



# Here are the Facts

DAVE DREW, Senior Lecturer in statistics at Sheffield City Polytechnic, highlights some recent research findings which indicate why there is so much concern about police - community relations.

- Psychological tests carried out on police recruits and probationer constables shows that they are more conservative and authoritarian than those of comparative socio-economic status and tend to have hostile attitudes towards "coloured" people.

(Ref: Coleman & Goreman).

- A Home Office study showed that for racial attacks blacks are 36 times more likely and Asians 50 times more likely to be attacked than white people.

(Ref: Racial Attacks, HMSO 1981).

- In a paper to the Housing Management Committee of the London Borough of Camden, 65 cases of racial harassment were reported on housing estates between November 1981 and July 1982. These ranged from excrement being put through the letter box and verbal abuse to incidents of a more serious nature, physical harassment and stabbings. A white family in Camden now face eviction from their council flat for harassing their Asian neighbours. In the first case of its kind, Labour controlled Camden has served a notice of intent to seek possession of the flat. This represents a departure from previous policy which was to rehouse the victims rather than those causing the harassment.

(Ref: Camden Council, Sept. 1982)

- Very few prosecutions are made for incitement to racial hatred under the Race Relations Act 1976. Sir Michael Havers, the Attorney General said in 1981 that the offence, as it is at present defined, is extremely difficult to prove.

John Kingsley Read, Chairman of the British National Party, was prosecuted in 1976 for saying at a meeting, referring to the murder of Gurdeep Singh Chagger in

Southall, "Last week in Southall one nigger stabbed another nigger. Very unfortunate. One down a million to go". At this trial Read claimed the comment about niggers was a jocular aside and that the second remark did not refer to the murder but to large scale immigration. Judge McKinnon in his summing up said:

"He is obviously a man who has had the guts to come forward in the past and stand up in public for the things he believes in".

The jury subsequently returned a verdict of not guilty.

Since 1976 there have been only twelve prosecutions under the Act.

(Ref: Paul Gordon Runnymede Trust).

- In Southall in April 1979, 3000 police including units of the Special Patrol Group with horses, dogs, riot shields and helicopters defended the right of the National Front to hold a meeting in the Town Hall. The demonstration against the National Front was predominantly peaceful but was dispersed with considerable violence by the police. Blair Peach was killed by a blow from a police truncheon or similar implement and many others were seriously injured. Demands for an independent public enquiry were rejected.

(Ref: NCU 1980).

- In March 1982 the Metropolitan Police published a racial breakdown of statistics on street crime for the first time. (In actual fact these had appeared previously in written answers to Parliamentary questions but had attracted no interest from the media). These statistics showed the disproportionate involvement of black people in certain kinds of street crime.

Whilst these offences accounted for only 0.9 per cent of all crime no racial breakdown was given for other offences for which black people would undoubtedly be under represented.

However, more fundamental issues are at stake because the figures were based on arrest statistics which have to be very carefully assessed. Arrests represent as much the differential effect of policing as differential crime rates, heavy policing will inevitably uncover more crime. That the police allowed a crude equation to be made between race and crime shows a blatant disregard for the facts which would fail an A level statistics candidate. Whilst it is tempting to conclude that there is a lack of statistical expertise in the Metropolitan Police, it is more likely that this was a well orchestrated counter attack to the Scarman Report for which the figures provided a convenient prop. The police were using the statistics like a drunken man uses a lamp post, more for support than for illumination.

(Ref: Drew, Carr-Hill and Gordon, Heinemann Education Books 1983)

- There is evidence to suggest that discrimination on the streets is followed up by discrimination after arrest. Research has shown that black juveniles arrested in the Metropolitan Police District were more likely than their white counterparts to be charged immediately rather than referred to the juvenile bureau. The conclusion reached was that the most important explanation for this was the police perception of black youths as being more aggressive and antagonistic than white youths, which could affect police officers' decisions to make an immediate charge.

(Ref: London, British Journal of Criminology, 1981)

from Solidarity, broadsheet of Sheffield Campaign Against Racism