

Chapter VII

Opening Up the Road to Rome

(a) The Disciples Gather For a 'Luv In'

While we two minnows swam around the West Midlands pond looking to avoid the hooks that were being cast around, NATFHE's graceless fish were about to perform like imitation porpoises in the ocean of festivities at the union's Annual Conference in Brighton.

This conference was the swan song for the first woman President, Nan Whitbread, stepping down after her year's stopover in NATFHE's *White House*. Rising to the occasion in her Presidential address, she graced conference with observations on NATFHE and its most senior official. Commending NATFHE's achievements in combating 'racialism', qualifying her plaudit by saying that "Branches and Liaison Committees have work to do in bringing about equal opportunities...[as] part of the struggle for natural justice." Ms Whitbread "paid tribute to...national and regional officials...[for having] worked for us well beyond the call of duty." Adding lustre to this was her "vision of society that cares for those in need or distress...[which] is no more than NATFHE's policy as it has evolved over the past 10 years."

Little doubt attached itself as to how the President defined 'racialism' and who the 'us' in NATFHE happened to be. In the President's lexicon, the harassment of a Black woman merited the description of 'interpersonal problem,' so we were accustomed to what she meant by 'racialism.' We also had a very good idea who she meant by 'us' – the 'conscious warriors'. The terms used by the President rolled so easily from her tongue that we were almost convinced Ms Whitbread was taken in by these sentiments in spite of her own vision of NATFHE's performance falling short of any credible accomplishment in terms of 'equal opportunities and natural justice'. Most Black members would be unlikely to endorse Ms Whitbread's vision of NATFHE as a "society that cares for those in need or distress."

There was "a very special word of thanks to the General Secretary...for friendship and support." A hidden side to Dawson's persona was also revealed when she thought "Members of conference and national council may just...have missed one of [his] other qualities and it is one which has made the last year so enjoyable and rewarding for [her]: it is [his] combination of a sense of fun and enthusiasm." The President rounded off with a grateful burst of "Thank you – thank you very much indeed." The price had been paid for having a

plastic nameplate screwed to a door at headquarters. If Ms Whitbread had stayed President for longer Dawson might have developed a personality cult.

In excellent form, the President fluently denounced the Thatcher Government and prophesied that “A clarion call must surely answer the trumpet of death when the electorate snatches the body politic of this nation from sacrificial burial before the altar of monetarism by the Government of Undertakers and Embalmers Unlimited.”¹ An exceptionally eloquent contribution compared to the lack of literary skill shown in her letters to Bis Weaver – letters displaying a style of writing remarkably similar to Triesman's. Ms Whitbread's regret that “Very few things started in a presidential year are finished”² was soon to be shown as a truism but perhaps not in the way she meant. The Weaver debacle was to haunt the union well into 1989 and despite the aura of mutual-congratulation on show, the first woman President of NATFHE had not earned any laurels with her response to the clarion call of a Black woman seeking assistance from NATFHE's own ‘undertakers and embalmers’.

The scintillating experience of life in NATFHE conjured up by the President in the full glare of the media and the trade union and labour movement was in marked contrast to the depressingly unpleasant backdrop to life in NATFHE West Midlands. The jollity embracing officialdom and lay officers at Hamilton House and the general secretary's ‘fun and enthusiasm’ made no appearance in the West Midlands fiefdom ruled by sovereign liege-lords enthroned at NATFHE's head office. Nonetheless, the aristocratic lay officers administering the fiefdom were ready once more to hoist the banner of anti-racism in front of the conference assembly with the standard bearer of anti-racism coming from the spokesperson for anti-apartheid. The message this time called on delegates to boycott goods from South Africa and to block recruitment for all posts to that “malevolent regime.”³ The proposal on this occasion was delivered by Deryk Clarke, one-time West Midlands' regional secretary, who was soon to introduce an unorthodox supplement to anti-racism activity.

The usual type of workshop was on hand, ‘Coping with Harassment’, which set itself the task of identifying and dealing with racial and sexual harassment.⁴ This was organised by two West Midlands members: the member of the regional women's panel, who met Bis Weaver about her complaint in January and then disappeared; and the secretary of WMARC, who ignored Bis Weaver's request for assistance. Both representatives of bodies seemingly at ease with policy making but extremely uncomfortable when asked to take on real cases.* The

* It should be pointed out that the West Midlands' women's panel did take up the Telford case involving a harassed White woman; and were extremely critical of Day.

distance between NATFHE's illusory rhetoric and practical reality became increasingly recognisable..

Other lobbying went under the guise of resolving issues at Bournville College. The regional motion restricting discussion of the Weaver case at conference solely to the regional secretary did not make it to the end of the conference as it seemed not to apply to the Bournville branch chair, who discussed with Triesman 'the occasional difficulties currently being experienced', as Triesman was soon to describe the attacks on Bis Weaver in Bournville College. During this discussion, Triesman agreed to the chair's suggestion to go to Bournville to sort things out.⁵

Any confidence Bis Weaver might have had in NATFHE officials and officers had long since dissipated and her correspondence, retaining its inquisitorial style, became more assertive. NATFHE officers may not have noticed the change of emphasis, assuming they breached the branch and regional motions by reading the correspondence, then, if not, they were in for a surprise, as were head office officials, who were allowed to read the correspondence. The road to Rome was on the verge of opening up. On the other side of the barricade, NATFHE head office was changing direction; emerging from the feigned neutralist position it had tried, unsuccessfully, to lull Bis Weaver into accepting. NATFHE's game-plan was now damage-limitation insofar as Day and head office were concerned. * NATFHE head office appeared to be about to wash its hands of responsibility for dealing with the affair and drop it into the lap of West Midlands lay officers and the regional official for them to deal with. Head office officialdom was preparing a *Roman Prefect* retreat.

The scene was set for NATFHE to bring Bis Weaver's search for justice to an end. She had been cut off from every possible avenue of assistance in the union and increasingly isolated; and the branch was being mobilised behind the *kernels* as she was about to be thrown to the wolves or the Bournville dogs. The threat to discuss Day's 'report' in the branch was about to be confirmed. When confirmation of that intention arrived were they expecting Bis Weaver to come to her senses and: (a) submit to the wishes of the union or (b) take her leave of the union by resigning. Or, (c) did NATFHE expect management intervention: and (d) to transfer either one or both of them elsewhere; or (e) hang on until Gates departed on study leave; or (f) take disciplinary action against Gates. Whatever

* This might overestimate NATFHE officials' ability in forward thinking because, in reality, what was about to descend on all and sundry was probably due to NATFHE officials not having a clue what to do when a victim of harassment sought positive action against a perpetrator, who was a member of a significant political force in the union; and against the agents of an obvious cover-up - NATFHE full-time officials.

alternative came into play, Day and NATFHE officialdom would be out of the frame and be home and dry. So simple! * Another prime example of NATFHE's commitment to 'anti-racism' was about to unveil itself and natural justice was shown to be a strange bedfellow. However, it opened up the 'road to Rome' via an Industrial Tribunal.

While NATFHE's 1960s 'revolutionary brigadiers' were deciding the future for those whose "understanding was at a different level from that of activists," as Ms Whitbread once described rank and file members,⁶ Bis Weaver and I prepared to greet the West Midlands contingent's return to the West Midlands with a stream of letters, more for the record than to deflate the egos of the *kernel*s and their allies in the college and the Broad Left Coalition. Some of the correspondence would be awaiting delegates from Bournville college when they returned from the South Coast or would be well on its way to them.

(b) The Reality of 'Anti-racism' in the West Midlands Camp

The focus of the correspondence was on the activities in the branch with more observations on NATFHE 'democracy' and NATFHE's procedural bias. Bis Weaver's 'paper pounding' was directed at the branch committee as was mine, and copied to NATFHE head office, with other letters going to the liaison committee; the WMARC; and more significantly Bournville management on a related issue. The breach of confidentiality; likelihood of bias in the administration of union procedures; and unfounded allegations were the main thrusts of the letters. Other points were also raised to show: (a) dereliction of responsibilities on the part of branch officers; (b) rhetoric overshadowing practice; (c) the tendency to override procedures; and (d) the hypocrisy and double standards operating in the union.

For internal branch communications, the branch chair and branch secretary were the addressees but copies were sent to the branch committee so that no one can claim not to have been informed. The purpose was not only to get our observations on the record but also to give all of them the opportunity to address our observations and comments and to challenge them if they so wished. No one did but this appeared to have nothing to do with the branch motion. We had little doubt these letters would be read and confirmation would arrive to confirm that the correspondence was being read.

The branch executive had made integrity an issue in the branch statement, i.e.

* Bis Weaver had no intention of performing (a) or (b) and expected only (e). Whereas, she suspected NATFHE officials and officers might think she would leave the union. NATFHE officialdom, as revealed by Triesman, on the 12th June, expected management to act in accordance with (d) and (f)

challenges to the integrity of branch officers when in reality Bis Weaver was asking for accountability. She had stated (30th April) that “no Branch Committee member who acted impartially should in anyway feel that his/her integrity was questioned.” Integrity did figure in the correspondence now as did the branch’s double standards. In seeking advice the chair was asked: (a) “how [she] came to be in possession of confidential information regarding [Bis Weaver’s] discussion” with two liaison committee officers; (b) “why [she] decided to disclose confidential information to the Branch”; and (c) why Bis Weaver’s “conversation with those officers was presented in an inaccurate and misleading manner?” She also asked the chair - a branch officer with an obligation to protect members’ interests, what she intended to do about “people outside the College,...[who] might believe that the unfounded allegations made against [her] in that statement are true.” The suggestion was that “a retraction should be made as soon as possible.”⁷ A line was also dropped to the secretary of the liaison committee asking the executive to find out how confidential information never discussed by the liaison committee * came to be known to the Bournville chair.⁸ Needless to say no written reply was received.

The claim in the chair’s statement that at a ‘rough estimate’ “approximately 50 letters” went to the branch executive was pointed out as “grossly inaccurate.” Day’s alleged advice the branch to forward “all correspondence...directly to Head Office” was considered questionable. Noting that Day’s letter to the branch dated the 10th December 1985 gave no such advice, she asked when Day was supposed to have given this instruction and if it was “a written or oral communication.”⁹ The chair was also requested to provide “the names of the people timetabled to see A Day and who actually saw him” as witnesses for his enquiry. Still not having received a copy of the chair’s statement, despite two previous requests, she made a further request for a copy or the reasons for not being provided with it.¹⁰

Another letter went to the branch secretary asking her to inform Triesman of the number of letters actually sent to the branch executive/committee prior to the branch motion - ten plus seven repeats, which was “hardly likely to have a detrimental effect on the running of the Branch...unless the Executive are (sic) unable to cope with an average of 3.4 letters per month, or 2 per month” if repeats were excluded. She also made it clear that speed was not a requirement for her after finding out that the branch executive wanted an enquiry into the situation before the end of Summer term. She had been waiting for close on twelve

* The chair of the liaison committee, Teresa Daly, ruled out any discussion after being told by head office not to discuss it¹¹

months and it was not speed but justice that was required, “which [she thought] all NATFHE elected representatives would...be concerned with.” It was also “about the rights of trade unionists to carry out their contractual role without abuse and harassment and if they...bring a complaint, they should be given assistance by [NATFHE] Officers and their complaint...seriously investigated according to the stated Rules and Policies of NATFHE and according to the CRE’s Code of Practice for Trade Unions.”¹²

The letters from my pen focussed on hypocrisy and double standards for which NATFHE provided fertile grounds. The pressure applied to Gil Butchere by the branch committee on Gates’ behalf seemed an appropriate choice as a starting point. Neither Gil Butchere nor I attended the special branch committee meeting dealing with the allegations Gates levelled against her. A simple reason was available to explain this absence – neither of us was informed of the meeting arranged at short notice. This was another example of likelihood of bias entering into Bournville branch procedures or just plain old ‘croneyism’.

It could not be the spate of letters to the branch committee over the preceding four weeks that hampered the branch executive’s ability to carry out its functions efficiently as they were unread, or so it was believed, but whatever the cause it was only Gil Butchere and I who missed out on calling notices. After that meeting, in a letter to the branch chair/committee, I repeated what I had heard of the allegations laid against Gil Butchere by Gates; how her alleged act contravened trade union practice, namely, “approaching line management about another member of NATFHE;” and, as a consequence, the branch committee, having concurred with Gates, despatched two members to speak to her. Furthermore, Gil “Butchere was not advised [that]...this issue was to be raised at Branch Committee.” * A request was made to the branch chair to let me know if this information was correct. **¹³ Getting no support from the branch’s women’s group, Gil Butchere eventually took this matter up formally with the branch committee.¹⁴

Three days later, this was followed up with a request for the branch committee to “show some consistency...[because] when action was asked [for]...with regard to D Gates and N Cave on serious issues of trade union practices, the Branch Committee’s response was to support a motion...to evade my requests for action and to ask Head Office to set up an enquiry into my behaviour.” Dealing with the union practices of Gates and Cave once more, the committee was asked, “In accordance with trade union practices can I now expect [it] to

* A similar failure to notify of intended proceedings had happened to Bis Weaver four weeks before.

** As all my correspondence was destined for head office, I sent a copy direct to Triesman, so he could see, yet again, what those with ‘long histories’ were capable of doing

act upon my concerns.”¹⁵

Two days afterwards, keeping the issue on the boil, a résumé was provided of recent branch committee action against three members. The first member, a Black woman, Bis Weaver, had asked “questions about the Procedures of investigation” used to deal with a “complaint of abuse and harassment” and as a consequence had union rights taken from her; a call for a national enquiry into her behaviour; and a prejudicial statement distributed to branch members without being informed of the committee’s intentions. The second member, a White man, married to a Black woman, who wanted two branch committee members, Gates and Cave, to account for actions directed against him but the committee refused to answer his correspondence (took union rights from him) and made a similar call for an enquiry into his behaviour. The third member, a White woman, Gil Butchere, married to a Black man, was alleged to have acted in a manner detrimental to Gates’ interests and, the branch committee “agreed that her action may not be in accordance with trade union practices”, and, without giving her “the opportunity to challenge any statement made about her,” assigned two of its members, “to speak to her.”¹⁶

In another missive, a lack of awareness in race issues was highlighted as a matter requiring attention. The anti-racism meeting arranged in the business studies department was considered “an important step...to remove racism from educational” institutions but it was a surprise that “the Branch’s delegate to the Anti-Racism sub-committee, a specialist in the field of anti-racism and a Black person, Bis Weaver, was not invited to lead the discussion.” However, it was understandable, “given that correspondence between this member and the Branch has been restricted and...she has been denied representation within the Branch, I can understand why it would be difficult for the Branch...to ask her to represent the interests of Black people...[in] any discussion of anti-racism within any part of this Branch.”

The proposal to establish a link between NATFHE and the college’s ‘Race’ committee was also recognised as a “progressive initiative” but disappointment was expressed that the college’s specialist adviser was overlooked in favour of “someone else without expertise in this important area.” This particular link through the college adviser “would be invaluable for the Branch...[and give] the Branch the opportunity to make an ‘assault’ on...the expectation among a majority of people that Black people do not have sufficient specialist knowledge to act as advisers to White-dominated organisations [and would be] a positive step forward in undermining these unfounded images of Black people.” I also pointed out the “tendency...for members of the dominant group...to think they know more about anti-racism than Black people...[and] this is an area that the Branch could initiate

an anti-racism training programme...on the need to listen to Black people on how to combat racism.”

A plaudit was also given to a positive measure agreed at that anti-racism meeting, namely, “the need to monitor racist treatment in the college” and it was suggested the branch committee sent out a questionnaire to staff for them “to register any behaviour...they consider to be in any way discriminatory or undermining Black people...” The committee might also find it “useful to...act on these suggestions...but...any suggestion I make will have to await Head Office approval.”¹⁷ The not so hidden message was that this branch executive and committee were unable to take active measures against racism because for the past sixteen months their actions had been the very opposite of creating an anti-racism culture in the college.

Two days before, a message previously given in my letter to Cave in April was resurrected. I had written in that letter, “You must evaluate your actions carefully because, as any student of history will tell you, the erosion of the peoples’ rights to express progressive views, however insignificant an action may seem to the one doing it, is the first step towards the type of state that proscribes trade unions.” There was an added dimension now because since those words were written the branch has removed rights from two people that “effectively prevented any discussion...of an issue [with] serious implications, and the restriction of...rights is but one of them.” The parting shot was to suggest that “a course in contemporary history should be a priority for the majority of Branch officers and Branch Committee members.”¹⁸

Did committee members ever reflect on their actions in support of the *kernels*? If the branch committee could not see they were serving the interests of the *kernels* with the inconsistencies shown by these examples then nothing would. The members would also have to be obtuse not to see that ‘race’ was a common denominator linking together the three members against whom the branch committee was acting.

While attention was directed at the Broad Left Coalition’s garrison in Bournville College, Triesman was not overlooked as the architect behind the curtailing of Bis Weaver’s contact with the union’s internal sources of assistance; and threatening mayhem for her in the branch by the possibility of authorising the discussion of Day’s ‘report’. He had received a regular quota of missives in his role as Bournville’s *Hermes* and these missives also acted as information for him as Dawson’s ‘enforcer.’ This connection did not pass by Bis Weaver and she made observations on a perceivable link between officialdom, local committees and the Bournville branch executive.

Beginning with Day's letter of the 10th December 1985 to the Bournville branch requiring local officers in the branch, liaison and regional committees "not [to] involve themselves directly in the affair,"¹⁹ she drew a portrait of the 'spiral staircase' leading down to the cell in which NATFHE officialdom sought to confine her. Bis Weaver's next staging post was Dawson's instructions to the branch secretary "not to discuss the casework."²⁰ These instructions had followed Bis Weaver's critical letters to Day – also sent to Dawson, about Day's 'report' and raised the possibility that "the reasonable person might consider...[these] instructions...in effect meant the non-provision of information and assistance to [her]." Furthermore, "as a rank and file member [with]...no direct access to information other than through Branch Officers...it appears that [NATFHE's] services...were withdrawn from [her] because [she] had asked...to be informed fully about the" way her complaint was dealt with and for wanting the complaint properly investigated.

She drew Triesman's attention to his letter of the 2nd April 1986 where he wrote that he would "not respond to further letters...[as he has] no further comments to make,"²¹ reiterating this on the 18th April 1986.²² He was reminded that he had stood by this statement when he did not answer most of her subsequent letters, although they did "have a telephone conversation on the 30th April." She referred to Triesman's "instructions...to Birmingham Liaison Committee and the West Midlands Region not to involve themselves or answer [her] correspondence..."

Having shown a circumstantial pattern, she unambiguously stated that Triesman's refusal "to respond to [her] legitimate questions and...the instructions given to the...Liaison Committee and the Regional Executive, on which members of the Bournville Branch sit, seems to have set a precedence for the Branch to restrict [her] rights." In addition, "This instruction from Head Office appears to have authority to prevent only [*her*] freedom to have access to information and [*her*] freedom of expression" because these instructions did not prevent NATFHE office holders from having the freedom of expression "to issue a statement, make unfounded allegations, discuss and decide on...[her'] complaint, [and] to parade the statement at Region and Liaison."²³

There was an air of mopping up about this spell of correspondence although neither Bis Weaver nor I knew what we were mopping up for – but there was an air of expectancy of something about to happen, which can probably be put down to Phil Murphy's intervention. The emphasis on detail for the record was also pursued for us to engage in a whistleblowing exercise if the case went nowhere.

The expectancy created by this change of circumstance had prompted a tongue in cheek letter to Triesman at the beginning of the ‘paper pounding’ of the branch. After the motion sending all her correspondence to head office, Bis Weaver assisted the branch executive, lest it was incapable of operating effectively, by sending copies of her correspondence direct to head office. However, she thought it unfair to have to pay the postage for performing this service.²⁴ This light-hearted aside was to have a furtive and unexpected quirk, completely unconnected with it, occurring within a few days, which cast further doubts on any real commitment to Black people by NATFHE spokespersons.

(c) New Directions

NATFHE’s side of the divide had already decided on a particular course of action – in fact it consisted of two routes, that were probably expected to fuse into one. Bis Weaver would become acquainted with both routes in a few days’ time but not their interconnection. On the opposite side, Bournville branch’s advertising campaign on how to treat Black members, promoted by the branch statement, opened up two routes for Bis Weaver. A third route was to be instigated by Bis Weaver, herself, and the ball would start rolling in all three directions within the next few days.

NATFHE’s route one was assigned to the Bournville branch executive and it meant throwing Bis Weaver to the Bournville ‘dogs’. NATFHE’s Route two was the responsibility of officialdom to rid head office of the Bournville fiasco, created in part by the regional official’s malpractice and head office’s lack of interest in the consequences of the harassment of a Black member. This route was to cater for the possible involvement of management after the Bournville ‘dogs’ were let loose. * The dogs would then be looked after by NATFHE’s West Midlands region’s own resources – Day, the *kernels*, the IPDists and fellow travellers.

The routes opening up for Bis Weaver became possible by three Black people – Phil Murphy, Olwen Cupid and Bis Weaver herself. Phil Murphy had already prepared the way along Weaver route one on the 30th May when he raised her problems at the Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Committee. A decision was made by the city council for “the Head of the [Race Relations] Unit [to] present a report on an alleged case of racial harassment

* The release of the Bournville ‘dogs’ was a union issue. However, the actions of the *kernels*, union loyalists and the ‘neutralists’ were infringing the college’s educational responsibilities and it could be expected that management would eventually become involved

against an officer at the Bournville College of Further Education.”²⁵ This development did not reach Bis Weaver for close on three weeks. Weaver route three would open up on the 4th June when Olwen Cupid, a Bournville Governor, phoned Bis Weaver after hearing of her problems from a number of sources in the Black Community. *

Weaver route two had opened up three days earlier, on the 1st June, by Bis Weaver herself, bringing management into the frame again, when she wrote to the Principal, not about the original difficulties with Gates, which continued to be a NATFHE issue, but about the HMI issue. She disclosed how she pursued this issue once Gates’, Cave’s and Hartland’s allegations had been made known to her and she provided evidence to show the allegations were untrue.

Bis Weaver was well aware the Principal knew of the allegations – the reason for her being called to the Principal’s waiting room at end of April; and she requested management to take up this issue as these “unfounded allegations...should not be seen in isolation.” She disclosed her intention of contacting the HMI for him to confirm he met Gates.²⁶ Letters were subsequently sent to three HMIs seeking confirmation of her account.²⁷

It was unlikely that the Principal thought it anything but a nuisance and that the issues would drift into obscurity once Gates went on study leave because she failed to reply or even acknowledge the letter. Nonetheless, the strands of recent events were being drawn together taking the issues with Gates and his acolytes well beyond the initial difficulties.

NATFHE’s renovation team began to lay the foundations of NATFHE Route One on the 2nd June when Hartland, acting branch secretary, left a memo in Bis Weaver’s college pigeon hole, sent on behalf of the branch executive, inviting her to attend a branch committee meeting on the 9th June to discuss her complaint.²⁸ What was the branch executive referring to because months before Dawson ruled her complaint not for discussion and Triesman had been closing down avenues to her for some time? Perhaps Triesman’s threat of the branch having the go-ahead to discuss Day’s ‘report’ was about to be executed – executed being the appropriate description. However, the acting branch secretary was referring to events on the 29th April and the 14th May. Bis Weaver was again off work due to stress so it was left to me to deliver the invitation to her during my lunch break.

