

# ‘KEEP THEM IN BIRMINGHAM’

*Challenging racism in south-west England*

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*By ERIC JAY*

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This research was undertaken as a voluntary project. Insofar as it expresses opinions, they are those of the writer and of the people whom he interviewed, and not necessarily those of the Commission for Racial Equality.

The use of the term ‘black’ in this report refers to Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Chinese and other minority ethnic communities who share a common experience of discrimination in the UK on account of their race, color, nationality or ethnic origin.

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I am also indebted to the many individuals in the south-west region who took time and trouble to share with me their experiences and views, and sometimes the findings of their own research work. The report owes much to their contributions, but they are in no way responsible for its deficiencies.

## *FOREWORD*

This report breaks new ground. Most research, by the CRE and others, has, not surprisingly, concentrated on racism, discrimination and disadvantage where their impact is greatest, that is, in metropolitan areas where most of Britain's ethnic minorities live. But there are significant numbers of people from various ethnic communities scattered in rural areas, and little is known about their experiences.

This report vindicates the CRE's decision to ask Eric Jay to carry out a short research study of four counties in the south-west of England: Devon, Cornwall, Dorset and Somerset.~ The aims of the research were to establish whether racism was a problem for ethnic minority communities in the West County and, if so, its extent, and whether anything was being done about it by the various authorities.

The report presents a disturbing picture of racial prejudice and discrimination directed against ethnic minority residents. While a few organisations and individuals are taking positive steps to promote racial equality, there is mostly widespread complacency – or worse – in the majority white community as a whole.

The CRE is now considering the best strategy for dealing with the situation described here. Meanwhile, however, it urges organisations in the south-west to take on board the findings of this study, especially local authorities, health authorities, employers and voluntary sector organisations, whose policies and practices can either help or hinder the achievement of racial equality.

The essential starting point must be to question the assumption which so many appear to have accepted uncritically, that 'there is no problem here'. This report makes that belief untenable; racism in the south-west is evidently a problem, and a serious one which requires

urgent attention.

## **Michael Day**

**Chair, Commission for Racial Equality**

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### **1. THE PROJECT**

The Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) has generally focused its attention on urban areas with sizeable ethnic minority populations, and it is well-informed about needs and problems there. But its knowledge of what is happening in predominantly rural shire counties where the ethnic minority populations are small and widely scattered is patchy; it is limited to a few counties where there is a Racial Equality Council (REC) whose remit is county-wide, or which at least covers the rural catchment area of a country town.

Many shire counties have no REC, and the CRF has had little contact with them. It has so far done no research in those areas to find out whether there are problems of racial prejudice and discrimination, and whether local authorities and other organisations are actively promoting racial equality and good race relations.

As a first step towards redressing this imbalance, the CRE asked me to undertake a pilot, fact-finding study in four counties of the south-west: Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset. The region is 200 miles long and 60 miles wide at its broadest point, and has only three large conurbations: Plymouth, Exeter and Bournemouth-Poole. The nearest RECs are outside the region, in Bristol and Southampton.

The terms of reference for the research were to identify:

- Areas in the region where people from ethnic minority communities live and work.
- Any particular difficulties they experience as a result of their relative isolation or because of racial prejudice and discrimination.
- Initiatives that are being taken, or which need to be taken, by organisations in the public and private sectors to develop effective equal opportunity policies.
- Ways in which the CRE might help to strengthen and coordinate such initiatives.

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## METHODOLOGY

The research on which this report is based was carried out over six months in the winter of 1991 -92. It had three main elements:

- To collect written information from a wide variety of organisations, and get their official views.
- To take the opportunity of attending meetings of 'key people' such as local authority personnel, with particular responsibility for, or interest in, questions of racial equality.
- To interview people who were prepared to talk about their personal experiences.

Letters explaining the purpose of the research and asking for information were sent to 155 organisations in the region. These included the four county councils (with separate enquiries to the chief executive, the chief education officer, the principal careers officer and the director of social services); 29 district councils; 15 District Health Authorities (DHA5), Family Health Service Authorities (FHSA5) and NHS Trusts; and all the Citizens' Advice Bureaux (CABx), Councils for Voluntary Service (CVSs), Rural Community Councils (RCCs) and Community Health Councils (CHCs) in the four counties. Enquiries were also made of the three police forces covering the region, six institutions in the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Sector (PCFC), 12 large, private sector employers, and the bishops or equivalent heads of the Anglican, Roman Catholic and Methodist churches in the four counties.

A further 131 letters were sent, two-thirds of them to selected officers in local authorities and voluntary organisations, advisory teachers, multi-cultural coordinators in colleges, and other individuals. The rest went to national ethnic minority organisations (seeking contacts in the region), trade union officials, tourist boards, and officers of South-West Arts.

Everyone was asked:

- Whether there were black and ethnic minority communities or families in the area and, if so, their ethnic origin and the localities where they lived.
- About the level of take-up of services provided by statutory and non-statutory bodies.
- Whether any ethnic minority organisations had been formed.
- Whether there was any evidence of specific needs and problems as a result of 'relative isolation, difficulties of communication, racial harassment or other forms of discrimination arising from racial prejudice'.
- What steps were being taken by local authorities and other bodies to implement anti-racist and equal opportunity policies.

- Any other relevant information about the general state of community and race relations in the area.

The letters to local authorities specifically asked what action they had taken in pursuance of Section 71 of the Race Relations Act<sup>1</sup> and in implementing an equal opportunities policy. Chief education officers were also asked about their response to the CRE's Code of Practice in Education, whether they had issued policy guidelines on racial harassment in schools, and whether their county had any projects funded by the Department of Education and Science (DES) through its Education Support Grant (ESG) scheme. Directors of social services were asked about particular aspects of their department's policies — for example, anti-racist training programmes for their staff. Health authorities and trusts were asked about ethnic minority access to adequate health care.

Chief Constables were asked for statistics of 'racial incidents', their policy response to the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) and Home Office guidelines on racial harassment, and whether racial equality issues appeared on the agendas of police community consultative groups (PCCGs). Polytechnics and colleges were asked for their responses to two documents issued by the PCFC — a circular on widening the participation of students from groups that are underrepresented in higher education, and the PCFC *Guide for Governors*, which sets out the equal opportunity responsibilities of governing bodies. The heads of churches were asked what steps were being taken in their dioceses or districts in response to policy documents from each of the three denominations on the need to put anti-racist policies and questions of racial justice on the agenda at parish or circuit level.

The second and third aspects of the research — meetings with groups and individuals — provided valuable contacts, which the CRE could usefully maintain. I attended four meetings of the West Devon Anti-Racist Group (see p. 46), and had informal discussions with its members. Both in Devon and in Somerset, I was able to attend the termly meeting of multi-cultural coordinators in colleges of further education. In Dorset, I met the senior inspector of the LEA responsible for 'cultural diversity', and members of a cross-curricular advisory team, and was able to take part in an in-service training course for teachers. I was also present at a meeting of careers officers from the four counties where anti-racist training materials were being prepared. Throughout the region, I was given much help by individual advisory teachers and lecturers responsible for multicultural education, and by the equal opportunities officers of some authorities.

Individual interviews formed an important part of the research. It seemed essential that the report should reflect not only the official viewpoints of organisations, but the personal experiences and opinions of local residents who had encountered racial prejudice and discrimination, or who were actively engaged in challenging it, or both. The interviews, each between about one and three hours long, were conducted with 37 people - 18 of them black, 19 white - who were prepared to share their experiences and views with the CRE on the understanding that neither they, nor their employer, would be identified by name in this report. What they said was recorded carefully, and forms the basis of chapter three. Although everyone was interviewed separately, and the interviewees were scattered around different parts of the four counties, there was a remarkable unanimity in what they had to say.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 71 requires that the various functions of local authorities should be carried out 'with due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups'.

What follows is far from being a complete study. The scope of the survey was limited by the time and resources available, and it was not possible to approach some institutions in the region — for example, Training and Enterprise Councils, trade unions (other than NUPE and COHSE), and organisations concerned with the criminal justice system. But, however incomplete, the picture that emerges from the research is clear. Nothing has changed for the better since the Swann Committee (Education for All, 1985) reported on its enquiries in ‘all-white’ areas. What the committee said then of its research in schools is equally true of this wider enquiry in 1992 into the state of race relations in the south-west:

*The project revealed widespread evidence of racism in all the areas covered -ranging from unintentional racism and patronising and stereotyped ideas about ethnic minority groups combined with an appalling ignorance of their cultural background and life styles and of the facts of race and immigration, to extremes of overt racial hatred a rid National Front-style attitudes.*

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## **2. A PROFILE OF THE REGION**

### **ECONOMY**

To many outside the region, the West Country offers escape and relaxation. It is where people go, on short breaks or longer holidays, to enjoy fine beaches, thatched cottages, cider, cream teas and sunshine, or even (in the words of the West Country Tourist Board’s brochures) ‘to discover another world of mystery and romance’. Not surprisingly, tourism is the region’s main source of income. It receives more than twice as many British visitors as any other region in the UK, and is in the top three most visited regions among overseas tourists. In 1990, 11.5 million visitors spent a total of £1,859 million in the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset and west Dorset.

