

anti-racism might be shifted and settled briefly on the systematic discrimination and disadvantage as well as the ruthless and coercive forms of policing to which the black areas where protest erupted had been subjected.

The subsequent racialization of the riots, which were labelled as black events expressive of the disorderly cultural and political traditions of their un-British protagonists, could provide raw material for an additional study of the languages of racial politics in contemporary Britain. The official explanation of the events was presented in the Scarman Report, and used the particular experience of Brixton to illuminate the national dimensions of the disorders, even where this was inappropriate. Less than a third of those arrested during the disorders had been 'of an ethnic appearance other than white'²⁰ yet the issue of 'race' dominated the popular memory of the events and cast the typical rioter as an unemployed, young Afro-Caribbean male living in an inner-city neighbourhood (Fielding and Southgate, 1982).

The extent to which these patterns of disorder actually grew out of the distinct experience of inner-city blacks is not important for the moment. Their capacity to represent the race problem being experienced by Britain as a whole is more important. The problem acquired substance in the account of black pathology which was given an official imprimatur by Scarman's report and 'race' duly emerged as a primary causal factor in his narrative of the riots. The Labour administrations elected in the metropolitan counties during the spring of 1981 were quick to institute a range of special agencies and programmes of work charged with the task of addressing the ethnic minority needs to which the burning and looting had given a supposedly inarticulate expression.

Scarman's clumsy denial that 'institutionalized racism' existed in Britain, however plausible within his own definitions, fuelled the anti-racist fervour of his new critics. They not only challenged his view but argued that the riots were proof that

racism was not only endemic but a potent, corrosive force in society.

The initial strategy of the new Labour local authorities emphasized the need for them to put their own houses in order as a precondition for the credibility of broader campaigning around anti-racist objectives. This 'internal' struggle to transform or at least adapt local authorities required a distinct range of tactical manoeuvres tailored to the shape and character of local state bureaucracies. The anti-racist tactics which emerged inside these agencies and institutions have not been easily transferable to the struggle against racism outside their walls, on the streets and in popular politics. The attempt to apply what can be called the institutional/bureaucratic model of anti-racist strategy as if it were a general, universal blueprint rather than a specific plan adapted to the peculiarities of local government, forms the central contradiction in the discussion of municipal anti-racism which follows. However successful these initiatives have been in addressing the issue of black disadvantage inside the institutional structures of local authorities and the voluntary bodies they fund, the overall structure of the bureaucracies, their formal rationality, hierarchical mode of organization and the coercive powers they enjoy as a result of their role as providers of money, all point to the specificities of their anti-racist strategy and indeed to the narrow definitions of anti-racism being pursued.

The role of anti-racist policy, for example, may be rather more significant in organizations of this type than it would be in more popular and less structured bodies, or agencies in which a political consensus is harder to create. The forms of anti-racist training most appropriate, for example, to work in the housing department of a Labour local authority may carry fewer guarantees when applied to the experience of manual workers, nursery staff or security guards in the same organization let alone those whose employment does not provide a legitimate opportunity for the development of anti-racist policy.

Programmes for equality of opportunity for staff within the local authority structures were introduced. The bureaucracies which perpetuated a racial division of labour confining blacks to the lowest levels in the hierarchy came under official scrutiny from a new cadre of professional officers and advisers mandated for the elimination of racism. Committees were set up consistent with the formal structure of the local authorities which could highlight the needs of ethnic minority groups and organizations. Finally, new programmes for the financial support of ethnic minority cultural and political work were introduced. By April 1984 sixteen London boroughs, both Labour and Conservative, had taken at least some steps along this road. The hub of this municipal anti-racism was provided by the Labour Greater London Council (GLC). The leader of that authority, Ken Livingstone, signified the priority attached to the issue of 'race' by assuming the chairpersonship of the newly created Ethnic Minorities Committee himself. In 1982-3, the first year in which the committee had a budget for grants, over 300 applications were received for the annual budget of £850,000. The following year the committee's grants budget had risen to approximately £2.5 million (GLC, 1985).

The motives behind these developments were diverse. Pressure on the authority from specialized community relations agencies coincided with the growth of black political activism inside the Labour Party. The group of blacks, which also organized itself around the demand for a black caucus or section within the party, issued warnings that the electoral allegiance of black populations in urban areas could no longer be taken for granted by Labour. To other analysts who had suggested that the riots represented the formation of an alienated or dissident urban underclass, the growth of specialized anti-racist initiatives was a vehicle for the reincorporation of these marginal elements into the rituals of the political system.

