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**'Race Relations in Bradford'
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RACE RELATIONS IN BRADFORD

I was the Council's Principal Race Relations Officer from 1984-90. I feel it is incumbent on me to contribute to the current enquiry. However, I make this contribution as a private citizen and resident of Bradford, not as a Council employee.

I believe that in many areas, both geographic and socially, race relations do not exist in Bradford. I also believe that much of the responsibility for this lies with the Council and its failure to build on the work it undertook in the eighties. However, some of the responsibility must lie with the new communities.

To understand Bradford's current situation it is essential to have a historical perspective. The broad history of the various immigrations into Bradford are well explained in several publications. I will concentrate on the situation from the early eighties, and the Council's response to it.

The Council began moving towards a race relations policy in the late seventies, a significant step being taken by the Education Department in ending school bussing. A number of other driving factors led to the adoption of a race relations policy and dictated the ethos of that policy. Examples are:-

- The preparation of the 1979 version of a document called District Trends. This highlighted the growth of the Asian population which led, in turn, to the production of a report called "Turning Point" which outlined how the Council might respond.
- There was a cross-party alignment of young Councillors who recognised the need to address the area of race.
- There was the beginning of community pressure, particularly from younger second generation Asians and Afro-Caribbeans.

These changes coincided with national changes in thinking on race relations and an appreciation of the implication for local government of the 1976 Race Relations Act.

When Labour came into power in Bradford in 1980, both they and the Conservatives were committed to a race relations policy and they decided on an all party approach. They established a member body, the Race Relations Advisory Group, which was, in effect, a sub-committee of the Policy and Resources Committee.

The all party approach meant some compromises which led to the basic ethos of the policy. This can be summed up as follows:-

- The policy would be service led, not employment led. Changes would be made to improve the quality of service, which, in turn, would lead to better employment opportunities.
- The policy would be Directorate based but centrally monitored.
- There would be no central budget, any costs would be paid for by the Directorates.

- The Race Relations Advisory Group was established without any direct powers but with the right to inquire into or call for reports from any Directorate.
- The policy would not attempt to define the causes of racism but would seek to prevent the effects of racism and discrimination.

The style of the RRAG in the period 1981-86 was consistent. Each Directorate had to produce action plans which were reviewed. Major consultation exercises were mounted and the findings from these basically set the agendas. Employment and training were constantly monitored. Specific issues were picked up and examined in depth, often leading to significant policy changes.

When Labour returned into office in 1986, there was a feeling of dissatisfaction about race relations in the group. The Council was just emerging from the Honeyford episode. (Honeyford was a headteacher who had seriously upset parents at his school and many others in the Asian community by the views he expressed in various publications, most notably the Salisbury Review. He eventually settled for early retirement.) Criticism of the Council's race relations policy was more open from both black and white groups and it was also clear that some senior officers had felt able to downgrade the issue. This led to the breakdown of the all-party approach. However, neither party lost its commitment to race relations and, in practice, there were few disagreements.

Under the Labour administration the policy was reinforced and substantially upgraded in terms of staff and resources. On the surface this looked impressive but there were many in the Labour group who were not happy about the emphasis being placed on race relations.

In 1989 the Conservatives took control of the Council. They abolished the RRAG and the post of Principal Race Relations Officer, however, they did not abandon the policies. They left what was by now a significant officer structure intact and did not change the policies.

Were the Council's race relations policies successful in the eighties? Certainly not everything envisaged in 1980 was achieved by 1990. The early vision of an integrated society with equality of treatment had not been achieved. If anything, the socio-economic position of many black people in Bradford had deteriorated because of factors outside the Council's control eg. unemployment, reduced housing investment. But there were tangible successes. For example, the number of ethnic minority employees had moved from 1% to 6%, over 1000 staff were employed using section II funding, service take-up in many areas was demonstrably better, multi-cultural education was an everyday fact of life. These changes were substantial. Most senior managers in the Council had experienced the beneficial effects of the policy. They employed more ethnic minority staff and could see the benefits that they brought to the job. Race relations and good management were becoming synonymous.

The relative success of the race relations policy was due to a number of factors:-

- The focus on service delivery rather than employment prevented the almost obsessive emphasis on the recruitment process with its contingent

bureaucracy that had paralysed race relations in other authorities.