Also important for the region’s economy, though, are agriculture and industry. In Somerset, for example, according to the 1992 *Municipal Yearbook*, more than 80 per cent of the county is still devoted to agricultural production, while manufacturing industries account for 30 per cent of the county’s workforce. Cornwall is the least industrialised of the four counties, but has a large china clay industry. Agriculture remains a major source of income in Devon, but the county also has 27 sizeable companies listed in *British Business Rankings 1991*. A Somerset-based company which manufactures and retails footwear has nearly 23,000 employees throughout the southwest. In east Dorset, there is a thriving micro-electronics industry, the defence industry contributes to the economy, and oil wells are being developed in Purbeck and Poole Harbour.

According to the Department of Employment’s south-west regional *Labour Market Review* (Spring 1992), the five-year period to September 1991 saw a seven per cent increase in employment overall in the region (including Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire). The largest rise in employment (23 per

cent) was in the banking, insurance and finance sector. However, in recent years the total number of people in work has decreased sharply; in the 12 months to September 1991 employment fell by 3.5 per cent, with decreases of 12 per cent in the construction industry, six per cent in manufacturing and seven per cent in banking, insurance and finance.

Unemployment began increasing significantly in the South-West in September 1990 and by March 1992, 8.6 per cent of the estimated total workforce were out of work, compared with 6.3 per cent twelve months earlier. The worst figures in the region that month were in Cornwall — 12 per cent for the county as a whole, rising to 15.4 per cent in the travel-to-work area of Redruth and Camborne.

While the number of self-employed people in the South-West stayed the same — 315,000 for the year ending September 1991 — Labour Market Review (Winter 1991) reported on a survey by a business information company which showed that the total number of business failures in the region had increased from 2,009 in the first nine months of 1990 to 3,380 over the same period in 1991 - an increase of 91 per cent. The Review adds:

**The survey confirmed that the sharpest effects of the recession are no longer being felt in the south-east, and are at their fiercest in the south-west.**

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## **POPULATION**

The south-west attracts not only visitors, but migrants from other parts of the UK. Many have chosen to move there because it offers a pleasant environment in which to live and work, bring up a family, or spend their retirement. After East Anglia, the region has the largest rate of population growth of any region in the country; according to the 1991 edition of *Regional Trends* (Central Statistical Office), it went up by 6.2 per cent between 1981 and 1989. The Registrar General's estimate for June 1990 was that there were 2.6 million people in the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset. Of these, 39 per cent - more than a million - lived in Devon, the third largest county in England and Wales by area, another 25 per cent in Dorset, and the remaining 36 per cent were divided almost equally between Cornwall and Somerset.

The presence of black people in the four counties has a long history. It goes back at least to the time of John Hawkyins, a freeman of Plymouth, whose pioneer slave trafficking not only earned him a coat of arms depicting three shackled slaves but also resulted in slaves being brought to this country from 1570 onwards. There are records of a slave living in Barnstaple that year, and of another being baptised in Plymouth 1594. Two hundred years later, many of Britain's black population, then numbering 10,000, lived in the West Country, and there must be white West Country families today who, if they could trace their ancestry back far enough, would find that it included an African.

Over the last 50 years, the black population of the region has steadily increased. Many black residents are long-established - for example, those described by an informant in Dorset as the 'war babies' (the children of Afro-American servicemen stationed in Britain during the 1939-45 war), and others of dual descent, who may have children and grandchildren born

here. Some have grown up in the region after being adopted or fostered by white families. And many others, like white migrants, have moved into the region from other parts of the UK. They include nurses and manual workers in hospitals; Vietnamese refugees who have settled in the west; a sprinkling of doctors, teachers, social workers and other professional people; and – the largest group – the families of restaurateurs and entrepreneurs with origins in Hong Kong or the Indian subcontinent. This permanent population is augmented in the summer months by gypsy travellers and, throughout the year, by students from African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries who are being recruited in growing numbers by institutions of higher and further education, and who may be resident on campuses for several years.

In the absence, at the time of writing, of data from the 1991 census, it is not easy to estimate the size of the black population of the four counties. Table 51 of the 1981 census figures gives a detailed breakdown of the ‘usually resident population’ by country of birth, and there were, at that time, 32,599 people in the four counties who were born in the New Commonwealth and Pakistan (NCWP), other parts of Africa (excluding South Africa), other parts of the Caribbean and Latin America, other Asian countries, the Middle East, and Turkey. From this total we have to subtract the ‘Raj factor’ – that is, the number of white people born in the former colonies – and add the number of black people who were born in the UK. Assuming that these figures cancel each other out, and that the total number of black people was in the region of 32,600, this would mean that they represented 1.3 per cent of the ‘usually resident’ population of the four counties, which, in 1981, was 2,345, 193. The proportion of black people resident in Dorset would have been 1.6 per cent, and in Devon 1.5 per cent, with figures of nearly 2 per cent each in the urban areas of Bournemouth and Plymouth.

However, estimates published last year in *Population Trends*, based on a comparison of the 1981 census figures with the 1981 and 1986-88 *Labour Force Survey* (LFS) suggests that the ethnic minority populations of Cornwall, Devon and Somerset currently represent only one per cent of those counties’ total populations, with a slightly larger figure of 1.1 per cent in Dorset. If these estimates are correct, then (given the Registrar General’s estimate of a total population of 2.62 million in the four counties), the ethnic minority population of the counties has declined to 26,200. If, however, the estimated black population of roughly 32,600 in 1981 was correct, and if it is still the same today, it would represent 1.2 per cent of the total current population. On the other hand, one might have expected that the number of black people in the region would in fact be greater than ten years ago, as a result of natural increase and, possibly, some immigration from other regions. The position will only be clarified when the 1991 census figures are published.

The importance of obtaining correct estimates is underlined when we look at the two largest ethnic minority communities in the region, both of which have particular needs that are not being met. One is the Chinese community, which, according to the estimate published in *Population Trends*, numbers 2,100 people in the two counties of Cornwall and Devon. However, the Devon and Cornwall Chinese Association, which is in touch with all the Chinese restaurants, takeaways and supermarkets in the two counties, estimates the total size of the community to be 4,500, of whom 500 live in Plymouth. Officials of the Association

believe that their estimate, based on their personal contact with families, is much more reliable than the one obtained by the LFS sampling method.

The other community consists of all those whose ethnic origins are in the Indian subcontinent. *Population Trends* estimates the total number of Indians, Pakistanis and Bangladeshis in the four counties at 6,600. Of these, 1,000 are thought to live in Cornwall – approximately 900 Indians and 100 Pakistanis, but no Bangladeshis. Unlike the Chinese, these communities have no formal organisations, but a reliable Asian informant who is in touch with many families in Cornwall believes that the total number is much higher than the official estimate. In particular, he knows that there are at least 200 Bangladeshis in the two towns of Penzance and St Austell alone.

Both communities have a common problem: many of them, especially women and older people, are unable to communicate in English. My informant in Cornwall estimates that this is true of roughly half the Asians, and the Director of the Chinese Cultural Development Centre in Plymouth gives a similar estimate for the Chinese. The Centre's latest report, which surveys the community's needs in Devon and Cornwall, says that the wives of many men in the catering trade suffer isolation because of the language barrier, and that men in the 35-60 age group who do not understand English well:

are easy victims for the less honest section of society and are easily abused on many levels - for instance, customers refusing to pay for the meal they have just eaten. An English-speaking person would simply call the police and explain the situation. A non-English-speaking person does not have this course of action open to him and so must accept this grossly unfair treatment.

The report adds that elderly Chinese people, as a rule, speak no English at all, do not leave their homes (because even a visit to the shops is traumatic when they cannot make themselves understood, or read signs in shops, or even locate the toilet), and are terrified of becoming ill and having to stay in hospital, where they cannot communicate with the medical staff and have no idea what is happening to them. 'Very often', says the report, 'people in this age group suffer terribly from isolation.' Given this situation, and the fact that local authorities have done little to alleviate it, it is essential that population estimates should be as accurate as possible.

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## **CORNWALL**

No profile of the south-west, however brief, should fail to recognise the special characteristics of Cornwall. In the words of one local government officer:

It is fair to alert you to the fact that there is a substantial number of indigenous Cornish people who feel themselves disadvantaged. compared with 'incomers' in relation to class, income, housing, employment and various other aspects of daily living. This manifests itself in a number of ways- for example, a feeling of losing out' to incomers in the scramble for affordable housing or the search for adequately remunerated employment, as well as concern about the erosion of traditional Cornish values and communities.

This being so, it is not surprising that another local government officer should have asked if the Cornish were an ethnic minority as defined by the Race Relations Act, or that, in a recent client profile produced by a citizens' advice bureau, 'some Cornish people see themselves as a distinct racial group, and were identified under our 'other category'.