The centrepiece of the GLC's anti-racist strategy was the

declaration of London as an 'anti-racist zone' and the announcement that 1984 was to be an anti-racist year in which the struggle against racism would be a continual and primary focus of the council's work. These commitments took the council into the realm of popular politics, and relied on public awareness campaigning marshalled through billboards and press advertisements. Early in 1984 the Ethnic Minorities Committee approved an initial budget of £310,000 for this purpose. Later in the year a further £552,000 was approved in principle for an extension of the campaign until March 1985 (GLC, 1984b).

Local counterparts to this strategy were supplied by borough councils which engaged in a parallel programme of popular anti-racist activity that included the same elements as the GLC along with more concrete popular initiatives such as the renaming of streets and estates to highlight the contribution made by blacks to world history as well as the multi-ethnic composition of neighbourhoods. Lambeth's Rhodesia Road was renamed Zimbabwe Road, and so on.²¹

It was, however, the GLC's billboard advertisements which formed the core of this campaign. The first posters produced in the campaign occupied large roadside hoardings and featured stark anti-racist slogans and exhortations against a plain white background. Typical of these was the following: 'Nearly a million Londoners are getting a raw deal - simply because the other 6 million let it happen. Let's kick racism out of town.' Another poster bearing the question 'Where would Mrs Thatcher have got to if she had been black?' was also distributed at this stage. No images were featured on these first posters and their textual form invited written comment. The question about Mrs Thatcher was answered by one graffito with the words, 'To the front of the housing queue'. This answer encapsulates a deeper problem which lay in the strategy that generated these posters, namely the tendency to assume that readers had a general perception of blacks as a disadvantaged group which

could be drawn upon as the basis of an anti-racist sensibility. Related to this misplaced assumption was the idea that at this level of political communication, the concept of racism required no elaboration, but would be recognized immediately as a negative and unwholesome political trait. The poster provided no apparent link between the assertion that some Londoners were getting a bad deal and the political solution being suggested: 'Let's kick racism out of town'.

On one site in North London, the word racism was crossed out and the word 'blacks' written in its place. Leaving aside for the moment the issue of whether the effects of racism are felt 'simply because whites let it happen' (a proposition which either makes the struggle against racism appear facile or denies that whites have an active role in perpetuating the institutions and structures which reproduce it) the idea that racism adds up to a 'raw deal' for its victims suggests a fundamentally pluralist understanding of racial conflicts in which the structural aspects of racial politics are minimized. When the problems raised by racism are seen in this way, the solution to them becomes the provision of an unspecified 'better deal'. This can be seen counterproductively as a form of special treatment. Furthermore, by the manner in which the poster separates the discussion of interaction between people from the injunction 'Let's kick racism out of town' it creates a view of racism as an autonomous ideological force, readily extricable from other dimensions of social life. Who will do this kicking out? Where will those people or ideas thus kicked relocate themselves? The choice of the verb 'kick' raises obvious additional problems in that its connotations of physical brutality may not be wholly compatible with the task of winning broad popular support for the struggle against racism, particularly where blacks are already seen as a volatile and violent group. The stress on numbers of blacks and whites conveyed by the poster suggested that these numbers were, in themselves, significant when presumably an

anti-racist position would be the same whether the number of oppressed blacks in London was 500,000 or 50,000.

The posters which followed were not placed on large advertisement hoardings though they were targeted at a similarly wide audience through newspapers and magazines. In these, images were introduced to support the text and a more elaborate form of argument began to emerge. One showed a photograph of a white iced gâteau with a piece of chocolate cake of different dimensions inserted into it where a slice had been removed. The picture was captioned 'Which slice of the cake are you getting? In the majority of cases Ethnic Minorities do not receive their equal share of the capital's resources. STAMP OUT INSTITUTIONAL RACISM NOW.' The two different types of cake crammed together on the same plate, provided in fact a striking image for the fundamental incompatibility of blacks and whites whose obvious differences were reproduced in displaced form among the crumbs. The slice of chocolate cake which represents black settler population, calls to mind the Powellite image of the 'alien wedge' with complete precision. It is manifestly out of place, an unnatural intrusion into the body of the white cake, iced with buildings and decorated to suggest relative prosperity and economic privilege. Again, the final injunction 'STAMP OUT INSTITUTIONAL RACISM NOW!' was given no explicit content by the images chosen or the supporting text. If the GLC was responsible for administering and distributing the capital's resources, a bewildered reader of the poster might ask, why don't they give things out more equitably?

