

Brixton's Blacks Stricken By Apathy

Second article in a two-part series

London - Only three blacks from the Brixton area bothered to show up at a recent "crucial" meeting of the Labor Committee for the Defense of Brixton. Since the first major revolts of April 11 and 12, the organization has met weekly to assess its efforts in helping with the legal defense of those arrested during fighting between residents and police.

The group's funds have slipped below the 300-pound-level (about \$570), and, among other things, organizers are working doggedly to replenish them. But the defense committee has one surprising foe.

Apathy in and around Brixton's black community poses a threat to the organization's effectiveness.

Many of those arrested were black. Yet blacks haven't displayed any mass support of the defense committee's apparently sincere effort to stand beside Brixtonians in court. How, then, are those most affected by the arrests to take advantage of the committee's moral and financial aid. And how can the committee possibly gauge the needs of blacks here? It is a gap that came closest to being bridged only after the disturbances were fresh in everyone's mind.

At one of the organization's initial meetings, more than 600 people - many black - made their way into two rooms at this same Lambeth Town Hall, said Bob Lee, a member of the defense committee. Brixton, part of the borough of Lambeth in south London, has a population of about 67,000 - 24 percent West Indian, 4 percent African.

The three blacks at this most recent meeting comprised less than 7 percent of the 45 people who attended.

It was on this doubly sour note that Stuart Holland, a member of parliament for Lambeth, opened the public meeting. "This is not a mass meeting," the MP said. "It's a pity it's not a mass meeting. But it can be constructive as a workshop."

Holland is one of the most militant of the 635 members of the United Kingdom's House of Commons - the elected lower house. He went on to mention the oft-

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quoted unemployment figures - 18 percent in Brixton, 12 percent in London as a whole. Holland also serves as a spokesman for the interests of blacks throughout the country. There is not one black member of the Commons.

London suffered, he said, from capital outflow. Holland, a trained economist, likened this "typical pattern" to the same thing in the United States. That outflow showed itself in the form of rising business inactivity and ensuing unemployment. The ripple effects were not restricted to the private sector, Holland added. "Public housing construction has virtually come to a halt."

Although Holland did not speak specifically to the lack of interest among Brixton's blacks, he hinted that this would be different if residents achieved a change in control. "At the moment, people have no control over their

lives," he said.

Holland described the "Key factor" as a lack of self-management. Allowing people to "do their own thing" is, for him, a specific part of left-wing teaching. A socialist policy is the "fundamental" solution, he said.

"What is to be done?" Holland asked. "In my opinion, there is no short-term solution in the inner-city area. I call for a major redistribution of resources within the system as a whole."

But until government attaches itself to such a leftist position, which is hardly possible, increased participation on the part of blacks in Brixton will have to rely on another stimulus. Given that many blacks in Brixton have turned to violent rebellion as a means of being heard, it would seem that they sense no constructive alternatives.

Sam Brown, a black member of the Labor Party Young Socialists, also commented bitterly on political indifference in Brixton. "There's a mood of apathy," Brown said. "It is much apparent when going on streets."

"The explosion of riots" raised everyone's consciousness, he said. "Now, it is difficult to get people interested in politics."

While the Conservative Party has not, understandably, attracted black support, the Labor Party hasn't fared any better. Bob Lee, who closed the Lambeth meeting, said blacks have no will to be political. "There's no credibility of the Labor Party in the black community."

Lee and defense committee supporters visit the Railton Road area - where the worst of the disturbances occurred - to spur some kind of interest in political outlets. Leaflets announcing this latest meeting had been handed out there. But, thus far, it's all been in vain.

He vowed, however, that the Labor Committee for the Defense of Brixton would continue the push to raise money for legal aid. And work must be done, Lee said, to give political direction to what blacks in Brixton should be fighting for.



UPI Photo
Albany, N.Y. - New State Labor Commissioner Lillian Roberts discusses her plans for New York's Labor Department during an interview with United Press International.

Mrs. Moses Promoted At Wachovia

Carolyn R. Moses has been promoted to trust operations officer at Wachovia Bank and Trust Company in Winston-Salem.

Mrs. Moses joined the bank in 1970 in sales finance and in 1971 became an accounting clerk. In

1977, she was named corporate action specialist and has been supervisor in the income processing section of the trust operations department since 1979.

Mrs. Moses is a native of Winston-Salem.

Ms. Watkins joined the

bank in 1966 in trust accounting. In 1976, she was named cost analyst and has been a tax analyst in the Personal Trust Department since 1973. A native of Lexington, Ms. Watkins graduated from Winston-Salem Business College.

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"I've done much more business than I expected."

Johnny Miller

ed because the unique product it sells, according to its founder James Mack. HRC is a management consultant firm that researches and advises corporations in the field of community relations, public relations and equal employment opportunities.

"Providing a service that is rather unique and needed in the corporate community is an asset for us," said Mack. "It was difficult to gain the confidence of clients when we first started out, but as we did job after job our reputation began to precede us. This is a result business."

For Mack, the objective is clear: "To get large enough to create jobs for other blacks and other females."

He also believes black businessmen of 1980 are laying the foundation that will one day give rise to a stronger black community. George Hill, president of Winston Mutual Life Insurance Co., got his start in business the way few blacks have the opportunity--inheritance.

Hill's grandfather, along with four other men, founded the company in 1907, selling industrial insurance. Today Hill heads a company that sells every major insurance plan, including real estate and investment in stocks, bonds and mortgage loans. He said that the main problem of his company is black patronage.