Forty years after its foundation, Mebyon Kernow, the Cornish National Party, is still active, although its membership has declined since the 1970s, when it was claimed to be larger than that of Plaid Cymru. and had its own parliamentary candidate in the 1979 general election. It advocates substantial devolution of powers – including education, housing, social security, transport and planning – to an elected Cornish Assembly, and is passionate in its defense of the 'Celticness' of the Cornish nation. Its demand that jobs should go first to local applicants rather than to 'English colonizers' from across the Tamar strikes a chord in the hearts of many Cornish people who may not fully share its political aims. This may account for the practice (as reported to me) of discriminating against non-Cornish job applicants. A Scot looking for work in Cornwall is said to have been told that local residents would be considered first, and the first question a non-Cornish applicant for a local authority post was supposed to have been asked was: 'Where were you born? We only employ Cornish in this department'.

Non-Cornish people living and working in the Duchy (a title acceptable to those Cornish people who reject the name 'county') differ in their reaction to Cornish sensitivities. A local government officer expressed anger at the 'derogatory remarks' made by Cornish people about the employment of 'emmetts' (that is, people from outside Cornwall), adding: 'Cornish verses emmetts is the same scenario as black versus white.' On the other hand, an advisory teacher said she fully accepted the view that the Cornish are an oppressed minority, and found that recognition of this fact in her work had proved to be a useful introduction to multi-cultural and anti-racist education. Cornish teachers, when invited to discuss what it meant to be Cornish and feel a sense of oppression, were then ready to widen the discussion and be much more understanding about the oppression of black minorities.

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### ***3. RACISM IN THE SOUTH-WEST***

#### ***DISCRIMINATION***

In the early summer of 1982, a young black student working for a degree in institutional management arrived at a hotel in Cornwall to begin an industrial placement arranged by his polytechnic. The hotel management was surprised to find that the trainee was black, and the following day he was asked to leave, since his colour 'might affect the trades. An industrial tribunal, the first in the south-west to hear a complaint under the Race Relations Act, awarded him damages and compensation for injury to feelings. In 1991, at a different Cornish hotel, a black woman who had just started work as a chambermaid was dismissed because members

of a coach party staying there expressed virulent dislike at the idea of having a black chambermaid attending to their rooms' and the management did not want to risk alienating regular customers and losing valuable trade. A tribunal in Truro awarded her £1,500 in compensation.

In the nine years separating those two cases, no successful complaints under the Act were brought to industrial tribunals in the south-west. But there are well-founded reports of acts of discrimination which have never been made the subject of formal complaint. Another black woman who was sacked from her job in a hotel because of the racial prejudice of a guest now works in a school where prejudiced parents are said to be reluctant to allow her to have anything to do with their children. A hairdressing salon which takes hairdressing students on placement from a college of further education refused to have black students, 'because our clients don't like it'; the college was prepared to accept this on the grounds that we must use this hairdresser for our placements'. And in a seaside resort where there are many overseas students, there have been several reports of bus drivers deliberately driving past a bus stop where black students were the only people waiting even though there were empty seats on the bus.

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## **VIOLENCE**

In the south-west, as elsewhere in the country, racism is sometimes expressed in verbal or physical violence. From Dorset and Somerset, there are reports of Asian families having been forced to leave their homes and businesses because of hostility from other villagers; in three cases, their premises had been repeatedly vandalised. In both Devon and Cornwall, restaurant owners and workers have experienced racial abuse and threats, or have had graffiti scrawled on the walls of their premises. Often the victims have not reported the abuse or assault to the police. But some 'racial incidents' have been reported and investigated. In Somerset, incidents involving 28 victims were recorded by Avon and Somerset Constabulary between 1988 and 1991, and the Dorset police recorded 11 incidents in 1990-91. Devon and Cornwall Constabulary recorded 33 racial incidents during the period 1987-1991; of these, the 15 incidents recorded in the last two years occurred in Devon, all but three of them in Plymouth or Exeter. They included common assault coupled with racial abuse, racially abusive phone calls and letters, abuse of Asian Oxfam collectors in Newton Abbot by members of the National Front, and stones thrown through the window of the Islamic Centre in Exeter.

The National Front has been active not only in Newton Abbot but in the nearby Torbay area, in Plymouth, in Exeter, and in parts of Somerset. A National Front candidate stood in the Torbay constituency in the 1992 general election. While membership of this organisation may be small, its views are articulated by many young people. A survey of attitudes and opinions carried out two years ago among white students, mostly male, in the construction department of a college of further education revealed that 40 per cent of them were hostile to the idea of having black, and especially Asian, neighbours. Typical comments were~

Pakis should not be here — they stink. It would probably bring standards down to mud huts and spears

I would hate to have black neighbours, because once they move in they take over.

Asked whether black/Asian people were ‘different’ from white people, 35 per cent of the students described the differences in a negative way. Some explicitly rejected Asian cultures with comments such as:

They all smell of shit and wear crepe bandages on their heads.

Culture — they should leave it in their own country, or stay there with it.

Nearly a fifth of the students were anxious that Devon should remain ‘mainly white’:

Because they could soon be invading us...keep them in Birmingham.

Our only concern is keeping the area white (out of sight, out of mind).

When the findings of this survey were published, the management of some other colleges reacted defensively by saying: ‘The report is inflammatory’ or ‘It couldn’t happen here.’ But there is evidence to suggest that a similar exercise carried out in their colleges might produce similar results. In one college, a lecturer responsible for multi-cultural education asked students to write a story about an imaginary encounter with people of other ethnic backgrounds; the responses, she says, ‘revealed a lot of fear and hatred, about half the class were hostile or very ignorant.’ In another college, not in the same county, a survey of the attitude of a wider sample of students, based on a different questionnaire, produced a higher proportion of ‘liberal’ responses, but still revealed alarming ignorance and much prejudice. Three quarters of the students believed that black and Asian people constitute more than 15 per cent of the population of Britain, and more than a third of the students argued for cultural assimilation; black and Asian people ‘...should live by our rules and dress in our dress.’ In the same survey, more than a third of the college staff who were interviewed reported that racist views were openly expressed by students. One lecturer said:

...their written work and comments frequently downgrade other cultures and races, creating an atmosphere where ethnic minority students feel excluded, marginalised, and sometimes angry.

But overt racism is not confined to young people. It surfaces in the staff rooms of some schools and colleges, town-hall canteens and other places where middle-class professional people meet. Racist jokes are assumed to be acceptable, and racial stereotypes are frequently used to describe people of various ethnic backgrounds. There are firsthand reports of words like ‘wog’ and ‘nignog’ being used to refer to colleagues, sometimes to their face. Black people are expected to tolerate this behaviour, and if they protest, are told they have a chip on their shoulder. Unspoken racism is evident to many black people in the streets and other public places. A group of overseas students in Plymouth said that it was common on buses to find white passengers avoiding having to sit next to them. Several black people in different parts of the region have independently described their experiences of being ignored when standing at a bar or shop counter, or of shop assistants ostentatiously making sure not to touch them when handing them change. A black woman from a small town said:

Even after sixteen years here I get abuse from the children and strange looks whenever I go out. It's every day.

Nor do those who are the targets of racism always get support from colleagues who profess to be liberal and unprejudiced. An Asian local government officer was said to have 'led a dog's life' because of racial abuse at work, but he received little support from the management. In another county, a black employee in the social services department was, and still is, constantly subjected to racial abuse by clients; when she reported this to her immediate supervisor, his advice was: 'If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen' – by which, he then explained, he meant that she should resign from her job. Elsewhere in the region, a social worker was once abused and physically attacked when she wore her traditional Muslim dress; the reaction of some of her colleagues was to ask: 'What can you expect if you dress like that?'

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## **HARASSMENT**

The extent of racial harassment in schools in the region is unknown; there is no systematic recording of incidents. But many schools, probably the majority, have a few black children, sometimes only one or two, on their roll. From these areas come individual reports, sometimes from teachers or advisers, sometimes from the local citizens' advice bureau, to whom parents had turned for support when their children were subjected to name-calling and other forms of racial abuse. In the absence, so far, of any established, official procedures for dealing with such incidents, teachers react to them in different ways. Some respond with sensitivity and firmness, others confess that they are at a loss to know what to do, and there are some who ignore the problem in the hope that it will go away. In a school in Dorset, for example, where a lone black child was being harassed, no action was taken by the class teacher on the grounds that 'children will be children'.

Again, while many teachers are undoubtedly committed to racial equality, there is evidence that others have a negative or hostile attitude towards black children and their parents. In one area, comments made by teachers, including some heads, were noted. One referred to black pupils as 'funny children', and another was heard to ask 'Are you still teaching all those Pakis?' A parent in Muslim dress walking across a playground was described by a teacher as 'that big black crow.' One class teacher requested an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to ask a parent not to come into the classroom every morning, because 'she's a very large lady, she stands in the doorway and her sari gets in the way' – this was said in front of the parent's child and the whole class. In one school, it was said that a 'Pandora's box' of prejudice was opened when a number of children needing English language tuition arrived; the attitude of the staff, including the head, was that the children were not their responsibility until they could speak English. Elsewhere, a black pupil living with white foster parents in a village and attending a comprehensive school returned after a visit to her mother in London with her hair plaited and beaded; she was sent home

from school to remove the beads. The advisory teacher who collected these examples of prejudicial behaviour said:

Any serious attempt to collect and log evidence of racial discrimination in schools in (this county) would, I believe, show these to be the tip of an iceberg

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## ***CONDESCENSION AND BIGOTRY***

But racism is not always overt; often it is masked by a facade of condescending politeness, 'tolerance of the stranger in our midst'. For one man, the experience of being a black person in an almost totally white environment was that he encountered great ignorance and was regarded as a piece of 'exotica'.