By locating the problem of racism in this relationship between the council as custodian of the resources/cake and its incongruous black minority slice, the white reader is abandoned by the text, appearing instead as a spectator on the margins of a private conversation. The poster's question 'Which slice of the cake are you getting?' suggests that it was aimed at both black and white readers, allowing or even encouraging each 'racial' group to

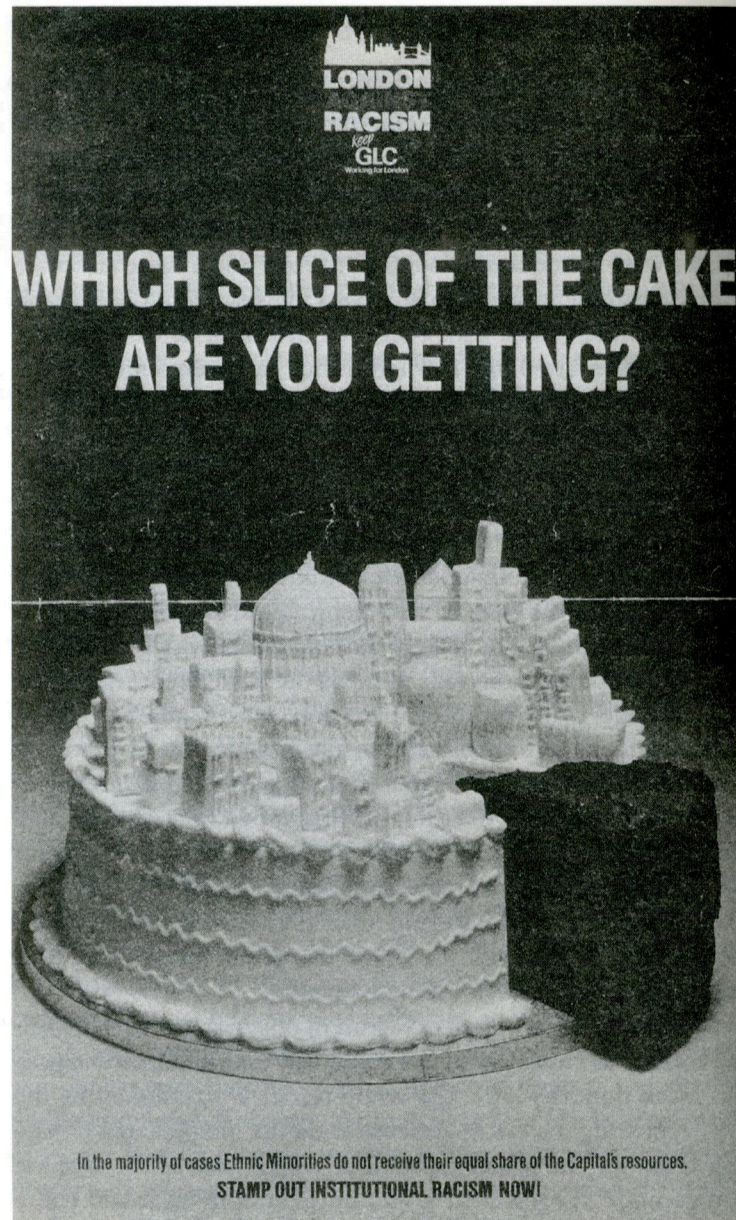


Figure 4 GLC poster, 1983

extract its own lessons from the cake image. Yet this anti-racist logic constructs the black reader as the primary audience and the poster becomes an exhortation to blacks to support the council's strategy for 'stamping out institutional racism' rather than a challenge to racist ideology and explanation.

Another poster which sought to address the politics of 'race' in a popular form is particularly interesting because it contained a commentary on the anti-racist poster campaign itself. Four whites, two of each sex, are depicted walking past a GLC anti-racist hoarding on which is printed the slogan: 'If you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem. You've got the power to challenge the damaging effects of racism. Use it.'

Each figure holds a folded newspaper up between their own face and the message on the hoarding. The final injunction in this case is 'Racism, better off without it'. Whether the figures are simply shielding their eyes from the ideological glare of the poster or whether their stance is intended to suggest the role of the popular press in reproducing racist ideology is not clear nor particularly important. It is more significant that the imagery chosen to represent the struggle against racism is provided by the GLC anti-racist campaign itself. Here, of course, white readers are the primary audience and are invited to recognize themselves in the actions of the white figures who will not look up at the message which the poster within a poster bears. The white reader who does look at the poster thereby puts himself in a different category from those (the racists) who will not look. Thus the poster suggests that by the act of looking at the slogan and absorbing its message, anti-racism is created and racism itself abolished. Consuming the poster becomes, in the terms of its text, part of the solution rather than part of the problem. The 'power to challenge the damaging effects of racism' of which the poster speaks is defined as the power to look at a GLC poster. We may as the poster tells us, be better off without racism but the images and text do not make racism

intelligible or concrete except in the refusal to consume anti-racist posters.

