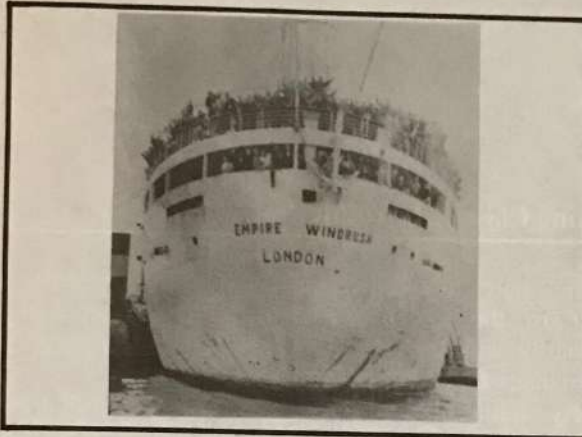


- 8 Ruth Benedict, *Race & Racism*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1942  
 9 Sheila Patterson, *Dark Strangers: A Sociological Study of a Recent West Indian Migrant group in Brixton, South London*, Tavistock Publications, London, 1963  
 10 J Eddington, *They Seek a Living*, Hutchinson, London, 1957  
 11 Patterson, *ibid*  
 12 The reference is to *Millie Small of My Boy Lollipop*

fame, issued on the *Island Lable* (August 1964), and produced by Chris Blackwell

13 Then Dr David Pitt, now Lord Pitt

14 The reference is to Paul Stephenson who later, as CRO for Coventry, became well known amongst young Blacks for his work there. In 1969 The Coventry Community Relations Council published Mr Stephenson's, *Young Coloured People in Coventry: is the youth service meeting the challenge?*



*'The Beginning', Empire Windrush, 1948*



*More arrivals, Paddington Station, mid-1950s*



*Temporary accommodation, South London, early 1950's*



*Early arrivant in England, 1950's*



*Black woman armed — Notting Hill, 1958 (cf. p.14 above)*



*Notting Hill 1958, Norman Manley, 'calms fears'*