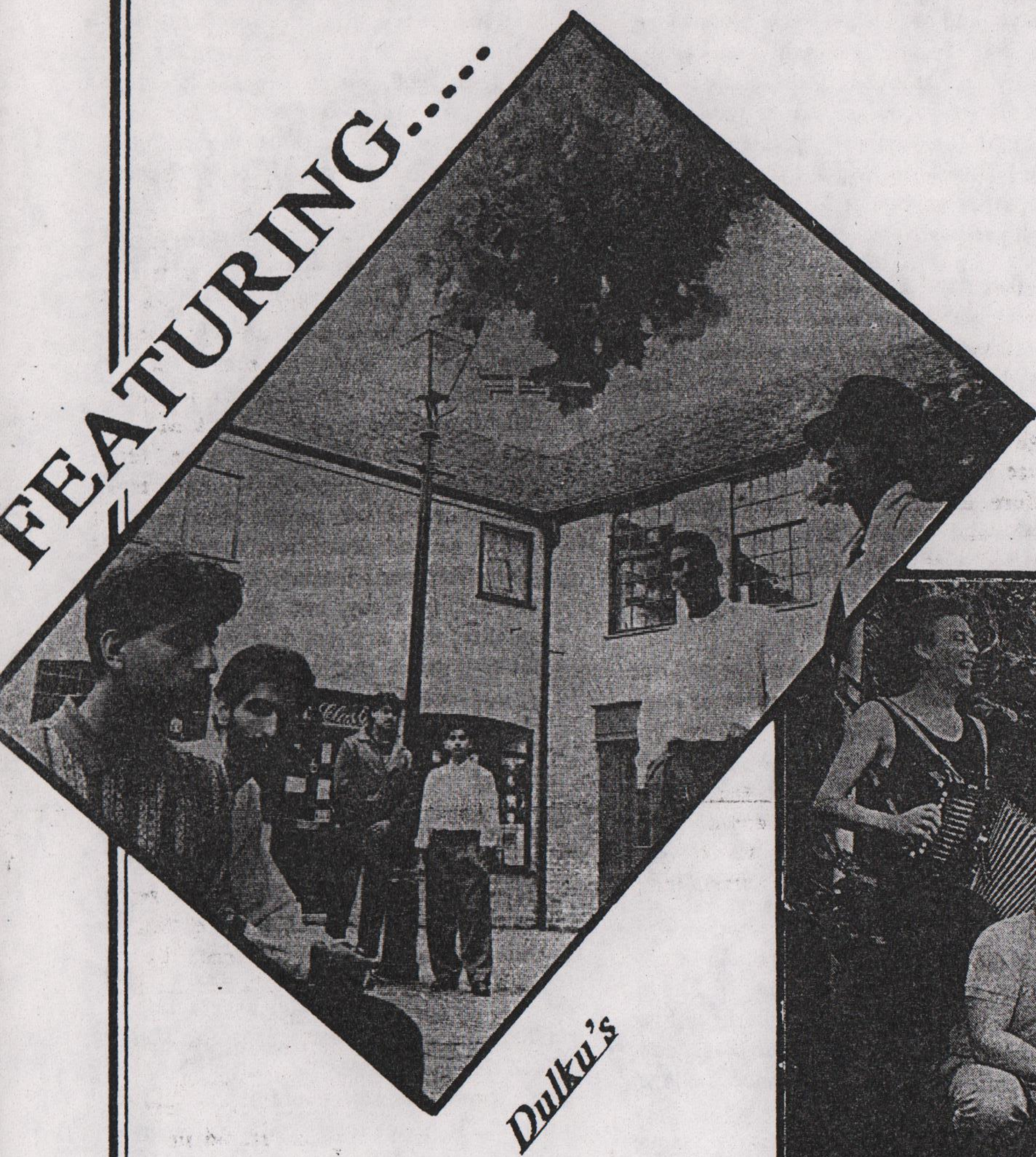


East Midlands TUC - Fighting Racism

Multi-Cultural Concert



Edward II & the Red Hot Polkas

Monday 21st October

Co-Op Central Suite, Derby

Doors open at 7.30pm

ADMISSION £4.00 (by ticket only)

