

## Indian Workers' Association Great Britain.

Summary Report presented at the Bi-ennial Congress in  
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We are proud to hold our Congress at a time when the National Liberation movements have dealt crushing blows to the American imperialist aggressors in Vietnam and Cambodia. We send our heartfelt greetings and salute those great fighters. The liberation forces in Angola, Mozambique and Guine Bissau have routed the fascist rulers of Portugal and are on the way to independence. The progressive reforms have been initiated by the people in Portugal. The people are on the move now and our hearts and minds are with the struggling masses.

At the same time, the world capitalist system is in no occurring deep economic crisis in which raging inflation, rising unemployment rocketing prices and inequality are the regular and inherent features. They have been unable to find any way out and are forced to admit as Mr. Dennis Healey did by saying, "Britain could be bankrupt". In addition to these the capitalists have created problems such as colour and religious animosity to keep the workers divided.

Indian Workers Association Great Britain have been working for the workers' unity, for the betterment of Indian immigrants in U.K. along with politicizing them as well. Indian Workers Association had worked for Indian independence, getting legal passports to Indians (before 1962) and now have been fighting against racialism, helped genuine strikers and campaigned for the entry of Kenyan and Ugandan Asians (with British Passports).

### Migration:

International migration has been going on from time immemorial with two salient facets; imperialist scrambling for territories and second to sell ones labour voluntarily or as indentured labour. The Capitalist system created significant movement of intra European international migration directly or indirectly. But the migration of the labour force has been regulated by the needs of the capitalists. So the immigration and migration should be seen at the international level with a holistic view. As 40 million Europeans migrated to the American continent between 1800 - 1930 and millions to the other countries. There has been migration forced and voluntary from the less developed countries to the industrially advanced countries as 15 million Italians and six million Indians left their homes. There are 12 million foreign workers in Europe now.

Indian labour emigration commenced in 1830 under the indentured (contract labour) system to Isle de Bourbon, Mauritius, Ceylon, West Indies, Africa, Fiji, Guyana etc. self motivated traders had already been in Africa, Middle East and Indo-China. The indentured contract labour and slavery were to meet the shortage of labour and help imperialist colonization of sparsely populated and undeveloped countries. Sir Metcalf wrote in 1803 "Labour is too scarce and too valuable to be applied to luxuries and refinements or to anything less solid or essential than profit - It can not, I fear, be justly denied that there is a great want of labour - The very idea that labour must be coaxed is a confirmation of that fact".

The recruiting was done from tribal areas of India and South India (Madras and Bombay Presidency). Later on small farmers and agriculturally allied people migrated due to poverty. Majority of the Indian migrants had been uneducated and unskilled, between the age of 18-45 years from rural areas. Though the overseas Indians generally displayed a disposition to retain Indian identity and have remained an unassimilated minority in the countries of new domicile yet they have been unable and less



willing to return home permanently. The objective conditions in India and have been compelling us to stay here and the indications are of permanent stay. Immigrants have never returned home except individuals. The people in India have never reacted sharply when Indian are maltreated in foreign lands.

### Racialism:

I.W.A.G.B. has been working for the workers unity and supporting and fighting against colonialism, exploitation, inequality and racialism. We have supported the working class movements and formed inter-racial solidarity committees to combat racialism. We pressurised Indian Government to issue legal passports to the Indians who were exploited by the racketeers by framing forged passports before 1962.

The coloured people have been in Britain for centuries and the Asians came here as students, seamen and later on individuals who worked as pedlars. The seamen settled in Liverpool, Cardiff, Tyneside and London etc. They faced riots as well. After the fifties, the Indians started arriving in good numbers (great rush in 1961-62). Initially they arrived here with a five year plan but they went on extending their temporary sojourn. The Indians are spreading out but at the sametime our identity, language, culture, social structure and racialism have helped togetherness and community life. The Italian, Irish, Jews and other immigrants also reveal the same pattern.

The poor, unskilled jews with no English faced hard times. The Irish were chased and hunted with the game called "Hunting the Barney" in Glasgow, just as the racialisists indulged in "Paki-Bashing" in London in 1971. The Surveys since 1956 have revealed latest as well as manifest racialism. The race riots occurred in Cardiff & Birmingham against the sailors, then in Nottingham and Nottingham and recently in Leeds. The Slogans of 'Control coloured immigration' and repatriation' started in late fifties; was included as voluntary repatriation in 1965 legislated and has culminated to slogans of forced repatriation in 1975. I.W.A.G.B. fought against all the immigration act since 1962 and is struggling to get the immigration act 1971 repealed. The Labour party which opposed 1962 immigration act, legislated the inhuman act of 1968 in 72 hours which was termed as "one of the most immoral pieces of legislation" by the Spectator. I.W.A.G.B. has always been in the fore front to fight against these racist and anti-Union acts and went on the streets to campaign for the entry of Kenyan, Ugandan and other British passport holder asians.

