



Harsh words on the attitudes of police

Bitter and brief attack

WEST INDIAN community leaders in Sheffield are calling for a continued boycott of attempts to foster police-black relationships in the city, Home Office minister Timothy Raison was told yesterday.

They told him that in trying to develop a working relationship with the police in the past, it seemed they had been "colluding with the police in the process of harassment, repression and injustice."

In a document signed by Black Churches, the local West Indian Community Association and several other groups, they say: "The black community has been subjected to excessive violence, provocation and harassment and racial abuse under the guise of upholding law and order."

It is the first time that representatives of all the West Indian groups in the city have united in such an outright attack on policing methods.

Their bitterness stems from an incident in the Haymarket last summer and in particular from the arrest of a black youth worker who went to try to defuse the situation.

By ROBERT BENNETT

"In the past, we have worked with good faith and goodwill and have assumed the same of the officers who worked with us," they say.

"The irony is that Sheffield over the past years would claim to have good community relations based on a positive (albeit careful) working relationship."

But following the Haymarket fracas and what they call "the high level of prejudiced values, racist attitudes and opinions of a large number of police men and women who participated," that working relationship has been destroyed.

The West Indian community is particularly concerned at police attitudes to two issues — reports of racial attacks on black people and the treatment of black people who have been arrested.

"In Sheffield the police use every tactic to prevent relatives, friends, community leaders and solicitors from having access to people held in police stations. This is particularly so in cases relating to young people," says the document.

It also has harsh words for the local

Of the city council's equal opportunities policy, it says: "So far we have not seen any evidence that this is being put into practice and the council's positive discrimination policies do not reflect the concern they ought to be showing in improving the employment position of blacks in Sheffield."

On housing, it points to the greater proportion of black people living in inner-city areas with poorer amenities than white people and to the high concentrations of blacks in places such as Hyde Park, Kelvin and Park Hill.

Consultation with black groups is informal and left to a few concerned white administrators and professionals.

With unemployment among black youth increasing more than among whites, with concern over the under-achievement of black children in city schools and with the lack of understanding blacks meet they take their problems to welfare agencies, the document warns that there will be no solution to police-black relationships until the Government and the local authority is seen to tackle the other results of racism.

Morning Telegraph Reporter
HOME Office Minister Timothy Raison faced bitter attacks from Sheffield ethnic minorities yesterday.

Mr Raison, who spent six hours in the city as part of a national public relations tour, met officials from the city's council for racial equality, and spoke to representatives of the West Indian and Asian communities.

A group of young Asian people, scheduled to meet Mr Raison for half an hour at the Montgomery Hall, Surrey Street, left the meeting after only a few minutes, shouting that the visit had been a waste of time.

They said the minister should have visited Asian communities instead of merely speaking to officials who did not really represent those communities.

They wanted discriminatory legislation such as the Nationality Bill and proposed health charges for foreigners abolished.

They stormed out of the meeting because they said the Government already knew what the ethnic minorities in the country wanted in the way of housing, education and health, yet ministers persisted in being "incorrigibly racist."

Praise

Mr Raison later spoke to community policemen in Pitsmoor, an area with one of the largest immigrant populations, and told them he was pleased with the standard of policing in the city.

He said: "Compared with other cities in this country, Sheffield has a good record as far as racial attacks and troubles go."

"We hope that the dialogue between ethnic communities and the city council will continue, avoiding any trouble in the future."

Mr Raison said that he would like to see more policemen and women being recruited from the ethnic minorities.

"There are a few vociferous people who will go away saying my visit has been a waste of time, but that is not the case."

"My object was to become informed and I shall be reporting back to the Home Secretary."