Tickets available from East Midlands TUC 0602 - 472444 or 0602 - 603522

TUC

TRADES UNION CONGRESS

TACKLING RACISM MONTH OF ACTION

OCTOBER 1991

EAST MIDLANDS REGIONAL COUNCIL

BULLETIN No. 2

C.R.E. CALLS FOR CHANGES TO THE RACE RELATIONS ACT

No activity that is aimed at the elimination of racial discrimination can escape some consideration of the law. One of the duties of the C.R.E., which was set up in 1976 is to periodically review the effectiveness of the Act and where necessary make recommendations for change. Earlier this year the C.R.E. produced its second review of the Act and is calling for a number of changes which are of immense relevance and importance to trade unionists in our efforts to eliminate racial discrimination at the workplace. Amongst some of the things that the C.R.E. is arguing for are :-

- Industrial Tribunals under the Act to have the power to order appointment, promotion and reinstatement where it is appropriate to do so.
- Where the C.R.E. issues a non-discrimination notice it should have the power to prescribe particular changes in the practice of the employer.
- Levels of compensation for someone bringing a successful claim of racial discrimination should be raised to the same level as in Northern Ireland (Fair Employment in Northern Ireland) i.e. £30,000.
- That ethnic monitoring as a tool for creating equal opportunities should be mandatory for all employers. At present only Local Authorities have a statutory responsibility under Section 71 of the Act. ".....to make appropriate arrangements with a view to securing that their various functions are carried out with due regard for the need .a) to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination and b) to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups".

At present this does not apply to other major employers and this has led to some odd situations. In their consultative document the C.R.E. contrasts the operation of the Northern Ireland Fair Employment Act where in 1981 the Government announced that tenders for its contracts would not normally be accepted from firms unless they held an equal

opportunities certificate issued under the Fair Employment Act with the situation on the mainland where :

"From 1969 there was a clause in all Government contracts requiring contractors to conform to the provisions of the Race Relations Act. No attempt has been made to monitor this notwithstanding the fact that the White Paper on racial discrimination preceeding the 1976 Act recognised this as unsatisfactory".

The point the C.R.E. is making is that economic power has to be bought into play and whilst this is true of Government the same holds good for major employers, before there is going to be substantial progress made in eliminating racial discrimination.

Currently, the TUC nationally is co-ordinating responses from trade unions which will be presented to the C.R.E. For us in the East Midlands we need to be aware of the discussion that is developing around the proposed changes to the Act and it may be an idea as part of our activity for the Month of October to invite a speaker from the C.R.E. to a branch meeting to explain the changes that they are proposing. The C.R.E. can be contacted at 4th Floor, Haymarket House, Haymarket Shopping Centre, Leicester, telephone 0533 - 517852.

TUC - FIGHTING RACISM

EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Since our first bulletin a whole range of union organisations have either planned or are in the process of planning some activity to coincide with October's month of tackling racism.