Racialism has been continuously used in parliamentary and council elections to catch votes and to split the working class. The march of dockers and smithfield butchers for Powell reveal the lack of political consciousness. The coloured people are the symptom of the disease and not the cause. Powell's speech of "Rivers of blood" and "a nation busily engaged in heaping it's own funeral pyre" made racialism a respectable weapon. The Immigration act 1971 with retrospective, patrial, non patrial and "Conducive to public good" clauses completely institutionalised racialism.

The P.E.P. and Trade Union reports have admitted not only the existence but the increase of racialism in every walk of life. The fiance ban (withdrawn last year) was another racist attack on our culture and on the freedom of marriage. The Entry Certificate system has strengthened prejudice and racist atmosphere because all the visitors, dependants, fiance, parents are considered liars and illegal immigrants unless proved innocent. Majority of the immigration officers at the airport are no exception to this. The coloured people are used as a scapegoat to serve capitalist purpose as Baran and Sweezy wrote, "It may be said that the very existence of a paria group is a kind of harmoniser and stabiliser of the social structure - so long as the pariahs play their role passively and resignedly".

It is prevalent among all stratas and the presence of the coloured people allow the false sense of social advancement to certain sections of the exploited white working class people and this self deceptive upward mobility helps to disrupt the class unity. The big losses benefit from it.

From housing to education, police and army, we face racialism. We have been demanding a strong, biting legislation against discrimination based on race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, religion and sex. The Race Relations Act 1965, 1968 were a good gesture but without any serious impact. The coloured people lost faiths in the act as well The Race Relations Board as it is for conciliation with no powers. The lack of complaints reveals 'no confidence'. Discrimination should be criminal offence, with subpoena powers and direct access to the courts.



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The Government bodies are the watch dogs of the State. The Community Relations Commission is another race industry whose direction has been to keep status Quo, do window dressing, channelise the coloured people into acceptance and thus kill the initiative among the coloured people. It is designed to suppress the genuine leadership of the coloured people. The commission has statutory, selected individuals. It's committees in the local and central level are dominated by the middle class coloured faces who do not dare to speak for their people. The commission should be composed of 75 per cent grass root representatives with real powers.

As it is a colour and class game so assimilation can not and will not happen. We are for 'pluralism' having harmonious relations and enjoying equal opportunities. Discrimination is an capitalist problem and demands radical change.

#### Economic Situation:

The present system is facing a serious crisis but it is not a world problem but is a capitalist system problem. The profits have increased manifold of the rich people but the workers struggle for wages is contained through a strategy called 'Voluntary social contract'. Millions of workers are low paid; that is, 100,000 families live on a income below the poverty line and 4½ million people are forced to draw supplementary benefits. Top 5 percent own more than 50 per cent of the total personal wealth and all company directorships are in the hands of few hundred people. There has been little re-distribution of wealth since 1911 as A.B. Atkinson writes, "It seems therefore that what redistribution there has been is not between the rich and the poor but between the very rich and the rich". The coloured people came at the bottom.

The National Health is in shambles and there is shortage of beds, staff and buildings. The status helps to get a good treatment. "The professional middle classes make full use of the NHS and the workers and the coloured people make fewer demands on it". It is run by the coloured and foreign doctors and nurses (55 per cent), but they have little chance of promotion and even 80-90 per cent coloured registrars work in geriatrics. The coloured doctors are kept away from teaching hospitals.

The housing situation is getting worse. About 900,000 properties can be called slums and for 500,000 properties, there is no alternative but bulldozer. Only 49.2 per cent households are owner occupied. All this is grounded on class basis. The coloured people are forced to live in deteriorated and inner city areas. They suffer racialism in buying mortgage, estate agencies etc. The Conditions are being created to aggravate the psychological feelings of personal inadequacy and inferiority but I.W.A.G.B. has been fighting against all this. Homelessness is a sign of housing inequality and inadequacy. These home and environmental factors affect the child, education and further progress. Poverty begets poverty in a vicious circle.