They treated me as someone who needed to be patronised; it was as though I had just stepped off the boat.

An Asian businessman who has lived in the south-west for 32 years, been active in various commercial organisations (serving as the chair of one of them), and is a member of a political party, said:

I do not like to live here as a guest. I never think of Mother India; I am a citizen of this place. B my grandchildren born here will still be treated as guests.... it we try our very best, we are reasonably accepted, but our chances are very limited. In this city I am a sort of novelty. And when I go to the club I am treated as a kind of oriental monkey.

The south-west has its share of white liberals who collude with racism by denying that it is a serious problem in their region. They do not want to believe it, and are hurt or embarrassed when their black friends and colleagues draw attention to it. As one black woman put it:

You are constantly made to feel responsible if you raise the question; it is you who are making it an issue.

Or, in the words of another black woman:

I was told when I arrived: 'There was no problem with racism until you came'.

This anxiety on the part of some white people that nobody should rock the boat may in part (but only in part) account for the loud and insistent chorus of 'No problem here' which, as the next chapter shows, comes from so many local authorities and other organisations.

But black people in the south-west and their white, anti-racist allies have no illusions about the size and seriousness of the problem. No doubt it derives partly from what an Anglican diocesan bishop in the region called the 'mind-set' of local people: some genuine ignorance, conservative resistance to the arrival of all incomers (strengthened by the recession and high unemployment), and an uncritical acceptance of popular media stereotypes, which

portray black people *per se* as a threat to British culture, jobs, housing and public order. But those are only some of the ingredients. What unquestionably exacerbates the problem by reinforcing local prejudice is the presence in the region of large numbers of white migrants from other regions who regard themselves as refugees from multiracialism. In the approving words of a county councillor and college governor:

People have come here because they want to get away from the problems caused by the coloureds.

The migrants themselves make no bones about it; many will openly boast: 'We've moved here to be rid of the blacks.' Their racism (which they now feel they can express much more freely than when they lived in London or the Midlands) has a chilling effect on the climate throughout the south-west; it hardens attitudes, and makes change even more difficult.

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## ***SURVIVAL AND RESISTANCE***

For black people in the south-west, life is not easy; 'a survival course' is how one professional woman described it. Racial harassment in the classroom and playground can be deeply disturbing to children. In a meeting of friends and supporters in Devon recently, a mother described the effects on her young son of being taunted at school; he was asking 'Why do I have to be black?' and was frightened that if she reported the harassment to his teacher he would be 'done over' by the other children. Some adults have given up the struggle against hostility and loneliness, and have left the region to return to urban areas, where they at least have peer group support. Others would like to escape; a woman living in small country town said:

If I had a choice, I would up and go to Brixton or St Paul's, and not be looked at like I'm something from another planet every time I go out.

Since, for family reasons, she cannot escape, she compensates by taking occasional day trips to a more cosmopolitan town 20 miles away, where 'I can walk around for half an hour and see other black faces'.

For Asian workers in restaurants, take-aways and clothes shops, and for their families, life offers few choices. They have no secular community organisations of their own, and, in the words of one informant, the men stay away from local pubs and clubs 'for fear of having a bottle smashed over their head'. There are a few mosques in the region, but most Muslim workers live far from them. Few venture far from their place of work or home – which is sometimes accommodation provided by the owner of the restaurant. There are no places, other than their homes, where the women can socialise. Asian communities in Cornwall are described as 'demoralised' and 'treading a path of fear'. In Plymouth a spokesperson described them as 'a very sad community'.

The lack of peer group support is a major difficulty for many middle-class black people. The head of an organisation described his job as:

.....a very lonely place to be. I get other black people coming to me for support, but there's no support for me, because there are precious few black people who are heads of departments and who have the problem of managing staff as a black person. We have to cope with difficulties without having anyone to identify with.

This sense of isolation is often made *worse* by the pressure from white colleagues and the culture of the organisation where they work, to assimilate –to lose their identity as black people and become invisible. A black worker in a voluntary organisation said that many black people have become unidentifiable in order to survive; they have had to deny their blackness, because the whole culture of the area makes it difficult for them not to do so. A local authority officer said she could understand why some black people 'pretend to be white', although she refused to do it. A college lecturer in another county described how the small Asian community in the town where she worked tried to assimilate by giving up Friday prayers and wearing saris, because they did not want to be seen as different, or as 'rocking the boat'. She had done the same thing herself for a long time when she was in the education service and among her students, denying her black culture, but then took a conscious decision to become less 'invisible' and be true to herself.

To take such a step is an act of resistance against pressure. It refutes the insidious racism of white people who are fond of assuring black colleagues that 'We don't see you as black person'. But black people have to fight on two fronts; they also have to challenge and resist the overt racism of those who do see them as black, and think they have no business being where they are. A woman working for a private company in a town in the south-west was the only black person in the firm, and was repeatedly told by a white colleague: 'You are not supposed to be here; Brixton is your area, isn't it?' The colleague was himself a migrant from the West Midlands. Her reaction –one which would be endorsed by many other black people in the region – was to say that she accepted his right to move to the south-west to live and work there, but to insist that she had an equal right to do the same. She is still working in the town (now in somewhat more congenial employment), refusing to capitulate to the monstrous idea that the south-west is a 'no-go area' for black British citizens.

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## ***4. RESPONSES AND REACTIONS***

### ***INFORMATION***

The initial request for information from local authorities, district health authorities (DHAs) and voluntary sector organisations (see p. 8) went to them in October 1991. In January 1992, a reminder was sent to those who had not replied. At the same time, letters were also sent to directors of social services and principal careers officers in the four counties, and to family health service authorities (FHSA5) and NHS trusts. By the end of March 1992, replies had been received from 38 of the 45 local authority officers who had been approached (84 per cent), from 11 of the 15 DHAs, FHSAs and NHS trusts (73 per cent) and from 33 of the 63 voluntary sector organisations (52 per cent).

Presumably, the 41 non-respondents were too busy, or not sufficiently interested, to reply. The terse comments of some who did respond suggest that they could not be bothered to consider the questions seriously. The chief executive of a district council simply stated:

I very much regret that I have no information in this respect, and therefore am unable to assist you.

Another responded by saying:

In general, the answer to the majority of your points....is Not Applicable to our area.

Six other respondents sent back the initial letter of enquiry with handwritten comments in the margins, such as 'No', 'Not applicable', 'No information', or 'None to my knowledge'. In its brief response, one voluntary organisation repeated several times:

There are so few members of the ethnic minority community that it is impossible to answer this question.

Other respondents wrote more fully and courteously, but seemed surprised that the questions had been asked, and quite sure that they had no relevant information to offer. Typical comments, both from statutory bodies and from voluntary organisations, were:

I have to confess that in my ignorance I had not supposed that there was any problem of racial equality in (X).

The subject of racial equality does not play a significant role because of the paucity of ethnic groups.

I am not aware that the council hold any data relating to black or ethnic minority groups.

We have not been able to establish the existence of any particular racial groups in this area.

The ethnic dimension is not a significant element in (X) due to the lack of sizeable ethnic communities.

There is hardly any incidence of black and ethnic minority origin in (X).

Some officers were aware of the presence of individual ethnic minority families in their locality, often referring to people of Chinese and Asian origin working in the catering trade, but they seriously underestimated the probable size of the black population. One district council officer said it was 'rare to encounter a black or Asian person', although, in fact, the number of people in the area at the time of the 1981 census whose place of birth was in an African, Asian or Caribbean/Latin American country was in excess of 1,100 – a number which, as has been argued above (see p. 14), is unlikely to have declined. Similarly, another district council officer wrote:

(X) has an extremely limited number of people from ethnic minority groups. I have yet to see any authoritative source which identifies the numbers of people from ethnic minority groups, and I have assumed that action in regard to the promotion of racial equality and good race relations does not arise.

Yet, in 1989, the social services department of the county concerned published a detailed breakdown, from OPCS sources, of the results of the 1981 census, showing that in this

officer's district there were 1,355 people born in countries of the NCWP, and that the total number of people born in Asian, African or Caribbean/Latin American countries was 1,879—1.6 per cent of the population of the district.

Several respondents used the word 'significant' in their reply. The spokesperson of an NHS trust wrote that he was 'not aware of any significant ethnic minority communities in the area'. In a different county, the representative of a DHA said the authority 'made no special provision for minority groups', but awaited the 1991 census statistics with interest, adding that the 1981 data 'showed less than 2 per cent as New Commonwealth citizens', and that 'we do not believe there are significant numbers locally'. This raises the question of how large the black population has to be before it stimulates a statutory body to ask if there are particular needs to be met. The assumption seems to be that relatively small minorities are 'insignificant', and can be ignored.

