

# Newsletter Number 5

## December 2000

*The last year has been one of exciting progress for the George Padmore Institute. There has been steady work with the archives – in the preservation and organisation of our materials, in preparing a bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund, in deepening our knowledge of the world of archives, and in building up our contacts. In our public programmes we held a successful reception for Blyden Cowart, the daughter of George Padmore, and are currently in the midst of a series of sessions examining the Origins and Early Development of the Black Supplementary School Movement. We have also had some important successes in fundraising, which will help underpin the work of the George Padmore Institute for the next year or more.*

### The George Padmore Institute

Asked about this George Padmore Institute in Finsbury Park, in London, where he was going so often during our first series of “Life Experience with Britain: lectures and conversations” in 1997 and why he was so enthused about the place, this friend of the GPI responded:

“The George Padmore Institute is a preparation for the 21s century”.

And we agree.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is now here and in the process of change, initiated by the new sciences and technologies, which affect all economies and societies, the George Padmore Institute will play its role.

### Blyden Cowart Reception

One of the highlights of the year was the *reception* the George Padmore Institute gave to *Blyden Cowart* and her daughter Linda on Thursday July 27<sup>th</sup>. Blyden Cowart is the daughter of George Padmore and she was in London for a celebration marking the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1<sup>st</sup> Pan-African Conference, organised by Henry Sylvester Williams in 1900. We were very pleased to welcome her and her daughter to the Institute and to pay our respects through

them to George Padmore, whose life, writings and visionary commitment to equality, solidarity and hope inspired our giving his name to our Institute. We were also thrilled that Errol Lloyd, the sculptor and artist, could attend and made a pencil portrait of Blyden Cowart for posterity.

Pic of Blyden Cowart

### Black Supplementary Schools

We are currently in the midst of a series of sessions on the *Origins and Early Development of the Black Supplementary School Movement*. We wish to record how the movement emerged and what it achieved. Parents concerns about education and about the underachievement of their children in state schools were aroused in the 1960s and 1970s. This led to the beginnings of what became in effect a Black Education Movement of parents, teachers and of various West Indian cultural and social organisations. This was also a time of black consciousness, independence movements, cultural resurgence and politics of change. Supplementary Schools were set up all over the country, not just in London, and the sessions are reflecting this nation-wide

experience. In the three sessions we have held so far there have been valuable contributions from people who were founders and participants in the Supplementary School Movement during the late 1960s and 1970s. We will be supplementing the valuable material they have provided by interviews with other key figures of the period who have not been able to attend the sessions. Other contributors, not present at the sessions so far and who were founders of the BSSM, have also provided important written and oral information.

The entire research and study programme, initiated by the George Padmore Institute, is designated as a “detailed study of the Origins, Development, Present Status and Future of the Black Supplementary School Movement”. We shall be pleased to hear from any founders and early participants in the Black Supplementary Schools Movement that we have not already contacted.

Our aim is to transcribe and edit the material so as to produce an authoritative account in book form, and make the material available and accessible to educational institutions and a wider public.

The research and study programme of the present situation and future possibilities of the Black Supplementary School Movement will require other sessions and a second book. But already a perspective on the Present Status and Future of the Black Supplementary School Movement has emerged and is emerging from the current sessions and discussions.

***Finally, once again, the George Padmore Institute wishes to pay public tribute to the Founders and Builders of the Black Supplementary School Movement for their vision, dedication and achievement.***

## **Archive Work**

This year we have been putting together a bid to the *Heritage Lottery Fund*. It has been a very useful learning experience and the George Padmore Institute is certainly now much more knowledgeable about the organisation and management of archives than it was a year ago. We have named our project for the HLF bid *The Changing Britannia Archive Project*. It covers five key collections – the Caribbean Artists Movement, the early Black Education Movement, the Black Parents Movement, the New Cross Massacre Campaign, and early newspapers and ephemera (1960s and 1970s) from both the UK and Caribbean. We have completed a draft of our bid and are waiting on the report of a professional consultant archivist to tighten up some loose ends before sending in the final bid, hopefully by the end of this year.

Early in the year some Trustees and volunteers received *training* in the preservation and boxing of archive materials from Amelia Rampton, a professional paper conservator and the wife of a colleague of one of our Trustees. We purchased the very expensive acid free boxes and other preservation materials that we needed, and from March began to work regularly in the archives. Great strides were made in the organisation and preservation of materials, particularly the journals and newspapers.

Pic of training with Amelia

During the year the George Padmore Institute has received offers of *new archives*, though we always bear in mind the limitations of space in our building. We

are very excited that the team that sat on the ***Macdonald Inquiry Into Racism and Racial Violence in Manchester Schools***, have agreed that the materials which they collected for their report, known as the ***Burnage Report***, should be placed in the George Padmore Institute. And we have now received these. This collection will be a major addition to those materials we already hold. We have also been promised the papers of ***Eloise Edwards*** who has lived and worked in Manchester for many years, and who was involved in many of the struggles and activities that took place in that city, including the big campaign in the late 1960s over the destruction of Moss Side.

### **Book Launches**

Together with New Beacon Books the George Padmore Institute has organised receptions for the publication of three important books: *Voices of the Crossing*, an anthology, edited by Naseem Khan and Ferdinand Dennis, of reflections on the impact of Britain on writers from Asia, the Caribbean and Africa; *Marking Time*, the first novel written by the leading writer E.A. Markham; and *The Legend of the Rockhills*, short stories by Funso Aiyejina, which won the Best First Book in the Africa Region of the 1999 Commonwealth Writers Prize. Alas, Funso Aiyejina was unable to attend this event in person, as bad weather delayed his flight from India, where the prizegiving took place. However, his good friend, the distinguished novelist Lawrence Scott, read, magnificently, the title story from his collection.