Trade Union:-by Gurnam S.Sanghera.

"Labour cannot emancipate itself in The White Skins where in the Black's it is branded"Marx.

To earn their livelihood the people work somewhere and thus cannot detach themselves from the objective situation.

The employment involves workers and the bosses, meaning wage negotiations and struggles for money and working conditions. In this way Trade Unions are directly involved in every work situation as Trade Unions are the pivot. So I must deal with the employment and Trade Unions in general and in relation to the coloured people in particular.

In Britain the total employed work force is 23,500,000 and out of this Indians are 176,375, West Indians 191,490 and the Pakistanis 76,440. The total foreign work force in employment is 607,310 which is about 2.5 per cent of the total working populations.

The working class suffers from exploitation and alienation as a whole. The unskilled and semi-skilled people are low paid, have poor housing conditions and suffer from various diseases. Thus very little education. Now the vicious circle goes on due to poverty as mentioned some-where else in this report. But the immigrants suffer doubly due to racialism and language.

There is widespread racial discrimination in employment as is revealed by the PEP report (Racial Disadvantage in Employment 1974).

Rather it is on the increase. The immigrants get the replacement low paid and dead end jobs. The coloured immigrants are working on Shift work (mostly night shift in textiles). They do the Hard Sweat jobs with no future prospects or promotions. There is little chance of getting work in a prospering and progressing firm. The coloured immigrants came here as a ready made labour with age range between 18 - 45 in the 50's and 60's. The Indians came from rural agricultural backgrounds with little or no industrial skill. Later on the educated (including doctors and nurses) and artisans started arriving during the Sixties.

The Indians went to the decreasing Urban cores of expanding industrial regions and reside in low paid areas. They are largely employed in manufacturing industry such as engineering and allied trades and general labouring jobs, Textiles, Transport, Health, Construction Catering, Clerical and professional occupations. But their place in the above Services is at the bottom. The skilled and Supervisory well paid and administrative jobs are the 'preserves' of the whites and are considered 'no go areas' for the coloureds. The white workers indulge in actions, threatened strikes if the coloured worker is promoted. For instance in July/August 1973 the dispute arose when ETU members refused to train a West Indian and 300 workers walked out. All the white AUEW stewards crossed the pickets. The district Committee took no action.

The dispute arose in Mansfield hosiery in Loughborough over the promotion of an Indian which resulted in Strike. Similar disputes arise in various industries. These actions expose the Bankruptcy of even trade union consciousness. Though workers minds are poisoned by the power structure, but still they have colonial attitudes. Secondly this arises out of white workers powerless ness and inferiority complex. Thirdly the fundamental cause is the indoctrination by the ruling class to divide the workers and deflect the class struggle.

The coloureds are considered unfit and incapable to hold any responsible job in any sphere of life though various excuses are put forward. There are restricted opportunities and inter-industry and social mobility is very limited. The coloured person is employed as a last resort when the labour is not available. One can rarely see a coloured face on bank counters, gas and electric meter readers not to say of executive managerial jobs.

It is alleged that corruption is there within the industry and the coloureds are compelled to give money or gifts to get an unskilled job.

Sometimes the gatekeepers and clerks turn away the coloured people seeking jobs.



During a time of unemployment or lay-off, it is the coloured people who suffer most and are made redundant with little or no redundancy pay. They are sacrificed and in the event of crisis they are counted as less than a human being.

The Employment Exchange is rarely used by the Indians to get a job. The Employment Officers do not send coloureds for a job where racialism exists, rather it should fight against the racialists. Secondly, it will offer menial and low paid jobs to the coloured no matter how well educated he/she may be. The coloureds get jobs through their friends or relatives. They have little faith in these Exchanges and they quote that the Employment Exchanges send scab labour when coloured people are on strike as happened in Perivale Gutterman factory in Greenford (Middx) in November 1973. The attitude of the officials is of the colonial type.

A similar thing happens with Youth Employment. Coloured youths are guided into poor career jobs even in schools and Youth Employment Officers are not bothered about the coloured youth. It is ten times harder to get an apprenticeship equivalent to a white youth (with equal qualifications). Youth unemployment is highest among the coloured people. It is about 16.2% whereas among the whites it is 8%. No need to sweep the problem under the carpet. Expose this hypocrisy of equal opportunity. The teenage unemployed reflect the prevailing racial discrimination and the attitude of the Youth Employment officers. The coloured people going through the British Universities also face increasing racial discrimination. Either they do not get an equivalent job or one which is below their intelligence and qualifications. This is becoming entrenched. The racialists may call it 'employability' personality, or say integrated character is required, yet it speaks of racialism.