The problems of definition and strategy which arise from this brief discussion of the GLC anti-racist posters can be pursued further elsewhere in the council's anti-racist output. At every stage of the anti-racist campaign and the anti-racist year programme the council's underlying political and philosophical positions were spelled out in pamphlets and other supporting documents. For example, after the council ran a series of advertisements in national newspapers bearing the question, 'What is this thing called racism?'²² readers were invited to write in to the Ethnic Minorities Unit for a booklet which would tell them the answer and suggest what might be done about it. The text of the ads continued:

You may hear a lot about it [racism]. But you may not understand how it affects you and your life in London. So, send for our booklet 'What Can I Do To Challenge Racism?' It's surprising, it's alarming and helpful. And it's Free.

The sixteen-page booklet combined general definitions of racism and anti-racism with what was presented as practical advice as to what could be done about its particular manifestations of racism in discrete areas of social life – the church, employment, the arts, media, education, housing, the health service and policing. The first page asserts the political importance of racism and argues that it is a ubiquitous presence. This was one of the recurrent themes in GLC statements on 'race': 'Racism directly affects us all. We are either the victims or the perpetrators.' The formula which reduces the complexity of racism to these two positions seems to argue against the possibility of anti-racism at all. Where does anti-racism come from? How is it possible to cease being a perpetrator, and cease being a victim? Is there any traffic between groups? If so, how does it

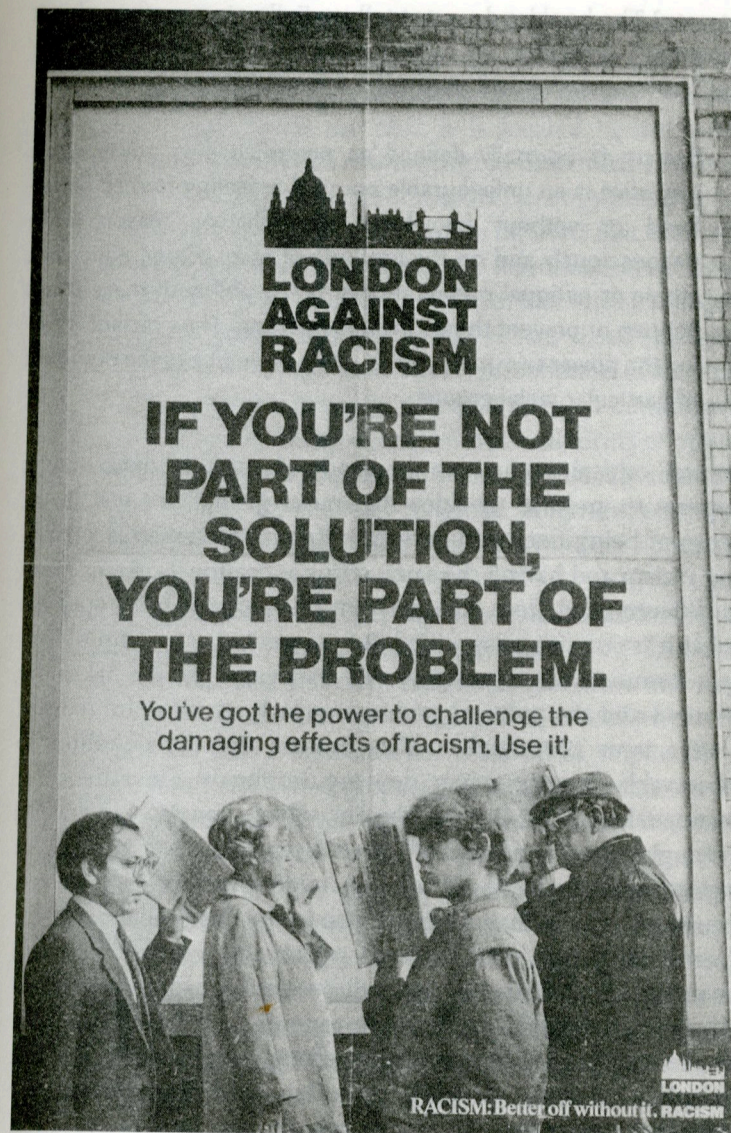


Figure 5 GLC poster, 1983

operate? The booklet does not tell us. Following on from this, it provides a definition of racism which presumably guided the GLC's own practice and anti-racist strategy.

Racism is normally defined as prejudice plus power where prejudice is an unfavourable opinion or feeling formed beforehand or without knowledge, thought or reason, often unconsciously and on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins. Power is the ability to make things happen or prevent things from happening. Thus racism is having the power to put into effect one's prejudice to the detriment of particular racial groups.