### **Publishing**

***Changing Britannia: life experience with Britain*** has been selling steadily throughout the year. We have been in touch with university lecturers and sixth form college teachers to encourage its use in the educational system. The GPI is making a concerted effort to bring it to the attention of people who can use it in the educational system. Any interest will be welcome.

There have been no lectures and conversations about ***Life Experience With Britain*** this year as we are currently working on the transcripts of the last series,

held from January to July 1999, and preparing these for publication. We will be planning a third series for 2001, probably starting around March or April. We shall, as usual, send out information on this new series and on the publication of the second book. If you are interested in receiving information about all this, please let us know at the GPI.

### **Justice for Roger Sylvester**

Members of the George Padmore Institute have supported the ***Roger Sylvester Justice Campaign*** throughout the year. Trustees attended the recent Briefing Meeting held on November 12 at the West Indian Cultural Centre and also supported the vigil and service held in January on the anniversary of Roger's death and on November 26 to mark the decision of the Crown Prosecution Service not to prosecute any of the eight policemen, who restrained him.

Roger was a young man of 30 years, when he was picked up by eight police officers on January 11<sup>th</sup> 1999. He sustained numerous injuries while he was in their custody, was in a coma on a life support system and seven days later was pronounced dead. Roger had had a history of depression since his teenage years but had been on a steady path to recovery in the two years before his death. We have always argued that restraint methods must not and need not result in death and those police officers who use what look like commando methods and undue force should be held accountable for the consequences of their actions. Up to now the eight police officers involved in

Roger's case have not even been suspended. And recently, on November 20<sup>th</sup>, the Crown Prosecution Service announced its decision not to prosecute. The family are having to seek what justice they can get through the forthcoming Inquest and through public campaigning. Roger Sylvester attended, as a young junior schoolboy, the George Padmore Supplementary School.

## **Fundraising**

For any small charity, raising money can take up a disproportionate amount of time. The GPI has obtained a number of grants this year, which are helping us move forward more rapidly with our programme of work. In January we received £5000 from the Hilden Charitable Fund for the Institute's "archival restoration and management programme in the next year". We received another £5000 from the Lord Ashdown Charitable Settlement in April. On May 22 a delegation of four Trustees – Gus John, John La Rose, Roxy Harris and Sarah White – had a meeting with the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust in connection with our application to that Trust for funding. As a result of that visit the GPI have been granted £15,000 over the calendar year starting from October. We would like to record here our public thanks to these Trusts for their support.

Pic of delegation to J.Rowntree

But the GPI never forgets that the basis for the achievement so far of the George Padmore Institute has been the work done and commitment shown by its members and supporters in Britain and other parts of the world. This is the rock on which our foundations have been built. We would like to pay public tribute to all these donors and supporters here, of whom there are too many to name and to thank them for all their effort and commitment.

The GPI's *Fundraising Lunch* will be held on Sunday December 3<sup>rd</sup>. This is where friends and supporters can meet, enjoying good food and good company in support of a good cause.

***The GPI always welcomes any donations to our work. Cheques should be made out to the George Padmore Institute. Standing order forms are available if you should wish to use one.***

NEWS IN BRIEF

### **George Padmore Info**

Throughout the year John La Rose has been operating the *George Padmore Info* service, Information on a wide range of events, including information about the GPI's work, is distributed to a circle of contacts and supporters of the George Padmore Institute. If you are interested in being on the mailing list, please let us know.

### **Web Site**

Brian Alleyne and Remi Harris are currently helping the GPI to develop a website, which we hope will be up and running early in 2001.

### **CLR James Conference**

The George Padmore Institute is one of the co-sponsors for a Conference to be held in Trinidad and Tobago from September 13th-16th 2001 to mark the centenary of the birth of CLR James. The Conference theme is ***CLR James at 100: global capitalism, culture and the politics of world revolution.***

The organising sponsor is the Afro-American Studies Program of Brown University and they are asking for submissions and panel proposals to be sent to them by January 2001.

The address is Paget Henry / Anthony Bogues, Afro-American Studies Program, Brown University, 155 Angell Street-2<sup>nd</sup> flr, Churchill House, Providence, RI 02912, USA; or email: Barrymore-Bogues@brown.edu

### **Deaths**

Very sadly, ***Pauline Ghent***, one of our volunteers, who suffered from epilepsy died suddenly and tragically on June 16. We would like to pay homage here to the work she did for the George Padmore Institute in the short period we knew her from March to June of this year. She was a very organised and dedicated worker. She was also a very pleasant person and all the people who had got to know her over the time we worked together were very saddened and shocked by her sudden death.

We are also sad to report the death of the **Revd Eddie Burke**, father of our Deputy Chairperson, Dr Aggrey Burke, on July 3<sup>rd</sup> 2000 at the age of 91. The Revd Burke was a leading figure in the modern history of Jamaica. His was a wide ranging life, including representation of Jamaica

in Britain after the Notting Hill Riots in 1958, and in Ethiopia and Zambia, also on behalf of Jamaica. His stories for children *Newsy Wapps* broadcast on the radio and also published in book form were a seminal influence.