"We have found your middle-class blacks take on the values of the social

majority," explained Hill. "They" will come to you for a loan, but in terms of purchasing any portion of their life insurance with us--no."

Becoming a viable force in the community is what Hill said is the priority of his company and he added that it is the responsibility of all black businessmen to communicate with black people.

"Blacks are suddenly realizing that if we don't protect and patronize our own black business, then we will never have anything. We as black businessmen have not articulated that to our people."

In the communications industry is A. Mutter Evans, owner/station manager of WAAA radio station, who is deeply committed to the community of Winston. Evans, at 27, is the youngest person (male or female) to own a station in the state.

"We look at our responsibility as a threefold task; first to entertain, then to make people aware of things happening in their immediate communities, the state, and nationally through news and public service. Third, we hope to help further educate the masses through public affairs programming. The degree of commitment is deep because we believe it needs to be done," said Evans.

WAAA signs on at 6 a.m. and signs off at sunset. "We have found your middle-class blacks take on the values of the social

"Quality is the preferred item, and we go for it every hour we are on the air," Evans said. "Of course it takes some commitment from the community to tune us in at the times of the day we do operate, but I feel that the only thing we are missing is the full-time operation," said Evans.

The smaller minority businesses have the advantage of direct contact with the public while the larger ones overcome this obstacle by perpetual growth in both cash value and scope of investments. Interestingly, most of the heads of the larger businesses did not characterize themselves as "successful", while most proprietors of small businesses did.

Large or small, the entrepreneurs agree on the advice they would give anyone thinking about starting a small business:

- Have both practical and technical knowledge in the chosen field.
- Do a thorough research of the prospective market
- Have adequate capital and always get more capital than you think you will need.

Despite the problems they face, all the minority businessmen interviewed were happy with the choices they had made for themselves. They take pride in their work and have hopes for the future.

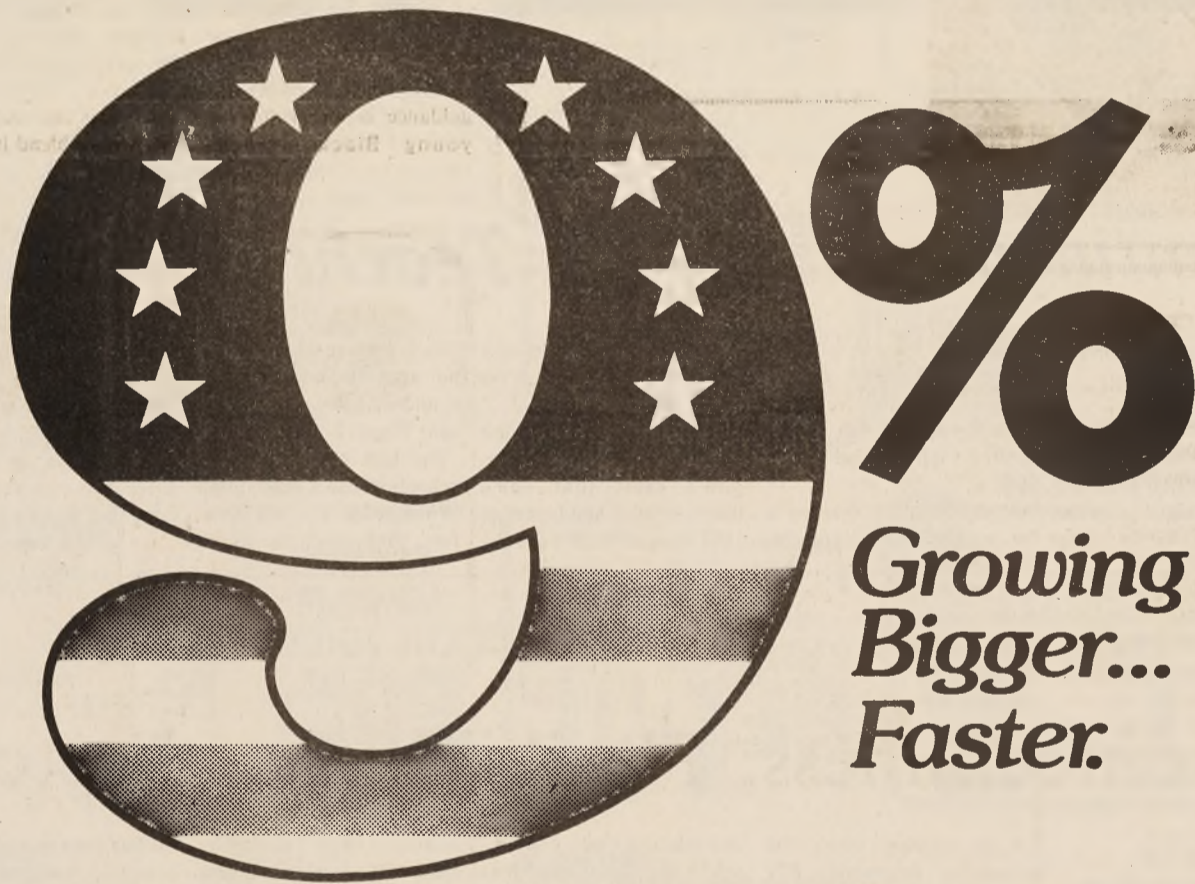
"It gives you a great deal of satisfaction," said one businessman, to know that what success, if any, you achieve is accomplished by you."

Hunt

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gressional Club, part of the Helms' political camp, said the election had not yet become the topic of discussion there. "That's a long way off," she said. "No one has mentioned the election here."

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