Several critical points can be made about this definition. It appears to endorse the idea that racial groups are real in the sense of being fixed and exclusive. Race is presented as preceding racism and having the same status as 'national origins'. Race is differentiated from the question of colour (phenotype) but what it is remains unspecified. It is presented as an unproblematic common-sense category. Its existence can be taken for granted and the political problems which attend it are reduced to the issue of prejudice. This in turn ties the definition to observable human action denying implicitly the salience of structural and ideological factors which cannot be grasped through the concept of prejudice and its consequent behavioural focus. As an adjunct to this, power is seen as a possession rather than a relationship in the classic manner of the 'zero-sum game'. The basis on which this view of power is maintained is revealed once the discussion turns in the direction of strategy. 'In order to eliminate racism, there has to be a twin challenge aimed at the institution where power is located and at people's behaviour which is too often conditioned by racially prejudiced attitudes.' This is less of a definition than a justification for the GLC's own strategy which combined, as we have

noted, an internal programme of equal opportunities policy with a public awareness campaign. One moment power is a property of individual relationship which involve prejudice between different races, the next it is located in institutions which have no discernable relationship to individual behaviour. How these two distinct objects of the GLC strategy relate to each other is not explained even though it is inferred that their relationship is functionally important in the reproduction of racism.

To its credit the booklet does, by comparison with the posters, emphasize that people can act against racism in all its diverse forms. Its definitional page ends with a prescription of how they can act and of the manner in which an anti-racist commitment comes into being: 'by being deeply aware of all forms of oppression and by taking action personally and collectively to end all oppression'. This vague, semi-religious language conveys a complete inability to locate what is specific to racial oppression and therefore to anti-racism.

Rather than tie the anti-racist project to a distinct and recognizable range of themes and political priorities as RAR had done (nationalism, fascism, policing, racial violence) this municipal anti-racism allows the concept of racism to ascend to rarified heights where, like a lost balloon, it becomes impossible to retrieve. This induces a strategic paralysis which is further encouraged by the allocation of a pre-eminent if not monopolistic role in the defeat of racism to the council's own agencies and activities. The council becomes the primary site of anti-racist struggle whether the racist object being kicked out of town is made up of the racist institutions which the council manages or the racist opinions of the public which only the council is equipped to challenge. The general task of advancing anti-racism is thereby collapsed into the specific strategic priorities of the GLC, a model which regardless of its in-house effectiveness, is not universally applicable to anti-racist politics in non-institutional settings but which is none the less offered up as a general blueprint.

In this operation, the would-be anti-racist is abandoned in a political vacuum. Overdue attempts to fill it are made in the practical instructions which follow. These urge concrete action appropriate to tackling the various manifestations of racism in different areas of life. The action proposed is, however, disappointingly vague and general. For example, those concerned about the racism in the field of 'arts and recreation' are urged as an initial move to 'write to the chairperson of your local council's arts and recreation committee. Find out how many black and other ethnic minority people the arts and recreation department itself employs ...'. Local government institutions are not just being presented as the primary source of anti-racist action and sentiment. In this model, the politics of anti-racism exists entirely within the circuit between them. The practical suggestions for furthering the struggle against racism in the media, a set of institutions over which local governments have no control, is exactly the same. Anti-racists are encouraged by the booklet to write or ring their protest in to the Independent Broadcasting Authority, programme controllers and editors. As far as health is concerned the advice is the same, though this time the letters are to be sent to the District Health Authority, the Family Practitioner Committee and the Minister of Health. The tactics are constant, only the target of the letters changes from issue to issue, institution to institution.

The unevenness of racism, its different forms in different institutional contexts and the correspondingly different forms of organization, tactics and modes of action required to attack it are simply not acknowledged to be significant. There are no priorities and no genuine strategic calculation. In this fight against racism, it would seem that any target is as valid as any other. Racism covers all society's institutions like a thick blanket of snow. Deprived of any overall direction and purpose anti-racists are invited to dig away into its frosty crust anywhere that tickles their fancy. A few carefully-aimed letters and an abstract