One community health council reported that 'there are facilities-within the hospitals to help ethnic minority patients, for example if specific diets are required'. Despite this assurance, there was no suggestion in any of the responses from statutory bodies that particular needs in health or social services had been identified, or that any special provision was being made—although in two counties the social services department (SSD) said that it was planning to monitor its services to ethnic minorities. Some authorities specifically said that, while they were not actually monitoring their services, they were confident that there were no special needs, with one DHA adding:

[This authority does not distinguish between ethnic minorities and any other minority.](#)

The majority of respondents, both from statutory bodies and from voluntary organisations, expressed confidence that 'there is no problem here' with regard to access to health and social services.

Others were equally confident that 'no race relations problems have been experienced'. This was in response to a question asking whether there was evidence that ethnic minorities experienced problems as a result of isolation, difficulties of communication or racial prejudice and discrimination. One district council officer wrote:

[\(X\) does not have a high ethnic minority population, so to a certain extent race relations problems are not so prevalent here.](#)

This overlooks the possibility that an isolated black family in a village might experience more problems than they would if they were part of a large black community in London or Manchester. The language used by the representative of one voluntary organisation could be interpreted to mean that there were no problems in the area because there were not enough black people to create trouble. She commented:

[\(X\) has one of the lowest ethnic minority populations in the country, and as such we have never found there to be a problem with ethnic minorities.](#)

Whatever she meant, the phraseology was, to say the least, unfortunate; 'A problem with ethnic minorities' is an all-too-familiar theme in racist demonology.

My subjective estimate is that, while a majority of respondents were at best polite and at worst negative in their comments, roughly 25 per cent showed, in the content and tone of their letters, a genuine interest in the research, willingness to help the CRF with its enquiries and, in varying degrees, concern about racial prejudice and discrimination in their area. This concern was particularly evident in the responses from directors or officers in social services or education departments (see pp 31ff). From some voluntary organisations came useful information about the location, ethnic origins and occupations of black families, sometimes drawn from the ethnic monitoring of client records; one long letter gave a vivid and detailed account of the deprivations of village life experienced by both black and white residents. Other respondents referred to specific problems, such as local employers neglecting to provide written contracts of employment, or racial harassment at work, or gypsy travellers being treated 'like lepers' by the white population. Writing from a seaside resort, the representative of a voluntary organisation expressed anxiety as to whether the growing number of black holiday-makers visiting the town experienced discrimination or harassment when they looked for accommodation and went to pubs and clubs. Two voluntary organisations which share the same premises in a large urban area independently gave detailed and sympathetic accounts of the isolation, communication difficulties and discrimination experienced by black people – which were later amplified in a meeting with their two chief officers.

Among these respondents there are actual or potential allies for any work the CRE may do to follow up this research; 'any discussion with you,' wrote one, 'on what more we can be doing in an area such as ours would be appreciated'. Others, expressing their support, put their finger on a major problem; the comment of one voluntary sector worker was:

*This is a very complacent area, with little tradition for challenging stereotypes or confronting issues.*

Another wrote:

*The prevailing attitude... is that of course there is no discrimination, everyone is treated the same, and indeed most people don't even notice the colour of someone's skin. So, the argument continues, they don't need any equal opportunities training, and there is no need for us to waste our time on the promotion of good race relations.*

These comments go some way to explaining the information summarised in the following paragraphs about the equal opportunity policies of statutory authorities.

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## ***EMPLOYMENT***

The initial enquiry asked statutory bodies whether they operated equal opportunity policies

and, if so, to supply a copy of their policy document. In their written responses:

- Three local authorities and two health authorities ignored the question.
- Nine other respondents said they had no written policy but nevertheless practiced equal opportunities. Typical comments were: ‘We are aware of our legal requirements’. and ‘It is our practice to treat all matters on merit’, while the spokesperson of one district council said in a subsequent telephone message that his authority had ‘not yet applied to become an equal opportunities employer’.
- Another six authorities claimed to have a written policy, but did not enclose a copy with their letter – among them a DHA which said that both it and the NHS trust with which it now had a contract ‘do operate an equal opportunities policy with relation to both fair employment and the provision of services, and this is part of the Patients’ Charter which is the keystone of all our contracting arrangements’.
- Twelve authorities or departments enclosed copies of equal opportunity policy documents which were brief statements of intent, ranging in length from four sentences to two pages of A4-size paper.
- Another nine authorities, departments or trusts sent longer documents, containing some detail about the procedures for implementing their policy. One of them pointed out that it had no officers with particular responsibility for issues to do with racial equality, ‘since the extent of actual or potential racial equality would not appear to warrant this’ (sic).
- Eight authorities or departments said they were in the process of formulating or revising their policies, and two of them supplied draft documents of some length

Of the eleven documents received which spelled out an authority’s policy or draft policy in some detail, two dealt with service provision and are considered later in the report. The remaining nine related to employment policy. Among these, three documents were identical, their origin being the policy of a DHA which has now been inherited by two NHS trusts in the same county. All nine contained at least some of the elements of an equal opportunities policy recommended by the CRE in its code of practice and other documents, but on some vital points seven of the documents were silent or vague. Only two appeared to contain all the elements of accepted good practice. One was the draft policy of an NHS trust, which came with an impressively tight timetable for implementation. The other was the existing policy of a district council, which was clearly ahead of all the other local authorities in the region in its attention to procedural detail, the trouble it had taken to communicate the policy to all staff, and its requirement that equal opportunities training was mandatory for everyone involved in recruitment and selection –including council members.

Thus, of the 49 responses from the statutory sector, only two produced documentary evidence of an employment policy which, if implemented, could seriously contribute towards eliminating racial discrimination and promoting racial equality. There are, however, some

glimmers of hope in this dismal situation. A few authorities clearly want to do better. One, which had a very brief statement of intent, said it would welcome any further steps towards the elimination of racial discrimination. The respondent of an NHS trust said that there would be a full review this year of policies and practices related to equal opportunities and racial discrimination, and added: 'I have little doubt that in twelve months' time we will be able to demonstrate a significant improvement in our levels of awareness as an employer.' Beyond this, there are, scattered about the region, local government and health service officers, usually at middle management levels, who want to push their authorities into action, but (as one said) are frustrated by the reluctance of chief officers and members to take equal Opportunities seriously, and would welcome the stimulus of pressure from the CRE.

Twelve private sector companies in the region were asked for an ethnic breakdown of their workforces and a copy of their equal opportunities policy, as a means of comparing employment policies in the public sector with those in industry. The enquiries were made in late February, and only six replies have so far been received. Some of them brief acknowledgements with a promise of further information to come. A firm of department and superstore operators has a brief equal opportunities policy and a 'handful' of black and Chinese employees in its workforce of 3,300. The company says:

*We do not carry out any ethnic monitoring, as quite frankly there appear to be no significant population groupings in the area that would give any statistically valid information.*

However, one of the largest manufacturing and retailing firms in the south-west, with a workforce of more than 22,000, says it has black and ethnic minority staff at management, white collar and manual levels. Its equal opportunity policy and code of practice, initially drawn up in consultation with the Equal Opportunities Commission, are currently being revised to make them more effective against discrimination on grounds of race and disability as well as of sex. The company has an internal training course in criteria-based recruitment and selection which seeks to challenge stereotypes, and which all line managers and others involved in staff recruitment are encouraged to attend.

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## ***SOCIAL SERVICES***

In all four counties, the regulations which now govern social work training have strengthened – or awakened – concern within social services departments (SSDs) about racism. The Central Council for Education and Training in Social Work (CCETSW) requires accredited training agencies to provide a training programme which emphasises 'anti-racist, anti-discriminatory good practice'. All four SSDs are heavily engaged in social work training, and the new regulations, wrote one director, 'have focussed our attention on anti-discrimination work in particular' While this is to be welcomed, his statement that the opportunities for demonstrating anti-racist social work practice in a rural shire county 'are apparently neither frequent nor obvious is open to question in view of the evidence summarised in chapter three of this report.

The assistant chief executive of one of the county councils reported that its SSD, one of

the first to be accredited by CCETSW as a training agency for practice learning. had 'an active commitment to equal opportunities and anti-racism'. But the SSD itself did not respond to my enquiries and, therefore, no details of its training programme are available

From a different county, the director reported that, for some time, staff on the Certificate in Social Service course had received preliminary training with the county's equal opportunities officer, and that most of the training officers had undertaken some form of anti-racist training. The department's long-term strategy, he added, was to institute, over the next 18 months, a programme of anti-racist training days for all managers, starting with the departmental management team.

In another county, the SSD has issued *Guidelines on equal opportunities and anti-racist practice*, which apply to all specialisms in the department. The guidelines summarise the CCETSW regulations, to which they are subject as providers of a Diploma in Social Work programme, and the requirements laid upon qualifying social workers.

