

NEWS

Metropolitan Police

Met accused of racism by its own lay advisory group

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ONE OF the worst race relations crisis to hit the Metropolitan Police post-Macpherson is currently unfolding in the wake of the decision by its group of lay advisers to suspend work after allegations of "unremitting racism" against two of its members.

The abused advisers of the 35-strong group are two Black women who allege that police officers resented their presence, displayed hostile behaviour, were apathetic to their contributions and made them feel isolated. Both women were invited by the Met to offer support and counselling to survivors of the recent Paddington rail disaster.

After an emergency meeting held by the group last Wednesday, it was decided to halt their work until further notice. The following day a damning letter signed by the group's members, including its chair Beverley

Thompson, hit the desks of assistant commissioner, Denis O'Connor and John Grieve, director of the Racial and Violent Crime Taskforce which is responsible for the advisory panel.

Another high profile casualty of this row is the cancellation of the Supporting Diversity Conference organised by the Met, the CRE and the Association of London Government, which was set to take place this Monday.

In a statement, the lay advisory group said: "We have refused to attend a conference on promoting anti racism because we were not consulted about the conference or its planning." It added that its treatment over the conference was the "final straw" and declared that it would suspend rather than terminate its activities.

Paul Wilson, chair of the Black Police Association, said that his group decided to boycott the conference



Paul Wilson: Black and Asian police officers face racism regularly

after he attended the advisory group's emergency meeting, the only police officer allowed to do so. He said: "We have decided to do this to highlight the unacceptable environment which directly impacts upon the advancement and development of Black people in the police service, and impedes the recruitment of new Black staff."

He described the whole affair as an "appalling sequence of events" and said that the experience of the two abused advisers was the norm for Black and Asian police officers. He explained: "What they experienced is what we have to put up with in the Met everyday. But the advisers were horrified. This is the Black person's experience of working in the Met."

Lee Jasper, a member of the lay advisory group and

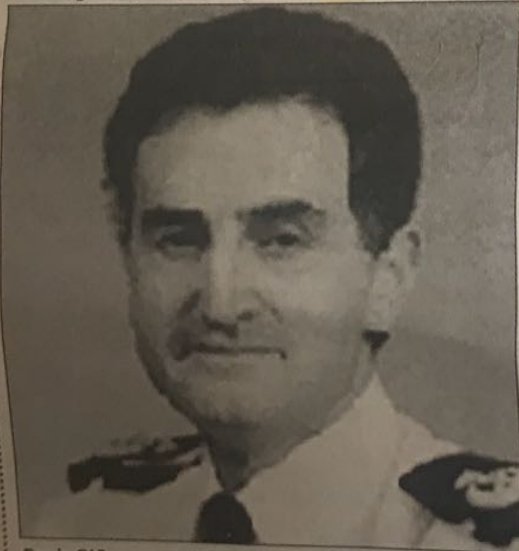
director of The 1990 Trust, past year and identified added: "The group has experienced difficulties over the institutional racism as the main problem."

THE CANCELLED ANTI RACIST CONFERENCE WOULD HAVE DISCUSSED:

- Developing an anti racist police service in co-operation with London's communities and agencies
- Promoting anti racist community safety strategies
- A police service that reflects London's diversity
- Partnerships in education against racism

DELEGATES WOULD HAVE PARTICIPATED IN WORKSHOPS ON:

- Policing diversity
- Multi agency working
- Consulting and involving the community
- Community safety strategies - are they working
- Reflecting the community - recruitment, promotion and retention
- Managing and developing a diverse workforce
- Training to police London's diversity
- Prevention and intervention with young people
- Responding to racist incidents among young people
- Education for an anti racist society



Denis O'Connor: Received an angry letter from advisers

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