- The lack of direct power of the RRAG meant it could range across all areas. This was actually helped by the absence of budget responsibilities because RRAG did not become bogged down in wrangles over limited resources.
- The high level of support given by senior councillors from all parties signified the importance given to the policy.
- Both Chief Executives over the period gave high levels of support to the policy and the officers responsible for implementing it. Both Chief Executives were always willing to meet directly with ethnic minority groups rather than deal with them through intermediaries. This support gave the policy the legitimacy it needed.

The Nineties

Labour came back to power in 1990. They did not reinstate the RRAG but instead formed an Equal Rights Sub Committee. This had responsibility for race, gender and disability issues. This had a number of consequences. Race as an issue became more marginalized, people felt more comfortable discussing gender and disability issues. Also, as a formal sub-committee, it had clearly defined responsibilities which could not overlap those of other sub-committees or committees. This limited its sphere of activity and it concentrated far more on employment and personnel issues. The service focus was lost.

This was soon reinforced by the Carr Report. The Council had lost a number of high profile industrial tribunals on race grounds. John Carr was engaged to investigate the Council's policies and procedures. His conclusion was that, while there was room for improvement in policy and practices, the main problem was racial bias in the Legal Services Department. He named two officers, they, in turn, threatened litigation. The Council refused to give Carr indemnity should he lose in court so all reference to these officers was removed from Carr's report.

The Council had made a big public issue of Carr's involvement so had to be seen to be doing something while avoiding the key findings. An officer working group was established and eventually produced volumes of guidance manuals focussing primarily on recruitment, discipline and grievance, and employment. The Council had, in effect, internalised all its race relations policies and forgot its primary role in service provision. Good work was still being done but it was dependent on the efforts of committed officers rather than being pursued as a major Council objective.

Another damaging feature was the response to the publication of Rushdie's book. Bradford was labelled as the book burning town even though the book was first burnt in a Lancashire town. The book burning gave rise to and expressions of deep feelings of antipathy to the Muslim community. In a sense it legitimised criticism of Islam in the eyes of many.

The most significant event was the disturbances in Manningham. They did not constitute a riot like those seen in Brixton or Toxteth, but they were serious enough. Unlike Brixton and Toxteth, the rioters came almost entirely from one community and a significant amount of their anger was expressed in attacks on white owned

properties, particularly pubs and car showrooms. No-one can be certain about the cause of the riots. There was a trigger incident which was mishandled by the police. There were long-standing grievances about police treatment, there was and still is a significant number of alienated young men with no work and few qualifications.

There was also resentment about the perceived lack of attention given to the needs of poor Asian families. The Council had successfully obtained significant external funding through City Challenge, Estates Action and SRB which had been directed at the peripheral estates. Meanwhile, grant aid to private sector housing in the inner city had been severely curtailed due to government regulations. This was not a deliberate strategy by the Council, the Council did not have an urban regeneration strategy. In the absence of a Council strategy, the Housing Directorate developed its own regeneration strategy and devoted resources to it. This led to the concentration of successful bids for external resources to peripheral estates. The Council could be seen to be neglecting the inner city and this caused resentment.

The Bradford Congress brought in John Barrat to look into the disturbances. He prepared a detailed report analysing the causes of the disturbances and race relations in general. He did not feel that it was his responsibility to make specific recommendations but these could be deduced from the report without too much intellectual effort. What was clear from the report was the lack of political will and vision to address the issues.

This was reinforced by the Council's response which can best be described as laggardly and ineffective. When the response was finally published it was formulaic, unimaginative and unresourced. An SRB bid for Manningham was submitted but it was so weak and ill-thought out that it was rejected by Ministers and the Government Office. They chose instead the Council's second priority bid for another peripheral estate.

Since then, there has been some improvement in the Council's success rate. Manningham received a badly underfunded fourth round SRB bid, the New Deal for Communities addresses the needs of Asian communities in West Bowling and parts of Little Horton and Bradford 3 received a substantial bid in round 6 of SRB.

The situation today finds Bradford with race relations probably at its lowest ebb. The housing conditions are extremely poor for many Asian families, educational achievement has improved but the gap has been maintained, unemployment is significantly higher in the Asian and black communities and income is significantly lower. The schools review will significantly increase education segregation. The spatial segregation of the communities is becoming ever more marked and there is a seething resentment from young men, particularly Muslim young men, who are rapidly becoming an underclass.