In the fourth county, where anti-racist training for practice teachers and assessors was already well established, the training programme has now been extended under the guidance of an experienced black training officer. The senior management team have undertaken anti-racist training themselves and have approved a similar training programme for managers and staff throughout the department. At the same time, the draft of a policy statement on 'Anti-discrimination in social work practice' has been widely discussed within the department, and the director expects that its final text will be agreed soon. The draft document rejects the view that there is 'no racism problem in (the county) because there are so few black people living here', and, among other proposals, says that ethnic monitoring of clients should take place as part of the initial referral information.

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## [EDUCATION](#)

A determined effort to challenge racism is being made by a small group of people working within the education system in the southwest. In each county, and extending across county boundaries, there is a network of advisory teachers, lecturers, education officers, inspectors and other specialists assigned to 'multi-cult oral education'. Most of them have a concept of multi-cultural education which goes beyond 'celebrating cultural pluralism' to tackle the issue of racism, both in the curriculum and in the management of schools and colleges. Under their leadership and guidance, some excellent work is being done.

On the other hand, it is these pioneers who are most conscious of how little has so far been achieved, not least because of the size and difficulty of the task and the lack of adequate resources. They would probably endorse the verdict of an academic who, after a long study of multi-cultural education in the south-west, writes that there are 'exciting pockets of innovation' combined with 'a vast extent of indifference and hostility'.

This innovative work is done in the name of LEAs and educational institutions, but the extent to which elected members (or, in colleges, governors) recognise its worth and

genuinely support it varies from place to place. Some advisers and specialists reported that they encountered resistance not only at the level of the classroom, the staff room and the parents' meeting, but also from people at the top of the education system who were reluctant to back them fully, on the grounds that 'race is such a sensitive issue'. The feelings of many committed people working in this field are perhaps summed up by a respondent who quoted Antonio Gramsci to describe the mood in which he said he 'battles on' against an unsupportive authority: 'pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will'.

In all four counties, the development of multi-cultural education in schools appears to have been influenced by the availability of central government funding for this purpose, and, later, by the National Curriculum Council's inclusion of multi-cultural education as a dimension of cross-curricular work. Two counties took advantage of the Education Support Grant (ESG) offered by the DES for curriculum developments in schools which might not otherwise be undertaken; the 'educational needs of a multi-ethnic society' were identified by the DES as eligible for funding. Each county used its ESG funding to appoint an advisory teacher to supervise a multi-cultural project which was initially based on one or more 'pyramids' of schools. The other two authorities did not apply for ESG funding for this purpose, despite the recommendations of their officers, but one of them has ESG money for health and social education, and the staff team employed on this project includes an advisory teacher responsible for equal opportunities. The fourth LEA finances from its own budget a number of advisory teams responsible for implementing the national curriculum, and one of these includes in its brief equal opportunities, cultural diversity and citizenship, and works closely with an inspector whose particular remit is multi-cultural education.

Although they have different job titles, and work within different structures, all these workers apparently share the same three priorities

- Encouraging schools to develop their own equal opportunity and anti-racist policies.
- Providing relevant in-service training for teachers.
- Curriculum innovation.

From county to county, the emphasis varies according to local circumstances and the particular skills of the specialists. In one county, the advisory teacher produced a remarkable range of curriculum ideas and resources, which have been widely used in schools. Here and elsewhere, there has been close cooperation with the staff of the Technical and Vocational Education Initiative (TVEI), which has curriculum development officers or multi-cultural coordinators working in many schools with the 14-plus age group. Advisory teachers in various subject areas have also cooperated in developing new cross-curricular materials. One LEA is about to supplement its brief equal opportunities policy statement with curriculum guidelines on 'cultural diversity', the draft of which advocates that schools should have a policy for dealing with racial harassment similar to that recommended in the CRE's *Learning in Terror* (1988). Another county has gone further and has already circulated to schools a comprehensive and explicit set of good practice guidelines called, *Equal opportunities* –

### *Countering racism.*

While this brief summary cannot do justice to it, there is no question about the quality of the work that has been done in the four counties in the name of multi-cultural education. What is in question is whether the limited resources that have been devoted to it will continue to be found. The LEA which has not used ESG funding reports that its education committee's equal opportunities policy is now to be developed further, and will lead to the publication of a comprehensive policy for the county council as a whole, which may be an assurance that the work of its specialist advisory team dealing with racial equality issues will continue. But there is cause for anxiety in those counties where multi-cultural education has been funded with the help of ESG funding, because the funding is time-limited and grants will come to an end in twelve months' time. There is no indication yet that LEAs will earmark funds from their mainstream budgets to ensure that multi-cultural education remains on their agenda and is allowed to develop. If they fail to do so, the south-west will lose one of the few positive initiatives that local authorities have taken in response to their Section 71 duties.

Meanwhile, the four LEAs respond in different ways to the 'special needs' of black and ethnic minority children. Three, for example, employ ESL teachers. In one county, where there has recently been an increase in the number of NCW children identified as needing special language support, one of two bids for Section 11 funding for ESL work has failed, and the LEA's own ESL budget has been cut. In another authority, there is only one peripatetic ESL teacher to cover the whole county. The third, however, is about to increase its ESL staff from five to six, because the number of ethnic minority children needing language support 'appears to be increasing significantly'. In the fourth county, where the appointment of ESL teachers 'has been considered, but is not feasible', some language support is being given by a Chinese person who is not a teacher. LEAs also vary in their response to the educational needs of traveler children, whose communities experience hostility throughout the region. An attempt in one authority to obtain funding to employ specialists in this field failed. In other authorities there are advisory teachers, and one LEA has produced a comprehensive guide for schools on traveler cultures and good practice in traveler education.

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## ***FURTHER AND HIGHER EDUCATION***

In colleges of further education, as in schools, multi-cultural education owes its origin to DES initiatives. The department's Further Education Unit (FEU) produced a training package on *Staff development for a multi-cultural society*, including recommended strategies for 'mainly white' areas. This was backed by pump-priming finance, through the LEA Grants Training Scheme, to all education authorities. A small annual grant has gone to each of the 19 colleges in the region, enabling the release of a member of staff for a limited period each week – usually one or two hours, although one college exceptionally allocates five hours – to act as a 'multi-cultural coordinator'; in some colleges, the task and the hours are shared by two or three people. But the DES funding has now ceased (that is, at the end of March 1992), and it is uncertain whether the colleges will pick up the bill to enable the work begun by the coordinators to continue.

In a few colleges, people with limited understanding and enthusiasm were pressed into taking on this role, which may be the one reason why 12 coordinators did not respond to my request for information. But in correspondence or meetings with another 16, working in 12 different colleges, it became evident that most of them were doing the job because of a strong personal commitment to racial equality, and that the greater their commitment the more difficult the assignment had been. In the brief time allotted to them each week, they have had to take the lead on many fronts: drafting equal opportunity policies (or persuading their college to strengthen and implement an existing bland document); lobbying for firm procedures to deal with racial harassment; suggesting to colleagues how multicultural perspectives might be 'embedded' in the syllabus in different subject areas; organising in-service training; and being expected to deal with the problems of individual black students. Where there is little backing from the top, it is a depressing, uphill struggle; one coordinator reported that after endless discussion the college was still wallowing around' and unable to agree an equal opportunities policy because of the resistance of the academic board and the governors. Another wrote:

Our over-riding difficulty in doing this work has been the apathy or overt opposition of management and county..... Whilst pockets of good understanding are found amongst students and staff alike, it is hard to get this into institutional structures.

In the circumstances, it is remarkable how much some coordinators have been able to achieve. While there are some colleges which have high-principled policy documents merely gathering dust on a shelf, there are a few where the policy is now taken seriously. Staff attitudes are gradually changing, and with them so is the curriculum; there is in-service training on racism and *how* to tackle it; CRE and FEU documents are quoted to define unacceptable racist behaviour, and such behaviour is regarded as a disciplinary offence; equal opportunities policies are backed by ethnic monitoring (with a 91.8 per cent self-assessment response rate from full-time students in one college where its purpose was carefully explained); and progress reports are regularly made to the college authorities. One college backs its equal opportunities policy with an action plan supervised by a special committee, while another has established target dates for further policy development and implementation between now and 1995.

Where progress is being made, a crucial factor is the interest and commitment of senior management. An example is the college where student attitudes were surveyed (see p 18) as part of a much wider research project. Here it was the backing of the principal and management team, who were willing to top up an FEU grant with additional resources, that made the project possible in the first place and thereby stimulated action. The college now has a set of policies governing different aspects of equal opportunities, which, if far from perfect, at least represent a step in the right direction. Another contribution to the real, if limited, success which some coordinators have been able to achieve is the fact that, like advisors in schools, they have been able to 'network' within counties and across county boundaries, sharing ideas and encouraging one another in what otherwise would have been a very lonely job. If the end of FEU funding means that this network of enthusiasts is to be disbanded, and 'education for a multi-ethnic society' becomes part of yesterday's agenda, it will be a tragic blunder.