The branch executive displayed an incomparable obtuseness in expecting Bis Weaver to attend a meeting with the ‘dogs of war’ off the leash. Returning to the college, I sought out

* These sources had seen the Bournville branch statement or heard of it

Hartland and he explained that the complaint referred to “not having representation at the Branch meetings”, * so the branch committee had decided to allow her “a whole hour to put her point of view.” No mention was made that this had been decided by Birmingham liaison committee when the branch motion was being touted around for support with Hartland one of the touters. It was put to him that should she decide to reply to his memo “it will have to go to Head Office” and the decision may “not come until after the meeting [and] For the meeting to go ahead without her will be another example of the cavalier disregard for her rights...” Hartland, quick off the mark with a solution, said that “all she need do is come to the meeting” – showing Hartland to be slow off the mark when dealing with matters of principle.²⁹ Akin to saying, if she wrote to the branch executive it will be ignored; but if the executive sends her correspondence comply with it.

There was no reason for her to attend a branch committee meeting as there was nothing to discuss – all the committee needed to do was to set a date for her ‘right of reply’ at the next branch meeting. What would she miss in not attending the committee meeting other than a possible mauling? If she did attend the ‘Biting Dogs’ might have a field day.

Responding to the executive’s memo, Bis Weaver expressed surprise that a decision made on the 21st May ** was not relayed to her for twelve days but “in the light of past experience,” she considered herself “fortunate that [she] was even told about this one.” Pointing to Hartland’s mistaken terminology as she had “not made a complaint about the denial of [her] rights [to] written or oral representation...nor about the Branch’s decision to deny [to her] NATFHE’s services and facilities...[but she] was ‘concerned’, ‘distressed’ , ‘aggrieved’ [about a] statement...‘detrimental’...and ‘prejudicial to [her] interests.’”³⁰

On the day Hartland stretched out NATFHE’s foot to take the first step on NATFHE Route one, Triesman was kicking his foot into action to supplement NATFHE Route one and prepare the way for NATFHE Route two by intending to put in an appearance at Bournville branch. This visit was arranged at NATFHE’s Conference - an outcome of branch executive lobbying. The proclamation of a visit by Triesman to the college on the 12th June materialised in the form of an unsolicited letter sent, on the 3rd June, to Bis Weaver’s home.

Triesman announced his intention “to meet the Branch Committee at lunchtime” and should she “feel that it might be useful to meet... [they could] meet at approximately 2.30 pm.” In the event of Triesman considering that “any discussions...leads [him] to the

* The executive was certainly not with it because Bis Weaver had attended the 14th May meeting and represented herself but was denied a right of reply to the branch statement

** The branch committee meeting when the decision was made was on the 21st May

conclusion that there is anything...to say to the Branch Committee or [her, he] will seek an occasion to do so later during that afternoon.”³¹ Triesman failed to mention the visit was brought about by a discussion between the Bournville branch chair and himself. Was this omission due to Triesman not wanting to disclose that the person with whom he was discussing her complaints was the partner of the accused? Whether or not Triesman was hiding this, he should know better than deal with someone personally connected to Gates – as Day likewise should have known. Or, perhaps, the branch chair should have excused herself from any involvement as she should have done during Day’s investigation.

After months of prevarication and evasiveness, Triesman had suddenly decided to trek up to the Midlands, which aroused our curiosity about the reason for his visit. Still at home through illness, she had had enough of his written evasiveness and was in no mood to face a personal performance of his double-talk, so I offered to phone him.

I told Triesman that Bis Weaver would meet him although “she has nothing to say [as] it has all been said [but] she will be listening to what [he has] to say about the issues...” However, she was not willing to meet him in Bournville college but at her home in the company of two other NATFHE members of her choice and he was expected to come alone. Triesman was not prepared to accept any of these conditions and his ‘experience’ and ‘rank’ was mentioned as justification for refusing, saying that he “had never heard anything like this in all the different unions [he] had worked for.” Whichever unions these happened to be was of no particular interest to us; nor was his ‘experience’ or status. He then stated he was the “second most senior person in NATFHE and she won’t meet [him] except outside of the place recommended” – Triesman was flashing his rank, which likewise was immaterial and of no interest. If the reasons he provided proved to be insufficient, he went on to point out that he would be “assailed by three people” and asked “what if she wanted to see [him] in Northumberland?” His attention was drawn to the irrelevance of the ‘Northumberland example’ because her home was five minutes from the college and he would be driven there by me. Triesman, still objecting, added a throw away remark that “the union room at college won’t be bugged”, eliciting the assurance from me that neither would Bis Weaver’s home. This exchange brought a mark of sarcasm from Triesman, or I assumed it was sarcasm, when he said he had “come to the conclusion that there are a lot of strange people with unusual attitudes North of Watford.”

Triesman was reminded of her state of health, previously brought to his attention when she phoned him in April, but he had done “nothing to stop the attacks on her.” Now

“with no consideration...shown to her, [he] just write[s] out of the blue” to let her know of his visit to Birmingham and “if she wants to speak to [him, he] will be available.”

No progress was made on the venue but as far as Bis Weaver and I were concerned the visit had the hallmark of irrelevance stamped all over it. Changing tack I let him know of the furore the branch chair’s statement was provoking among the various ethnic minority communities, who wanted to know “what has been happening to her,” and I mentioned particularly Phil Murphy, whose name should have rung a bell with Triesman if he had read Mackney’s April letter. I told Triesman how angry Murphy was about being deceived by a lay officer who told him “the matter...had been resolved” and was also angry with NATFHE for doing “nothing to protect [her].”

Triesman had done most of the listening, except for the occasional riposte, but then interjected to say he “will consider changing [his] schedule” because of his concern “that Mrs Weaver is at odds with the Branch Committee.” This regurgitation of his January formula, masking the initial issue as Day had done, buttered no parsnips because being ‘at odds’ with the branch committee was not the issue – the *issues*, as pointed out yet again to him, were her “complaints against Gates, the irregularities of Day’s investigation *and* the actions of local activists.”

Triesman was also confronted with his failure to answer her questions; and tackled about Day’s defamatory statements. He remained mute on the first point but came up with a remedy for the second, which was to sue Day – an extremely costly venture as I pointed out to him. But Triesman was not finished because he brushed aside my comments to say “the Union can’t sue itself. Do you expect us to sue ourselves? You should publish that, it is very funny.” I agreed with Triesman that “there have been some funny moments in this case...[and he] *should* come to Birmingham and see Mrs Weaver and he will soon see how funny it is.”

At the end of that exchange, Triesman came up with the ‘solution to resolve all solutions’ - use Rule 8 – the rule to which Triesman tried to get her to sign away her rights way back in January. He then suggested that she met Gates after he (Triesman) had spoken to the branch committee. So this was what his trip was about?

When told there was no possibility of any meeting with Gates, Triesman said “There is no way out then through the union. An example of how NATFHE dealt with difficulties experienced by members in situations of continuous harassment - do as we say and accept what we do or be left on your own. As in his 17th April letter when he pointed in the direction

of the Local Authority, Triesman was pointing a path away from the union. Was this the purpose for his trip?

Triesman only had my word, as he put it, that Bis Weaver would not meet Gates, and insisted on speaking to her despite being told she was indisposed through illness. On so many occasions NATFHE officers and officials displayed evasiveness and underhandedness and, perhaps, the NATFHE view was that all people were afflicted with these deficiencies. Or, perhaps, we 'North of Watford' *wallahs* were too provincial to know what constituted the truth. One thing was likely; Triesman, the official in charge of casework, had not read much on sexist harassment or racist harassment aimed at Black and Asian ethnic minorities, otherwise he would be familiar with the effects of harassment on the victims.

For Bis Weaver, listening to the conversation on the extension – not quite a 'bug', it was only too obvious that any meeting with Triesman had no practical use whatsoever or so she thought at the time. She intervened and agreed to speak to him but on no account would she meet Triesman at the college - "a hostile environment [where] the union have alienated...and isolated [her]." Triesman eventually agreed to come to her home and he asked to bring someone with him, which she accepted provided "it is not a member from the Branch Committee." Triesman persisted in his determination for her to meet the branch committee but to no avail. He was nothing if not persistent – a pity the same level of persistency did not extend to defending members who were victims of harassment by fully investigating their claims.

In spite of knowing what she wanted, Triesman still asked what she expected from the union. Not pussy-footing around, coming straight to the point, she said, off the record, that "Gates should be expelled from the union", bringing the response that if the union expelled him it "would have to put out a statement why and management might take action against him." She seized on this to say "This logic was news to [her] but it would be known to Day when he carried out the investigation"³² and that "must have been the logic of Day's investigation." In order to protect Gates, Day had "accused [her] of lacking competence and integrity."

Triesman disputed that Day had made such attacks on her, so she suggested he read Day's 'report'. She mentioned that the 'report' was lodged at all levels of the union and she wanted a retraction published in *NATFHE Journal* stating Day's 'report' "has been withdrawn because the complaint was not properly investigated and that [the 'report'] is inaccurate." This requirement led Triesman to ask if she wanted "Day to get the sack [because]...it would mean his loss of job." His concern for Day, so evident in the way head

office refused to investigate Day's 'enquiry', cut no ice with her. She told Triesman she did not "have to make [the] judgement...[only] the complaint." As she was unable to work and "will lose [her] job at this rate,...why should [she] bother about Day's job." She pointed out that "the union avows the right of women and Black people to work without harassment" but Day's 'report' has given Gates "a licence to carry on as before" and he "has done one or two other things that must remain confidential at the moment." * Triesman accepted the need for confidentiality but still wanted to hear this confidential information, therefore, she suggested he contacted the Principal of Bournville College, as she was a NATFHE member.

Bis Weaver informed Triesman that she will accept the regional motion and asked "when will the General Secretary make his decision." The best indication coming from Triesman was that "the General Secretary has a tight schedule and it might be some time before he decides." Like a needle stuck on a never-changing record, Triesman recommended Rule 8 again, which he must know by now was not on her table.³³

The conversation was brought to an end by Bis Weaver agreeing to meet Triesman at her home but had no intention of following his moribund agenda as he was only too well aware. She realised there was 'no way out through the union', but was prepared to meet him as she had a few more things to say to Triesman in the presence of witnesses. Both of them were playing different games under different rules.

This three-cornered conversation showed the great divide between the type of justice Bis Weaver expected and the type the union intended to deliver in its determination to protect Gates, Day and head office officials, which was packaged as protecting the union. The lines were firmly drawn; there was no common ground for a solution since justice and right as she defined them could not be accommodated to the inequitable compromises required by NATFHE.

The same day, Triesman sent an agenda for his day out at Bournville to the branch secretary, even though it was already a non-runner. According to Triesman, the suggestion for his visit came from the branch chair and he thanked the branch for the invitation. His agenda would begin at 12.30 pm by meeting the branch committee and he was "happy to do so." He offered to meet Ms Weaver at 2.30 pm and Mr Gates at 3.15pm. After these meetings, he wanted "Branch Officers or the entire Branch Committee [to be] available at approximately 4 pm [and] If...possible to make any constructive proposals...to Ms Weaver

* Gates' allegations over the HMI visit; and the student-governor's allegations over the Equal Opportunities (Race) Coordinator's post

and Mr Gates.” What kind of ‘constructive proposals’ did he expect a committee dominated by Gates and his acolytes to come up with to deal effectively with Gates’ harassment and Day’s *Whitewash* ‘report’. In his telephone conversation with Bis Weaver, Triesman had initially shied away from visiting her home on his own lest the ‘second most senior official’ – Triesman himself, be assailed by three people and yet, with knowledge of what was happening at Bournville and at other levels of the union, he expected an ill Ms Weaver to face Gates and these acolytes in an extremely hostile union environment.

Noticeably absent from both letters was any reference to what the visit was supposed to achieve – for example, to resolve outstanding issues; * all that Triesman mentioned was “to have discussions with the Branch Committee about the occasional difficulties currently being experienced” - a gross understatement unless, of course, the Bournville situation was nothing out of the ordinary in the ‘anti-racism’ marshland that NATFHE officials and officers waded in.³⁴ Triesman’s journey to an outpost North of Watford was for a purpose other than the stated one. But what was it? Its purpose was still unknown to us.

REC members, or one in particular, did not abide by the REC’s motion but breached it in a most unusual way. Bis Weaver was the recipient of another piece of correspondence from a NATFHE source – three items in two days. The origin for this REC member’s action could be traced back to the 17th May, when Bis Weaver wrote to the regional secretary, sending separate copies to all REC members. That letter had dealt with the branch statement and motion; and other related issues. Just under three weeks later, on the 3rd June, one of the copies was returned but, as Bis Weaver and I explained to the regional secretary, “‘unfortunately’ the returner did not inform us of his/her identity as there was no covering note [and] Inadvertently, the returner also forgot to [put a] stamp [on] the envelope.” **

We asked the secretary to “assure the forgetful person that the Post Office decided not to surcharge the letter.”³⁵ There was nothing to identify the ‘activist’, who had not the ‘courage’ to reveal himself/herself – all we knew was that it was posted in Coventry. It appeared to us that the anonymous correspondent was obviously trying to tell her how little interest he had in the plight of Black people when under attack in the workplace. Our letter to the secretary was more in disdain than anything else and was undertaken to show how petty

* In June 1987, Triesman tried to claim that the purpose of his trip to Bournville was to resolve the situation³⁶ but there was little evidence that any ‘resolution’ would serve any interests other than those of NATFHE officials and officers

** The REC member returning her letter had put the letter, complete with the opened envelope in which it was delivered, into a fresh envelope with Bis Weaver’s address duly written on it, thereby, requiring a stamp

worked the minds of REC ‘activists.’ However, nothing emanating from NATFHE could surprise either of us anymore.

When Bis Weaver first unleashed a series of ‘paper bombardments’ on NATFHE’s well-fortified trenches it was not part of any grandiose plan of action; no grand strategy besides exposing the ‘all-conquering’ hero, Gates, to his colleagues while searching for information. Eventually, it did assume another purpose - part of a limited adaptation of Gandhian *satyagraha*, to confront lapsed or imitation ‘radicals’ with themselves, by showing the injustice of a situation and the effect on the victim. The objective was to enable them to recognise their current action or inaction as inconsistent with, in this case, the anti-racism they claimed to espouse and to appreciate the real situation facing Black members in NATFHE. Hopefully, they would become more inclined to listen to Black people and offer active assistance.

To assist this process, where possible, we decided to use publicly declared statements on anti-racism; anti-sexism and other ‘progressive’ issues, articulated by ‘radicals’ culled from recent back issues of *NATFHE Journal*. * Those implicitly acting against Bis Weaver by doing nothing might reconsider their positions and support her demand for a full and fair investigation. If this attempt to win over ‘radical’ lay officers proved unsuccessful, she could at least bring into the open their failure to act so that future victims of racist or sexist harassment would think twice before putting their trust in local officers, especially those operating in the Broad Left Coalition in the West Midlands or lay-officers at head office. This approach had begun with the President of NATFHE and the chair of the ARNP but did not work. Nor had it worked with the REC ‘activist’, returning letters unstamped, whoever he or she happened to be.

(d) The *Kernels* - From Walking on Water to Treading Water

The branch executive continued on its merry way seemingly oblivious, as were we, to what the NATFHE Number Two had in mind for his visit to the branch. The meeting to call a meeting to discuss Bis Weaver ‘not having representation’ ended with another meeting being

* Up until November 1985 when Day released his report, NATFHE journals, as they came through the letter-box went unread. This seemingly trivial point in the context of what was happening to her during these months proved costly at the Industrial Tribunal hearing in 1987. One item in the April 1985 edition would have been crucial to her case against NATFHE and if it had been noticed and submitted to the Industrial Tribunal it would have undoubtedly brought a different result

called to discuss whether she should have a meeting to deliver a right of reply. Although there might not even be a meeting for this purpose because Cave, in the chair, juggled with the idea of either a Special Branch meeting being the best procedure or, after informing the committee of Triesman's impending visit, of "not proceed[ing] with a meeting...and [leaving it] to Triesman to talk to all the parties involved." At this stage it looked as if her 'right of reply' was to be abandoned and branch members would never hear an alternative version to the one presented by the previous chair, now ex-chair, who also thought it "best to await...the outcome of Triesman's visit and then decide the best way forward." It would have been interesting to know what the liaison committee representative, Lovejoy, in attendance to oversee the liaison committee's decision for Bis Weaver to have a right of reply made of this fiasco.

Heather Stretton, back as branch secretary, produced Triesman's letter and his proposed agenda.³⁷ A member asked the purpose of Triesman's visit, which was followed by the secretary providing a resumé of the Triesman-Pattinson discussion at the Annual Conference – the topic being the 'difficulties currently being experienced'. There was some difference over who proposed the visit. The secretary, quoting from Triesman's letter, said the proposal came at the instigation of the branch chair, whereas, Ms Pattinson's version was of Triesman suggesting coming "to the Branch to discuss what was going on...[and] At the Conference [they] did not go into what he would be recommending but...[he] would come to the Branch to find a way forward in the dispute between Dave Gates and Bis Weaver."

At this point I intervened to correct that last description by reminding them "it was not a dispute but a complaint by Bis Weaver against Gates." This persistence brought a snippet of information explaining one aspect of Day's 'enquiry' not previously discovered. Cave picked up on my clarification to make an informative disclosure. Acknowledging that Day's "Report was confidential," he revealed "there was a complaint in the Report made by [him] against Bis Weaver...[and] there were three people involved." Cave was referring to the alleged incident concerning a student and himself, which Day had used as the basis for discrediting Bis Weaver's complaint by putting forward the "understandable indignation of Mr Cave and his colleagues" as an explanation for Gates' foul-mouthed abuse.³⁸ In her critique of Day's 'report', Bis Weaver dealt this claim a death blow by showing it to be utterly false.

Cave's admission raised a contentious point. Why did Cave not tell Bis Weaver before, during or after Day's 'investigation', that he intended to, or had, made a complaint against her to Day. Day had used this alleged incident to criticise her for not adhering to the

so-called ‘customary practice’ of "the first person to be informed is the one against whom the complaint is directed." * Cave’s disclosure put him in the firing line for what Day accused Bis Weaver of doing. He made a complaint against her to an investigating official but did not tell her as the “the first person to be informed...”,³⁹ and, therefore, not giving her the chance to refute the allegations. Cave now had two strikes against him because he did exactly the same a few weeks before in April when complaining to management over the HMIs visit without informing Bis Weaver of his intention. ** On both occasions, the complaints were false. Was this another case of an Orwellian pig being treated more equal than the rest of the farmyard?

An SWP member asked if Bis Weaver was invited to the meeting and Cave informed the gathering “there was a letter from Bis Weaver to Brendan Hartland,” who confirmed having filed the letter away to be sent to head office. Hartland did not explain how he knew it was a reply to his ‘invitation’ or even if it was from Bis Weaver. The branch executive did not have to draw pictures to confirm this letter, like the others, was opened by curious branch officers. Of course, this could not be admitted since it was in breach of the motion but, like the motion on smoking, it was open to interpretation to suit the needs of branch committee members.

The meeting moved on to Triesman’s visit and questions were raised by both SWP members. They asked what the branch committee intended saying to him and if he was coming to discuss Day’s ‘Report.’ To the first point, both Cave and Hartland were of the opinion the committee should wait until Triesman came. The second point received a firm ‘no’ from Cave, which left the questioner feeling “uneasy not knowing the purpose of Triesman’s visit.” He thought the branch committee “might not like what Head Office have to say [as] it might not be in [the Branch’s] interests.” The branch secretary also saw a problem in not knowing Triesman’s brief and disclosed that he had phoned before the May holidays but provided no guidelines for the meeting. ***

* This would have been an impossible task for Bis Weaver to have complied with as the student did not inform Bis Weaver of any intention to complain against Cave because the student was not considering such a complaint. (See Chap 7 Sect f) The student mentioned by Day in his ‘report’ made a statement to management at the end of June 1986 showing the allegations Cave made against Bis Weaver had no substance – perhaps the *kernel*s and the regional official never thought that a student, in this case a Black mature student, would hear of the allegation or be prepared to stand up for what was right

** Cave would do this again in December 1986 in what became known as the *Beider affair* (See Chap XI Sect c)

*** If Triesman did phone before the holidays, this meant he had decided to go to Bournville branch prior to speaking to Ms Pattinson at NATFHE’s Annual Conference

The ex-Chair, undoubtedly drawing on her Conference discussion with Triesman, mentioned as matters of concern: (i) the branch and REC motions calling for a national enquiry; and (ii) allegations made by Bis Weaver against branch officers and the regional official. Triesman's starting point was the branch's call for a national enquiry; whether such an enquiry is possible; and if there is "any substance to the allegations" against officers. But thought it difficult to surmise what Triesman would do.

Gates expressed regret that "Bis Weaver was not at the meeting [as he] would like to know what she wants" – an obtuse comment because it had been spelled out consistently for months in her correspondence 'what she wants'. He was also unclear of the purpose for Triesman's visit because "there were "allegations against [other] Officers [and] there can't be a re-run in 45 minutes" and he would not go "through the original complaint as that had been investigated." If he had given any thought about it, that last comment was the whole point of what Bis Weaver wanted – an investigation of the complaint but this time a fair and impartial one.

Cave described the visit as "not an investigation but a preliminary to seek clarification." According to the branch secretary, these preliminaries covered the regional motion with its recommendation of 50% Black participation and Triesman was coming to discuss this "because the Regional decision [motion] carries a lot of weight." He would: (i) look at the branch statement and the allegations; and (ii) "give everyone space to put forward points."

That wrapped up the discussion on Triesman's visit and it was obvious the reasons for his trip were as much a mystery to the branch committee as they were to Bis Weaver and me. It would soon become apparent his visit was for an entirely different purpose than resolving the issue in the union whether or not the branch committee ever twigged to its real purpose.

Downey, who had yet to say anything, took centre stage on the right of reply, which was the next agenda item. He claimed the credit for the proposal "to invite someone from Liaison Committee to Chair the next [Branch] meeting" because based on "an observation of the previous two Branch meetings that it would be impossible for the Branch meeting to proceed...[unless the Chair is] someone not involved in the issues." He proposed putting a motion for discussion at the next branch meeting for a liaison committee representative to chair the meeting for Bis Weaver's right of reply but this motion should be delayed until after Triesman's visit. Cave supported this proposal. At this rate the branch will be discussing this for ever and they still wondered why the branch committee was unable to cope with its responsibilities.

I did not disclose that Bis Weaver had already spoken to Triesman and made it clear she had no intention of meeting Gates or the branch committee – let them play their games while support for Bis Weaver from ethnic minority groups outside the branch and the union was gathering strength. The discussion on Triesman’s visit and the attempt to put off her right of reply was not going to mean anything and other events on the horizon would render the branch’s efforts irrelevant. The consequences from Triesman’s visit would create an entirely different situation and catapult the Weaver case into the public domain.

The committee turned to another issue facing the branch. The Bournville governing body was due to meet the next day. Gates, who along with Downey was to put the case against cuts and for improving conditions and services in the college, asked for guidance but could not resist having a ‘dig’ at branch ‘dissidents.’ He thought the branch should go to the next stage in the college’s ‘collective dispute procedures’ and saw the branch’s problem as “lack of consultation...[and] Branch activities...suffering from the activities of certain people.” Apparently, the branch lost out on the negotiations with management last time around coming “out with a weak compromise.” In Gates’ opinion “management think NATFHE can’t protect its conditions, whatever the cause for that demise is.” There was no need to be a rocket scientist to determine the identity of those ‘certain people’ causing ‘that demise.’⁴⁰

At least Gates confirmed that the branch executive was not up to scratch and Bis Weaver’s *Gandhian* approach of blocking structures that enforce unjust rules to make them unworkable appeared to be having some effect. This appeared to be the only activity in the branch that was working. NATFHE members in Bournville should harbour no complaints about that situation because a trade union refusing to protect the interests of its most vulnerable members while pampering to the interests of the powerful deserved to be made unworkable. Yet, if one solitary Black member and a couple of supporters could wreak such havoc on a powerful branch executive what chance did the union have against *Thatcherism* and the forces behind it?