- COHSE, NUPE and NALGO are planning a Conference on Racism in the NHS and NALGO is proposing its own detailed programme of activity, including a 'flash' on all correspondence during October, having the TUC display (this is currently being put together) at their September Regional Council Meeting and an information sheet for all Stewards to assist them in identifying racial discrimination and harassment. In addition to this NALGO is working on a number of other ideas.
- Charnwood Racial Equality Council is going to approach the E.C. of Loughborough Trades Council to explore some joint work on employment issues in the town.
- The GMB is planning an approach to a major employer in the East Midlands (more details on this in the next bulletin) as well as organising a region wide meeting of black members.
- The Nottingham District of the TGWU is devoting the September meeting of its Race Advisory Committee to its participation in the month of activity.
- K.F.A.T. (Nottingham District) has invited Councillor Shaikat Khan (Sheriff of Nottingham) to address its October meeting. (K.F.A.T. is the union recently formed by the merger between the Hosiery Union and the Boot and Shoe Union N.U.F.L.A.T. - bringing together workers in two of the basic East Midlands industries).
- The TUC is devoting its October Regional Council to the theme of tackling racism.
- Nottingham Trades Council is considering initiating an oral history project on the experience of black workers in Nottingham.
- Derby Trades Council will be inviting a speaker from one of the major black organisations to address its October meeting and is making arrangements for the TUC display to be on show at the Labour Club.
- The TUC Health Services Committee has developed its approach to the Trent Regional health Authority and two ideas are being pursued. One is the joint publication of guideline on equal opportunities within the profound changes that are going on in the NHS and the other is to jointly organise a seminar for Managers and Trade Unionists in the NHS.
- Nottingham has been chosen as the site for the new Headquarters of the Inland Revenue and in consequence of this the I.R.S.F. jointly with the Nottingham Race Equality Council has been in discussion with the Management over equal opportunities in any new recruitment. A very positive response has been forthcoming and under consideration is the arrangement of a number of visits in October by Management and the I.R.S.F. to black organisations in the City to explain what new jobs are coming to the City and how recruitment is to be organised.

FINANCE

We are getting within striking distance of reaching the target of £3,000 to finance the month of activity. Since our last bulletin money has come in from NALGO, F.B.U. ASLEF and SOGAT. The total so far is £2,146. Congratulations to those who have paid so far and a gentle reminder to those who haven't - let's have it as soon as possible!

Below we reprint extracts from a recent interview with Bob Purkis (National Executive Officer of the TGWU). The full text of the interview can be found in the July edition of *Searchlight*.

On a day to day basis what is the most common grievance that you come across concerning black workers?

The constant one is harassment rather than discrimination. Discrimination in Britain has become very sophisticated. It is not as open as I experienced in South Africa or in the southern states of America or France or Germany. It is a very clever, sophisticated way of discriminating. They would never say no black people need apply here, even though when you look around there are no black people employed and you wonder why. I went to a milk firm the other day and out of 1,000 rounds-people they never had one who was black and yet out of 450 process workers something like 72 per cent were black. They pretend that they have never noticed the difference and yet there are equal opportunities policies all over the place within that organisation.

Nearly every newspaper found it quite incredible that Bill Morris became our General Secretary but to many people in the union that was the most natural thing that could happen because Bill Morris was the best person for the job. But to other people it is unnatural.

There was a recent report on employment prospects of black workers in London Transport which showed the difficulty they faced in getting jobs at senior management level. Is this the kind of area that trade unions should be looking at?

Firstly, you have to get the issue on the agenda and into the debate. What do we mean by removing barriers? It is not about quotas or numbers, it is about removing barriers whatever those barriers

IN BRITAIN, IN EUROPE: THE FUTURE

may be. It might be the lack of qualifications because of the problems we have had within education, so that is a barrier. We have to talk to employers about proper training schemes, about proper education courses which are perfectly natural in America but completely unnatural here.

Structures

We then have to ask what structures we have to promote this. It is not just a question of saying let us set up a black workers' group, that is not the question. The question that we have to address is how do we promote it right across the board, how do we explain to white people what positive action is and why it is needed and that it is beneficial to everybody, not just to the few. Those are some of the structural things we can do.

What do you think will be the impact of 1992 in positive and negative terms?

If we get the aims and objectives of the European Community sorted out then there could be a widening of jobs and regional development policies which may give some of our inner cities some new regeneration. There could be positive views for black workers in terms of some of the legislation from Europe in health and safety etc.