There are in the four counties six institutions in the Polytechnics and Colleges Funding Sector (PCFC). All have black and ethnic minority students, some recruited locally or from other parts of the UK, and some from overseas. The proportion varies from one college or polytechnic to another, ranging from one to 16 per cent of the total student population. As reported earlier (see p 9), the institutions were asked for a copy of their response to a PCFC

circular requiring them to state what action they proposed to take 'to widen participation by students from groups which are at present under-represented in higher education'. One college did not respond to this request, the representative of another replied that, as far as he knew, his institution had not responded to the PCFC circular, and a third sent a copy of a detailed response with a request that it should be regarded as confidential and not quoted. In their responses to the PCFC, the other three institutions all affirmed their wish to recruit more ethnic minority students both from within and outside their catchment area, but felt that it would be difficult to attract them locally. One respondent wrote:

In view of the very small numbers of people from ethnic minorities living in the local catchment (area), major recruitment initiatives are unlikely to be successful...

He said, though, that the institution proposed to 'consult with the ethnic groups present in south-west England' to investigate ways of developing access routes. Another institution said that it:

...would wish to facilitate access for members of ethnic minority groups, in particular those of Afro-Caribbean origin....The presence of an established local ethnic community is believed to be an important factor; no such ethnic community exists in the local population area.

The six institutions were also asked what action was being taken to fulfill the equal opportunities responsibilities set out in the PCFC's *Guide for Governors*. The college which said it had not responded to the circular on widening participation claimed that it practiced equal opportunities but because it was currently evolving a new constitution, 'no statement of policy and practice in connection with equal opportunities has yet been formulated'. Another institution said its Board had not yet published a formal policy on equal opportunities, but that staff had been 'tasked with making significant progress on this matter in 1992'. One college sent a copy of its multicultural policy statement, a document concerned more with good intent than with detailed procedures for tackling racism, and another provided the draft of a new policy which concentrates on fair access for students and employees, with an appendix setting out its code on sexual (but not racial) harassment. The fifth and sixth institutions sent brief policy statements, which were positive but lacking in some essential detail, while making it plain that allegations of discriminatory behaviour by staff or students would be dealt with under grievance and disciplinary procedures; one of them attached detailed guidelines on how complaints should be handled.

The third question put to the institutions was whether overseas students recruited from Third World countries, or their families living with them in this Country, had experienced racial prejudice or discrimination, either within the college or polytechnic or in the wider community and, if so, what action had been taken to deal with the problem. Two did not respond to the question, one referred to 'a limited degree of overt discrimination within the (institution) and the south-west in general', and the other three said they were not aware of any 'significant problems' or serious difficulties'.

If, from the point of view of black students themselves, there are few problems, this information is welcome, but it leads to further questions about the quality of support they receive from student welfare services. One exemplary model of how overseas students should be introduced to the new life of their campus, made to feel welcome, and provided with a wide range of support and counselling services appears to be Exeter University, which, although not

included in the approach made to the PCFC institutions, has provided extensive detail of the arrangements made by its international department and welfare service.

Institutions in the PCFC sector may well make similar satisfactory provision. But it is not only universities and PCFC institutions which recruit from overseas; it is now common practice and a growing one, among colleges in the FE sector. Marketing for overseas students is becoming increasingly competitive, and there are reports that some colleges prize the students only for the revenue they bring. In two colleges, individual respondents who were trying to combat racism said: 'The way we recruit overseas is a form of colonialism', and one of them referred to a member of staff who, before embarking on a recruiting trip to Africa, described it as 'going to the jungle'. One respondent claimed that there was little concept of tailoring courses to meet the particular needs of overseas students, and that there was no effective student welfare system in operation. Lecturers have complained that they have to give extra time to overseas students, but are not given any assistance; as one said:

*The money that comes with the students goes on administration; it is not spent on providing services to the students who brought the money in.*

This was underlined for me at an informal meeting with a group of overseas students in another college who said they were isolated and had virtually no social interaction with white students. Whereas if they had gone to Exeter University or, no doubt, to many other institutions, they would have been offered hospitality in private homes during the Christmas vacation, this small group of Africans and Asians spent Christmas alone on the campus, a bus ride away from shops, even if there had been any open.

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## **CAREERS SERVICES**

The careers service in each of the four counties was asked whether it had an equal opportunities policy, what proportion of young people using the service were of black or ethnic minority origin, and what procedures the service adopted for dealing with instances of employers discriminating against black applicants for jobs.

In response, two services said they were currently preparing an equal opportunities policy, one provided a single-page policy statement, and the fourth produced a much longer draft document recommending, among other things, that equal opportunities targets should be incorporated into area operational plans. None of the services at present keeps ethnic records of its clients, although in two counties record-keeping is under consideration. None of the services had any knowledge of attempted racial discrimination by employers, but an officer said it would be quite unacceptable — placements were made solely on the grounds of suitability for the vacant post.

Until now, the careers services of the south-west have concentrated in their policy development work on sexual equality. Their regional equal opportunities task force, which covers seven counties, produced a training pack on issues relating to gender, which was then

published by the Institute of Careers Guidance. The task force has now begun to put together a similar pack on racism and racial equality, and, in the process, is looking hard at employment practices within the service. In the view of one officer:

As far as our own employment is concerned, we are a long way behind. How can you approach other people when your own recruitment practices are not right?

Within the four services, there are individual officers who are clearly committed to change. One of them said:

...the careers service has to be challenging stereotypes, widening choice, giving equality of opportunity in guidance as well as in placement.

But the difficulties of bringing about change are not underestimated; in the words of an informant in one county who knows the careers service well:

With a static staff of white, middle-aged Anglo-Saxon males, it is like pushing a stone uphill. We are nowhere on this, not even on the gender issue. The race issue is nowhere on the horizon.

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## **POLICE**

All three forces covering the region reported that they had clear procedures for recording racially-motivated incidents, monitoring reports, and taking action when appropriate, as recommended in the ACPO guidelines. To encourage reporting of attacks, Avon and Somerset Constabulary has produced a leaflet in several minority community languages. Devon and Cornwall Constabulary says that, while there are no multi-agency racial harassment groups in the two counties, the second report of the Home Office Inter-departmental Racial Attacks Groups (*Sustaining the momentum*, 1992) is now being discussed by a chief officers' group representative of the police, the SSDs, the LEAs and the Chief Crown Prosecutor. There are in the two counties 20 Police Community Consultative Groups, which meet on a quarterly basis, but 'no problems relating to racial incidents or to the state of race relations locally have featured.. on any group agenda'. Similarly, Dorset Constabulary reports that five public consultation meetings, under the auspices of Section 106 of the Police and

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## **TRADE UNIONS**

It would have been impossible in this small-scale project to seek the experience and views of all the trade unions which might have had something relevant to say. But, with the cooperation of sympathetic divisional officers of the National Union of Public Employees (NUPE), letters went to their colleagues in the four counties, as well as to officers of the

Confederation of Health Service Employees (COHSE), asking for information. The rationale was that these were the two unions most likely to have black members in the region – for example, workers in the health service. Only three officers have so far replied, and none of them was able to give much information. In the absence of ethnic record-keeping, the unions do not have a clear picture of how many black members they have or where. But NUPE's divisional office supports the aims of the research, and would cooperate with the CRE in any follow-up action that might be taken.

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## ***TOURIST BOARDS***

For reasons that have become evident in this report, it was important to seek the views of tourist authorities. The West Country Tourist Board is the official tourist authority for the region, working in partnership with all local authorities, but Cornwall also maintains its own tourist board as a department of the county council. Both boards were asked what steps they were taking to encourage black people living elsewhere in the UK to feel confident about taking a holiday in the region, or about applying for vacant posts in the hotel and catering industry. Did they, for example, produce publicity material that was visually representative of the racial groups living in Britain today, and did the training and information they offered the hotel and catering trade include advice on equal opportunities legislation?

In reply, the West Country Tourist Board said it had no policies which differentiated between races or colours, and the people seen in its publicity pictures were those who happened to be there at the time, reflecting the racial mix of the place at that moment; 'we never USC models and do not plan to do so' -

In a longer reply, the Cornwall Tourist Board said its choice of pictures was made on the basis of photographic content and promotional appeal, and that its training and educational courses for hotel and catering staff covered all aspects of equal opportunities legislation.

Both boards said they had no record of complaints from visitors about racial prejudice or discrimination. The Cornwall Board confirmed that 'coloured or ethnic minority visitors to Cornwall... exist in fair numbers', and indicated that further discussion of the questions raised would be welcome.

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## ***CHURCHES***

Finally, the heads of churches were asked about the progress of various denominational or ecumenical programmes designed to help congregations understand and oppose racism. Seven of the eleven who were approached, or their appropriate officers, replied. Five of these wrote

at length, giving details of conferences, training programmes and working parties devoted to racial equality, or suggesting 'key' people in the area who should be approached for information. In one Anglican diocese, the Board of Social Responsibility has adopted a statement of intent on racism, and its members have agreed to use the media to challenge racism when incidents are reported. Elsewhere, a group is being set up to plan an ecumenical strategy to combat racism. The two Roman Catholic dioceses which cover the region reported on an extensive programme of anti-racist education, including, in one diocese, the appointment of two full-time workers to stimulate action. Some churches also have a good record of welcoming overseas students.