After I reported the unenlightened, uninformed episode that was designated as a branch committee meeting to Bis Weaver, she decided to contact the regional secretary. Hearing of the possibility of Triesman’s visit having the purpose of seeking the withdrawal of the REC’s motion and Triesman’s own comment to her “that it might be some time before any action was taken,” she wanted confirmation that the REC would pursue it. This was a tactical move to keep NATFHE’s attention on internal matters, while waiting to see if the Weaver routes offered suitable destinations. In a telephone conversation with Evans, she

expressed the “hope that the motion...will be taken up by the General Secretary”; and informed him of Triesman’s comment to her. The secretary was asked to “urge the General Secretary for an early response...[because] her health is suffering as a result of the stress...which is affecting [her] capability to pursue [her] work.” If nothing else, the REC would now know, if not already aware, how the activities of Gates and his allies was affecting her health. He just listened without comment. She noted down the contents of her one-sided conversation and sent it to him for the record.⁴¹ By then, the regional secretary would almost certainly know that Triesman was intending to recommend the general secretary to reject the regional motion but he did not pass this on to Bis Weaver. *

The following day, the 10th June, the governors came together not expecting the fare that was to be served up to them and, when the meeting was over, Gates would have something else to mull over. Before reaching that unexpected moment, an item on the agenda concerning the Manpower Services Commission’s Code of Practice for equal opportunities was discussed. The Principal was to prepare a paper on the College’s policy by submitting it to the various sub-committees. This included the ‘Race Committee’ – the committee that the Principal, the chair of governors and several members knew had not been functioning effectively because of the efforts of one of the staff governors, supported by other staff members, to undermine the contractual role of the committee’s adviser.

When the agenda reached ‘Any Other Business’, an example of the College’s actual position on race equality was brought into the open as Olwen Cupid opened up Weaver Route Three. She released the news that Black and ethnic minority community groups were phoning her, disturbed at the news reaching them of what was happening to a Black lecturer at the college and asking her what she intended doing about it. The name mentioned in connection with the racist harassment of Bis Weaver was David Gates. This was a bombshell management and those governors aware of the situation had been seeking to avoid, especially the news of harassment going well beyond the confines of the college. For those unaware of the situation this must have come as a startling revelation as the accused sat among them; and Gates must also have been startled listening to Olwen Cupid, especially as he considered himself to be the inspiration behind her appointment as a governor. The Principal intervened to say management was dealing with it and the chair of governors decided, in the light of the

* On the 12th June, Triesman disclosed to the Bournville branch committee that he had been in touch with Evans, on another matter, and it was unlikely for Triesman not to have told Evans of his intention, since Triesman wanted both motions for a national enquiry withdrawn

Principal's assurance, to rule out any further discussion. *

The governors were being misled because management was doing nothing about it, continually abdicating its responsibilities, as NATFHE's regional official had described management inaction in his 'report'; probably the only accurate observation in his 'enquiry'. The chair of governors certainly knew more than the impression he gave. He knew of the allegations of the student-governor and it was unlikely that Phil Murphy's disclosures on the 30th May in front of several Labour councillors did not reach the chair's ears, especially as Phil Murphy was looked on as a firebrand in the Labour Party. The chair, who is kept up-to-date by the Principal, could be waiting, as was the Principal, for Gates to leave the college on study leave and this might qualify, in their eyes, as 'dealing with it.' If the chair, like the Principal, was under the impression the issues would disappear with the disappearance of Gates, he was as misguided as the Principal and their counterparts at NATFHE head office; or among local NATFHE officers – one of whom, Mackney, was attending this meeting.

When we heard the details of Olwen Cupid's intervention, we wondered what Mackney made of this and if he would be in touch with the West Midlands NEC member to keep her informed of developments; or the regional official; or the REC; or Birmingham liaison committee, or head office officials: or even his associates in the Broad Left Coalition. Judging by Mackney's actions when first hearing of Bis Weaver's complaint in June 1985, it would be reasonable to consider these people might well be informed of anything threatening to take the case out of NATFHE's control, especially as the REC had put forward a motion to keep it in the union. **

Mackney's action, or lack of action, as a governor was also brought into the limelight because he knew of the problems in Bournville College, and had done so for a long time, yet he kept quiet when it could reasonably be expected, as one of his functions as a governor, for him to bring to the attention of the governing body serious issues interfering with the smooth workings of the college; the well-being of staff and students; and the college's image, as Olwen Cupid had done. Olwen Cupid stood firmly behind the interests of a fellow Black woman, suffering, as many Black women did, harassment and intimidation in the workplace. The student-governor, in attendance at this meeting, had also been prepared to stand up to defend a Black lecturer.

* Information from Olwen Cupid and one other person attending the meeting

** In June 1985, at the outset of Bis Weaver's formal complaint, Mackney only contacted the regional official and two Broad Left members but the situation was considerably extended now and known by officers in these committees, by national officers and by head office officials

Olwen Cupid had known of the issue for only a very short time before acting whereas Mackney had known of it since 11th June 1985 – a year all but one day. If Mackney had acted in his capacity as a governor, knowing how serious he viewed the situation, it might have saved Bis Weaver a considerable amount of pain and suffering. Was he not familiar with the study in sexist harassment recently conducted by Birmingham feminists?

Gates, too, was given a lesson about solidarity among most Black people in the face of racism and would learn more of that solidarity when it reached far beyond the confines of Bournville, Birmingham, the West Midlands region and into the national arena.

Management was seeking to deflect attention from the seriousness of the situation. Olwen Cupid's exposé of harassment was distorted in transcription with the omission of any reference to racial harassment involving members of staff. The minutes recorded it as “The questions of an alleged dispute between a member of the full-time teaching staff and a professional association was raised but Governors having been informed by the Principal that the matter was under review agreed not to give consideration to the matter.”⁴² Another example of Orwellian newspeak! This ‘inadvertent error’ was raised by Olwen Cupid at the next governors meeting several months later and it was rectified to read “an alleged dispute between members of the full-time staff” – still no reference to racial harassment!⁴³ College management was as reluctant to acknowledge ‘racist harassment’ as an issue as was Day and NATFHE head office and its reason for doing so could be attributed to its vicarious liability in failing to act.⁴⁴

As was said in one of the three investigations into the Handsworth protests, “they (the establishment) cannot deny that they have had many previous warnings...but they conveniently forget. And when the explosion comes they express shock; they forget the warnings; they forget the monument of evidence of excessive racial discrimination and the fact that they did nothing to relieve the grievances....They could have been on another planet before the events occurred.”⁴⁵

On the day of the governors meeting, Gates, (negotiating officer) Ms Pattinson (women’s rights officer) and Downey (vice chairperson), with regret, tendered joint written resignations to the Birmingham liaison committee. They cited, as the reasons for their decision, the “considerable difficulties” faced by the “Branch and its officers...over the last twelve months, [which they] had sought to contain...within the Branch and to minimise their disruptive effects on the work of Liaison Committee. However, in recent months the problems have been raised within the [Liaison] Executive” to show its “inability to function as a Branch and [their] own inability to operate effectively as BLC [Birmingham Liaison

Committee] Officers.” They mentioned that “The issue was raised for the first time” at the last liaison committee, “when a specific request for assistance was made [but] despite some assistance being agreed...it has been evident that there is an unwillingness to provide support to a Branch in difficulties and to [themselves] as Officers of Liaison Committee.”

As a finale, the three officers, who apparently appreciated the sensitive and complex nature of the issues involved found “it difficult to accept that Liaison Executive can abdicate responsibility to a Branch and to three of its own Officers.”⁴⁶ Abdicate was a word used in NATFHE to direct attention from the user’s own abdication of responsibility. It was also noticeable that the *kernel’s* presentation played on a division between the union’s ‘own’ – officers, versus rank and file members; and the way their individual interests as branch officers were presented as branch interests. They went further by seeking to identify individual interests with liaison committee interests - *L’union est à nous!* If their intention was to keep it inside the branch why did: (i) Gates make his ‘unfortunate’ comments attacking Bis Weaver’s professional integrity in liaison committee and the BLCARC?; and (ii) Ms Pattinson present her statement at liaison and region seeking support for a national enquiry?

Presenting their protests as concern for the branch, and even liaison, was merely spin to avoid the real issue, which was Bis Weaver’s complaint against Gates in his personal capacity as an employee. As for Ms Pattinson and Downey, they had been asked questions about their role in the union’s procedures, as were other branch committee members. Ms Pattinson’s attention had been drawn to the likelihood of bias as a result of her involvement in the procedures. Downey had been asked why he had involved himself in the procedures when he had such an antagonistic attitude to her as shown on three occasions - in a conversation with Nedjat in July 1985; and in conversations with Bis Weaver in September and December 1985.

The contents of the letter represented the attitude of three dominant members of the branch committee and yet Triesman was expecting Bis Weaver to meet them and a few more of a similar kind in two days’ time in Bournville branch’s ‘kennels’!

Liaison’s ‘loss’ was to be the region’s ‘gain’ because within days Gates and Ms Pattinson, despite both due to leave the West Midlands region on study leave, would take over as chair and vice chair of the region for 1986-7. Their occupation of these positions would establish a pattern for the REC’s activities and create considerable difficulties for Bis Weaver until the end-of-the Summer-term 1987.

On the eve of Triesman's visit, Bis Weaver sent a letter to branch committee members providing further insight into the activities of three members of the committee. She drew attention to the allegations made by Gates, Cave and Hartland after the HMIs visit and she "stress[ed] that the bases of the allegations made against [her] are completely unfounded." She asked: (a) "if the Branch Executive/Committee was informed that such a complaint was to be made..."; (b) "why [she] was not informed of these allegations and" of their intended approach to management; and (c) "why an approach was made to...management with unfounded allegations against [her]." "The failure of D Gates, N Cave and B Hartland to observe trade union practice" was contrasted with the "considerable concern recently" shown by the branch committee "over other people's behaviour...alleged not to be in accordance with trade union principles" – the Gil Butchere witch-hunt. This inconsistency "might lead the reasonable person to consider that certain Branch Officers/Branch Committee members were operating under double standards." It was also pointed out that "all three [complainants] voted in favour of recommending" the removal of union services and facilities from her; which "undermines the credibility of the...Branch Committee[']s commitment to trade union principles and other NATFHE policies."⁴⁷ This letter, * sent out to coincide with Triesman's visit, had the purpose of giving committee members an idea of what they were supporting and food for thought when they were expected to perform for Triesman's benefit the next day. Of course, they might not bother to read it!

(e) A Quick Trip to North of Watford

Events at the governor's meeting would certainly have circulated among the *kernels* and other local officers and could reasonably be expected to be relayed to Triesman as a significant development in the case. This was the immediate background when Triesman donned his 'judicial robes and wig' to venture forth among the *Ba-bas* eighty five miles north of Watford.

Triesman knew Bis Weaver had wanted an impartial investigation of her complaint against Gates; an investigation into Day's 'enquiry'; and the retraction of Day's 'report', so what was he expecting her to discuss with Gates and the branch committee. Did Triesman expect her to lie down with 'biting dogs' and get up with their fleas or an abundance of teeth marks? To meet those constantly attacking her in the dogs' lair would require an inexplicable

* Copies also went to Triesman; and to the regional and liaison secretaries

naiveté on her part as well as Triesman's! With deep-rooted scepticism of head office, she needed no convincing that Triesman's visit would not result in anything approaching a just outcome.

Triesman had never shown any real interest in conducting an enquiry with an ethnically balanced team of investigators, so why suddenly stir himself into altering the prevailing situation of 'letting her stew' with a visit to Bournville? Did Triesman recognise that the strategy had failed and was about to abandon it? Bis Weaver had pounded all levels of the union with information that the union preferred hidden – lack of procedures to investigate racism or complaints against officials; the possibility of collusion between officers and officials in *Whitewashing* a complaint or in accepting a *Whitewash*; and the activities and attitudes of officers and officials more consistent with reactionary views than progressive anti-racism and anti-sexism. The bubble was on the point of being pricked and, therefore, had the effect of prompting head office officials to re-think the union's strategy for washing its hands off the problem.

Bis Weaver had been getting nowhere with Triesman, nor Dawson, the official senior to him. The evasiveness of NATFHE officialdom raised too many doubts about the authenticity of anything offered by the union; and its oft-declared commitment to accountability, shown to be very thin during the Fernandes affair, was now completely in shreds.

When preparing for Triesman's physical *entré*, we took into account that he would arrive with his own agenda, therefore, the onus was on us to prevent his agenda coming into play. We came up with the idea of insisting that Triesman direct any proposals or questions to me and I would decide whether or not she should comment. The other task for me was to follow my usual practice of taking comprehensive notes. She had taken the precaution of inviting an observer, the BLCARC's anti-racism officer, and agreed to Gil Butchere's request to attend, as Gil wanted to have a confidential word with Triesman about her situation well away from the prying eyes of her adversaries in the college.

Triesman's visit was jinxed from the outset – the train from London was delayed and Triesman, accompanied by a head office administrator, * did not arrive at the college until lunchtime. I picked them up at the college to take them to meet Bis Weaver, who was again off work sick after a very brief return to work.

* He was the official who had spoken to her at the anti-racism conference at Middlesex Polytechnic in December 1985

The situation had changed considerably from when Triesman arrived on stage in January 1986 to now when he was about to present himself in Birmingham. Bis Weaver's prospects were also looking somewhat different with Phil Murphy and Olwen Cupid - no coincidence both being Black, coming to her aid, and, as a consequence, about to alter the balance of power, at least in the short term. *

There were no expressions of *bonhomie* preceding the meeting and I started the proceedings by outlining the format Bis Weaver was prepared to accept, that is, she would "listen to what NATFHE has to offer [for]...investigating [her] complaints" but if he wanted any responses from her that would depend on my approval. After a couple of questions both

* For his outspoken criticism of racism in the Birmingham Labour Party, Phil Murphy became a victim of the Labour Party's determination to smother the increasing dissatisfaction of Black members within its ranks. On the 25th March 1987, the Party's NEC ruled that "black sections were outside the party's constitution and anyone involved with them faced expulsion."⁴⁸ A Black section meeting was to be held in Birmingham on the 7th April with Linda Bellos and Bernie Grant as speakers. Five Birmingham Labour MPs * (Hattersley, MP for Sparkbrook, which included Knowles and Hafeez as councillors, Howell, Rooker, Davis and Corbett.) wrote to the speakers telling them to stay away. They stated that "As Labour MPs in Birmingham fully committed to racial equality and ending discrimination, we want to make it clear that neither the Birmingham District Labour Party or the city council need any advice from Harringay or Lambeth councillor....Learn how a sensible council – the largest Labour led council in Britain – is dealing with this problem instead of coming to give us the doubtful benefit of your advice."⁴⁹ These correspondents obviously knew little about the city council's real approach to racial discrimination in the city and how they deal with it by monitoring the movements of complainants

On the night of the Black Section meeting, which Murphy attended, a private meeting of the Labour group was called by Knowles to suspend Murphy from the party and "start procedures for withdrawing the Labour whip and to ask the national constitutional committee to exclude him from party membership," which was approved by the group. Leading members of the Labour group said Cllr Murphy's walk-out had been "the last straw" [as] he has been repeatedly disciplined for attacking alleged failures by the council to combat racism...⁵⁰

The Labour Party, like NATFHE, was determined to prevent Black members from participating fully in matters relating to racism and racial discrimination. The Party expected them to toe-the-line put forward by those with little knowledge of the problems faced by Black members and the Black population as a whole. They undoubtedly disapproved of Black members listening to advice from other Black members and developing policy outside of the watchful eyes of 'reliable' bureaucrats. It was obvious there was little likelihood of advance for Black members in the party nationally and in Birmingham in particular at that time. Murphy was put in the situation of preventing his expulsion from the Labour Party, thereby, restricting his action in the Bis Weaver case at a time when the Labour Party leadership in Birmingham was trying to cover up the consequences of an LEA investigation into the racist situation faced by her at Bournville College. Murphy was eventually reinstated to the party on Appeal.

Olwen Cupid was not invited to remain on the Bournville Board of Governors when her term was up nor was a member from ethnic minority communities offered a place on the new board – unusual for a college seeking links with those communities providing over 50% of students at the college. As with NATFHE, the college and local authority were apprehensive of having outspoken Black people anywhere near racist situations. At Bournville College there were now two African-Caribbean/Asian lecturers out of 132 lecturers; The African-Caribbean/Asian student intake was 54% of the total intake⁵¹

of which received my approval, Triesman objected to this format because, as he said, he “would not be able to carry out the reasons for his visit if he could not speak to Ms Weaver.” If Triesman’s reason for coming was to explain what NATFHE had on offer it made no difference whether her responses were directed through me or delivered by herself as it was merely a question of Triesman talking and Bis Weaver listening. As far as she was concerned that was the sole purpose in agreeing to meet him. If it had been up to me Triesman could have left there and then as he had given her the run-around for months and I could not see anything coming out of his brief excursion out of the metropolis.

Bis Weaver shared my distrust and distaste for the way NATFHE had acted but had waited a long time to see what round of excuses NATFHE would conjure up in a face-to-face encounter. As was always intended, she agreed to allow Triesman to speak to her directly – hear what he had to say and then let him know how she felt about NATFHE officialdom and what its inaction had enabled the branch to do to her.

If Triesman had been unsettled he quickly recovered and seemingly oblivious to the state of her health, which he could now see for himself, quickly launched into his pre-determined agenda. Acting like one of *Caesar’s prefects*, he took NATFHE’s Route two on the ‘glorious 12th’ – the ‘shooting season’ had arrived a couple of months early, but it was not at all clear who would finish up on the dinner plate.

Triesman concentrated his early comments on Gates and his behaviour. He “wanted to establish whether or not David Gates’ style was merely abrasive or otherwise” and focused on the incident when Gates called her a liar – noticeably omitting the swear word either through delicacy or to minimise the impact of Gates’ abusive language. He mentioned the references in her letters to “being a Black person and a woman” but avoided spelling out the connection between Gates’ behaviour and gender and race.

She rejected Triesman’s description of Gates’ behaviour as ‘abrasive’; and his allusion to a single incident by referring to the many incidents performed in the presence of witnesses, describing them as ‘abusive’ and ‘harassing’; and informing Triesman of other unwitnessed incidents, including one incident “when [she] thought Gates was going to hit [her]...and [she] had to move back [to avoid him] and fell against the radiator.”

Triesman gave the impression of being trapped in a time warp; still showing a great reluctance to refer to Gates’ behaviour as anything resembling harassment. This resolve not to mention racist or sexist harassment, which she had described so clearly in many letters sent to head office, illustrated Triesman’s determination to diminish the gravity of Gates’ behaviour, as Day had tried to do in his ‘report’. Triesman mentioned nothing about her

allegations of racism as if racist practices were alien to NATFHE members* and showed little interest in her experiences and why she attributed to them the term racism. This was very much in the vein of Day's meeting with her. Triesman was there to tell her what she had experienced and what that represented, delivered by someone who had admitted to not having competence in the field of racism.

He then produced another diversionary definition to avoid having to open up a discussion on racism and sexism; and to promote the harmlessness of Gates' behaviour – not as 'interpersonal dispute'; not as 'personality conflict'; but as 'abrasiveness.' Triesman had obviously read Day's 'report' but not Bis Weaver's comprehensive critique or he was giving the impression of not having done so. Triesman was out of touch with the reality of the situation or gave that impression - as if the period since the 13th January, when he first became directly involved, had not existed. Not only that, his pre-January vision of the complaint was a mythical one.

Triesman, having succeeded in re-establishing his own agenda, ventured well beyond the boundary granted to him. He could see she was ill and, yet, he appeared to be taking advantage of this by impressing his own agenda on the proceedings. This was really too much and I intervened, telling him "what [he] is doing is irrelevant." All that "is required is for [Triesman] to tell Ms Weaver what NATFHE is going to do." Furthermore, the discussion was looking too much like Triesman's option two offered in January, namely, "Triesman and one other party; no mention of motivations; discussions with Ms Weaver and then with Gates..." I made it clear that if Triesman's "intention was to conduct his visit under option two then the meeting was now terminated." Triesman denied this was his intention, however, he looked decidedly uneasy; maybe it was the insubordination from a Brummie 'redneck', who was not showing due deference to a head office official – the second most important

* Triesman was to claim later that he "tried to ascertain if Gates had made remarks which contained any racist sentiments or racist views [as this] had very serious implications for his employment by Birmingham City Education Department...Mr Weaver's response, on his wife's behalf, was that Mr Gates had made no overtly racist comments but he had been abusive to his wife, who was a Black person, and Mr Triesman should draw his own conclusions on that."⁵² Triesman did not state when, during the meeting, this question was posed and my response was given to him other than to say I answered on my wife's behalf and the conversation lasted for about five minutes.

This was wrong because she was acting for herself soon after the meeting began and for a while I took a back seat just writing down notes of the meeting and in those notes there was no reference to this 'debate'. Not only that, Triesman's claim, and the way it was supposed to have been raised, confirmed his own admission that he was not competent in matters of racism and exposed his unfamiliarity with the problems faced by Black people. Triesman overlooked or did not understand that racism had a much wider framework of behaviour than merely being confined to what he described as racist 'sentiments' and racist 'views.'

official, at that!

Triesman, widely recognised as a skilled negotiator, had spotted an advantage arising from my bellicose intervention and tried to pull off what appeared to be a cheap theatrical stunt. Out of the blue, Triesman suggested that people might think me anti-Semitic. This took me by surprise, as I suppose it was intended to do. When I asked Triesman why people might consider this to be so, he replied he was Jewish and I had been abrasive to him. This did not take me by surprise because I knew he was Jewish and readily admitted being abrasive to him but I asked in what way were the two connected. This was not enough for him and he repeated the claim. Triesman, however, had failed to do his homework and his opportunism fell flat. He did not to pursue this particular line after receiving an unexpected response that nullified his ruse.

Triesman's theatrical stunt was tasteless and rudimentary; dismissively offensive to Bis Weaver; lacking in respect to her acknowledged experience and specialism in the field; and insulting to me. Using a disingenuous device, he had linked my abrasiveness to him with his Jewish origin to infer possible anti-Semitism on my part in order to belittle and minimise the harassment suffered by Bis Weaver by suggesting Gates' behaviour was naught but abrasiveness and no different from my abrasiveness to Triesman. This was a shoddy attempt to equate the stress and harassment experienced by a solitary Black woman over a sixteen month period in a college of 150 White staff with his 'experience' of a curt exchange of words with me, as Bis Weaver's representative, lasting a couple of minutes in a room containing four other people. * Triesman's ploy was to claim that Bis Weaver 'mistakenly' interpreted Gates' behaviour as racism. This was dismissive patronisation *par excellence* from Triesman towards Bis Weaver, who had spent twenty-five years confronting and fighting racism. As Triesman's comrades in NATFHE's 'democratic' structures chanted out 'interpersonal dispute' while proclaiming their 'long history' and 'anti-racist' credentials to the world, he was reducing harassment, in defiance of definitions produced in trades unions and local authority guidelines; and in judicial decisions, to a mere 'abrasiveness'.

The best Triesman could offer as an argument against Bis Weaver's interpretation of Gates' behaviour as racist was to use his own ethnic origins 'against' me – a tactic suited to the darkened chambers occupied by NATFHE officials but unsustainable when examined in the cold light of day. A variation of the 'race card' had been played in order to devalue a

* Two of whom were Asian; and Two White

Black woman's complaint of racist harassment. * Right wing politicians would be hard pressed to outmatch this.