'Foreigners'

Out of the 12 to 15 million so-called foreigners in the E.C. 85 per cent of them actually live in three countries, Germany, France and Britain. Now the majority of black people in Britain are not foreigners. The majority of foreigners in our country are from Australia, New Zealand, America, Canada - they are white. In Germany and France where they still have a second class citizen status, and more so now in Italy as well, we have a big problem looming up because certain EC committees are very influential, the Schengen committee, the Trevi group - the internal group of ministers who have linked terrorism, prostitution and drugs along with immigration, and so therefore if you are black you are either seen as a migrant or an immigrant. We therefore have to prove that we are neither, to be given the rights of everyone else. Certainly it is bloody ironic that we are almost going to have to carry a certificate, an identity card, just to prove that we do not actually need an identity card. I travel a lot on the continent with my job and on

holidays and I always get stopped at customs in France, going in and coming out. I get stopped at Gatwick and Heathrow and it is not just a question of looking at the passport, I even get asked where I have been, which I do not see has to do with anyone if I have got a valid British passport.

The other day I had an example of one of our members. She came from Portugal some 10 years ago and was worried about going back for a holiday and being allowed back into this country, even though Portugal is a member of the E.C. because she was born in Goa and therefore does not look Portuguese or English and would have to then go through all sort of proving mechanisms.

Watered down

It will affect the way that we live and our relationship in society irrespective of some of the protection that we might have. We are the only country with race law protection at the moment, so therefore I can see that being watered down rather than the other 11 coming up to our standards, which is a very frightening aspect.

I think though that there are other things which are very much more tangible. I have often quoted the fact that if we have two lorry drivers, one white and one black, and both applied for a long distance haulage job, then the employer would know that even if they both travelled at the same speed, they would never get to Madrid together from Manchester. The black lorry driver will be constantly stopped just to check, and then let on his way. So that is going to reduce the employment possibilities. We know that if you are black in the higher reaches of management or in some of the jobs with multinational companies, your chance of promotion and being moved around Europe is going to be less because it is much more difficult to get accommodation. It is not illegal to refuse to let your flat or sell your house on the grounds of your colour in many countries. So that is going to make firms think twice before people are given equality of opportunity.

Changed dramatically

If you go back 10 years to 1981, the position of black people in our society has changed dramatically. The participation of black people in society in 10 years has grown rapidly. I think that in the next couple of years we are going to see real

change based on nationality and immigration, the two words that are going to pull black people so much together in our society and have a very significant impact on the ethnic minority community in the rest of Europe. Because we are British, we have got full rights. Nobody can stop us doing things, but not only that, we have underpinned it with legislation, even though we need it strengthening. We have now got people who have a voice in society and a tremendous voice, and I do not just mean Bill Morris. We have four black MPs for example. We have many more black councillors being elected. We have many more young black people who are not first or second generation, they are third generation, participating, wanting a voice and having a say, and not fighting for equality, they are just demanding it. It is not a question that we would like to be treated equal. It is why are you treating us differently.

Regret

I see the 1990s in particular in this country being very exciting times. There are a couple of things I honestly regret because I travel so much, I regret that the Union Jack has been captured by the National Front and the extreme right wing, so we do not really have a flag, a rallying banner in that sense. The Union Jack, in other words the united flag, has been captured and I would like to capture it back. It is not for any stupid jingoistic sense, it is just to give people a sense of identity. National pride can be shared by everybody as opposed to nationalism, which is factionalism and fascism to a large extent. We have to do some of those very strong things to give us back that sense of British unity and British identity. Albeit that I want to participate in Europe. I also want to participate in the rest of the world. I do not want to participate in a Europe that shuts off Africa and Asia and says we are alright and sod the rest of the world.

Bob Purkis is one of the main speakers at our black members conference on the 12th October, 1991 at Leicester Town Hall.

TUC EXHIBITION

As part of the activities for October the Regional TUC is putting together an exhibition of Trade Union material on race and equal opportunities. This exhibition will be available for you to use at any events you are planning and can be booked on a strictly first come first served basis. You can also help us to put the exhibition together by letting us have examples of union publications on the theme of race and equal opportunities.