RACISM

Conference notes the likelihood of a General Election in the forthcoming period, and expresses its concern over the continuing electoral challenge from racist and fascist groups such as the BNP and the National Front.

Conference further condemns the policies and proposed policies of both the Labour Government and the Conservative Opposition towards asylum seekers and refugees. Conference expresses its concern that the effects of such policies and proposed policies are likely to be exacerbated by a continuing media campaign against asylum seekers and refugees, which spreads myths and lies, and is likely to contribute to race hatred.

Conference deplores the Government’s further curbs, which require prospective migrants to be able to speak English and be ‘skilled’ workers as a precondition for entry. Conference believes that such a system is intrinsically racist and will be used to discriminate against people from developing countries.

Conference is particularly concerned by the rise of Islamophobia since the events of 11 September 2001, and in the wake of the war and occupation of Iraq.

Conference notes that there is a continuing issue of under-achievement by ethnic groups within the British school system, particularly but not only by black boys.

Conference is deeply concerned at Government moves to further devolve dedicated grants to schools and the impact this is likely to have on the Ethnic Minority Achievement (EMAG) grant.

Conference believes that the move to formula based EMAG funding from 2005 will further diminish already depleted funding for promoting social cohesion and meeting the specific educational needs of minority ethnic pupils.

Conference believes:

1. that despite the inclusion statements in the National Curriculum, equality is still not at its heart and does not facilitate easily the preparation of pupils for adult life in a diverse society and in a global context;
2. the provisions of the 2002 amendment to the Race Relations Act, which required schools to implement Race Equality Policies, have not been developed beyond a paper policy in many schools;
3. teachers and schools and teacher unions have a responsibility to address the issues of underachievement and institutional racism within the education system, and to work collaboratively with parent, students, governors and the wider community;
4. black and ethnic minority students have suffered from the rigid formulations of the national curriculum, which has restricted the ways teachers have been able to develop a curriculum that addresses the concerns of many students. This has been reinforced by the continuance of the disastrous SATs regime in England;
5. the practice of entitlement to paid leave for religious observance is a positive recognition of diverse faiths.

Conference instructs the Executive to:

a. call on the government to commission an independent review of the 5-14 curriculum, integral to which must be an examination of how a new framework can encourage the tackling of race discrimination, including anti-Semitism, and the promotion of race equality;
b. encourage divisions, associations and members to become involved in campaigns in elections, including the forthcoming General Election;
c. to work with Unite Against Fascism and other anti-racist and community organizations to publicise and extend the campaign against racism and fascism in this country;
d. to continue to actively campaign against current legislation, and for the repeal of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002;
e. to actively promote among members, and in the media, the massive contribution refugees and asylum seekers have made to our society;
f. to campaign nationally for an anti-racist curriculum, that will be to the benefit of every child, and for the active implementation of the 2002 amendment to the Race Relations Act in every school;
g. to develop and circulate materials that will encourage the development of an anti-racist curriculum, and to encourage local associations and divisions to work with LEAs and schools in organising events, conferences and professional development.
h. continue its campaign for an increase in race equality funding;
i. conduct a survey of divisions to ascertain the impact of the Government's formula based EMAG funding;
j. provide support to divisions and associations, including and up to strike action, where members’ jobs are threatened as a result of any move to reduce or dismantle ring-fenced EMAG funding;
k. initiate a project on anti-Semitism, mindful of the fact that 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of the Holocaust and that anti-Semitism is rising throughout Europe; and
l. write to all LEAs reaffirming policy on paid time off for religious observance.