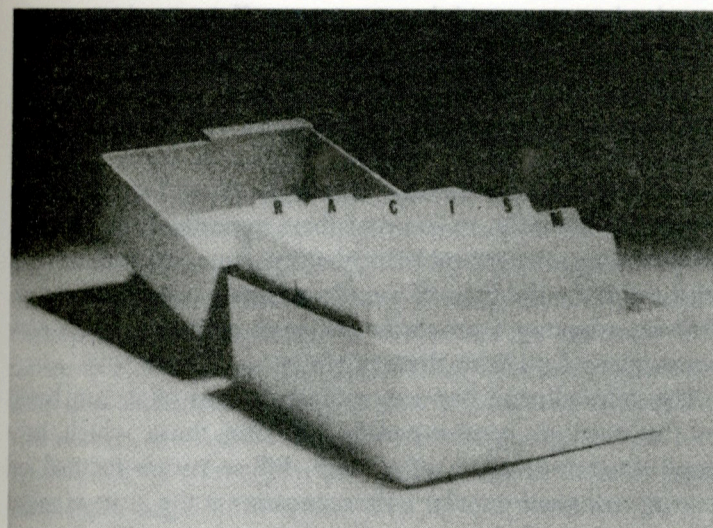
commitment to redress all forms of oppression are all the tools which are apparently required. This definition of anti-racism offers its recruits a choice between the mystical and the mundane. Unlike RAR, whose anti-racist vision was premised on the collective transcendence of 'race' in concrete settings and the continued celebration of that transcendence in politically infused forms of pleasure, the GLC's tactics relied on isolated and individualized acts. It is highly significant that writing letters and contemplating oppression in general are essentially solitary activities. The problem of what connects one anti-racist to the next is not recognized as a substantive political issue. Municipal anti-racism solved it by providing signs, badges and stickers through which individuals could convey their affiliation to others without having to negotiate through collective activity the extent to which definitions of anti-racism were actually held in common. These products may have created a form of solidarity between the atomized individuals who consumed them. But the basis of that solidarity and the subsequent content of their anti-racism remains obscure and fixed at the individual level. Anti-racism is for this model a personal quest.²³

I am not suggesting that writing letters or embracing the contemplation of oppression in general have no place in the struggle against racism, but rather raising the question of whether these forms of political action, which are among the more traditional options available, address the formation and reproduction of racism in the ideology, culture and structures of contemporary Britain. More fundamentally still, I am suggesting that these tactics have originated in a version of anti-racism which identifies racism, the object which it sets out to challenge, only in discrete institutional settings. The struggle against it within those institutional walls is then represented as the primary and sometimes the only worthwhile form in which bona fide anti-racism can develop. At its worst, this tendency can lead to the analysis of racism as if it were only a problem because its

irrationality creates an obstacle for the development of rational government intervention rather than because of the power relations which it organizes and legitimates. This is precisely the message of another GLC advertisement placed in a variety of journals and magazines during 1984 and 1985.²⁴ This ad featured a photograph of an open card index. The letters which make up the word racism are visibly protruding from the cards where the alphabet would usually be seen. The immediate caption for the picture reads 'When racism stops you from being efficient are you doing your job?'; beneath this is a paragraph arguing in favour of equal opportunity policies which ends with the sentences: 'If you're not providing equal opportunities, you're probably breaking the law. In a multi-racial society, you're certainly not doing your job.' The image of racism in the form of well-ordered, uniform cards in a neat index is only too expressive of the definition spelled out in more detail in the anti-racist pamphlet. The cards which appear to be blank are neat, clean and barely used suggesting the efficiency which becomes the primary issue in the supporting text.

Anti-racism is defined as both efficiency and good management practice and the supporting text mixes factual statements – 'A black school leaver will find it three times as hard to get a job as a white school leaver' – with questions – 'What percentage of your staff are black?' The effect of this ad is to suggest that racism and anti-racism are issues which can be tackled in terms of administration and management.

The text assigns no causal priorities. Racism and inefficiency appear simply to coincide. Is racism bad because it makes firms and governmental institutions inefficient? Will making them more efficient make them less racist? The ad remains silent and ambiguous on these points. Again racism is represented as a tidy and regular process or event. The moral and political dimensions of the struggle against it are subsumed by the suggestion that it



WHEN RACISM STOPS YOU FROM BEING EFFICIENT ARE YOU DOING YOUR JOB?

Finding the right person for the job is never easy. And mistakes are always costly. But how many employers let racism narrow their choice?

A black school-leaver will find it three times as hard to get a job as a white school-leaver – with the same qualifications and experience. Is your firm recruiting on real merit? Unemployment levels among black people are twice those of the country as a whole. What percentage of your staff is black? Black and other ethnic minorities are concentrated in the lowest paid manual jobs. Are you promoting staff according to ability and performance?

The 1976 Race Relations Act made racial discrimination unlawful – yet it goes on, blatantly, in too many firms. How many of the rest are actively preventing it? By the firm's policy? By advertising vacancies in ethnic media? By monitoring recruitment? By ensuring that no employee suffers racial harassment?

If you're not providing equal opportunities, you're probably breaking the law. In a multi-racial society, you're certainly not doing your job.

For further information contact: Ethnic Minorities Unit, GLC, Room 686a, County Hall, London SE1 7PB.