Why has this situation been allowed to come about? A core reason has been the failure of the Council to analyse the situation over time and in not creating the structures through which this analysis could happen.

The extensive work I have undertaken on peripheral estates has illustrated to me that the similarities between disadvantaged groups of different ethnic origin are far greater than the differences, however, the differences are real and need to be addressed. The problems of disadvantage can largely be explained by a class

analysis leading to solutions based on this analysis. However, there are aspects which pertain specifically to race, most importantly the impact of discrimination, but there are also aspects which relate specifically to culture and history which can be both advantageous or disadvantageous.

I have constantly experienced a marked reluctance by all agencies to disaggregate their analysis on the lines outlined. Thus we talk about Asians or black people as an entity rather than an identity. Examples of this can be found in many areas, for instance, I repeatedly encountered this in education where analysis of exam success was always done on a white, black, Asian basis whereas an analysis which included Sikh, Hindus, Muslim, as separate categories, would have yielded far more useful and useable results.

The point being made is that if the problem is not clearly identified, then the solution will always be lacking. There are clearly problems or issues which relate to Bradford's Muslim community which do not appertain to the Sikhs or Hindus. In both class and cultural terms there are real differences. There are even differences in levels of racism expressed towards different groups.

Any progress must therefore take account of:

- a) class analysis solutions
- b) the impact of racism and discrimination
- c) the particular needs/issues which relate to culture/history.

A retrospective view of my experience in race relations has led me to a somewhat simplified paradigm of what is really happening. It can be looked at in three phases.

- 1 Recognising that there was a voice to be heard – late seventies, early eighties.
- 2 Reacting to the communication – early eighties to date.
- 3 Responding as equals, being honest and engaging in open debate – still to happen.

Phase 1. Recognition: In the late seventies there was a belated recognition that a number of, until then, alien communities existed in Bradford and that they were going to stay. The statistical projections brought this home as did the actions of younger Asians of all groups in resisting Fascist and racist political organisations. This led to the beginning of dialogue. The local authority went out to talk to the different communities which led to the report quite correctly called within the time context "The Other Man's Voice".

Phase 2. Reacting: The local authority began to change a number of its policies most visibly in education, training and employment practices. There were high profile decisions such as the introduction of halal meat, the continuation of some single sex education provision at Belle Vue School and a host of minor changes which are now taken for granted.

Phase 3. Responding: The local authority has never really reached this phase. The local authority has been either an ostrich or an apologist when issues have been

raised which it either disagrees with or is fearful of the consequences. The local authority has never reached the stage where it will say to any section of the black or Asian community "sorry, I disagree", "I think you are wrong" or "it is your responsibility to do something about this". It has often created problems by refusing or failing to respond, thus demonstrating a lack of real respect for these communities.

Members of the different communities have gone away thinking something would happen but the authority has profoundly disagreed, but not been prepared to say so openly, so these issues are either shoved under the carpet or are met with inappropriate responses.

Examples of the former are to be seen in issues such as Asian girls being kept home from school or Asian children starting school with little or no English. The local authority tries to bury or ignore the issues. To be more precise and to be faithful to my own analysis, this refers almost entirely to the Muslim community.

Examples of inappropriate responses can be seen in the profusion of voluntary agencies supported by the authority in the Manningham area. These agencies do things for and to the Muslim communities, they do not help these communities to develop. Views the authority do not want to encompass are often bought off by grants and community centres.

Ironically, one of the reasons for this failure in true dialogue has been the overhanging impact of the Honeyford affair. Honeyford achieved the opposite of what he set out to do. He closed down the debate rather than opening it up. Many people, particularly councillors and officers, became afraid of being accused of racism. People buttoned up, it became part of Bradford's culture.

Greater dialogue is essential but real dialogue will only take place in an atmosphere of genuine respect. The failure of many young Muslims to do well at school, and their subsequent failure in the jobs market is not simply the product of discrimination or the failure of the local education authority. They are also the product of class, of family, of culture and of community. Responsibility for both the problems and the solutions has to be shared across the board.

Local politicians seem reluctant to give a lead. In practice they have exploited and exacerbated tensions in the Muslim communities by the tactics both major parties adopt in inner city wards working on extended family loyalties rather than political issues or commitments. Perhaps they do so in the cynical political belief that involvement of Asians in the Council justifies their previous inadequacies to meet needs.