The belligerent tête-a-tête between Triesman and me faded, temporarily. Putting Triesman wise to what was and was not acceptable for his discussion with Bis Weaver had apparently struck home and Triesman gave up on 'option two' of his January 'offer' but he still shirked away from telling her what NATFHE intended to do, which had been one of the reasons for Bis Weaver agreeing to meet him. Instead, Triesman wanted to know if she was "saying that Gates is not fit to work with; not fit to be a union member; not fit to hold [union] office." In this formal meeting, she did not buy into this line because she was "not making any conclusions; [she] wants NATFHE to conduct objective investigations into [Day's] investigation and into [Gates'] motivations."

Triesman's change of tactics provided an opportunity for Gil Butchere, who had been waiting to provide Triesman with additional confirmation of the way the outfit operated at Bournville College. She let him know what she thought about the situation at Bournville and she did so emphatically, saying that Gates "was a disgrace, the work situation was unacceptable [and] For the sake of all other women he should go." ** After this intervention Gil Butchere became very distressed and several minutes were spent while Bis Weaver comforted her.

When the meeting resumed Bis Weaver needed no additional confirmation that she was wasting her time and had been for a long time because Triesman came up with the old line of using Rule 8. Surely, he had not made a 250 mile round trip for this as she had no intention of falling for this regurgitated and already discredited twaddle of NATFHE's option one. What next? Option three!

Triesman was told she had "no faith in those procedures [as] no Black people are involved [but she] would have accepted option two if there had been Black people involved." She went on to tell of the response from White feminists, at a women's panel meeting attended by Day. When asked "if they brought a complaint against a Black man for abuse and

* NATFHE officialdom would go even further, in four months' time, in its submission to the Office of Industrial Tribunals, when it accused Bis Weaver of playing the 'race card'

** In the Industrial Tribunal Case, Triesman quoted this statement but made additions to it, including the words 'and Blacks' and wrongly attributed the response to Bis Weaver. His quotation was recorded in the Tribunal Report as "Mr Triesman asked the applicant if it was her view that Mr Gates was a racist and that he had harassed her on that basis...and, if the allegation was true, was she not saying that he was not fit to hold his job...The applicant agreed that Mr Gates was unfit to hold his job, saying 'He is a disgrace, the work relationship is unacceptable. And for the sake of all other women and blacks he should go; don't you think so?'" ⁵³ Was this an inadvertent mistake on Triesman's part or a deliberate misrepresentation?

harassment, would they accept a Tribunal consisting only of Black men, all answered no. Therefore, why should [she] accept a Tribunal...of all White men.”

For a different tactical reason to the one used on the regional secretary, she said she was prepared to accept the regional motion in order to see Triesman’s reply and he obliged with an interesting admission. After saying the general secretary “will get advice from the NEC” as he “was bound to operate according to the Rules,” which proved not to be so in practice, Triesman said “if Gates had done what he was alleged to have done, he would hardly be a member of the union and hardly be employed.” Triesman was admitting that the allegations made against Gates, if substantiated, would lead to expulsion from the union, and the grounds given for his expulsion might lead management to take action against him. So much for Triesman’s description of ‘occasional difficulties...experienced at Bournville College.’ By this comment, Triesman had given a ‘reasonable person’ judgement on the case against Gates because Bis Weaver’s complaint could be easily substantiated. It was all too clear why Day produced a *Whitewash* and why head office had tried to railroad her into an ad hoc enquiry outside the rules.

She seized on this to reaffirm her accusation of distortion and omission in Day’s ‘investigation’; leaving the selection of witnesses to a close friend of Gates; withholding information from her; and attacking her professional integrity – all this “to let [Gates] off the hook.”

Triesman, a covert conjurer, came up with another trick, prefixed with his use of the words ‘with respect’ – a quality absent in his previous dealings with her up until then and to remain absent *ad infinitum*. He claimed Bis Weaver had never made a “complaint only allegations”, an inaccurate claim previously mentioned before by him⁵⁴ which had been demolished in a response from her,⁵⁵ and was as ridiculous now as it was then. Triesman really did not read her letters or had a poor memory or was just dismissive. This diversionary comment did not succeed in halting her flow, as she went on to suggest putting the complaint to the ARNP, while adding NATFHE was too afraid of the complaint to risk that.

She repeated what would be acceptable to her: (i) the regional motion; (ii) Day’s ‘report’ withdrawn with a written retraction in NATFHE Journal; and (iii) action on the branch statement. Unable to turn the tide to flow in a direction favourable to the union and its interests, Triesman made it clear he would: (a) advise the general secretary to reject the regional motion; and (b) refuse to discuss Day or Day’s investigation with her. And here we were thinking the rules stated the NEC was the union instrument for advising the general secretary on regional motions! As for the unfounded allegations in the branch statement,

Triesman was of the opinion that there were “two sides to the situation.” Very commendable but Triesman had a curious way of interpreting ‘Two sides to the situation’. He was refusing to listen to the other side – Bis Weaver’s side, and a few minutes before had refused to discuss Day’s ‘enquiry’ – only one side to that issue was acceptable to Triesman – Day’s side. Furthermore, although unknown to Bis Weaver, Triesman, on the basis of a single letter from Gates, had decided Gates was not a racist, disregarding any of the other evidence provided for him. Not bad for someone not competent in racism issues! Triesman’s maxim appeared to be confined to choosing the side furthering his conception of reality – the NATFHE myth.

If Triesman was so convinced Gates was not a racist, why was he so adamant in opposing an investigation of her complaints as requested by the REC. Triesman obviously did not want any Black member in an adjudicating role to hear what Gates had done; how Day had tried to cover it up; and how Triesman had tried to direct her into a cul-de-sac ‘investigation’. Why on earth had Triesman come to Birmingham – just to tell her that Gates was abrasive; there were two sides to every story; and Day was forbidden territory because he might get the sack. Was this the way NATFHE officialdom dealt with complaints of racist harassment in its domain? – it certainly seemed to be its only formulae.

What kind of judgement would Triesman have come up with if she had been foolhardy enough to accept his *ad hoc* investigation offered in January? If she had fallen into line and accepted his offer, Triesman, Day, Gates et al would have laughter lines across their faces.

Triesman was also in the position of determining if the branch statement contained unfounded allegations as he was aware of her real objections to Day’s ‘report’ and of her dealings with him over his own offer of a re-run investigation. What he might be unaware of was the disclosure of confidential information in the statement. However, that was soon remedied as NATFHE’s anti-racism officer, Sardhul Dhesi, one of the liaison officers delegated to discuss the issues with her, was on hand to turn from observer into contributor. Dhesi confirmed the meeting with liaison representatives was confidential.

A question put to Triesman would eventually take him and the union on a journey of a thousand days towards the exposure of NATFHE’s own racial discriminatory policy. Having been informed of Triesman’s intention to advise the general secretary not to accept the regional motion, she asked “to whom could she turn for advice” as “NATFHE had not given her [any] advice” on the eight separate occasions that she had requested advice on NATFHE’s legal obligations. Triesman justified ignoring these requests on the grounds that

if advice “was offered to her then it would also have to offer it to David Gates [and] this would not be appropriate or possible.” On the basis of this ‘justification’, se grounds, NATFHE could never provide advice or assistance to any complainant of racist or sexist harassment and the accused would always be the beneficiary of this policy. When would NATFHE ever be able to provide such advice? Every scrap of information coming from Triesman confirmed NATFHE’s anti-racist and anti-sexist policies to be illusory.

NATFHE’s inaction was not to be allowed to hide behind such a lame reason and she asked Triesman “who then could [she] get advice from.” Triesman’s unexpected response – one that Triesman and NATFHE would vigorously deny, was to tell her to “go to the CRE”. That looked very much like NATFHE providing advice to her, so why did they not do that before? She reminded Triesman that was not an option open to her because it was prohibited by the requirements of Rule 24. Triesman, once again flexing his ‘No 2’ muscles, surprised both of us by agreeing to “waive Rule 24 and [to] tell any interested parties that he had” done so. *

With that out of the way, although its significance had yet to be realised, she picked up on the major discrepancies and impropriety associated with Day’s ‘enquiry and report.’ This did not arouse much interest in Triesman, responded by telling her that NATFHE was not a court of law. When it was pointed out that Day was acting in a quasi-judicial role, it appeared to be of even less interest to him.

Bis Weaver was tired by now. Triesman’s dismissiveness, although expected, was enough to wear anyone out and want to escape from the bureaucratic dross that was being served up. My re-involvement was met with the news that, according to Triesman, Ms Weaver already had the remedy for complaining against Day. His solution was for her to write to the general secretary, a procedure eventually shown to be as bankrupt as the remedies offered up to deal with Gates. Brought to Triesman’s attention was the fact that any investigation would be conducted by Dawson or his nominee – all colleagues of Day and all members of the ASTMS, which could not avoid the likelihood of bias. However, Bis Weaver had another remedy - write to the ASTMS, and Triesman agreed that was an option. But did he know that ASTMS officialdom would not be inclined to act against a member - a like-

* Triesman gave a different reason to the Industrial Tribunal for advising her to go to the CRE but had to accept that his advice to go to the CRE was for a race issue.⁵⁶

mindful aficionado operating in another union. * NATFHE had no conception of justice; no impartial procedures for investigating complaints but it did have a tightly-knit caucus of officials exercising total control over complaints against NATFHE officers and officials.

There is nothing like impartiality and we had arrived at the conclusion that in NATFHE nothing is impartial. This was another reason for waving Triesman good-bye and wishing him a safe journey back to civilisation.

Gil Butchere had listened to Triesman's disinclination to do anything and entered the fray to relate her own experiences, which she did so while visibly distressed. She explained what she suffered at the hands of Gates and how the branch's women's group offered no support, attributing that to the "clique operating at Bournville." ** Without any support she had given up any attempt to submit a complaint against Gates. *** Struggling to retain her composure, she expressed admiration for "Bis for her strength and determination [and] because Bis was doing it for her as well," adding that "Bis had been effectively isolated in the college" for doing so. Gil, too, was familiar with the way "Gates converts everything that is raised against him in the union as if it was against the union. He sees himself as the union."

Bis Weaver did not stay out of the picture for long and re-emerged to put Gil Butchere's contribution into another context, telling Triesman of Gil's close connection with Black people, "married to a Trinidadian and having a Black child." Surely, Triesman would be able to recognise the significance of both their experiences at the hands of Gates and the way *kernel*s and fellow travellers follow their leaders. This also seemed to pass by Triesman, as he skipped on as if their experiences were of no significance. This came as no surprise to us but Gil Butchere seemed downcast by Triesman's lack of interest. Triesman then moved in a new direction well away from the harassment and intimidation of the vulnerable. He evoked the interests of the branch and the necessity of it continuing to operate as "there were other

* This was what happened when Bis Weaver alerted the ASTMS to the activities of NATFHE officials. The ASTMS had passed several conference resolutions in 1983 condemning racism but was less impressive in fulfilling these provisions.⁵⁷

** This 'clique' we have referred to as the *kernel*s

*** Gil Butchere was in a position not dissimilar to one dealt with by the Court of Appeal when Triesman, as general secretary, appeared for the respondent trade union, the AUT, in a case of racial discrimination brought by a member against the union. This was the Deman v AUT case.⁵⁸ Dr Deman had suffered miserably at the hands of the AUT, whose general secretary was Triesman. The Court criticised Triesman and went on to state that "Dr Triesman needed to 'meet with and pay heed to the views of members like Dr Saha', who was a witness for Dr Deman. Dr Saha, who was unhappy with the services provided by the AUT for ethnic minority members, was asked by the Court "why he had not raised any internal grievance. His 'telling reply' was that had he done so he would have ended up like the appellant"⁵⁹

issues that the Branch must take up.” * As if the wider issues involving the branch could compensate two women being browbeaten by union officers using the branch committee and the branch members as instruments for ensuring compliance.

In response to this attempt at diverting attention from the main topic of the meeting, Triesman was shown a copy of Bis Weaver’s letter to the Principal, dated the 1st June, about the HMI issue. She told him that “if the Branch cannot protect the interests of one Black member then it can’t defend anyone.” This incident was linked with Day’s ‘enquiry’ in that the *Whitewash* opened the way for Gates to continue his attacks on her. Triesman’s reaction did not involve any dispute with the facts, appearing to accept the authenticity of the disclosures. He hit back with “What did [she] expect? It was understandable given the antipathy between [her] and other members.” *⁶⁰

This was an appalling remark and Triesman was left in no doubt about that: “Three members of the Branch Committee go direct to Senior Management and make unfounded allegations...without telling that member...or giving her the opportunity to have representation and all [he] could say was ‘what do you expect.’” Focussing on the additional word “understandable”, she reminded him that the people responsible were: (i) “the ex-Chair of the Branch, Vice Chair of the Liaison Committee and Regional Chair elect”; (ii) “the vice-chair and Chair elect of the Branch”; and (iii) “another Branch Committee member.” Their actions were compared with the incident involving the unfounded allegations against Gil Butchere by Gates, which led to the branch committee rebuking Gil purely on the word of Gates without giving her an opportunity to challenge his allegations.

Explaining anything to Triesman was like firing into cotton wool; the hole made at the moment of delivery was quickly covered by a multitude of fibres spun for the purpose of leaving everything remaining as it was before. Triesman, returning to branch issues, raised

* These ‘other issues’ to Triesman no doubt meant traditional trade union activity in defending terms and conditions of work and not the new demands of extending those activities to the more vulnerable workers except as fodder for brochures. Did Triesman not appreciate the ‘whip-hand’ management now had in Bournville College in any negotiations with the union? Management knew that three branch officers had tried to elicit its assistance against a Black member when making false allegations against her [the HMI issue]. What chance had branch officers, when negotiating with management, pressing home any contentious point regarding the terms and conditions of the workforce when branch officers had sought to sabotage the terms and conditions of Bis Weaver’s employment; and one officer allegedly tried to suborn a student-governor to prevent her promotion. Management also knew that a senior regional NATFHE officer was a governor at the College and was well aware of the Weaver case but had never raised it with the governing body or management

** Triesman’s response should be seen in the context of similar actions by these officers against Bis Weaver six months later during the *Beider Affair* (See Chapter XI Sect c)

the issue of redundancies that were of importance but as was pointed out to him, due to the pressure being applied to Bis Weaver and its effect on her performance in the work situation, “she will not have a job for much longer.” Having now witnessed at first-hand the ‘morality’ of officialdom, I took the opportunity to provide the observers with another example when I reminded Triesman of his telephone comments on how funny was the thought of the union suing itself and my ‘suggestion’ for him to come to Birmingham to see how funny Ms Weaver thought it was. Triesman apologised and retreated into the workings of the branch. He disclosed his intention of giving a “directive to enable the Branch to carry on its business,” and was met with my response of him having “a lot of power in NATFHE...for someone who is not a NATFHE member.” Bis Weaver followed this up by saying “if Triesman’s directives prevented her from having recourse to information or [union] services and facilities,” she would ignore them and “NATFHE would have...to expel her.” Triesman thought it would not come to that – and he was right because there was no need to expel her with all the complications attached to that, especially as the union had already reduced her union rights to virtually nothing.

The meeting was getting nowhere, nor had it really been anywhere; there was little point in continuing it; it was fizzling to a halt, spluttering to an ignominious end. Before reaching its death throes, I summarised what she wanted from NATFHE. Triesman, continuing to harp on about the branch, asked if we thought the branch should be disbanded as he had the authority to do it. This confirmed he had a ‘lot of power’ if he could actually do it and it was not some sabre rattling bravado on his part. We thought some branch officers “were unfit to hold office” but disbanding the branch was a decision for him not us. He floated the question thrice - he certainly appeared to be looking for a ‘yea’ but all he received was the same response but while he was at it, he was asked if he could “ensure that [her] rights in the Branch were returned to her.” If only he had been as persistent in seeking a just outcome of her complaints.

When the meeting was almost at an end and it was obvious anti-racism and anti-sexism took a back seat to everything else in this union, Gil Butchere, distressed by the indifference shown to her, had had enough and decided to leave. After she left, I let Triesman know that Gil Butchere had contacted Day, by letter, offering to provide information to Day’s ‘enquiry’ – an offer Day had ignored. To add spice to that revelation, I let it be known that copies of the letter were in the possession of other people. I never told Triesman we had a copy with her permission to use as and when we saw fit. Triesman was angry for being told of this letter as he “did not want to be put in the position of looking through a colleague’s

mail.” This tame ‘eyeball-to-eyeball’ confrontation was the last gasp as the meeting finally died.⁶¹

Triesman certainly displayed an unusual reaction to information alleging that an official deliberately ignored relevant evidence in an investigation he was conducting. His response was to criticise us for blowing the whistle on Day’s disingenuousness. As far as we were concerned, whistle blowing on discriminatory behaviour directed against minority groups was without doubt acceptable and, as NATFHE had shown, the struggle against racism had few rules. Given his earlier enthusiasm to brand me a possible anti-Semite and his constant Machiavellian approach in his dealings with Bis Weaver, Triesman had a tendency to accuse others of Machiavellian intrigues – a characteristic practised copiously in Bournville College.

Little was achieved or so we thought but Bis Weaver’s expectation of anything coming out of the meeting was zilch, although it did provide an opportunity to bring a few home truths about NATFHE officers and officials to Triesman’s attention. Moreover Gil Butchere was given the opportunity to have her say and she had confirmed the way control was exercised by the few at Bournville College. As Mackney had commented almost twelve months earlier – this was no ‘End-of Summer-term-tiff’ and not, as Triesman described it, “occasional difficulties currently being experienced.”

In his correspondence, Triesman had surrounded the most straightforward questions with a maze of obfuscation for which only he appeared to have the key to unlock but when he was confronted face to face his answers revealed more in an hour or so than in the previous six months. However, in keeping with NATFHE practice, he did not disclose that he had arrived as a decision that Gates’ behaviour to Bis Weaver was free from racism. Gates had apparently passed Triesman’s unique test for determining racism and racists arrived at not on the basis of any investigation but on a self-exonerating letter sent by Gates to Triesman in April 1986 saying *je ne suis pas un raciste*. The culture of cover-up was a well-established feature of NATFHE officialdom. * Triesman’s failure to disclose this conclusion was a wise move because had he revealed his decision and method of evaluation to Bis Weaver, he would have been laughed all the way back to the South of Watford.

No conversation took place in the car as I drove Triesman and his colleague to the college for his meeting with the branch committee. I waited outside the union office until the

*In 2005, now elevated to the peerage, Lord Triesman, on the issue of unlawful rendition, “misled peers when he told the House of Lords that no such meeting had ever occurred.” Lord Oakeshott accused the Government of presiding over a “culture of concealment and cover-up”⁶²

group assembled before entering the meeting just after it had started. In the office, Triesman, now in *his* environment, showed how the ‘number two man’ could wield his authority and he did this by asking me to leave. Apparently, he had already asked the same of Gates, who must have been invisible because I did not catch a glimpse of him as I waited around. Another reason put forward for my exclusion was that he had spoken to me earlier. My objection on the grounds that my presence at this meeting was as a branch committee member and not as Bis Weaver’s representative made no impression on him. Even if I was there as a representative of one of the parties it should invite no objection, as Gates’ interests were well represented by the majority at the meeting. Triesman then put it to the branch that I should be excluded and his proposal met with unanimous approval. No one there wanted their comments placed on the record! The only person who would have supported me, Gil Butchere, was too distressed to attend. After the attacks made on her recently by the branch committee, acting on Gates’ behalf, it was wise not to invite a repeat performance, although committee members might have tailored their actions to impress a head office official. Notwithstanding, had she gone to the meeting, whatever she said in front of the *kernel*s would have soon found its way to Gates and she would probably find herself back in the firing line with no help coming from NATFHE officialdom or local officers, who had failed to assist her months before.

There was little to be done short of staging a ‘sit-in’ so I agreed to leave but only on the grounds of having a close relationship with Bis Weaver, which Triesman accepted as the reason. This questioned Triesman’s reason for excluding me because Ms Pattinson, with a close relationship with Gates, was not excluded. Double standards were not uncommon in NATFHE – they seemed to be the norm. The weight of Triesman’s authority had fallen on me and out went I to return home. Triesman obviously did not want me around to witness his performance. Gates was guaranteed a feedback through the *kernel*s whereas Bis Weaver would be denied this unless she could prevail on the generosity of a less partisan committee member.

During my brief excursion ferrying Triesman and his companion to the college and my ‘tail-between-the-legs’ exit from the branch committee, Bis Weaver pondered over the meeting. Triesman offered nothing, no surprise there, and she concluded head office wanted to shed itself of the complaint. Triesman’s advice to go to the CRE was a diversion as there was no mileage in that direction. The time limit for submitting a complaint against Gates to the Office of Tribunals was three months and to the Courts six months. This had long since

lapsed. * The possible offence committed by Day, discrimination in the provision of benefits, facilities and services, would have been committed, at the latest, on the 26th November 1985, which was just outside the six months-time limit. Was NATFHE aware of this? Was this the reason for Triesman waiting until June to come to Bournville to “resolve the situation?” Although recognising that Day’s actions were outside the time limit, she still asked the anti-racism officer to provide written confirmation of Triesman’s advice to go to the CRE and waiving Rule 24.⁶³

Inside the Bournville barracks, Triesman informed the assembly that: (i) it was suggested to him to close down the Branch Committee.⁶⁴ He then focussed on other points: (ii) “Gates’ abrasive style; [and] (iii) allegations by Ms Weaver that the Branch Committee condones Gates’ abrasive style whether consciously or unconsciously.” ** Points (i) and (iii) were without substance but the branch committee did not know that and considering that Triesman had just left Bis Weaver and mentioned her by name, there would be little doubt that she would have been thought to have made these comments.

Triesman had been made aware by Gil Butchere that Bis Weaver was isolated in the branch, therefore, it was not difficult to see that his claims would hardly commend her to committee members even those not tied to the kernels. Little wonder that Triesman was not keen to have me there ready to challenge him and/or take comprehensive notes of the meeting.

Triesman continued to focus on Gates’ behaviour. There were no open questions asking them to describe Gates’ behaviour, even if they had been inclined to do so. The committee was asked to comment on Gates’ abrasive style, setting the standard of measurement for Gates’ behaviour as abrasiveness, despite this definition being torpedoed earlier by Bis Weaver. Triesman claimed Ms Weaver considered Gates’ behaviour to be more than ‘abrasive’ and he asked the committee “if Gates’ behaviour was abrasive or more than abrasive with anybody in the Branch Committee.” This disclosure did not describe what Bis Weaver actually said – it was a play on words because her description of Gates’ behaviour was harassment. Triesman’s approach conformed with the bureaucrats’ practice of restricting options and directing responses to those acceptable to the inquisitor. The tendency in NATFHE to put words into the mouths of others in order to gain an advantage was rampant.

* Under the 1976 Race Relations Act

** Triesman’s questions, comments and advice to the branch committee were brought to Bis Weaver’s attention courtesy of the branch secretary⁶⁵ and other information was gleaned by me in subsequent branch committee meetings. The comments in inverted commas relate to the words used by the branch secretary when recalling Triesman’s comments

Triesman's bureaucratic version of analytical inquiry added a new dimension to anti-racism and anti-sexism. 'More than abrasive' became the new all-embracing definition to cover everything not covered by 'abrasive'; another NATFHE attempt to devalue sexism, racism, harassment, intimidation and bullying to a concept of no significance, alongside interpersonal dispute; personality conflict, interpersonal conflict.'

Several Committee members mentioned having rows with Gates but they were described as not long lasting. This was proof of nothing – it was the type of 'rows' and the duration that was significant. Gates may have been 'abrasive' to them but by their own admission none had suffered for a period of anything like sixteen months, unlike Bis Weaver. She had faced crude, intimidating and bullying behaviour from Gates over that time, and they should consider themselves fortunate their experience was not as long lasting or of the same type as the behaviour Gates displayed to her. But while proving nothing it did give a reason for branch committee members not having opposed Gates or the *kernels* over the Weaver issue lest they had to face the same wrath as Gil Butchere had to endure. Fortunately for Triesman, Gil Butchere was not there to contradict what was a self-serving question.