You've got the power to challenge the damaging effects of racism. Use it!

Figure 6 GLC advertisement, 1984

must be done away with because it is inefficient and in any case illegal.

TOWARDS A NEW ANTI-RACISM

Having explored contrasting definitions of anti-racist politics and drawn attention to some of their respective strengths and shortcomings, it is possible to identify some pointers towards what might be the basis of a more adequate conceptualization. Without adopting a programmatic tone or intent, I will now summarize what I think these might be.

The contradiction between understandings of racism based on the need to combat-neo-fascism and those which have emphasized anti-racism of a more diffuse nature focused on state agencies and popular politics remains at the heart of racial politics today. We have seen that RAR and the ANL diverged around this point, setting different priorities for their work as a result. In the above discussion of their achievements I have tried to suggest why the second, primarily anti-racist rather than anti-fascist, orientation provided the more appropriate route. These two different approaches to anti-racist politics should not be over-polarized. Yet they do indicate different modes of action, in particular, different positions on the role of state agencies in controlling neo-fascist groups and the violence they create. There are additional dangers in an anti-racist commitment which declares itself first and foremost an anti-fascism. Not least of these is the nationalist resonance which anti-fascism has acquired in this country (Barnett, 1982). But, at a more fundamental level, the emphasis on neo-fascism as the most dangerous embodiment of contemporary racism inevitably pulls discussion of 'race' away from the centre of political culture and relocates it on the margins where these groups are doomed to remain. To exaggerate the importance of their activities and allow them to become dominant in the definition of racism risks the

suggestion that racism is an aberration or an exceptional problem essentially unintegrated into the social and political structure. The National Front and similar groups become seen, not at one end of a continuum of political sentiment but as an embarrassing excrescence on the otherwise unblemished features of British democracy. They become a problem which can be dealt with effectively through the mechanisms which that democracy has provided in terms of policing and legal intervention. To pose the issue of racial politics in a way which gives these groups a disproportionate significance is also to reduce the analysis of racism to a debate over the extent of the continuity which ties their new fascism to its brown and blackshirted antecedents. This renders anti-racism vulnerable from the moment that John Tyndall, Patrick Harrington or whoever it is in the anti-fascist searchlight, begin to deny that they are not Nazis but plain, if over-enthusiastic, patriots.

The experience of the GLC campaigns examined above suggests that the pursuit of a general theory of anti-racist politics may itself be a misplaced and fruitless activity. Anti-racism will be deformed and discredited where it tries too rapidly to generalize a tactical or strategic orientation which has developed out of specific determinate conditions. Equal opportunities policies, for example, may be a necessary element in the formation of anti-racist initiatives inside the kind of bureaucratic agency in which an overall policy can be introduced and used as a baseline for political reform. However, these policies are not a sufficient precondition for the emergence of a substantive anti-racism in organizations of this type. The methods and strategy which they promote may be completely inappropriate in organizations which enjoy a less centralized or less rational structure. The abandonment of a general theory of anti-racist practice also requires the sacrifice of crude definitions of racism in the prejudice plus power formula quoted earlier. This may fit well into the rational bureaucratic conception of anti-racist politics but it is

unable to account for expressions of racial classification and structuration which are not behavioural or attitudinal or which rely on a populist response from the white subjects they bring into being.

Races are political collectivities not ahistorical essences. 'Race' is, after all, not the property of powerful, prejudiced individuals but an effect of complex relationships between dominant and subordinate social groups. If whites have shared the same job centres, schools, police cells, parties and streets with blacks in what sense can we speak of them having additional power? The very complexity of these relations and the extent of difference which exists between the meanings and structures attached to 'race' in different social formations are additional factors which undermine the possibility of a general theory of race relations and the sociologically inspired attempt to elevate that concept into an analytical rather than merely descriptive term. Even within a single social formation at a particular phase of its development racism will not be an unbroken continuous presence. It will be unevenly developed. Even where it is diffuse it will never be uniform. The different forces which form 'races' in concrete political antagonisms will operate at differing tempos and in contrasting ways according to immediate circumstances. Racial attacks may be higher in one area than the next. The manner in which racist sentiment is expressed may vary, for example, according to the extent and character of black settlement; in relation to the composition of a black community, its position in the contradiction between capital and labour, its gender, age structure or even its ability to communicate with the dominant group and the degree of cultural overlap which exists between white and black.

If, as has been suggested, the 'race' issue has been seen from the vantage point of sympathetic liberalism as a matter of policy rather than politics (Hall, 1978), the tasks of a more sustained and thorough-going anti-racism must include an attempt to

show how administration of institutional reforms (policy) can be articulated to a sound grasp of extra-institutional politics.