But the respondents were aware that the surface of the problem had scarcely been scratched. One wrote of a mixture of 'ignorance, prejudice, unwitting racism and puzzled concern' in the church, and another said there would be little action to achieve racial equality until people start to burn with a sense of the injustice inflicted' on black people. An Anglican bishop wrote bluntly that the answer to my enquiry about what his church was doing was 'very little or nothing', because, he said, his diocese was 'an area which thinks there is no problem'.

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## **5. ACTION**

As this research has shown, organisations in the south-west fall into three categories in their attitudes towards racism and the problems experienced by black people. In a small minority of organisations, awareness and concern on the part of management or individual officers have led to positive action to promote racial equality and good race relations. In some others, there is at least an interest in the questions asked and a recognition that 'something more must be done'; a few of these have asked for advice as to what they should do next. But the commonest response to the project was one of indifference or even hostility; racial equality is evidently not part of the agenda.

In approving the terms of reference of the research (see p.7), the CRE made it clear that it would want to support initiatives that had already been taken in the interests of racial equality, and to encourage others. The following recommendations point to some practical steps that might be taken. In considering them, the CRE will no doubt want to begin by studying, in some detail, the written organisational responses that are now in its possession, together with any further reaction from organisations to the publication of this report. This may well suggest where support would be welcome, and where new initiatives could usefully be encouraged.

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## STATUTORY BODIES

The responses received from local authorities underline the urgent need that they should consider afresh – or, in some places, for the first time the duties laid upon them by Section 71 of the Race Relations Act. The CRE’s role in encouraging this could be to organise a series of conferences, perhaps one in each county, with the aim of persuading as many authorities as possible to move forward in policy development. An alternative method would be to concentrate on selected authorities, or departments within authorities, which have recognised that racial equality must move higher up their agenda, and have said they are willing to discuss what they should do.

Either of these methods would also be used in contacting health authorities and trusts, whose responses show wide variation in the extent of their concern about racial discrimination and equality of opportunity. While they are not subject to the requirements of Section 71, they are expected (in the words of the (then) Secretary of State for Health in his endorsement of the CRE’s *Race Relations Code of Practice in Primary Health Care*) to ‘promote action to achieve and sustain racial equality’. The recent publication of the code provides an ideal opportunity for the CRE to meet them and discuss the action they should take.

Another statutory body with which the Commission could usefully discuss the findings of this research is the Rural Development Commission (RDC). The RDC concentrates its work on areas of particular social and economic need, designated as Rural Development Areas (RDAs); these include much of Cornwall and Devon, together with parts of Dorset and Somerset. The RDC’s policy is to encourage, and sometimes fund, projects designed to overcome serious disadvantage experienced by specific groups within the community, arising from or made more serious by their rural location’, and no doubt it would be sympathetic towards the language problems and other difficulties experienced by some ethnic minorities in the RDAs of the south-west.

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## VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

The national bodies that support the work of CABx, CVSs and RECs all have anti-racist and equal opportunity policies that local agencies are expected to follow, and all have indicated that they support the research and want to discuss its findings. In the light of this, it is disappointing that the level of response from the local agencies was so low (see p. 25), and that those that did respond appeared indifferent to the purpose of the enquiry. While the responses of individual organisations must obviously remain confidential, I suggest that there should be early discussion with the National Association of Citizens’ Advice Bureaux (NACAB), the National

Association of Councils for Voluntary Service (NACVS), the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), and possibly

with the RDC on ways of encouraging rural agencies to give higher priority to the issue of racial equality.

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## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

There are some immediate steps that should be taken, either by the CRE itself or by local authorities and other organisations in partnership with the CRE, to Support those ethnic minorities in the region who have particular needs; for example, the problems experienced by Asian workers in the catering trade and their families, who have no community organisations, and whose existence and needs have been largely ignored by statutory bodies (see p.14 and p. 23). I suggest that, as a first step, CRE officers should meet members of these communities – there are individual contacts through whom meetings could be arranged – to hear at first hand about their experiences, ascertain their needs and help them plan action to improve their circumstances. One way of raising morale might be to encourage them, perhaps with financial support, to form self-help organisations, through which they could speak with a collective voice to local authorities and other bodies about their communities' problems.

The report mentions the Devon and Cornwall Chinese Association and its offshoot the Chinese Cultural Development Centre (see p.14). After providing the association with grants for three years, the CRE was instrumental in persuading Devon SSD to fund it, through the Urban Programme, to the extent of £25,000. This grant has continued annually at the same level, enabling the association to employ its director/advice worker and an administrator. But, with the exception of small ad hoc grants from two district councils, other attempts to secure funding have failed, despite the fact that the association provides a service for Chinese people in both the counties. The director is stretched to the limit acting as interpreter and translator for many statutory and voluntary bodies; there is no other agency in Devon or Cornwall that can provide this service. Moreover, the association has no funding with which to meet acute needs within the community – for instance, a day centre for elderly people (whose problems are mentioned on p.15). The CRE could play a crucial role in helping the association to prepare and submit new bids for funding.

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## **EDUCATION AND CAMPAIGNING**

Immediate steps are also needed to support existing programmes of education for racial equality. Much creative multi-cultural education in schools and colleges may suffer a cutback with the ending of government funding (see pp 34-35), and the CRE should discuss with the appropriate LEAs ways in which they can continue to finance it from their own budgets.

An initiative which deserves the support not only of the CRE but of local authorities and

other organisations in the area is the inauguration of the Plymouth and District Racial Equality Council. This has come about through the pioneering work of the West Devon Anti-racist Group (WDARG), which was formed in 1988 by the merger of a black workers' support group and a white workers' anti-racist group. The WDARG has no public funding or paid staff, but has an impressive record of achievement in three areas of activity:

- Providing a training and information resource for anti-racist campaigning.
- Building a support network across the county of people seeking to challenge racism.
- Giving personal Support to individuals who suffer racial harassment.

A conference organised by WDARG in February 1991, and attended by many who felt the need for a new initiative to promote racial equality in Plymouth, concluded that an RFC should be established. The organisers have adopted the model REC constitution approved by the CRE, and the new REC will be launched soon, with a remit covering the areas of three other district councils as well as the city of Plymouth. This welcome development provides the first opportunity in the south-west for a joint enterprise to promote racial equality on the *part* of the CRE, local authorities and the members of the REC. in line with the CRE's partnership policy.

Elsewhere in the south-west, there are individuals, some of them working in statutory or voluntary organisations, who responded to the research enquiries with enthusiasm, would like to be active in racial equality work, but at present have no common forum. Responses from the Exeter area, for example, suggest that there is a nucleus of such people in and around that city. The CRE could act as a catalyst in bringing them together to discuss this report and consider what action they might take together. One way of doing this would be to convene, perhaps jointly with a sympathetic local voluntary organisation, an exploratory day conference. Out of that might come agreement to set up a forum to plan anti-racist public education and action, and lead ultimately to setting up an REC.

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## **A LONG HAUL**

It would be a mistake to dismiss as merely cosmetic initiatives of the kind proposed above. The process of change has to begin with what is possible. It is possible, and therefore important to support and strengthen action for racial equality which is already being taken in some parts of the region. It is equally possible, and important, to identify those who can be persuaded to take the first steps towards promoting racial equality in places where, so far, there has been no movement at all.

These things are worth doing, but they are only the beginning of a long haul. This report suggests how much resistance there could be. Some of the comments received reveal not only the complacent belief that 'there is no problem here', but indignation that questions about racism and racial equality should even be asked. In the words of one respondent:

I am pleased to say that such topics have never been raised in any of our committees during my ten years here.

Given this attitude, it would be naive to suppose that change will come quickly or easily.

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## 6. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Local authorities and health authorities in the south-west, with the CRE'S support, should develop firm policies for promoting racial equality. (pp. 43-44)
2. The RDC should be asked to consider ethnic minority needs in rural areas. (p. 44)
3. Racial equality policies and action in rural areas should be discussed with NACVS, NACAB, NCVO and ACRE. (p. 44)
4. Asian communities in the south-west should be contacted to find out their needs. (pp. 14, 23, and 45)
5. The Devon and Cornwall Chinese Association should receive adequate funding. (pp. 14, 15, and 45)
6. LEAs should continue funding multi-cultural education in schools and colleges (pp. 34-35 and 45-46)
7. All possible support should be given to the Plymouth and District Racial Equality Council.(p. 46)
8. The CRE should act as a catalyst in bringing together people with a commitment to racial equality. (p. 46)

**COMMISSION FOR RACIAL  
EQUALITY**

The Commission for Racial Equality was set up by the Race Relations Act 1976 with the duties of:

- Working towards the elimination of discrimination.
- Promoting equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups.
- Keeping under review the working of the Act, and, when required by the Secretary of State or when it otherwise thinks it is necessary, drawing up and submitting to the Secretary of State proposals for amending it.

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