Against this background Triesman asked if Gates' behaviour had "special implications for women and Black members"; and what was the branch committee's "commitment or approach to the general question of racism and sexism." The members confirmed racism and sexism were taken very seriously and they tried to act in a non-sexist and non-racist manner. However, expressions of commitment, even if they could be substantiated, were not the same as being an anti-racist and an anti-sexist. Non-racist and non-sexist behaviour describes their personal behaviour to Black people and/or women, which in itself was commendable, but anti-racism and anti-sexism is a commitment to confront those who act in a racist and sexist manner. The committee members were saying that they subscribed to a policy of treating others fairly but not involving themselves when others practice racist and sexist discriminatory behaviour. Triesman, whose questions were hardly probing, seemed satisfied with the answers given. But to expect Triesman to search for answers challenging his own dismissive reaction to everything revealed to him by Bis Weaver and Gil Butchere was expecting too much. Triesman's performance was well below the required standard of competence necessary for an official responsible for casework and as secretary to the Anti-racism National Panel.

Ms Pattinson and Downey spoke of Gates' good track record on these issues but they failed to explain the divergence between Gates' non-racist and a non-sexist commitment and his actual behaviour to Bis Weaver and Gil Butchere. To buttress their assessment, Gates was

attributed with recommending the co-option of a Black member to the Governing body and a women's representative to the branch committee. Neither mentioned that the Black governor was Olwen Cupid, who brought the harassment of a Black woman employee to the attention of the governors two days before and was obviously unimpressed with Gates' performance even as a reputed non-racist. The women's representative was Gil Butchere, who likewise was not impressed by Gates' non-sexism when she spoke out against harassment. Triesman received answers suitable for his purposes from two *kernels*, who resigned alongside Gates from the Birmingham liaison committee two days before and whose roles in Day's 'enquiry' were highly questionable.

Picking up on the incident disclosed by Bis Weaver (the HMI issue), Triesman asked if any committee member used their professional positions to make complaints against Bis Weaver; but immediately amended the question by asking if they had used their trade union roles for that purpose. The chorus of 'no' was not quite universal as Hartland admitted seeking information in an individual capacity. This was Hartland's way of describing the unfounded allegations he made to management in a professional capacity. What did the other branch committee members make of Hartland's answer because a letter giving details of the HMI issue was sent to them the day before? * Hartland's response was not truthful because making false allegations to management cannot be construed as asking for information. Triesman would be aware of that but the substitution of 'trade union' for 'professional' avoided the need to pursue Hartland's response. Perhaps, Triesman's reason for rephrasing the question from 'a professional' to 'a trade union' capacity guaranteed a negative response.

This distinction was irrelevant anyway because one of NATFHE's functions is to protect members in their professional capacity in the workplace. NATFHE constantly minimised its responsibilities to members almost to nothing or did its responsibilities not apply to Black and women members. Another nail in the coffin of NATFHE's anti-racism and anti-sexism.

Triesman arrived at the *raison d'etre* for his visit – withdrawal of both the branch and the REC motions for a national enquiry. His justification made little sense, despite draping the reason in procedural raiment. He was against a 'national enquiry' on the grounds that an "enquiry would be read by members of the NEC and if either party" disputed the findings it

* The branch secretary confirmed to Bis Weaver that branch committee members had received the letter but none raised it at the meeting.⁶⁶ This was further confirmation that her correspondence was being read by committee members

would prejudice a Rule 8 tribunal.⁶⁷ Triesman had provided a reason pointing out the inappropriateness of Day conducting an enquiry into Bis Weaver's complaint. Did not Day's 'enquiry' carried out as a preliminary to a possible tribunal hearing prejudice a Rule 8 tribunal?

Triesman was generous enough to provide the wording for a motion withdrawing the branch motion. The new motion should include "we think the national enquiry should not go into process." He then told them of his intention to recommend to the general secretary that a 'national enquiry' did not take place. There it was in a nutshell; any and every which way there was not going to be an enquiry. Simple and to the point! In this 'democratic' union, there was to be no deviation from the script drawn up by the head office draftsman. Nonetheless, if the branch and region withdrew their motions for 'national enquiries', his recommendations to reject the motions were unnecessary because the motions would cease to exist. This 'selective democracy' was amply demonstrated by seeking only the removal of the second limb of the branch motion and not the first limb removing Bis Weaver's rights. Judging by the ease with which the branch committee acceded to Triesman's request on the 'national enquiry', he could easily have restored Bis Weaver's rights, as she suggested to him earlier in the day, if he had been so inclined but relieving the pressure on Bis Weaver did not appear to figure in this agenda. * Triesman had shown the control that paid officials exercised in the union by waiving a union rule (Rule 24) introduced and agreed to by NATFHE delegates following a democratic vote; to allow Bis Weaver to seek advice from what looked like a dead-end – the CRE; and parading the potential influence he had over another official – Dawson, to overrule a democratic motion from a regional committee. He had that power but would not exercise it to restore union rights to a Black woman member.

There was nothing like looking after the interests of Black people and women in the union and Triesman's visit was nothing at all like looking after the interests of this Black member or of a supporter, Gil Butchere. As it stood, his fleeting visit left a sour taste in the mouth – the syrup laid on for others was bitter aloes for Bis Weaver and Gil Butchere.

The branch secretary informed Triesman of a letter received from a Black community group, Birmingham Black Sisters, deeply concerned about what was happening to Bis Weaver. She asked him for advice on how to deal with it. He told her that "Evans had a copy

* As Triesman had directed local officers to close down all avenues to Bis Weaver, we suspected NATFHE head office might be behind the idea to introduce the branch motion to remove Bis Weaver's rights and to isolate her even further. However, the branch executive had gone too far by calling for a national enquiry. Triesman's only action on the restriction of Bis Weaver's union rights was to request the branch to remove the call for a national enquiry

and was going to reply.” This indicated that Triesman had recently been in touch with Evans as the ‘Black Sisters’ letter was dated 5th June. He was aware how the ‘wall of silence’ erected by NATFHE was crumbling. Did Triesman inform Evans of his intention to advise against implementing the regional motion.

Triesman returned to the chosen path and identified Rule 8, as he put it, as “the only procedure left to try to clear it up” and it was open to Ms Weaver to “put in a specific complaint against Dave Gates and a collective complaint against others”⁶⁸ but made no mention of a complaint against Day. He explained how Rule 8 operated and the possible findings that could include “expulsion from the union, censure or removal of membership.” He also conveniently forgot to mention Bis Weaver had no intention of taking out a Rule 8 so his advice was meaningless but transparency did not appear to be a feature in NATFHE officials’ and officers’ performance their union duties. Furthermore, how many times did a complainant have to submit a complaint to the union to have it dealt with properly? In NATFHE it was a continuous process until the union achieved its objective in getting the complainant to abandon the complaint or to try an alternative non-NATFHE route.

Triesman followed up this internal union scenario by offering up an alternative one. Aware of her recent letter to management; of Murphy’s interest; and no doubt informed of a governor’s intervention – known to Downey, Gates and Mackney; he threw up the prospect of Bournville management not standing by indefinitely and “would eventually act in this situation...it was just a matter of time because they can’t put up with this conflict within the college.”⁶⁹ Or, as Triesman should have described it, in not allowing the harassment of an employee to continue unabated without intervening to put an end to it. This lukewarm ‘warning’ was accompanied by the possibility of members being transferred to other colleges, although Triesman did not specify if it would be Bis Weaver or Gates or both departing from Bournville. Nor did he mention the possibility of disciplinary action against Gates or the potential consequences if proven.

Triesman’s next suggestion looked as if it might create the circumstances to provoke management intervention. He advised the branch committee to convene a branch meeting to discuss Day’s recommendations in order “to give an opportunity to every party to air their views”,⁷⁰ thereby, fulfilling the threat laid before Bis Weaver ten weeks before.⁷¹ Triesman also thought “it would be valuable to have someone from outside [the branch] to chair the meeting.”⁷² This was voted on and agreed.⁷³

Knowing of the extreme pressure put on Bis Weaver over the months and fully aware of the state of her health, which he had just witnessed first-hand, Triesman was behaving

irresponsibly, putting the *kernel*s in a position to increase branch hostility towards her. He must have known this could be the possible consequences to her if she was dumb enough to agree. Did Triesman think the threat of another pummelling from the branch would make her ready to do a deal on NATFHE's terms? Or leave the union, which would be the answer to the union's prayers? If he did think this then he should think again.

As Day did ten months before, Triesman did not come to listen but unlike Day, who wanted to prevent the complaint going outside the union, Triesman appeared intent on disposing of the poisoned chalice and if it went to an outside body so be it.

NATFHE's best case scenario was that with less than a month before the end of the academic year, Gates might manage to depart from the college on study leave before management took any action. Even if management intended to pursue Gates' behaviour, which apparently it was not judging by the inaction shown by the Principal on two occasions,* by the time Gates returned to college, if he chose to do so, NATFHE could expect the issue to have faded away. NATFHE's worst-case scenario was if the LEA or governors moved against Gates with a disciplinary charge before Gates waved goodbye, but that would not be dealt with before September at the earliest. NATFHE head office could claim it had done its duty to the branch, and Triesman would have washed his hands off the affair like a true *Roman Prefect*.

Triesman's trip looked like a piece of window dressing, so if management intervened he would be able to say he had: (i) spoken to the complainant even though his determination to prevent a fair and impartial investigation was all too evident; (ii) advised the Bournville branch committee of a way to reconcile the situation, that is, a Rule 8 and a discussion of Day's recommendations; and (iii) informed the committee of the consequences to the parties involved if the branch committee failed to resolve the issue. Head office could claim that it had acquitted itself admirably but no one was prepared to take its advice.

In this scenario, head office could absolve itself of responsibility as it would become a local disciplinary matter - employer v Gates, with the Birmingham liaison committee and the regional official involved in representing Gates, whereas Bis Weaver and any others would be called as witnesses for the employer. A well thought out strategy for leaving officials at head office out of the frame, as would be the regional official. The price to pay for this was not too excessive as Triesman only had to spend half a dozen hours in Brum! However, two

* The Principal's conversation with Bis Weaver in May 1986 and misinformation given to the Governors (10 June 1986)

weeks later, whatever NATFHE had planned was overtaken by events that not even its ace negotiator had foreseen. He had been the courier paving the way for Weaver Route four to supersede the previous three. Triesman had obviously failed to anticipate Bis Weaver approaching the governors with a formal grievance against Gates under the statutory grievance procedures which changed the rules of engagement and led NATFHE officialdom into making an even greater blunder.

NATFHE's problem-solving format applying to complaints of racist harassment under the guidance of the secretary of the Anti-racism National Panel and official in charge of case work should be contrasted with his earlier sentiments as a lay officer in 1980 and 1984. He declared "Racism is deeply entrenched, and it is a White problem. The ability to come to the assistance of those colleagues who are under the worst attack, and who are at their weakest...is the quality of selflessness."⁷⁴ By 1986, it was a selflessness that NATFHE officials and officers had placed in cold storage, if they had ever warmed to it. After closing down every avenue in the union to Bis Weaver during the previous six months, except for the belated offer of the dubious Rule 8, Triesman was about to expose NATFHE publicly to the hollowness of its anti-racism commitment.

Having come up with what was thought to be a 'solution' to NATFHE's problem, though not incorporating 'selflessness' or seeing the harassment of Bis Weaver as a 'White problem', Triesman made a quick exit for New Street station⁷⁵ without meeting Gates. Perhaps, he was reluctant to risk facing Gates' 'abrasiveness' for not having come up with the goods for Gates. At a later date, Triesman described his face-to-face dealings with Gates in other union matters as something considerably more hostile than mere 'abrasiveness.'⁷⁶

(f) Triesman's Seeds Begin to Germinate

Bis Weaver had no intention of accommodating to Triesman's born-again strategy and far from causing dismay, Triesman's visit was like shot in the arm. The union route was a dead end; Triesman had finally broken the last tenuous thread just as new routes were opening up. Several routes were on the near horizon – the City Council, the Board of Governors and the CRE; with the latter's office to be visited early in the following week.

Over the weekend a few loose ends needed tying up as we wanted to link discrimination, double standards and duplicity to the Race Relations Act. The correspondence about to be circulated added to the information for eager and not so eager eyes. The main recipients were the branch committee and Dawson, the general secretary. Correspondence

sent to the branch committee queried the constitutional validity of the branch motion and its legitimacy under discrimination law. Bis Weaver pointed out that “as no disciplinary action had been taken against [her] and as there is no rule in operation to sanction the withdrawal of services and facilities of the Association, except as a result of a verdict of a tribunal under Rule 8, by what authority [did the committee] ask the Branch to authorise the withdrawal of services [and] facilities from [her]?” The significance of the committee’s action was that it “would appear to be contrary to the [union’s] Rules...and...a contravention of the Race Relations Act.”⁷⁷ She also picked up on Cave’s claim to have made a complaint against her and asked, if he had done so, would he inform her “when this complaint was made...[and] why [she] was not informed..?” Cave’s revelation and his failure to answer her question showed another consequence of the branch motion in allowing “Branch Executive [Officers] to avoid their accountability to rank and file members, [which] puts the Branch Committee’s commitment to democratic accountability and...the rights of Black union members into its true perspective.”⁷⁸

I sent one letter to the branch committee – finalising a draft started on the day of Triesman’s visit. The topic consisted of the foul mouthed abuse incident in May 1985, which I witnessed, and the letter Bis Weaver sent in December 1985 to Ms Pattinson, also a witness to that incident, asking her to write to Day on the inaccuracies in his ‘report’, specifically the omission of that incident.⁷⁹ I asked about a draft copy of a letter produced by the branch chair for the executive to send to Day but did not disclose I had a copy. I did disclose that information available to me suggested “the incident...was described in a manner completely at odds with the way...it happened, although the draft letter recognised that a foul mouthed incident did in fact happen.” I asked if a draft copy was produced and acted upon.⁸⁰ This might get the *kernels* to ponder on how I knew about this draft and who was supplying the information.

Dawson also received a couple of letters. The first covered the Cave revelation and the second provided details of Triesman’s visit. Bis Weaver noted that Day, in his ‘report’, referred to “Mr Cave [having] a legitimate sense of grievance and [Ms Weaver] should be willing to express regret...in precipitating that.” Gates, too, claimed to be “subject to the same complaint as Mr Cave.”⁸¹ Dawson was asked to find out “when N Cave made this complaint” and “why A Day accepted this complaint” without seeking “to establish [its] veracity...before the interim ‘Report’ was produced?” She reacquainted Dawson with NATFHE’s previous refusals to provide such information, which “the reasonable person might consider...is a denial...of NATFHE’s services and facilities...normally...provided to a member.” She was

giving a strong hint that NATFHE had contravened the Race Relations Act with its constant refusals.⁸²

In the second missive, she provided details of the meeting with Triesman: her acceptance of the REC motion; wanting Day's 'report' publicly retracted with the reasons given; and appropriate action to counter the unfounded allegations in the branch chair's statement. She knew there was no chance of Dawson doing anything but to ignore this. However, the main purpose of the letter was to place on record Triesman's suggestion for her to contact the CRE and his decision to waive Rule 24 for this purpose. This might be of use to her for whatever became available in the future. She also asked, given that "Mr Triesman considers...the CRE is the appropriate body to approach for advice", if the general secretary would contact the CRE for guidance on "what course of action the CRE could take regarding...[her] original complaint against D Gates; the later incidents involving D Gates; the procedures of investigation of the original complaint; and the involvement of members of the Association in matters surrounding the complaint and the investigation." An early reply was sought because her "health is suffering as a result of the stress [she] is under,...[which] is affecting [her] capability to pursue [her] work." It was also made clear that her meeting with Triesman "had no connection whatsoever, with any proposal in Mr D Triesman's letter of the 13th January"; and her original complaint "was not about a single incident but of four incidents, where there were witnesses, of abuse and harassment, over a course of four months."⁸³ This was to make sure the union could not come up with the argument that Triesman sought a resolution of the original issue when he came to Birmingham in June. *

NATFHE's dismissive approach to complaints and complainants of harassment created a situation that required her to write one particular letter to NATFHE with considerable misgivings. The recipient was a person at NATFHE head office not cut from the same cloth as the others at Hamilton House with whom Bis Weaver had been in contact – someone treating her as a professional would expect to be treated. This was the education officer. Bis Weaver, who had previously spoken at NATFHE education sessions, was invited to another arranged for the 28th and 29th June as a keynote speaker to address a plenary session on "Strategies for Ensuring Black Access and Opportunities in Post School Education."⁸⁴ She decided to decline the invitation and phoned the Education Officer to personally withdraw, confirming her decision in writing. The reasons cited were: the attack on her professional competence and integrity by a regional official circulated to various levels of the union; the

* At the Industrial Tribunal, Triesman claimed this was the purpose of the meeting.⁸⁵

union's refusal to withdraw Day's 'report'; and Triesman's recent recommendation to the branch to discuss that 'report' and, consequently, to leave a "defamatory and damaging" 'report' on the record. She described the union's action as "completely unacceptable...and it would be hypocrisy on [her] part to participate in a NATFHE organised educational conference about the needs and rights of Black people in education when [she had] been the victim of deliberate, defamatory and damaging statements." She made it clear both on the phone and in writing that the Education Officer was not included in her condemnation of NATFHE as she had "look[ed] forward to further collaborative activities but if NATFHE is going to honour its pledged commitment to Black people then it must follow this commitment by actions."⁸⁶

Not letting the dust settle under her feet, Bis Weaver sallied forth to the CRE office in Birmingham. The CRE officer was given a breakdown of the complaints against Gates and Day but the officer, as expected, ruled out an application under the Race Relations Act due to the expiration of the time limit. However, the local authority's grievance procedure was suggested as a route for the complaint against Gates and she was strongly advised to take it.

While the grievance procedures opened up a route against Gates; Day and head office would get off scot-free. There would be no redress against Day's disgraceful 'report' and on NATFHE's files it would remain for any union officer to have access. *

Over the next ten days, we meticulously examined the local authority grievance procedures and carefully listed the specific incidents complained about. In the meantime, a considerable amount of activity was taking place in various sectors of the union with the 18th June being a day of intense activity – two meetings; a telephone call opening up a new avenue; and several letters to tie up a few more loose ends. The first event of the day, following Triesman's advice, saw the branch committee going along the route planned out for it – preparing to discuss Day's Summary of Conclusions and the withdrawal of the motions for a national enquiry.

The meeting comprised four 'groups' – five *kernels*' and three others always following their line; two SWP members; a disparate group of four relatively unattached individuals; and me. As the union had ceased to have any real significance for the future direction of Bis Weaver's complaint, or so we thought at the time, I had little interest in the proceedings but still made an occasional comment. - sitting there taking comprehensive

* Triesman was soon to provide the means for her to expose not only head office and its racially discriminatory policies but also to bring Day and Gates into the public arena

notes, earning myself, not in a particularly complimentary way, the *nom-de-plume* of the *scribe*. The branch secretary announced that Gates had not been invited but, before the meeting got under way, Gates turned up.

When the proposal was put to discuss Day's 'summary of conclusions', I opposed it on the grounds that such a discussion was meaningless as "the summary is based on misrepresentations and is confidential." But, in reality, as far as we were concerned 'confidentiality' was now irrelevant and if they wanted to discuss the summary let them go ahead. One new *kernel* acolyte, * recently emerging from the shadows, confidently rejected the claim of 'confidentiality'. He was wrong, however, because the 'report' carried a clause of confidentiality, in that any part of it could not be shown to anyone unless all members named in that part gave permission and Bis Weaver had not done so nor would she do so in this forum. Hartland acquiescently agreed to a discussion of the summary. A vote was taken and the motion was passed.

I persisted and pointed to point 4 of the summary, which happened to be untrue and therefore defamatory against Bis Weaver. Ms Pattinson spoke of a vote being taken on the principle of discussing the summary but pointed to a problem - none of the officers had brought the 'summary' to the meeting. To a certain extent my objection was resolved, at least for the time being. What was then planned was a discussion at another branch committee meeting with Bis Weaver and Gates in attendance. The committee was extending the format to include a discussion in branch committee to be followed by a proposal to the branch recommending a further discussion to decide on whether or not the branch should discuss the summary, as Triesman had suggested. At this rate it might go on indefinitely or, at the least, have the end of term arrive before the discussion took place.

I pointed out there were people implicitly referred to in the 'report', who should also be invited if the summary was to be discussed but this was overruled. This did not end the matter as one SWP member, in conflict with a couple of the *kernels* on other issues, thought it difficult to discuss the summary without seeing the "original complaint with perhaps a rejoinder from Gates." This was opposed by the *kernel* acolyte, who, again backed by Hartland, justified his opposition on grounds of the branch committee "not [being] arbiters of the complaint." He sang the Triesman-inspired anthem of giving the branch "an idea to get out of the situation [when] he recommended Bis Weaver to take action under a Rule 8." Ms

* One of the excess Bournville delegates attending the liaison committee when the branch statement was paraded before it

Pattinson was also attracted to this 'solution' as the "Branch Committee should be dealing with Branch business" and not head office's, as she described this. If this was solely head office's business why was the branch committee discussing the prospect of submitting the 'summary' to the branch? Was the proposed branch discussion another means to put additional pressure on Bis Weaver before Gates and Ms Pattinson went on study leave in three weeks' time. *

It was the other SWP member who saw the fallacy of the *kernels* objection and the subsequent suggestion. Day's recommendations had flowed from the complaint and, as the branch was being asked to withdraw the call for a 'national enquiry', he thought "the Branch Committee's duty was to say this was Branch business." He suggested inviting Bis Weaver and Dave Gates to a meeting of the branch committee and if a branch member has committed an offence the "Branch should take it up under a Rule 8." ** This was the starting point for him and if the committee chose not to do this it would be abdicating its responsibilities. The *kernel* newcomer chanted out Triesman's "direct request...to look at the conclusions of the report and the lifting of the request for a national enquiry." The SWP member found an ally in the branch secretary who also thought it "difficult to go forward" without knowing "the original complaint."

Downey – the long-time *kernel* projecting himself now as a statesman, sang the same tune as the newly-born *kernel*. He repeated Triesman's suggestion to "look at the conclusions as a way forward...[and to] get on with Branch business." Issuing the hackneyed "We cannot undo history," Downey reminded the branch of Triesman's very strong advice "not [to] look at the whole report...[but] look at the conclusions as a way forward...[and] to look forward as a process."⁸⁷ Hartland supported this as did Ms Pattinson, who referred to the original complaint of abuse and harassment sent to the branch committee. I interjected to add that the complaint consisted "of several incidents of abuse, harassment and attempts to discredit Bis Weaver", which stimulated a further response from Ms Pattinson of "we cannot go back now [and] the biggest problem was Bis Weaver's rejection of [Day's] 'report'." A not unexpected response from a *kernel* to blame the victim for rejecting a *Whitewash* enquiry carried out by a colleague of Gates with the majority of witnesses selected by Ms Pattinson. An examination

* Ms Pattinson had also been granted a year's study leave.

** This would be the right way for the branch committee to deal with the issue by taking collective responsibility and minimising pressure on the complainant. Bis Weaver had tried to do this in June 1985 but the problem was Gates being a branch officer supported by other *kernels* on the branch committee – a situation recognised by Mackney, and due to this likelihood of bias and the seriousness of the complaint it was handed over to the regional official, who then produced a *Whitewash*

of the incidents in Bis Weaver's complaint was definitely not on the *kernels*' agenda because this was one of the reasons for the branch motion of the 29th April. The *kernels* were keen to forget the past and find a new way forward to suit their ends. However, they were putting all their eggs in a non-existent basket.