Some responsibility for the present situation has to lie with the communities concerned. The Sikh and Hindu communities are doing relatively well. Overall, their children are performing above average in educational terms. They tend to be better housed and are more likely to be in employment than are those of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origins. This can be explained mainly in class terms. Most of the Sikhs and Hindus come from the middle strata of their societies and are relatively well educated. Most of the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis, predominantly Muslim, come from rural, or more correctly, peasant societies. Many have relatively little education and hold traditionalist views on religion. This, coupled with complex family

relationships often identified with land ownership in Pakistan and Bangladesh, leads to a predominance of first cousin marriages which include one spouse from the country of origin. It is estimated these constitute 60% of marriages. This has a significant impact.

It has a major impact on population growth. About 1,000 Bradfordian Muslims marry each year. If most of those marriages were internal to this country, it would lead to 500 new households which would be likely to average 4 children per household. (This is based on experience from other immigrant groups where family size usually halves that of the first generation by the second generation.) With 60% of marriages involving a spouse from overseas, the number of households goes up to 800 and, with many of the spouses being first generation, family size is likely to be significantly larger. So whereas 500 internal marriages might be expected to produce 2,000 offspring, the 800 marriages are likely to produce 4,000 offspring. This leads to very rapid population growth. In the eighties the Council estimated that the Muslim population would reach 130,000 by 2030 and then level. Now the projection is for 130,000 by 2020 and rising. The number of separate households is predicted to rise from 16,000 now to 40,000 in 2020. This rate of growth concentrated in particular areas puts severe demands on the public services. It has other ramifications. Many of the children arrive at school with little or no English. Many of those who come from overseas have little education and do not possess skills which are transferable to a Western economy. The high family size means overcrowding will be a persistent problem.

Most northern cities and towns have responded to the shrinkage of their manufacturing base by a shrinkage in their own populations and an expansion of the service sector. Bradford has expanded its service sector but has not had population shrinkage. If anything, the population is growing. This requires the creation of more service sector jobs. However, the declining economic base makes this difficult, particularly in the retail sector. This is complicated by the fact that many of the service sector jobs require good social and/or oral skills. Phone centres have been attracted to Bradford because it has a regional accent which is relatively easy to understand. Unfortunately, many young Asians have spent their entire school lives in Asian-only schools and have developed their own Bradford accent with a distinct South-Asian sound. This is not what the phone centres want.

There are three other areas for concern. They cannot be definitely proven but there are growing indications that they are real. They are the desire for Muslim only areas, the change in attitude from immigrant to colonist and the apparent collapse of family control over their young men.

Not all Muslims in Bradford want Muslim only areas. Traders, retailers, restaurant owners want and need a broad-based custom profile. However, there is a drive amongst the mosque-attending older generation who would like sharia areas. There is also the minority of highly disaffected young men who want to control their patches. These two opposite ends of the spectrum desire the same thing albeit for different reasons and it is likely that they will support each other in order to attain their goals.

The second issue relates to the first. It is less easy to pinpoint but evidenced by ways of life. The first generation of immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh came here as "immigrants". They came expecting and wanting to integrate to some extent

into the existing community. The collection of photographs taken of the first generation by the photographic studio in Manningham Lane illustrates this. The first week's wages went on a Burtons suit and the men proudly displayed watches, pens and radios, mostly supplied by the photographer.

Immigrants come to a country expecting to change their lifestyles. They can and often do maintain key elements of their culture for generations, particularly their religion, but in many ways they adopt the dominant culture in such aspects as work, dress, leisure, housing and family composition. Colonists do not, they come into a country to displace the existing culture and establish their own. Colonists impose their language and customs. Once these facets are established, further incomers become immigrants accepting the society they enter.

From colonist to immigrant is the dominant pattern historically, however, this process seems to be thrown into reverse in Bradford. The Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities now expect to recreate the environment of their country of origin. They have settled in village patterns which reflect their origins and they constantly reinforce this by bringing in new members from the country of origin. This, in turn, leads to spatial and social immobility, communities which are internalised on themselves and are relatively self-sufficient in social and cultural terms although reliant in many ways on the economic and government resourced infrastructure.

This internalised focus does not, however, bode well for future economic development of the community. Reliance on an internal economy is very restrictive, particularly when the community is poor and has little disposable income.

