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2. PRIME MINISTER

George Young



Prime Minister

12 February 1982

*Original on Home Affairs
Race Relations*

RACE RELATIONS AND SIR GEORGE YOUNG

Your office telephoned mine this morning about the reaction to the announcement made yesterday about Sir George Young.

You may find it helpful to glance at the full text of the attached Press Notice. This makes it clear several times that the announcement about George's duties related only to matters falling within the sphere of interest of my Department. It was carefully drafted and presented so as not to over-state the role which George will play. There was no hint that George's responsibility would impinge on any other Government Department, nor reference to the Prime Minister. I understand that the usual Press Office co-ordination with the No 10 Press Office occurred, and that the answer was referred to at yesterday's lobby briefing.

I made the appointment of Sir George after careful discussion with Ministers in this Department. Race matters are a big and increasing element in the work of the Department. In my Private Secretary's letter of 1 February to Clive Whitmore (about advisers from the black community) specific reference was made to the fact that I had asked Sir George to take a particular interest in co-ordinating the Department's approach to the ethnic communities. I was, of course, extremely grateful for your agreement to my proceeding with the special adviser appointments.

I believe that parts of the Press have deliberately misrepresented the terms of a very specific Press Notice. At no stage did George Young or I make any reference whatsoever to your involvement or approval of the arrangement. As far as we are aware, this is a total fabrication, not based on fact or briefing. The comments of some of our back bench colleagues have been reprehensible.

In our comments George and I will emphasise the constructive nature of what we will be doing. It is not a matter which I believe the Government need apologise for.

I am copying this to Willie Whitelaw. I should add that George Young discussed the new arrangement within DOE with Timothy Raison last week.

Note.

I passed on the Prime Minister's comments to TV 10 minutes (DOD) by [unclear]

The question and answer were badly phrased and the whole matter was badly handled. I hesitated in writing this when I heard about it at 7 a.m. on [unclear] on Monday morning in [unclear].

MH

15/2/82

Press Notice 35

11 February 1982

RACE RELATIONS - SIR GEORGE YOUNG GIVEN SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Sir George Young, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department of the Environment, is to take special responsibility for all matters concerned with race relations that fall within the Department's sphere of interests, Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State announced today.

In answer to a Parliamentary Question from John Wheeler, MP (Paddington), Mr Heseltine said:

"I have asked my honourable Friend the member for Ealing, Acton to take special responsibility for matters concerned with race relations in the Department of the Environment's field of activity."

Commenting today Sir George said:

"Many aspects of DOE's work are vital for the development of good race relations and for helping to cure racial disadvantage. Our urban programme is the clearest case of this. But aspects of housing policy are also extremely important, and the same is true of other local authority programmes with which DOE is concerned. I attach particular importance to ensuring that the views of ethnic minorities are taken on board when policies are being formed and decisions taken".

NOTE TO EDITORS

Sir George Young's responsibilities as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department of the Environment include work on Housing and Construction matters, New Towns and the Property Services Agency. He was Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Health and Personal Social Services at the Department of Health and Social Security from May 1979 until September 1981 and has been MP for Ealing, Acton, since February 1974. From 1968-1971, Sir George was a councillor of the LB of Lambeth, and sat on the Council for Community Relations there; and, from 1970-73, represented LB Ealing (which includes Southall) on the GLC.

The Government's reply to the report on Racial Disadvantage by the Home Affairs Committee has been published as Cmnd 8476. In response to the Select Committee's recommendation that DOE "should create a specialist unit concerned exclusively with racial disadvantage aspects of their responsibilities", the reply was:

"The Government does not see the need to establish a separate unit within the Department of the Environment as recommended, since this would be divorced from the work of particular policy divisions, with whom the prime responsibility must lie. However, responsibility for taking a general view of racial disadvantage as it affects the Department's whole area of interest has been allocated to the division within Inner Cities Directorate which has most to do with these issues".

The resources available to local authorities through the urban programme total £210 million in 1981/82 and will be £270 million in 1982/83. The programme is aimed at the regeneration of inner city areas for the benefit of all the residents. It is not specifically geared to meet the needs of ethnic minorities. Nevertheless they do benefit considerably from the Programme, because:-

(a) more than half (54%) of ethnic minorities live in the areas of partnership and programme authorities; and other authorities designated under the Inner Urban Areas Act 1978.

(b) about 350 of the projects, costing about £6 million a year, are designed specifically to meet their needs; many of these are run by members of ethnic minority groups themselves; they include training workshops, language tuition, youth and community centres and a wide variety of cultural activities.

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