Following this interchange, the decision was taken to discuss the 'Summary' at the next branch committee meeting, without its members knowing the details upon which the 'summary' was based and without a significant party (Bis Weaver) being there. After that, the intention was to decide whether or not to recommend a discussion in the branch. If recommended, the branch would have to decide whether or not to discuss the summary under the same innocuous conditions. Casey's Court was still performing in Bournville. *

The next item was the withdrawal of the branch motion for a national enquiry, which Gates opposed because the enquiry had nothing to do with Bis Weaver's complaint. It was concerned with "Gordon Weaver's and Bis Weaver's...attacks on leading officers" and if the motion was withdrawn "where does that leave" the committee. ** The branch committee showed little sense of propriety because Gates, an interested party, was not only attending the meeting but playing an active part in influencing the branch's decision. This was not unexpected as the committee had operated in this way for a long time so why change now.

Gates' claim cut no ice with the SWP members, one of whom still wanted the original complaint looked at and if it constituted anything substantive then the committee must do something. Alternatively, if the complaint did not amount to anything "then it may represent serious harassment of Branch Officers" and action should be taken "against Gordon and Bis Weaver." This member was aware of what constituted the complaint and was putting Gates on the spot. Ms Pattinson reiterated the theme of "a whole number of people [being] involved in Bis Weaver's allegations, not only Dave Gates [and that] the original complaint is still on the cards" - a variation of Gates' argument that Bis Weaver's complaint and the national enquiry were two separate and unconnected issues. Ms Pattinson wanted the original complaint to be dealt with by Bis Weaver taking out a Rule 8 and that any investigation would prejudice Rule 8 – confirmation that she had listened carefully to Triesman.

Downey – the 'statesman', intervened with a slightly different variant of Triesman's advice to withdraw the call for a national enquiry. Downey's version was for Bis Weaver to

* Casey's court was the frantic comings and goings of unruly children - an early 20th century music hall act

** This was straight from the horse's mouth. The motion had nothing to do with seeking a just outcome of the situation at Bournville College

“put in a specific complaint against Dave Gates” - conveniently forgetting Bis Weaver did that just over a year before; the one when Downey supported the proposal for it to be handled by the regional official, whom Downey had described as “useless...making a mess of a lot of cases...” within a month of Day’s ‘report’ being released. In addition, Bis Weaver could submit “a collective complaint against others”, which meant two separate investigations under Rule 8. Downey’s justification for this, *a la Triesman*, was, not unlike Ms Pattinson’s, namely, reproducing the head office nutmeg of a national enquiry compromising a Rule 8 tribunal.

This ‘statesman-cum-partisan-ally’ called on Bis Weaver “either to put up or shut up. Either Bis Weaver uses Rule 8 against Dave Gates or Rule 8 against the branch committee; or the branch committee should use a Rule 8 against those members who continue to pursue complaints without making the complaints formal.” Such was Downey’s sensitivity for a Black woman fighting almost single-handed against the ‘might’ of the union – a further demonstration of Bournville anti-racism in action! Bis Weaver’s 27th April letter to Downey had certainly rankled him because, in his own inimitable style of showing his antagonism to Bis Weaver, he could not resist upping the pressure while inadvertently exposing the type of environment any discussion would take place in. *

These ‘radical’ activists certainly listened carefully to the dictats of bureaucrats but no one seemed to detect the hidden signs of head office washing its hands off the complaint to extricate itself. The branch was ready to explode and Triesman’s advice could only prime the mechanism for management intervention as he had warned was a possible development.

Gates thought a Rule 8 against him was unfair especially as Bis Weaver “was asked to use a Rule 8 six months ago.” The initial suggestion Triesman, and now taken up by the *kernels* except for Gates, in pushing for a Rule 8 was enough to show anyone that it would be a road leading to nowhere but Gates did not seem to appreciate that a Rule 8 would kill off the complaint once and for all. My meagre contribution was to say that “It is a question of justice but not if she takes a Rule 8” For good measure, I threw in Triesman’s suggestion for her to take the complaint to an external body but this did not seem to register with anybody as it was ignored like most things that either Bis Weaver or I said to the branch committee.

* Several years before, Downey had been a very close friend of ours. His current behaviour, that is, since early 1985, showed how fragile some friendships become when other influences come into play. Downey had gradually distanced himself from Bis Weaver, since the time when the *kernels*’ eyes were on her job and Downey had been fed rumours about himself to win him over – rumours that he seemed only too eager to believe

Downey repeated his proposal for Rule 8 complaints, adding a codicil, that if “campaigns are continued against [the] Branch Committee or Branch Officers then [the Committee] should consider invoking a Rule 8 against individual members responsible.” The branch secretary expressed her unease at a motion for a Rule 8 potentially aimed at Bis Weaver but it was the two SWP members who pressed Downey to specify the names of members who would be subject to his proposal but he refused to name anyone although he did say “any member who has embarked on behaviour bringing [the Branch] to this position must be included.” While not naming those against whom the Rule 8 proposal was aimed, it was left in no doubt at whom the proposal was directed when it was stated “this campaign [ours] has caused the Branch not to function.”

Not all those at the meeting thought that the Rule 8 proposal was aimed only at Bis Weaver and her representative and the SWP members thought there were wider implications. The SWP saw through the attempt to gag those who criticised branch committee members. Not only were Bis Weaver and I on the list to be stifled but also the two SWP members, who were lobbying against one of the kernels. A motion put forward by the SWP members to specify those members covered by Downey’s proposal was inevitably defeated.

Another motion proposed by the *kernels* to invoke Rule 8 against anyone campaigning against the branch committee and officers was passed. This motion, in effect, curtailed the right of free expression under the threat of disciplinary action under Rule 8. An abundance of Rule 8s seemed on the horizon.⁸⁸

This particular path laid down in Bournville Branch could be traced from the ‘barking dog’ incident of December 1985; through March 1986 when some branch committee members refused to account for their actions; to restricting the rights of two members for challenging bureaucratic *dictat*; and on to the threat to restrict the rights of all branch members should they criticise branch committee members. This should have a familiar ring to anyone with an interest in modern European history. If this went on much longer the Bournville NATFHE branch would end up like a police state.

In the evening, the ‘police state’ format was transported to NATFHE’s West Midlands Anti-Racist Committee (WMARC) when it met at Wolverhampton Polytechnic. Triesman had closed down most of the union avenues available to Bis Weaver; Gates and the *kernels* had the branch sewn up, so Bis Weaver was moving to a new arena in NATFHE – the WMARC. Despite its previous reluctance to assist Bis Weaver in raising crucial issues by postponing a meeting and then failing to inform her of another, the prospects in WMARC seemed more encouraging judging by the support received from the BLCARC. However, the

WMARC avenue was due to have the *Iron Curtain* treatment too. We were both on the list to receive calling notices but yet again the notices passed us by. Fortunately, or perhaps not, we heard of the meeting from an ally and, unexpectedly for the organisers, we turned up to be ‘greeted’ by a few surprised faces. Another nine people attended, including two from the Bournville branch, all of whom had received a formal invitation. The meeting acted as both a reminder of what anti-racism really meant in NATFHE and a foretaste of how the Broad Left Coalition intended to oversee anti-racism activity in the region.

There was no difficulty determining why we did not receive an invitation. The main purpose of this meeting was to elect officers for the new committee and to co-opt three members to add to the twelve appointed by the REC. Membership had a quasi-House of Lords format with three non-peers chosen by the REC Lords to join the aristocracy – NATFHE West Midlands democracy in action! The new West Midlands REC chair and vice chair and their allies in the Broad Left Coalition seemed intent on telling committed anti-racists campaigning for genuine anti-racism action who ran the West Midlands anti-racism show. Both Gates and Ms Pattinson were due to leave Bournville College in two weeks’ time for locations outside the region so the WMARC had to be sewn up to prevent Bis Weaver seeking support for a motion to be put to the regional council. Her previous attempt to have Day’s ‘enquiry’ and the collusion surrounding it raised in the WMARC was not to be allowed to happen again. The promotion of Black interests, ostensibly the reason for the committee’s existence, would soon be seen to apply only under certain conditions, that is, if Black members: (i) followed the line handed down to them by the Coalition’s ‘anti-racists’ and (ii) did not seek to have a real say in how the WMARC operates or to take positive action in complaints of anti-racism within NATFHE.

The presence of Bis Weaver and I did nothing to change the Coalition’s intentions but at least it made us more aware of what they were up to and gave us the opportunity to confront these ‘anti-racists’ with the shabbiness of their commitment. The REC/BLC’s manoeuvrings to control the WMARC paved the way for them to launch a campaign against Bis Weaver and two of her supporters in early 1987. * Notwithstanding this, the REC/BLC’s actions, in the short term, did not prevent the WMARC coming under the influence of Black members.

When the meeting began, the regional secretary, Evans, assumed the role of chair and

* The WMARC was subsequently used to bring additional pressure on Bis Weaver and her supporters when her grievance to the governors had been concluded and the result pending release; at a time just prior to when an Industrial Tribunal application against NATFHE was due to be heard

introduced the first item on the agenda - the election of three officers for the committee. He explained the electoral procedure, namely, only those appointed members – ‘the Lords’, could nominate and vote; and observers were not eligible for nomination, although they could ask questions and make observations. The Broad Left Coalition was represented by six of the seven eligible voters. He then asked for nominations. The Bournville ex-branch chair, Ms Pattinson, was nominated for the post of chair by Lovejoy and seconded by another Coalition member – Julie Frew.

I opposed the nomination on grounds that the nominee “produced a statement, and spoke to it, attacking the only Black person in the Branch, [Bis Weaver] and making unfounded allegations against her,” and, if she was elected, the committee would lack any credibility. My objection was condemned as inflammatory by Gates; and for bringing up other issues by Evans, which presumably the two critics thought had no relevance to an anti-racism committee or who was to become its chair. It seemed, as I pointed out, that having “silenced me in the Branch,” now was the time to silence me elsewhere. Bis Weaver, although an observer and not in a position to nominate, nominated the only other Black person attending the meeting but she turned down the nomination not wishing to be an officer. *

Ms Pattinson, defending herself, spoke of her many years on the WMARC, since its inception, and that Gordon Weaver was “referring to only the last six months and not [her] record over the previous five years [and he] should consider that.” The regional secretary confirmed the committee would take that into account. Did the Bournville ex-chair realise what she had just admitted and the regional secretary also realise what the committee was prepared to accept as credentials for being chair? The Broad Left’s anti-racism could not only be shut off at 5pm but also had close seasons. Furthermore, whoever had sat on the committee during the previous years of its existence did not make any effort to bring the existence of this committee to the attention of many Black people, certainly not to Black activists, who were in the process of forming themselves into the Black Lecturers Group, which was due to have its inaugural conference within the next ten days.

Bis Weaver then nominated Krishna Shukla, soon to become the West Midlands ARNP representative, for chair. Ms Pattinson agreed to withdraw if Krishna was nominated but was encouraged not to stand down by the Black woman observer. Bis Weaver made a mental note to have a word with this member after the meeting to explain what had happened

* In the minutes of the meeting, it was stated that I made the nomination, which was incorrect ⁸⁹

to her at Bournville at the hands of Gates and the role Ms Pattinson played in it. She would then ask if she still thought the nominee “should not stand down.” This opportunity did not come Bis Weaver’s way because the member left soon after the nominations closed. *

Bis Weaver’s nomination of Krishna was ruled ineligible on the grounds that he was not in attendance. ** Nonetheless, she went on to broaden the issue by proposing that the committee should have Black officers, since it was an anti-racism committee. This was opposed by the retiring WMARC Secretary and ARNP representative, Bob Carter, who questioned the relevance of officers being Black. This was an eye-opener. Surely Bob Carter could appreciate that those constantly facing racism were the ones to occupy prime positions in an anti-racism committee not as tokens but as those usually more informed on these issues. Bis Weaver acknowledged there were committed White anti-racists but WMARC was in a position to break the mould as it was now fashioned; after all there were no men on the women’s panel, and few women, if any, would suggest having men as officers on that panel or even as members. ‘Anti-racists’ in the West Midlands region certainly had a lot to learn about the struggle against racism. There were to be no Black horses in NATFHE’s Troy.

When it came to nominations for the post of secretary, paradoxically, Krishna Shukla, was nominated by Gates, seconded by Carter, and elected to the post - his absence apparently did not debar him from nomination or election for this post! When nominations for Treasurer were called for Bis Weaver was nominated by Gates - image rather than reality, since she was not eligible for nomination not being a member of the committee. Anyway, she refused the ‘honour’ because she was under threat of having a Rule 8 taken against her by the branch. One Broad Left comrade wanted to know what having a Rule 8 taken against her had to do with accepting the post of Treasurer. Bis Weaver had been campaigning for justice on the issue of racist harassment; had her rights taken from her by the branch; and was threatened with a Rule 8 for campaigning for justice and he asked why she refused a post on this so-

* Bis Weaver found it not difficult to empathise with her position. She, like some other Black people in further education might find it unwise to go against the so-called interests of the dominant members of the union. It was almost a necessity to avoid ruffling the feathers of influential Broad Left Coalition members and other plastic anti-racists working in colleges. The Broad Left ‘activists’ might well be the only means of support, however token, for a Black woman

Tuku Mukherjee was to point out that “The position of the Black teacher [is] often a token presence, confined to marginal positions in the educational power structure, fighting a constant battle for survival...[and] many teachers internalise their oppression ... Very few are able to build a springboard for collective action...Yet...this was thought the only way to survive.”⁹⁰

** Bis Weaver’s nomination of Krishna as chair and the reasons for not accepting the nomination were not mentioned in the minutes. In fact, the minutes stated Ms Pattinson was returned unopposed with no mention of the strong objection to her nomination

called anti-racist committee. This was another member thinking anti-racism could be put in water-tight compartments in that detrimental actions against Black people in one situation could be ignored completely in another. The post of Treasurer was left for another day. *

Nominations were then requested for “3 co-opted members, who should represent special interest areas which would otherwise not be represented.” Three non-appointed members were present, Bis Weaver, myself and another White male non-member - the Black woman member had just left the meeting, making three eligible candidates for the three places. The White male was immediately nominated, seconded and accepted.

With one co-opted place taken, one Coalition member, who was also on the NEC, went on about how difficult it was to get people to attend meetings – a revelation coming as no surprise because few Black members knew of this committee’s existence and were not in a position to attend. After this contribution on low attendance – everything went quiet on the West Midlands anti-racism front. Bis Weaver, the only member of a special interest group now in attendance, and I, sat there wondering if anyone would nominate us for the remaining places. Breaking the silence, Bis Weaver thought it appalling that she, an activist for many years in the anti-racist movement and the only Black person present could not get anyone to nominate her. Gates pointed out that she had been nominated as Treasurer. She rejected this comment as “nonsense [as she] was not even a co-opted member when [nominated]...[and] words were cheap.” The words had an effect and two REC/BLC members (Evans and Lovejoy) immediately nominated and seconded her. Now a member, she nominated me for the third spot. Silence did not prevail at this proposal because almost as the words dropped from her mouth, Gates objected in strong terms to my nomination. Bis Weaver then spoke of her nominee’s twenty five years’ experience of fighting racism; his awareness of the problems faced by Black people; and the research conducted on the experience of young Blacks in Handsworth.⁹¹ Gates, who spent the past sixteen months harassing a Black woman; trying to oust her from her job; and seeking to discredit her; continued to oppose the nomination and rejected the nominee’s experience and involvement as qualifications for membership.

Gates’ objection was disregarded and a majority of the committee decided to go along with Bis Weaver and co-opted me, which I accepted until such time as Black members attended the meetings when I would relinquish the position. The first co-optee also decided to

* The nomination of Bis Weaver and the reasons for her rejecting the post was not entered into the minutes. The secretary recorded this item as “it was agreed that Mr K Shukla be invited to...combine the role of Treasurer with” secretary

give up his place on the committee on the same grounds as mine. The secretary recorded this in the minutes not as being prepared to give up our places to Black members but to do so for 'special interest groups and 'more relevant members' – an apparent reluctance in an anti-racism committee to use the word 'Black'! *

The dominant elements having shown how the struggle against racism should be compartmentalised set about opening up one of those compartments. The agenda for the meeting consisted of NATFHE's Anti-racism Pack; Racism Awareness Training/Anti-racism Training; and the aims and objectives of the WMARC. The secretary explained that the latter "item had been placed on the agenda to allow discussion on the relationship between the WMARC and the 'Region'". The WMARC had been in existence for a number of years and it still had no aims and objectives; now they were to be placed on the agenda for the next meeting of this BLC/REC dominated committee rather than put to the Black Lecturer's Group to draw up aims and objectives at its first meeting in ten days' time. The BLG had been suggested by the BLCARC to discuss the relationship of Black people to the union and to develop strategies for actively combating racism in the union's structures and among the membership. The BLCARC was way ahead of the WMARC, which was undoubtedly, due to the composition of its membership - Black and White anti-racists, who recognised the important role Black members had in the struggle against racism – a committee that had no Broad Left Coalition members; they all ceased to attend when the committee decided to take an active role against racism in the union. **

There was some discussion of the relative merits and demerits of Anti-racism training (ART); Racial Awareness Training (RAT); and the Power plus Prejudice debate, which it was agreed to be discussed next time.

Three points were to be discussed under the heading of 'Aims and Objectives' of the WMARC: (a) a campaigning role for the WMARC; (b) instances of harassment, and (c) propaganda. The first point would provide an interesting basis for discussion as Bis Weaver was under threat of a Rule 8 for campaigning against racism; assuming she was allowed to comment and the chair did not rule it out of order. But, of course, campaigning in NATFHE

* In the minutes: "one (AJ) "expressed reservations as he was not drawn from a special interest group" and both (AJ & GW) "indicated their willingness to resign if more relevant members indicated a desire to be co-opted." The secretary also seemed reluctant to cite me as initiating the intention to relinquish the post when more Black members joined the committee

** Three of those at this WMARC meeting were among those Coalition members who ceased attending the BLCARC

meant nothing more than putting up a few posters or having a few meetings. The second point could create a problem in how the WMARC defined harassment as there was a well-documented case that the doyens of anti-racism in the West Midlands had defined as 'interpersonal dispute'. Little wonder we did not get calling notices for this meeting. It was agreed to discuss the second point at the next meeting.

The overwhelming emphasis of REC/BLC members was on institutional structures, which though important, tended to ignore the role individuals play in reinforcing those structures. In essence everything in their approach to racism was covered by 'institutionalised racism'; the structures were responsible and not the individuals, therefore, concentrate on changing the structures. Changing the structures within which racism thrives is a significant task but it is also a very convenient position to take when BLC members were involved in acts that fell within the definition of racism. This 'institutional' approach enabled them to take no action other than condemning the structures that 'created' the act. Alternatively, those acts could be redefined as something other than racist, such as 'interpersonal dispute'.

This could be seen by the reluctance of BLC members on the committee to take up the issue of sanctions against discriminators/harassers. This was only to be expected when one of its members had a complaint of harassment still outstanding against him and another had produced a statement attacking the Black complainant - both of whom having voted to remove the complainant's rights in the Branch. There were others reluctant to take up the issue for fear of 'splitting the left' or taking on 'one of their own'. Confirmation of this attitude came under any other business, when it was reported that at regional council "A rule change committing NATFHE to protect members from discrimination had been [recently] carried but [only after] an amendment had moved [the proposal] to a section [of the rules] that could well increase the danger of it being seen as 'case work.'" Another rule change "placing the responsibility of members not to engage in discriminatory behaviour had been lost." This disclosure came from the co-opted White member and everyone would know, or should have known, what 'case work' meant because Day's treatment of the harassment of Bis Weaver was dealt with as 'case work' - no doubt some attending this meeting would welcome that amendment and also the lost proposal. The hope was expressed in this committee that the lost motion and the removal of the amendment could be passed next year. Always another day! Nine to five-cum-seasonal action on racism had become annual. It did not come as a surprise that such an important decision affecting anti-racism work featured in the anti-racism committee agenda merely as AOB. However, the outcome of these proposed rule changes gave Bis Weaver the opportunity to suggest that WMARC should circulate these

decisions and, relying on Triesman's 12th June comments, advise Black members that NATFHE provided no advisory services on racism as Black people seeking advice had to go to the CRE if they could get an exemption from the conditions of Rule 24. *

The WMARC was left in no doubt that the Weaver case, as a standard-bearer for the difficulties many Black members faced in the workplace, would figure in future meetings whatever steps the Broad Left Coalition might take. One of the REC/BLC members magnanimously suggested it should be left to the Black Lecturers' Group (BLG) to "address themselves to it", which meant in 'Coalition-ese' that WMARC would do nothing about it whatever the BLG decided.

The committee was briefed by the secretary on the progress made on collating college equal opportunity policy statements to form a model policy statement for the region. This was being coordinated by one of NATFHE's local academics, Jenny Williams, but with not a Black member involved. Bis Weaver, who had experience of how Black members were sidelined and how NATFHE officers manipulated college equal opportunities policy for personal interests, spoke of the necessity of NATFHE members working with those appointed by the colleges to oversee policy implementation but was wary that "such activity could replace real action." The need for collating policy documents was minuted as being supported by Bis Weaver, who apparently, "saw such activity as an essential first step and believed the production of statements was in itself educative." She made no such comment and throughout the meeting had argued in favour of active struggle against racism and not merely the production of paper. Furthermore, her caveat against replacing action with statistical analysis was attributed to me in the minutes.⁹²

Bob Carter had convened this meeting; provided information on policy statements; announced it had been decided by the REC that future WMARC meetings would be held on a four to five weekly basis; and disclosed his resignation as ARNP representative. He then departed from the scene and was not seen again in NATFHE 'anti-racist activity' in the West Midlands during the duration of Bis Weaver's travails. ** His place on the ARNP and as secretary of WMARC was taken by Krishna Shukla, who laboured valiantly in support of Bis Weaver and suffered the venom of the Broad Left Coalition for his efforts.

We suspected the objective in putting Ms Pattinson as chair of WMARC was to

* Recorded in the minutes as "BW and GW spoke of the need for adequate structures to handle complaints of discrimination."⁹³

** He eventually entered academia to retrieve social science from its image as a 'Trojan horse of phallogocentric, ethnocentric narratives and values'.⁹⁴

prevent any motions or actions being discussed or accepted from the Black Lecturer's Group on the Bis Weaver issue or on a range of other proposals calling for action on behalf of Black members. The future challenge of Black members to the dominance of the BLC, who were determined to maintain control of the route to be taken on anti-racism, was to lead to conflict in the committee. Most of the BLC committee members, who wanted to retain the WMARC as a talk shop, were to boycott the committee when Black members attended in greater numbers.

That day, the Birmingham Evening Mail published news of "a new crackdown on racial harassment [by]...Birmingham City Council," who wanted Departmental Chief Officers "to prepare policy statements making it clear to both the public and its own employees that such behaviour will not be tolerated." Mr Kurshid Ahmed, head of the City Council's Race Relations & Equal Opportunities unit, was making this recommendation because it was clear there was "no coherent practice for determining what constitute[d] racial harassment or how to deal with it." *⁹⁵

A busy day was not yet over and the first move in another saga to grace the Weaver case was about to descend on the Weaver household. Following on from Phil Murphy's actions at Birmingham City Council's Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Committee meeting on the 30th May, the committee agreed that the Head of the Race Relations Unit presented "a report on an alleged case of racial harassment against an officer at the Bournville College of Further Education."⁹⁶ The manoeuvrings at NATFHE's Annual Conference a few days before had been upstaged by Phil Murphy.