The development of anti-racist policy around which these reforms can cohere should be a cautious exercise. If they are to be credible outside the institutional settings in which they were dreamed up, anti-racist policies must not have the effect of appearing to reduce the complexity of black life to an effect of racism. This is a real danger when racism is presented sweeping all before it and the power relations involved are caricatured as an eternal tussle between victims and perpetrators. I have already argued in the introduction to this book that the role of victim is articulated into contemporary British racism. What anti-racism must do if it expects to be taken seriously by the black settlers in whose name it claims to act is to transcend this sociologism and move towards the longer-term aims of demonstrating the historical dimensions of 'race' and bringing blacks fully into historicity (Touraine, 1977), as actors capable of making complex choices in the furtherance of their own liberation. Finally anti-racism must negotiate, as RAR did, the political priorities which emanate from the defensive struggles and negotiations of racially subordinate groups. No meaningful anti-racism can ignore the content of these conflicts for it constitutes the raw material used to establish the meaning and limits of 'race'. These struggles may be both political and cultural and the manner in which these instances combine may result in new kinds of political practice which defy Eurocentric categorization.

The GLC's attempts to develop popular anti-racism tended to lack the active participation of large numbers of black people. However, on one occasion during its reign, the council did inadvertently blunder into an area of activity which was capable of generating massive interest among black youth, supposedly the most marginal of social groups. The Hip-Hop Jam of 9 September 1984 attracted over 30,000 predominantly, though not exclusively, black young people to a GLC event. The jam brought

together for the first time all of London's most celebrated rappers, dancers, DJs, mixers and graffitists on the South Bank site in the shadow of County Hall.

Never before had so much talent and potential gathered on one stage. And never before could so much have been achieved. . . . Bambaataa (leader of the Bronx's original Zulu Nation) had sent a personal message. . . . A message of peace and love and respect for one another.²⁵

The event, which had cost the council £5000 and had been planned around an estimated crowd of 5000, degenerated into a mini-riot after an ill-disciplined steward became aggressive and hit a member of the audience. Police were brought in to control the crowd and in the mêlée which followed the GLC was itself discredited in the eyes of many of these young people. It is impossible not to wonder what might have happened if their culture had been given some place in the council's definitions of anti-racist activity. The style of the campaign and its posters might have been very different. The expressive culture of the black community will be considered in detail in the next chapter.

NOTES

- 1 This point comes across strongly in the speech by Haile Selassie which forms the basis of Bob Marley's song 'War'.
- 2 *Melody Maker*, 9.12.78.
- 3 *Evening News*, 20.9.77.
- 4 *Sounds*, 28.8.76.
- 5 Michael Gray, 'Elvis', *Temporary Hoarding*, no. 3, 1977.
- 6 *Searchlight*, May 1981.
- 7 See the interview with Roger Huddle in *Camerawork*, no. 24, March 1982.
- 8 Don Slater, 'David King', in the same March 1982 issue of *Camerawork*.

- 9 See MINDA's own account of their work in *Photography Politics One* (eds), Terry Dennett and Jo Spence (Photography Workshop, London 1979).
- 10 There were four such letters in issue 4.
- 11 20.10.78.
- 12 The second RAR carnival took place on 24 September 1978 in Brockwell Park, Brixton.
- 13 See p. 41 of the *Revolutionary Communist*, no. 9, 1979.
- 14 Clough said, 'Nazism is just as much a disease as cholera, leprosy or smallpox and it must be treated to stop it spreading. I believe the Front must be removed from the life of this country and I will play my part in whatever way I can.' Rotten said 'I despise them. No one should have the right to tell anyone they can't live here because of the colour of their skin or their religion or the size of their nose. How could anyone vote for something so ridiculously inhumane?'
- 15 *Leveller*, 16.6.78.
- 16 *Leveller* 31.10.79. For evidence that RAC is still struggling on see *New Dawn*, no. 2, 1986.
- 17 *Broadcast*, 29.3.85.
- 18 See the NCCL's *Southall 23 April 1979. The report of the Unofficial Committee of Enquiry* (London, 1980).
- 19 *New Musical Express*, 7.3.81.
- 20 *Home Office Statistical Bulletin*, 20/82, 13.10.82.
- 21 *Daily Mail*, 1.7.85.
- 22 1.4.85.
- 23 This point has been made as part of critiques of Racism Awareness Training. See, for example, Ahmed Gurnah's, 'The politics of Racism Awareness Training', *Critical Social Policy*, 11, 1983.
- 24 The advertisement appeared, for example, in *Police*, the subscription-only magazine of The Police Federation.
- 25 See Tim Westwood's account of the Jam in *Blues and Soul*, no. 416, 23.9.84.