The educated with higher jobs in mind may suffer from 'mobility pessimism' that is, it may be the result of an achievement value drive which has been blocked and this hindered mobility leads to frustration. Some employers and certain sections show paternalism instead of equality. I am against paternalism as it is tantamount to racialism. I do not desire our people to be treated like pet or less developed persons. We must fight for equality. The words spoken by Lord Kitchener C - in - C in India (1902 - 1909) expresses the present racialism. "However well educated and clever a native may be, and however brave he may have proved himself, I believe that no rank we can bestow on him would cause him to be considered an equal of the British Officer"

The coloured people suffer from deprivation and rejection. It is the coloured person who is not accepted by the majority of whites. The coloured person does not hate the white person but only their system, their racialism and discriminatory practices. The coloured persons detest the arrogance and the humiliating attitude of the white racist. As the dominant ideas are always the ideas of the ruling class, so the imperialist past and general socialization engenders false consciousness of feeling themselves above the coloured sub-proletariat. At least the presence of coloured people at the bottom gives them a feeling of satisfaction, superiority which can lead to division among the working class on the basis of colour. The coloured man starts thinking in terms of 'Trichotomous' system meaning 'us' workers, 'we' coloured and 'them' bosses. These ideas disrupt the unity of the workers, blunt the struggle and ultimately help to prop up the oppressive system. This racial exploitation is a weapon of the rulers. Their minds must be de-colonized then they will see the contributions made by the coloureds. 72% of the coloured adults are economically active compared with 62% of the whole population. Our people fill the tax and welfare coffers and yet they did not get any benefit for their children as they were in India. Millions of pounds were saved by various services due to the absence of thousands of children and wives. Rather, the British Government must compensate the people and the Indian Society who spent money on our ready made labour.

The Trade Union has passed various anti-racialism resolutions and the basis was laid in 1955 Trade Union Congress. Since 1955 Trade Union Congress has been condemning racialism. Jack Jones, General



Secretary of the T. & G. W. U. set out the broad outlines of T.U.C. policy at 1974 Trade Union Congress. He said "The General Council have given evidence to the Select Committee on Race Relations, we have been looking at employment. They very strongly expressed the view that discrimination - some open, some concealed - is wide-spread in Industry, and that whatever the law says, the main remedy lies in the hands of workpeople themselves. I am sure you will agree. There is no union affiliated to this Congress which supports discrimination. Many union representatives have been active in dealing with grievances and complaints. The T.U.C. Guide to Good Industrial Relations makes it clear that arbitrary factors such as race, sex or age should play no part in employment, and we stand firm for integration.

We told the Select Committee that the General Council were prepared to recommend that unions should take very positive action. That action is to promote an active, equal opportunity programme and carry that programme in our agreements with the employers, and so on to the shop floor. They welcomed this undertaking and they called on employers to make positive moves.

I can tell Congress that the General Council are going to carry out this undertaking. We will call on every union for full and active and detailed support. Our aim is equality and the end of disadvantage. Our aim is equal opportunity and an end of discrimination. Our aim is a free and fair society and this is part of it".

Although the T.U.C. did not oppose the Immigration Act 1971 by 1973 the T.U.C. recognised racialism in it and thus passed a resolution calling for the Act to be repealed. But all these noble declarations remain on paper and were never followed and implemented at every level. The T.U.C. have not worked actively for the positive work.

The AUE, EET.P.T.U., ASTMS and APEX passed anti-racialism resolutions in 1973, 1974. Various Trades Councils have joined in this as well. APEX accepted the resolution in 1974, "That this Conference is concerned at the inadequate response of the Trade Union movement to the problems of race relations in British Industry".

The above resolution is very true. Some are closing their eyes, saying there is no discrimination. Now every committee and Government officials accept that racial discrimination is increasing and the resentment, disillusionment and reaction of the coloureds must be avoided.

The coloured immigrants were brought here to meet the labour shortage and plug the gap. They were considered as migratory birds but the situation has altered. To keep a certain section discontented is not in the interests of society.