The third issue relates to the apparent collapse of parental control over their young men. There are significant groups of young men who are heavily involved in drug dealing and abuse, gang activities and crime. They are often abusive and threatening to white people in their areas and appear in significant and intimidating groups in the town centre area. No-one within their own communities seem prepared to challenge them or call them to order. However, these same young men, for the most part, profess their belief in Islam, do not drink alcohol and the vast majority will accept the arranged marriage. Their parents claim to have no control over them yet these young men do not kick against certain fundamentals.

I believe that the parents do have some control, that they have a tacit agreement with their young men which basically requires them to accept the strictures on drinking and the arranged marriage in return for no interference in other aspects of their young men's lives. This simply reflects their priorities:- the commitment to Islam, the prohibition on drink and the arranged marriage are more important than other aspects. There is a parental fear, no doubt well-founded, that if they exert pressure in other areas then they will lose their sons' commitments in those three vital areas. It works for them but is a recipe for chaos in the rest of the community.

The above is an overview of some of the most salient issues. I have omitted much of the detail. The challenge now is to put forward some ideas as to how the issues are to be addressed.

Some two years prior to the 20/20 Vision exercise the Council part-funded work by the "Local Futures" group to look at a broader framework for long-term economic

development by integrating economy-facing policies with policies that aim to achieve greater social cohesion and improved environmental sustainability.

The authors of this report identified three key issues for the District that had to be tackled. They were:-

- Racial disadvantage discrimination and segregation
- Poor educational attainment
- Lack of political vision and commitment.

Some sensible recommendations came out of their final report, most of which have been incorporated into 20/20 Vision. However, out of the three key areas identified, only educational attainment came through. The race issue became “celebration of cultural diversity” and the lack of political vision was laundered out of the report altogether.

The issue of race is crucial. Given the demographic trends, Bradford as a whole cannot succeed unless its ethnic minority populations prosper. Some cities have demonstrated that they can succeed despite having a spatially segregated underclass. No city has succeeded when it has two spatially segregated underclasses; the poor Muslim communities in the inner city and the poor white communities on the peripheral estates – the real double whammy.

The most difficult question is how can these problems be addressed. I will not attempt to put forward detailed solutions primarily because I do not have them and the details need to be generated by a partnership of all the interested parties. However, the key to setting up a process which may lead to progress, rather than the current regression, is to focus publicly on the issue of race and race relations for Bradford’s future.

This means dissociating the issue of race from the quagmire of equal rights. Race relations in Bradford supersede refinements to concepts of equality; they are social and economic imperatives. Irrespective of the moral arguments, if Bradford’s black and Asian populations do not succeed then Bradford as a whole will fail, falling into ever greater social and economic malaise.

There has to be a clear political focus on the issue of race, a strategy has to be developed to tackle the issues, this needs to be co-ordinated, there needs to be a focus on service delivery and there needs to be an openness and willingness to debate the difficult issues.

There is a good example which is the Housing Departments work on race and housing. There are numerous bad examples, for example, the schools restructure and the total disregard for the race dimensions of it., which amounts to institutional racism. Another example is the lack of co-ordination and strategy for inner city regeneration. There is a hotch potch of externally funded programmes, often decided upon by short-term political intrigues, which are in danger of dissipating resources in piecemeal, unco-ordinated activities because there is no strategy, or real dialogue.

The current political decision-making structure of the Council does not provide a vehicle for addressing the issues. A reinvented Council for Racial Equality, under whatever name, will never have sufficient impact.

There has to be a new political body with sufficient authority and resources. This body would not be an implementing body but one that ensured that others developed the strategies and carried them through. This may be a dedicated Scrutiny Committee.

In order to go forward Bradford must take a step backwards. It must establish structures and processes through which the voice of the ethnic minority communities and those white communities which are most effected are heard. Bradford has allowed itself to slide into a situation where it speaks to a self selecting group of "community leaders" many of whom are operating on personal agendas rather than speaking for their communities. It will be difficult and time consuming. It will also be expensive because there is no point undertaking the exercise unless there is a commitment to resource the outcome of such a process.

The only physical product of the report into the disturbances in Manningham has been an unnecessary and underused one stop shop. The current exercise is likely to lead to the same unsatisfactory outcome as it's two predecessor reports unless the resource commitments are made.

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