In line with both Phil Murphy's action and the new direction to be taken by the City Council, the Head of the Race Relations Unit phoned Bis Weaver, when she returned home from the WMARC meeting. He wanted more details of her difficulties at the college and where her future intentions lay. He was informed of the CRE's advice and he confirmed the grievance procedure as the best way of proceeding. He suggested a copy of the grievance be sent to the Chief Education Officer with a covering letter asking him to keep an eye on the

* No one was exempt from Birmingham City Council's discriminatory practices – Dr Haroon Saad, Head of Equalities, filed charges of unlawful racial discrimination and victimisation against Birmingham City Council's Chief Executive in 2000. He was the second Head of Equalities to take a case of racial discrimination against the city council. Kurshid Ahmed, who advised Bis Weaver on procedures in June 1986, received a £56,000 settlement to drop the case with the condition of not commenting in future on the details. This pay off was apparently "one of a series of private deals the council has attempted to negotiate to prevent internal racial feuds being aired in public through Industrial Tribunals."⁹⁷ This had changed in the last ten years. Perhaps, the Labour Party demagogues had lost their control over race issues

procedures due to Gates being a member of the Bournville Board of Governors.⁹⁸ For the first time in sixteen months, a constructive avenue was opening up for her or so she thought.

This was not to be an easy route because political figures in the Birmingham City Council's Labour ruling group with their close relationships with like-minded NATFHE bureaucrats in the constituencies and council committees were all too ready to manipulate procedures and outcomes. The view expressed by the all Black inquiry panel into the Handsworth unrest of 1985, released four months before, was a harbinger of what the future would bring. That particular inquiry described the Birmingham Race Relations Unit as "invisible to the Black community by its non-action and...backed by a racist bureaucracy and political administration that did not give two hoots for the concerns of Black people."⁹⁹ Nor had Bis Weaver taken into account the Labour Leader of Birmingham City Council, Dick Knowles, who had his own way of dealing with complaints and complainants of racial harassment that almost put NATFHE in the shade.

There was still enough time left that evening to fire a few more arrows into the air. The *kernels* had shown yet again their influence over the branch committee by their insistence on discussing Day's 'Summary' and to impose a Rule 8 on intractable 'campaigners.' The Broad Left Coalition had also shown its determination to control the WMARC to prevent its use as a springboard for actively challenging racism within the West Midlands. Bis Weaver decided to hit back with more details of what Gates had been engaged in.

A letter to all branch committee and REC members provided details of Gates' behaviour. The branch committee was criticised for its decision to discuss Day's 'summary', described as a pointless exercise due to the 'report's' gross misrepresentations. Nonetheless, the proposal provided an opportunity, "as many members of the Committee seem to be unaware [of] the complaint or the reasons why [she] rejected the 'Report'," to reproduce the complaint in full with details of the witnessed incidents. This was to set the record straight as she was concerned about the negative way she was being discussed by certain branch committee members "as if the problem resides with [her] and not with D Gates and some of his colleagues in the Bournville branch." Having little doubt that the letter would be read, she reminded them that "at the time [she was] the only Black full-time member of the teaching staff and as such in an exceptionally vulnerable position." She "presented...a factual account of what happened, [while] motivations for the behaviour have been left aside."¹⁰⁰

In the introduction to the letter sent to REC members, she wrote of "figuring frequently on the Agenda of the Regional Executive [and] undoubtedly attempts...from some

quarters will continue to be made to have a national enquiry into [her] behaviour.” The latest proposal of the branch committee was to take out a Rule 8 complaint against any individual continuing to campaign on her complaint. She considered it would be “appropriate...as...the person under discussion and,...unlike Gates, is not represented at either Regional Executive or Regional Council to make some form of representation[;]...and to provide...information relating to the complaint...[and] why [she] rejected the ‘Report’.” The remainder of the letter reproduced the same contents; inferences; and conclusions as in the letter to branch committee members.

There were three other objectives behind this letter. The first to let Gates’ ‘Coalition backers’ know what their ‘commanding all-conquering hero’ was capable of doing, if they did not already know. The second was to see if the Gandhian principle of confronting people with the consequences of their behaviour brought a change in their actions. The third to identify the member who pusillanimously returned one of her letters anonymously. We did not expect to accomplish the third aim but, notwithstanding this, each copy of the letter contained a different and almost imperceptible mark on it. A check list was kept of each mark and to whom it was assigned.¹⁰¹ There was an air of curiosity to see if anyone would be dumb enough to take another sip from a poisoned chalice. The second objective failed miserably; but the third was rewarded.

These letters from Bis Weaver were among the last to be sent out on Gates because once the grievance went to the governors, Bis Weaver intended to pull the shutters down on the Gates issue rather than risk compromising any hearing. We also predicted that once her grievance went to the governing body the NATFHE knives would be out for her more so than ever before and we began to pave the way for a wider range of support than hitherto.

Bis Weaver had recently been in touch with a Black colleague in the Labour Party’s Ethnic Minority Liaison Committee, Alton Burnett, who was a NATFHE member and a delegate to the West Midlands TUC. Alton had known of the complaint for some time and he, too, had been told many months before by a NATFHE officer and Labour Party member that it had been settled. He was also a close colleague of Phil Murphy and recently been acquainted with the current situation. She discussed with Alton the state of play and the assistance he could provide. He suggested making it formal and the letter she wrote to him did just that.

She referred to the complaint made against a branch officer but focussed mainly on: (i) the irregularities in Day’s ‘report’ and her rejection of it; (ii) the April branch statement and the removal of her union rights for seeking information; (iii) the branch committee’s call

for a national enquiry into her behaviour; (iv) the role played by branch committee members in those procedures; and (v) the branch committee's proposal to use Rule 8 against her if she continued to campaign. She described this latter proposal as "a threat...to prevent [her] from obtaining information...and [it] attacks [her] basic political and human right to carry on campaigning for justice." She also described her increasing isolation in the branch and victimisation by the branch executive and branch committee. This gave her the "impression that they feel they can do this because [she] is a member of a racial minority and [she considered]...the intimidatory tactics being employed is a form of racial harassment." She asked if he "can suggest any course of action...[to] restore [her] trade union rights...and terminate the tremendous pressure [she] is under."¹⁰²

The actions of NATFHE's 'dictatorship on behalf of the proletariat' had nurtured in her a determination to challenge everything concerning racism both in its relevance to her situation at Bournville College and elsewhere in NATFHE; and its effect on Black people in general. The Marxists in NATFHE's Broad Left Coalition should have read their Marx more carefully but perhaps, to them, 'invisible people' have no consciousness and no place in their version of Marxist thought! In other words, Black people were unable to develop a consciousness from their experiences and would have to sit back and rely on the paternalism of the Broad Left's 'anti-racists' to do what they considered right and necessary for their Black charges.

It was proving to be a hectic time. On the following day, the Bournville women's group met. Nine members attended with only two from the branch committee. The meeting dealt with the on-going situation in the branch and what the women's group was prepared to do.

Reacting to the branch's attempt to silence her, Bis Weaver described in detail the incidents in her complaint and spoke of the tremendous pressure she was put under. She wanted support from the women's group and put her situation into context by saying that if a White woman had been sworn at in that manner by a Black man, the culprit would have 'been out on his ear'. The Access coordinator – a Black woman and a veritable newcomer to the college, emphatically agreed with Bis Weaver.

The Boss, who had witnessed two of the foul-mouthed incidents and two other incidents, confirmed they had taken place and criticised management for failing to take action to "take pressure off a woman doing her work." *The Boss* also revealed she was interviewed by Day but did not reveal the account she gave. However, her evidence was more than likely to have tallied with the facts otherwise Day would not have omitted her account in the

‘report.’ *

The reliable as ever Gil Butchere spoke out in support and drew attention to her own complaint against Gates, which had been brought to the women’s group for support but was ignored. She also revealed that a woman branch committee member (JCS), who had not turned up at this meeting, had been delegated by the branch committee to make a complaint to the women’s group, on Gates’ behalf, about an alleged action by Gil Butchere. ** Gil also referred to Bis Weaver’s case and said that had it been anyone other than Gates, she would have received “a lot more support and NATFHE would have looked at the case differently.” *The Boss* confirmed the affect that Gates’ behaviour had on Gil Butchere’s health, although that was already common knowledge in the college. ***

One of the group, reacted strongly, making it clear that the women’s group was “not a group for males to bring complaints about females.” It was “not a Kangaroo court to judge other women” as harassment was something to take seriously and the group was about protecting women. This prompted Bis Weaver to let the group know that Gates, Cave and Hartland complained to the Principal about the HMIs visit and she provided details to show their allegations to be unfounded. *The Boss* confirmed that the incident involving the three had taken place. Bis Weaver wanted new procedures introduced and for those with special interests in a complaint to be excluded from administering the procedures. However, she thought it unlikely that any change would take place because NATFHE acted like a brake and, in that respect, was no different to management.¹⁰³

The positive signs that appeared to be emerging from this meeting were illusory. While *the Boss* did a lot of confirming, she was loathe to take action and revealed her intention not to take sides. This was consistent with other members of the group other than the two supporting Bis Weaver directly; one Black – the new Access coordinator; the other having close links with Black people – Gil Butchere. When Bis Weaver sought assistance again six months’ later, during what became known as the *Beider affair*, support failed to materialise and she was again left to her own devices.

While she was having considerable difficulty in getting the ‘women activists’ to act

* Two other people whom Day had interviewed had confirmed Gates’ behaviour (HC and BT) but were not mentioned in Day’s ‘report’. This was one more witness – one Bis Weaver did not know about, who also claimed to have confirmed the incidents. The only witness that Day mentioned in the ‘report’ was Cave, who gave evidence that was not only derogatory but was without foundation

** This concerned the note Gil Butchere wrote about a student’s polytechnic application form

*** Day had also known of the effect on Gil Butchere’s health as she had written to him about it on the 6th October describing her condition and the person responsible for it, when offering herself as a witness for Day’s ‘enquiry’ into Bis Weaver’s complaint

alongside her, she received a visit from an Access student. Bis Weaver's problems had circulated through the Black communities and it was inevitable those problems would be picked up by Black students at Bournville College, who were active within local Black community groups; and this was coming together with what they were hearing in the college. At the beginning of the week that turned NATFHE's world upside down, the student, who approached Bis Weaver in February 1985 - the student used by Day in his 'report', went to see her. Having an insight into the situation she was hearing about, the student wanted Bis Weaver to know what happened on the day the appointment was arranged for the student to see the deputy head of the department. She related that after Bis Weaver had given her the note with the time of the appointment on it, her tutor, Cave, asked "what the note was about" and she told him. Cave left the classroom and came back with Gates and *the Boss*. The student was asked, in front of the class, what was the purpose of the meeting. She told them it was "a general complaint about what was going on in the business studies [provision]." Apparently the trio of staff members wanted to know if Bis Weaver had suggested this and if any tutors were named. The student told them no tutors were mentioned nor had the student intended to name any. The student's perception, and she was no impressionable teenager as she was married with children, was "that as a Black person [she] was being used [by the tutors] against another Black person." This situation might well be described as three White staff members, in a relative position of power, trying to use a Black student against a Black member of staff. As a consequence of this experience, the student decided against seeing the Deputy Head.¹⁰⁴

The student, subsequently, wrote down the circumstances of her meeting with Bis Weaver on the 19th February 1985; of her belief that the business studies options were not appropriate for her chosen career; and of her discussion with Bis Weaver about the possibility of changing courses. She then dealt with the circumstances from the time Bis Weaver gave her the note to the exit and re-emergence of Cave with Gates and *the Boss*. In conclusion, the student registered her feeling of "being used in an argument between some of the tutors and Mrs Weaver." She then sent the statement to Bournville management.¹⁰⁵

The student-governor, when he found out about Bis Weaver's problems, also went to see her about Gates' alleged attempt to suborn his vote. This student had been prepared to appear in front of the governors and confront a highly influential staff-governor to expose a serious incident aimed at Bis Weaver. The telling part of his declaration was that he was not going to be used by a White person against another Black person. Following on from this a group of Black Access students went to see her to express concern over what they were

hearing. The response of these Black students should be compared with that of the majority of so-called anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-apartheid White staff at Bournville College, many of whom had known Bis Weaver for many years.

(g) Treading Water While Taking a Second Breath

Birmingham city council was about to grasp the nettle of racism or so people were led to believe. A meeting of the Council's Race Relations and Equal Opportunity Committee was held in the Council House on the 20th June. Bis Weaver's case featured in this meeting as item 8 No 1 'Verbal Report of the Head of the Race Relations and Equal Opportunities Unit – Allegations of Racial Harassment at Bournville College of Further Education' - 'Information relating to a particular employee of the Authority'.¹⁰⁶ The 'verbal report' from the head of the Race Relations Unit informed the committee of Bis Weaver's decision to use the LEA's statutory grievance procedures. The committee also heard of the anarchic situation in Birmingham city council where each department had either their own racial harassment/discrimination procedures or none at all. This state of affairs was to be brought to an end by the committee's approval of the unit's policy document for dealing with racial harassment.

The city's policy defined racial harassment as applying "to a range actions or behaviours...experienced by many black people in the employment context consist(ing) of repeated and unreciprocated and unwelcome comments, looks, attitudes, suggestions or physical contacts with a racist content or motivation, which is found objectionable and offensive and which may threaten an employee's job security or create an intimidating environment." The definition covering harassment in team situations came from the Social Services department, which described harassment as occurring "if Black colleagues were ignored, subjected to verbal abuse, or regarded as of lesser calibre than white colleagues...[and] not treated appropriately in terms of their status..."¹⁰⁷

There was no doubt the treatment meted out to Bis Weaver by Gates nestled well within the parameters of this definition * whatever 'IPD' delusions NATFHE officials and

* Bis Weaver, as Access course director/coordinator, had been belittled and intimidated by Gates in front of students; abused in a foul mouthed manner in front of colleagues and management; and been the subject of false allegations made in minutes distributed at Access course meetings and in 'discussions with management, e.g. the HMI issue. These were the incidents where witnesses were available to attest to this degrading treatment and harassment

lay officers laboured under. Bis Weaver did not have to consult the definitions and guidelines to recognise the connection – she was the one with a ‘long history’ of experience of that kind of behaviour and was still experiencing it from a number of quarters.

There was a document covering the LEA’s procedures for dealing with complaints of racist discrimination and harassment; and the steps to be followed to involve the CRE. The CRE would then conduct a preliminary hearing to consider whether or not to conduct a formal investigation. Once involved, the CRE had powers to require production of documents and attendance of persons to provide information from which it would publish its findings for public inspection.¹⁰⁸ This policy document should have been placed on a list of required reading for NATFHE officials and officers to acquaint them with the definition of racial harassment. * The Birmingham Labour Group leadership should also have taken heed of it.

The City Council had not been alone in Birmingham in looking at harassment in council establishments. NATFHE’s Birmingham feminists had recently participated in research into sexist and sexual harassment in the workplace alongside two other teachers’ unions. The study consisted of 134 women respondents, two-thirds of whom reported having experienced sexual harassment from male colleagues, male students and others. (p2) These women expressed anger, frustration, vulnerability and distress at the treatment and for being put in the position of changing their behaviour by avoiding staff rooms and certain members of staff. (p4) However, this ‘evasion technique’ only led to further problems as: (i) the women became isolated from colleagues; (ii) were perceived as anti-social and aggressive if they asserted themselves; and (iii) forced to neglect their work by diverting energy into dealing with the threat of further harassment. (p7)

The women participants in the survey commented on the ways men undermined their work by patronising attitudes, bullying tactics and shouting. Most women tended not to make complaints, formally or informally, because they recognised: (i) the difficulty in proving

* Bis Weaver’s case came at an opportune moment for the city council’s new policy to be put to the test. However, within months these provisions were shown to be nothing but a paper commitment easily subverted by dominant political interests. At least one senior Labour Party figure, after the collection of evidence was completed and the judgement arrived at, was successful in ensuring the report into the grievance was never officially released. The Labour Group’s approach to eradicating racist harassment was on a par with NATFHE’s overriding determination to cover up racist behaviour. The LEA’s report on the Bis Weaver complaint was written up in October/November 1986 but, after being shown to the city council politicians was vetted of all references to direct racism on the instructions of Dick Knowles, Leader of the Labour Council. A rewritten summary of the conclusions, for the benefit of the Department of Education and Science, not completely purged of racist references since it identified a racist situation existing in Bournville College, was eventually acquired by the author.¹⁰⁹ (See Chap XVIII Sect a)

sexual harassment; (ii) sexual harassment was seen as something women teachers were expected to put up with as a normal part of their working lives; (iii) their limited ability to influence management – lack of power; (iv) the trivialisation of the complaint by male colleagues especially by those in authority; and (v) the tendency of men to stick together and defend each other. (p6)¹¹⁰

This research ran parallel with Bis Weaver's exposure of Day's *whitewashing* of her complaint of harassment that incorporated both the gender and race dimensions and was another document destined to pass way over the heads of many activists in the West Midlands, both male and female, who chose not to take it into account when defining Bis Weaver's problems.

As with the city council's report on racist harassment, anyone reading this report should have little difficulty in identifying the treatment suffered by Bis Weaver as consistent with these findings. Given that Bis Weaver was a woman, why was she not considered to have suffered in a similar way to the women in this research? Why did NATFHE women activists in Birmingham and the West Midlands fail to consider Bis Weaver's treatment as warranting the description of harassment as it did for other women in the region? Why did they defend the one-sided approach adopted by Day, whom they criticised when he 'mismanaged' a complaint made by a White woman at Telford? Why did they fail to consider that the regional official - Day, like the men mentioned in the study, was sticking together with other men? In the Weaver case, it appeared that the West Midlands women's panel was sticking with Day and Gates – two men. The fact that men and women were sticking together and the complainant was a Black woman suggests their unity was based not on gender but on race. Or was it because she was typical of other Black women - a reactionary, according to the view of one Broad Left/REC/women's panel member, and not worthy of consideration, or due to Gates being a 'man of the Left' or what passed for 'the Left' in NATFHE?

Understandably, women take offence if told by men what constituted sexist harassment and how the victims should feel about the experience, yet too many feminists, from NATFHE's President, Ms Whitbread; to members of the West Midlands women's panel; did not extend that 'gender understanding' to Black women, whom it seemed did not qualify for protection as women. In practice if not in rhetoric, Black women were assigned to another category - a generic category of Black and ethnic minority people but even then they did not qualify for assistance in the committee established to promote and defend their interests – the WMARC.

A couple of weeks' before, the West Midlands women's panel met to dabble in strategies for dealing with sexist and sexual harassment. Members of the panel would surely have been aware of the many studies undertaken in this field, including the recent one carried out in Birmingham by feminists, one of whom regularly attended the West Midlands women's panel meetings. But had they familiarised themselves with Barbara Smith's article, written four years before, which was most relevant to the situation of all women and an essential reader for those with a genuine interest in sexist harassment and how it affects *all* women. Smith wrote

Feminism is the political theory and practice that struggles to free all women: women of colour, working class women, poor women, disabled women, lesbian, old women – black as well as white, economically privileged, heterosexual women. Anything less than this vision of total freedom is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandisement.¹¹¹

In the meeting, Ms Pattinson proposed that courses should be on offer for men and women; and casework or case studies should be the basis for role play activities to raise consciousness. * A paper produced by Ms Welch, on behalf of the regional council, covered procedures for dealing with complaints not only of sexual harassment but also of racial harassment. Their efforts were to be submitted to “the NEC to prepare...detailed guidelines for the use of members, Branch Officers, Regional and National Officials in...dealing with complaints of racial and sexual harassment, discrimination and victimisation of all kinds...”¹¹²

As for the *kernel*-dominated Bournville branch committee, its direction was other than to eliminate sexist and racist harassment. The objective was to dispose of one particular case within its own barracks by placing the authority for its actions on NATFHE's No 2. With the branch committee about to meet to decide upon No 2's proposal, Bis Weaver dropped a line to committee members restating that Day's 'summary' was based on “gross misrepresentations of the events and contains grossly damaging...defamatory remarks about” her. She mentioned her letter “to the General Secretary demanding...this 'Report' to be withdrawn and a public retraction made...” However, if the committee decides to discuss the 'summary', members should “see the 'Report' ...[and her] criticisms of the inadequacies and

* A visit to Bournville College during the average working day to witness a real life case in action would teach those interested in the course all they needed to know about harassment and how NATFHE branch officers, committee members and the women's group responded – after all the branch committee apparently was the starting point for dealing with racial harassment, according to another regional sub-committee, the WMARC. It also might be advisable for one of the working party to search out a Black member to explain the difference between harassment and interpersonal dispute

distortions” dealt with in several letters to Day, copies of which are with the branch secretary. She also offered to provide the names of several non-NATFHE members, associated with the Access Course, “who might feel aggrieved about being implicitly criticised in [Day’s] ‘Report.’ She drew committee members attention to “the gross misrepresentations in the ‘Report’” upon which the ‘summary’ was based and threw in an additional tit-bit for them to chew on - the possibility of taking out a complaint against the regional official.¹¹³

After receiving a copy of the Summary from the branch secretary, she sent out a further letter to committee members, pointing to Page 24 point 9 (ii) of the summary. This stated that “a copy of any part referring to a member of NATFHE may be made available to the person named but should not be given any further or wider circulation without the permission of the member or members who may be named.”

Five references to her by name were made in the Summary, therefore, as no one had asked for her permission “The action of the Branch Committee is a breach of Confidentiality.” Did Triesman, on his visit to the branch, ask the committee to seek her “approval for distributing parts of the ‘Report’ which referred to [her] by name?”¹¹⁴ Triesman gave the go ahead to the branch committee to discuss the Summary, which was beyond his authority to do so. This was yet another example of the dismissiveness towards Bis Weaver exhibited by head office officials and obsequiously obeyed by the branch committee.

Bis Weaver also contrasted the branch committee’s action against Gil Butchere for alleged contravention of trade union practices with its failure to take action against Gates, Cave and Hartland over the HMIs’ issue, which was a “serious breach of trade union practice.” The reason for this comparison was to show that “the Branch Committee has treated [her] (a Black woman) in a differential manner to the way it treated D Gates (a White man).”¹¹⁵

She referred to the motion allowing the branch to take out a Rule 8 against her for campaigning on her “complaint against D Gates and other issues relating...to...the procedures” and asked for clarification of what constituted ‘to campaign’. Did ‘campaigning’ cover: (a) oral discussion with branch members; or with NATFHE or non-NATFHE members outside the branch?; or (b) only written ‘campaigning’, and, if so, with members of the branch committee; or Birmingham liaison committee; or regional council? Did ‘campaigning’ consist of one or more letters a day; one letter every other day; one letter a week; or what? The committee was asked to attend to this issue since it “is considering taking disciplinary action against” her and “ambiguity...must be removed and clear guidelines given” because of the “considerable consequences” it had for her.¹¹⁶

The questions fired at the branch committee revealed the incompetence of the *kernels* and the arbitrary and ludicrous way this motion was cobbled together as the *kernels* sought to defend their own interests. The branch committee was competent in at least one thing; copies of our letters were still being sent to Triesman.¹¹⁷ The British bourgeoisie had little to fear from union ‘activists’ of this calibre.

The branch committee met on the 25th June. The new chair, Cave, opened the meeting “called to deal with the issue which had dominated the Branch this year...[and] has been lost in a maze of issues.” All members had received a copy of the summary of conclusions, confirmed as having been circulated “on the recommendation of David Triesman” to serve as background information because the committee “can [not] enter into any great debate.” The meeting was then thrown open to members to ask questions.