The coloured people are keen to join the unions. The Indian Workers Association Great Britain has always stood for the united and strong unions and has circulated, leafletted the towns to join their respective unions. They were asked to participate actively in the union affairs. The strength of the union depends upon the members. We do not want membership a ritual. The membership is higher where the union is strong and is also dependent upon the industry, job, nature and officials of the union, it's traditions and to some extent 'minority organizations' pressure. Only 60% of the white workers are in the unions. The membership among the female section is lower than the male workers. We are against ethnic or nationality based unions. The black unions will be a retrogressive step and anti-worker. We do not approve all black unions but the unions must put their house in order otherwise the blacks individualists and self-exhibitionists will issue occasional sensational statements.

Even a leading trade union leader of the AEU Sir William Carron said "it would be interesting to obtain detailed statistics applying to the grand total i.e. consumed by educational grant, national health expenses and subsistence payments that become immediately obtainable by the ever growing number of individuals who were not born in this country and who in no way contributed towards setting up a fund into which they so willingly dip their fingers. As they so succinctly put it they know their rights. It would be very acceptable to the rest of us if some small measure of appreciation and thanks were in visible evidence". (The Guardian 25th April 1967). Sir Carron has forgotten the contribution and no expenses of the coloured workers.

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The Indians have helped to form new Trade Union branches. The coloured people have shown real industrial militancy for the workers' rights. They can not be used as scab labour. They have shown complete solidarity with their white brothers in every struggle from Birmmids to Postmen and others. Even the coloured women walked out when two white women were sacked at Yarnolds in Wolverhampton (1975). This militancy of the coloureds presents a challenge to the employers and complacent, inward looking trade unions. The coloured people have used the strike weapon for their rights for promotion, conditions of work etc. In most of the strikes initiated by the coloureds, rarely have the white workers come out in solidarity. In the majority of places, the whites went on working and the trade union officials did little for the coloured workers. The Mansfield Hosiery in Loughborough, Imperial Typewriters of Leicester, Coventry Art Castings, Nuneaton, Perivale Gutterman, Yarnolds strikes reveal this bureaucratic and indifferent attitude of the trade unions. In the 'Turban on the buses' cases in Wolverhampton and Leeds, the trade unions role was of racist.

The trade union rules are not for the men but the men are for the rules. The coloured workers are losing faith in the white workers. But there is a case of Dagenham Ford workers coming out at the sacking of a coloured person. We need unity. The trade union ethic is workers' solidarity and their very existence is the symbol of conflict between the workers and the employers. Now the coloureds do not appreciate the role of the unions in many strikes. Even some local union branches are under the influence of the National Front. The role of the union and white workers in various strikes as mentioned in the above few cases help to strengthen their views.

#### Strikes :

The coloured workers have realised that they must fight for the workers and their own rights if they are to work and live with dignity. They have been forced to go on strike and in many cases, the indigenous workers have failed to come out on strike, with the coloured workers. This unfortunate split in many places has created misunderstanding and tension. Even the image of the union leadership is not very creditworthy among many coloured people as at Artid Plastics in Slough, Mansfield Hosiery Mills, Loughborough (1972), Imperial Typewriters, Leicester (1974), Coventry Art Castings, Nuneaton etc. The promotion of the coloured people was resisted by the indigenous workers in most of the cases, and the effort was made to keep them out of better jobs. Even concerning the wearing of turbans by the drivers and conductors on the buses was opposed by some indigenous workers and some local union officials as in Wolverhampton and Leeds. Everytime the union's central leadership hesitated and failed to condemn this sort of racialism in time and with force. Indian Workers' Association Great Britain branches helped these strikers financially as well as by mobilising the community through public meetings and socials.

Now the Asian women have shown their industrial militancy by going on genuine strikes in Hitchen, Wolverhampton, London and other towns. The Asian women engaged in cleaning jobs on Heathrow Airport work on shifts, are low paid and their union and other indigenous workers have shown little interest in their miserable and super-exploitative conditions.

#### Trade Unions :

The coloured workers say "Every time they have a fight against the employer, they have to give a double fight against the union's bureaucratic machine". Why do the unions enter into agreements with employers without consulting the workers?

The trade unions are useful and essential for the cohesive, collective action in the interest of the workers, within the rules of the present system. The trade unions are of the view that the interests of labour and employers are complementary whereas the coloureds see them as antagonistic. So the coloureds see the unions integrating into the structure of the establishment. Thus in the day to day work as well as during the strikes, the coloureds see the local union officials as disciplining agents of the employers and are understood to be on the side of the white workers. The coloured consider the union officials as proletariat aristocracy. The unions discourage the strikes and the Rank and File action. V. L. Allen has correctly written about the Trade Unions,