The branch secretary put forward reasons for the summary not to be discussed, namely, that they (i) could not “sit in judgement”; (ii) nor determine between “right and wrong”; (iii) nor “work out the relevance of the Summary...without the [full] ‘Report’.” These points were bolstered by the ‘report’ not being accepted by all parties and that “people weren’t around when the complaint was made.” *

The SWP members wanted to know that if it was not to be discussed why the summary was distributed and, without a discussion, how was the committee to resolve the issue – it appeared they wanted the issues out into the open as part of their on-going feud with the *kernels*. This was opposed by Hartland, who said going back into the summary and report, which “some may see...as a way forward...would not be accepted by all parties.” He suggested “to go forward not go back into the past” and he supported non-discussion of the summary. Apart from the SWP members, non-discussion was the prevailing view. A considerable change had taken place over the past few days. Her correspondence since Triesman’s visit seemed to be having an effect – assuming it had been read!! What appeared certain was that Triesman had left the branch committee with an irresolvable dilemma.

The meeting went on to address the proposals from the previous meeting: (a) “withdraw [the] call for a national enquiry”; (b) any complaints by Bis Weaver against Gates, or by Bis Weaver and Gordon Weaver against the branch committee should be made under Rule 8; and (c) “If complaints are not pursued through these channels but [the] campaign continues then the Branch should consider taking out Rule 8 against [the] individual members

* This latter point was in error because only one committee member was ‘not around’ at the time – Hartland

concerned.” Downey interjected to include in the first proposal, to “ask the region to withdraw its request for a national investigation”, which meant no enquiry into the actions of local officers.

The SWP members were not happy with a motion threatening disciplinary action against those campaigning and called for its withdrawal; branding it “ambiguous as to whom it refers to...and so vague as to be dangerous.” What came as a surprise, at least to me, was Downey’s concurrence with these criticisms by saying “This proposal is not helpful but counterproductive,” which considering he proposed the motion represented a significant *volte face* on his part. The branch secretary supported withdrawal as did Cave, who thought “the wording fairly innocuous and...ambiguous.” A motion to withdraw part (c) was put to the committee and passed. Perhaps, they did read her letter before putting it in the pile to be sent to Triesman.

The next item on the agenda was whether to give Bis Weaver a right of reply in a branch meeting to the April statement produced by the chair, who did not attend this meeting. If the proposal was agreed should it be at an ordinary meeting or a specially convened one; if the former, whether at the beginning or end; and who would chair the meeting. Downey reminded everyone that Triesman said it “would be valuable to have someone from outside” but he thought it would be “impossible to ask Liaison Committee officers at such short notice.”

The *kernels* introduced an entirely new concept – an emphasis on fairness. Hartland raised the possibility of people claiming it might be unfair if officers, involved in the issues, chaired the meeting and, in another first for the *kernels*, stated that “Justice must be done and seen to be done.” He added that “whoever Chairs the meeting their credentials must be above suspicion.” It was a pity that this ‘recognition of justice’ was not extended to Bis Weaver for the 29th April meeting or when she asked for the right of reply in May or when Hartland found his way to the Principal’s office over the HMIs visit or on several other occasions. Downey wanted the issues to be treated with great respect and the facility to speak to be available “only to the person who asked”, which surprisingly enough was Bis Weaver. Gates was not pleased with this development. He denied the issue was between Bis Weaver and himself and he referred to the seventy letters she sent out, including some to the regional official. He followed up by saying “the issue is not about what Bis Weaver did twelve months ago” and he criticised the meeting for “reinforcing a false position [as] many people have had allegations made against them.” This was a peculiar but expected reversal of the situation since it was about what Gates ‘did twelve months ago’ that led to her still unresolved

complaint. Recent incidents attributable to Gates and his *kernel* allies, acquiesced in by the branch committee, arose out of the original complaint and the ‘mismanagement’ of that complaint by NATFHE officialdom. However, it would suit Gates and his allies, both lay and paid, to have collateral issues to divert attention from his and their roles before he slid away from the consequences with only just over a week to go and study leave beckoning. But it was not unknown for Gates to have unusual interpretations of events when trying to escape the consequences of his own actions; even Mackney recognised this, having accused Gates of lying in a liaison committee debate.¹¹⁸ Notwithstanding this, it was agreed that her statement would be made at a special branch meeting. The proposal for a liaison officer to chair the meeting was then discussed.

The SWP members considered a vote for an independent chair meant no one can be found in the branch to impartially chair the meeting – “it is a vote to trust nobody.” Triesman’s name was raised, by the *kernels*’ new recruit, as authority for having a liaison chair, adding if committee members could not “take the advice of a national official then they want [their] brains looked at.” Hartland backed up the newcomer and repeated another gem from Triesman’s repertoire of ‘tall tales’, namely, “it was suggested to [Triesman] to close down the Branch Committee” – whatever relevance this had to this particular discussion remained unsaid. A thought crossing my mind was how gullible some committee members were to accept without question what was told to them without checking its veracity. Hartland tended to give the impression of being overwhelmed by people of status and influence at all levels of the union. He went on to say “the Branch Committee is [an] inappropriate body to provide [a] chair for that meeting” and repeated the “justice must be done” message. The motion for an external chair was agreed and the date for Bis Weaver’s right of reply fixed for the 3rd July 1986 – ever closer to the date of Gates’ disappearing act.

The branch chair, Cave, disclosed that, in the event of any challenge to the chair at the following day’s branch meeting, the executive had taken the precaution of drawing up a list of replacements. The sequence would be Ms Pattinson, then Gates, then Downey. This was the face of ‘impartiality’ in the branch – very comforting for Bis Weaver to know her interests depended on four *kernels*; the latter three having recently resigned from the Birmingham liaison committee because that committee would not assist the ‘branch’ against Bis Weaver. So much for ‘Justice must be done and seen to be done’ and the chair’s ‘credentials must be above suspicion’!¹¹⁹

For ten days, the letter of grievance had been worked on. This was not to be a repeat of the loosely constructed, generalised complaint sent to NATFHE providing the opportunity

for Day to ignore: (a) the specific incidents in the complaint; (b) the sequence of events over time; and (c) the issue of racist harassment. Nor would the procedural ignorance be repeated that allowed Day to offer an initial enquiry that turned into a final enquiry and then into Triesman's offer of a similar investigation outside the rules.

The situation had also moved on and involved new incidents and other parties. She dealt with both objective and subjective elements of racism and harassment; linking her personal experiences at the hands of Gates with other Black people who face these experiences in the workplace; highlighting Gates' influential position in the college as a NATFHE officer and how that was used to isolate her in her professional role.

On the evening of the 25th June, the final touches were made and the grievance was ready for the chair of Bournville Governors, with copies to Gates, Cave and Hartland; the Bournville Principal; the Chief Education Officer; and the Head of the Race Relations Unit.

In what was thought to be a parting shot at NATFHE's lack of democracy; arbitrary decision-making by unelected officials; and total disregard for trade union practices and principles, a letter – a condensed reminder for the record, would be posted at the same time as the grievance. This letter, five pages long, did not go to Triesman but to the union's number one man, the general secretary, Peter Dawson.

Bis Weaver held NATFHE officialdom culpable, in part, for what happened to her in Bournville College. Head office had stoked the flame that intensified her problems after officialdom's number one and two in the chain of command became involved. These bureaucrats were the targets; and the content of the letter was almost prophetic for a future confrontation with NATFHE in a higher arena, which, at the time, was not envisaged as a possibility.

Five points were comprehensively dealt with; three covering Triesman's recommendations to the branch committee and two dealing with outstanding issues concerning her complaint against Gates. Firstly, surprise was expressed "that a full-time non-elected official (a member of the ASTMS) would recommend to the Branch that it seeks to withdraw a motion decided by the democratically elected regional body" proposing an investigation of issues surrounding her complaint with 50% Black participation. Triesman's intervention showed "the limited democracy within NATFHE and a lack of power of NATFHE members in their Association." She also revealed being aware that "this particular motion...was not to the liking of" Day, one of the subjects of the proposed investigation. Dawson was asked to explain why, on two occasions, the proposal to include two Black members was deemed to be outside the rules "yet D Triesman...offered [her] an 'outside the

rules' enquiry by two White males in January 1986." She disclosed that "Black people, in NATFHE, are beginning to be concerned about" NATFHE's reluctance to allow them "to participate in the investigation of...issues concerning the rights of Black people."

Secondly, she addressed Triesman's recommendations for the branch committee to discuss Day's 'summary', which breached the confidential status of the 'report' requiring the permission of named persons before circulating it to others.¹²⁰ Triesman also failed to disclose this intention to her or ask her permission when they met on the 12th June. The general secretary was pinpointed as having ultimate responsibility for this breach because Triesman, who authorised the breach, and Day, who included the condition in the 'report', were both acting under Dawson's authority. This breach of confidentiality "nullif[ied] the original Rules of Confidentiality," leaving her now free to disclose any part of the 'report' to anyone. Furthermore, as the 'report' contained "many deficiencies and implications" [it] would not be appropriate to release it without including her "critical comments made about the 'report'...[sent] to A Day." She was removing any possible complications when she released all documents to the governors to counter any claim NATFHE might make of the grievance being fully investigated and the union had found no case for Gates to answer.

In the third point, she noted Triesman's concern for the withdrawal of the branch motion for a national enquiry, yet he "did not ask the Branch to restore the services and facilities taken from [her]..." She also referred to "the Branch Committee playing 'cat and mouse' with [her] – first the threat of a Rule 8" on the 18th June if she continued to campaign on the Gates' issue and "then its withdrawal" on the 25th June. To Bis, "the reasonable person might consider [the Branch Committee's] tactics intimidatory and aimed at creating the greatest possible anxiety for [her] and, as D Triesman... knows, [she has] been ill for some time partly...[due to] Head Office's refusal to... pursue all matters relating to [her] complaint." It was made clear the branch committee continued to intimidate her after the 12th June – the inference being that Triesman's visit to deal with the 'occasional difficulties' had increased the pressure on her.

There was no doubt she had been "subject to differential treatment in NATFHE" and she made a detailed comparison of the branch committee's actions on behalf of Gates against Gil Butchere with its failure to act on Bis Weaver's behalf against Gates over the HMI issue. This was described as "differential treatment...[and] consistent with the standard applied by A Day in his 'Report', whereby, Day disregarded any information [she],...a Black person, supplied to him whilst relying completely on third party 'information' provided by White 'witnesses.' It is becoming increasingly apparent to [her]...and [to] a number of Black

people...that NATFHE's commitment to Black members is merely a token, paper, one." She was preparing the way for point four, which referred to Triesman's letter of the 17th April, when he directed her to the local authority's grievance procedures where she "would have the opportunity to substantiate [her] allegations" against Gates.

She went on to describe to Dawson, as she had done before to Day and Ms Deeson, that the various forms of Gates' harassment "might not be unconnected with [her] racial origins." Triesman's advice in the 17th April letter, suggested that "NATFHE is unable to deal with a complaint like [hers] against another member of NATFHE and...the appropriate institution to...take [her] complaint is the local authority." As she put it, "What an indictment of a trade union, especially one that proclaims publicly that it has a commitment to Black people."

Day and Triesman were criticised for not telling her earlier that NATFHE was unable to deal with these kinds of complaints as "it would certainly have saved [her] a lot of time and trouble." The centre piece of the missive was telling Dawson that having "given considerable thought to D Triesman's suggestion...[she] will take his advice and pursue [her] complaint against D Gates through the Local Authority." She "hope[d] that the structural inertia that...NATFHE has exhibited in response...to the interests of Black people, namely *NATFHEism* will be eradicated." Her new direction was to be followed only with regard to the complaint against Gates; the issue of Day's 'enquiry' and his 'damaging and defamatory' 'report' were covered in the fifth point.

Her intention was to submit "A formal complaint against A Day when...fully recovered from the ill-health...generated by...contact with NATFHE." Dawson was given a bit part in this script; his supportive role was to provide the name and address of the ASTMS, of which Day was a member for her to advise its general secretary of her intentions, "or is this another piece of information...NATFHE will be reluctant to provide..." NATFHE was not really expected to provide this information but it might give NATFHE officialdom something to think about, assuming NATFHE officials, in their arrogance, ever thought anything about what Black members did or might do. In conclusion, in ditching NATFHE, or so we both thought, she asked for a written reply rather than the usual postcard.¹²¹ She received neither. Was this arrogance or merely saving on postage? At least it was not returned in an unstamped envelope!

After months spent wandering in the shadows cast by NATFHE's bureaucratic stonewall intransigence and despairing of a breakthrough, a glimmer of light could be seen at the end of the tunnel as people outside the duplicitous embrace of NATFHE arrived on the

scene to alter the complexion of things. So long under the lash, she felt the pressure melting away as the case left NATFHE's repressive regime to enter the domain of the governors and Birmingham city council. It was now up to these two bodies to take the burden off her. It was to be a long and arduous path before she emerged out of the darkness. Another brood of NATFHE's ill-led chickens were coming home to roost. Gates and his co-conspirators in NATFHE had pushed Bis Weaver to the brink. The time bomb they had been priming since June 1985, when NATFHE officialdom entered the scene, was about to explode and with it NATFHE and its mythical anti-racism commitment would be brought into the limelight for public scrutiny and it was not an attractive sight.

¹ NJ June/July 1986

² THES 23 May 1986

³ NJ June/July 1986

⁴ Ibid

⁵ DTr to HS 4 June 1986 BW IT Bundle 70

⁶ NJ Mar 1984

⁷ BW to BCh 26 May 1986 File C 81

⁸ BW to RDty 26 May 1986 File C 82

⁹ BW to BCh/BCtte 28 May 1986 File C 86

¹⁰ BW to BCh 30 May 1986 File C 87

¹¹ T/p Conv RDty & BW 22 May 1986 File Y 3

¹² BW to BSec/BCtte 27 May 1986 File C 85

¹³ GW to BCh/BCtte 25 May 1986 File M 1

¹⁴ GB to BCtte 7 Jul 1986 File Z 9

¹⁵ GW to BCh/BCtte 28 May 1986 File M 8

¹⁶ GW to BCh/BCtte 30 May 1986 File M 9

¹⁷ GW to BCh/BCtte 4 Jun 1986 File M 13 - 14

¹⁸ GW to BCh/BCtte 2 Jun 1986 File M 10

¹⁹ AD to BSec 10 Dec 1985 File A31

²⁰ T/p message PD to HS via PD Sec in HS to BW 2 Mar 1986 Item 2 File B 23 - 24

²¹ DTr to BW 2 Apr 1986 BW IT Bundle 52

²² DTr to BW 18 Apr 1986 BW IT Bundle 61

²³ BW to DTr 27 May 1986 Rec'd Del K762717 File C 83 - 84

²⁴ BW to DTr 24 May 1986 File C 80

²⁵ BCC RR & EOC Mins 30 May 1986

²⁶ BW to PMT 1 Jun 1986 File N 1 - 2; See also BW to PMT 4 Feb 1988 Letter A para 4 File O 26

²⁷ BW to HMIs 11 Jun 1986 Rec'd Del Z 391333 File N 3

²⁸ BH to BW 2 Jun 1986 File D 1

²⁹ Conv GW & BH 2 Jun 1986 File Q 25

³⁰ BW to BH 4 Jun 1986 File D 4 - 5

³¹ DTr to BW 3 Jun 1986 BW IT Bundle 69

³² BW to DTr 10 Jul 1986 Rec'd Del J 632265 BW IT Bundle 81

³³ T/P Conv BW/GW & DTr 4 Jun 1986 File Q 36 - 39

³⁴ DTr to BSec 4 Jun 1986 BW IT Bundle 70; B/V Br Ctte Agenda 12 Jun 1986 File Q 40

³⁵ BW/GW to DE 5 Jun 1986 File D 6

³⁶ Weaver v NATFHE IT Report p15 pt 6 (h)(v); p8 s5 (g)(ii)

³⁷ DTr to HS 4 June 1986 BW IT Bundle 70

³⁸ Day's Report p 16 s 6 (xv)

³⁹ Ibid p16 s6 (xiii)

⁴⁰ Notes BCtte Mtg 9 Jun 1986 File Q 31 - 35

⁴¹ BW to DE 9 Jun 1986 File D 9

⁴² Mins B/V Govs Mtg 10 Jun 1986 p8 AOB Item 2 File W 25 - 26

⁴³ Mins B/V Govs Mtg 11 Nov 1986 p1 File W 29

- 44 RRA 1976 s32 (i) SDA 1973 s41(1); *Majrowski v Guy's & St Thomas's NHS Trust* [2006] UKHL 34
- 45 A different Reality, EOC/WMCC, February 1986, p 10 in Post 21 Feb 1986
- 46 DG, SP & RDwy to BhLC Sec 10 Jun 1986 File D 12
- 47 BW to BCtte & others 11 Jun 1986 File D 13
- 48 Post 4 Apr 1987
- 49 Post 6 Apr 1987
- 50 Post 8 Apr 1987
- 51 Statistics, BW at Bus St Mtg 22 May 1986 File Q 27
- 52 DTr in *Weaver v NATFHE* IT report p9 pt 5(g) (4)
- 53 *Ibid* p9 pt 5(g)
- 54 DTr to BW 2 April 1986 BW IT Bundle 52
- 55 BW to DTr 16 Apr 1986 Rec'd Del V 401815 BW IT Bundle 57
- 56 *Weaver v NATFHE* IT Report p9 pt 5(g)(vi)
- 57 GLC Anti-racism TU working Group, Racism within Trade Unions, Nov 1984
- 58 *Demam v AUT* [2003] ECWA Civ 239 s 16
- 59 *Ibid* para 51
- 60 DTr to BW 12 Jun 1986 in BW's response to NATFHE's CRE Questionnaire p 12 pt 18, 2.4 Nov 1986, *Weaver v NATFHE* at www.theplebeian.net p 102
- 61 BW & DTr Mtg 12 Jun 1986 File Q 41 – 45; BW to DTr 10 July 1986 Rec'd Del J 632265 BW IT Bundle 81
- 62 Woolf M, Political Editor, Independent on Sunday 22 Jan 2006
- 63 SD (ARO) 12 June 1986 File D 14
- 64 Disclosed by BH, BCtte Mtg 25 Jun 1986 File R 4
- 65 T/p conv BW & HS 12 Jun 1986 File Q 46 - 49 and Q 50
- 66 T/p conv BW & HS 12 Jun 1986 File Q 46 - 49
- 67 Disclosed by RDwy, BCtte Mtg 18 Jun 1986 File Q 53
- 68 *Ibid*
- 69 *Ibid*
- 70 NC, BMtg 26 Jun 1986 File R 6 – 9; HS, BCtteMtg 18 Jun 1986 File Q 51 - 54
- 71 DTr to BW 2 Apr 1986 BW IT Bundle 52
- 72 Disclosed by RDwy, BCtte Mtg 25 Jun 1986 File R 3
- 73 BCtte Mtg 18 Jun 1986 File Q 51 - 54
- 74 NJ June/July 1980; and NJ Mar 1984
- 75 T/p conv BW & HS 12 Jun 1986 File Q 46 - 49
- 76 *Weaver v NATFHE* IT Report [1987] p10 s5 (ii) and p14 s6(h)(iv)
- 77 BW to BCtte 15 Jun 1986 File D 16
- 78 BW to BCtte 16 Jun 1986 File D 17
- 79 BW to BSec for BrCh 1 Dec 1985 File A 23 - 24
- 80 GW to BSec/BCtte 12 Jun 1986 File M 15
- 81 Day's report, p19 pt 7(ix), p9 pt 4(xiv), p23 pt 8 (vi); DG to AD 12 Nov 1985 p2 NATFHE IT Bundle 74
- 82 BW to PD 16 Jun 1986 Letter A File D 18
- 83 BW to PD 16 Jun 1986 Rec'd Del B 600780 BW IT Bundle 72
- 84 LJ (N) to BW 17 Jun 1986 File D 19
- 85 *Weaver v NATFHE* IT Report p8 pt5(g)(ii)
- 86 BW to LJ (N) 17 Jun 1986 File D 20
- 87 Disclosed by RDwy BCtte Mtg 18 Jun 1986 File Q 52
- 88 Notes BCtte Mtg 18 Jun 1986 File Q 51 - 54
- 89 Notes & Mins WMARC 18 Jun 1986 s4.1 File U 3 - 4; and GW to KS 24 Jan 1987 File U 33 - 35
- 90 Mukerjee, T, *The Journey Back* in Cohen P and Bains H W, [1988] *Multi-racist Britain*, MacMillan, Basingstoke p217
- 91 *Weaver GJ* [1980] *Political Groups and Young Blacks in Handsworth*, Un of B'ham, Series C No 38 Feb 1980. Rewritten [2007] as *Young Blacks, Political Groups and the Police in Handsworth* at www.theplebeian.net
- 92 Notes & Mins WMARC Mtg 18 June 1986 File Z 8 & File U 3 – 5; GW to KS 24 Jan 1987 File U 33 - 35
- 93 Mins WMARC Mtg 18 June 1986, s 9(b) File U 5
- 94 Carter, R, [2000] *Realism and Racism*, Routledge, London, p 1
- 95 BEM 18 June 1986
- 96 Mins, BCC RR & EOC Mtg 30 May 1986
- 97 BEM 23 Dec 1998; and Blacknet News & Information for the Black Community Forums Archives, 7 Jun 2007

-
- ⁹⁸ T/p conv KA & BW 18 Jun 1986
- ⁹⁹ A Different Reality, EOC/WGCC, February 1986, p88 in Post 21 Feb 1986
- ¹⁰⁰ BW to BCttee 18 Jun 1986 File D 23 - 24
- ¹⁰¹ BW to REC members 18 Jun 1986 File D 21 - 22
- ¹⁰² BW to AB 18 Jun 1986 File D 25 - 26
- ¹⁰³ Notes B/V WG 19 Jun 1986 File Z 39 - 40
- ¹⁰⁴ BLe to BW/GW 23 Jun 1986 File Y 3
- ¹⁰⁵ BLe to Mgt Jun 1986 File D 36
- ¹⁰⁶ Agenda BCC RR & EOC Mtg 20 Jun 1986
- ¹⁰⁷ Min BCC RR & EOC Mtg 20 Jun 1986 Sect 2; & App C; & BEM 18 Jun 1986
- ¹⁰⁸ BCC RR&EO 20 Jun 1986 App B
- ¹⁰⁹ LEA's Conclusions s5 of Investigation Into Allegations made by Mrs B Weaver Against Staff at Bournville College of FE, (amended version)(undated) File N 33 - 34
- ¹¹⁰ Report on the result of the Sexual Harassment survey carried out in Birmingham Schools on behalf of NATFHE, NAS/UWT & NUT, Birmingham, 1986, available in Birmingham Reference Library.
- ¹¹¹ Smith B [1982] Racism and Women's Studies, in Hull G, Smith P & Smith B (eds) All the Women are White, All the Blacks are Men, But some of Us are Brave, Feminist Press, New York But some of Us are Brave, Feminist Press, New York
- ¹¹² Mins WMWP Mtg 9 Jun 1986 File X 8 - 9
- ¹¹³ BW to BCttee 23 Jun 1986 Letter A File D 28
- ¹¹⁴ BW to BCttee 23 Jun 1986 Letter B File D 29
- ¹¹⁵ BW to BCttee 24 Jun 1986 Letter A File D 29
- ¹¹⁶ BW to BCttee 24 Jun 1986 Letter B File D 31
- ¹¹⁷ HS to DTr 23 Jun 1986 File D 30
- ¹¹⁸ PMc to DE 8 Apr 1986 BW IT Bundle 55
- ¹¹⁹ GW Notes BCttee Mtg 25 Jun 1986 File R 1 - 5
- ¹²⁰ Day's Report p24 pt 9(ii)
- ¹²¹ BW to PD 25 June 1986 BW IT Bundle 73