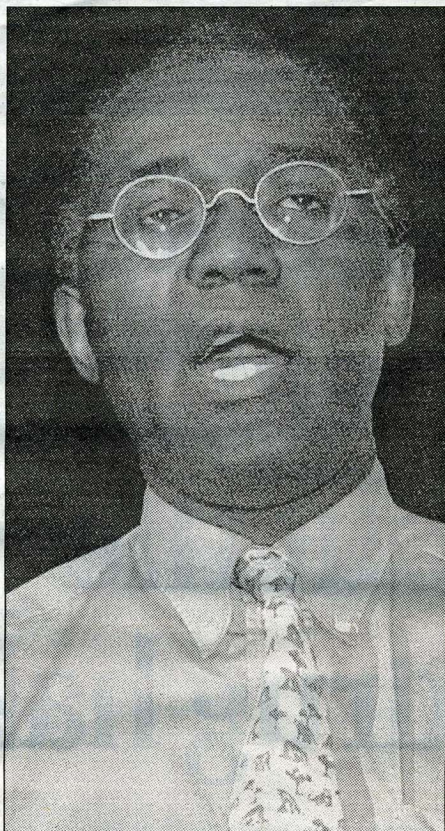




WE'RE NOT WELCOMED IN COUNTRY, SAYS CRE CHIEF

Phillips: Rural apartheid keeps minorities in cities



Trevor Phillips: reaction "deters blacks and Asians"

BLACK and Asian families are being subjected to a form of apartheid in rural Britain, a race campaigner claimed today.

Trevor Phillips, who chairs the Commission for Racial Equality, said ethnic minorities were forced to live only in big cities because of the reaction they receive from country-dwellers.

His remarks highlight the fact that most first and second generation immigrants live in urban areas.

They were being subjected to "a passive form of apartheid", Mr Phillips told BBC Radio 4's Today programme.

The CRE says it has been told that people from ethnic minority backgrounds frequently feel uncomfortable when visiting the countryside.

Even on a brief holiday or while walking, black and Asian people were watched closely and treated suspiciously, it is claimed.

Mr Phillips highlighted the fact that in the South-West one person in 85 was from an ethnic minority rather than one in 11 nationally.

Tacit racism was also deterring black and Asian people from jobs in rural public services, he said.

"Hospitals, prisons and so on, which want to recruit staff from ethnic minorities, find they can't

By Paul Waugh
Deputy Political Editor

attract people because people say 'I'd like the job but that will mean that my partner will be living in a village where he or she feels lonely and my children will be the only black or mixed race children in the local school'."

He said that he personally had felt uncomfortable when visiting the countryside.

"It's not that anybody says 'you must not come here'. But you go into the shop and people look at you as if to say 'where have you come from, planet Zarg?'"

Mr Phillips said it was time to stress the common bonds between ethnic groups and those in the country, such as playing cricket and church-going.

Berwick-upon-Tweed and Alnwick in Northumbria, Selby in North Yorkshire, North Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly were all found in the 2001 census to have almost no residents from ethnic minority groups — less than 0.05 per cent of the population.

Race groups have said that the problem of hostility has become worse since the September 11 ter-

ror attacks on New York and Washington. Many people in rural areas believe that asylum seekers are a threat to them even though it is Britain's big cities that take the vast majority.

The Islamic Society of Britain last year organised a rural camp for Muslims in Lincolnshire to combat perceptions in the countryside.

Wilfred Emmanuel-Jones, a Jamaican-born Briton, came to the UK when he was three and now farms on the Devon/Cornwall border. He is believed to be the only black farmer in Britain.

"There's no going back to the banana boat now," he said. "We've been here for 50 years and part of being part of this British society is to be involved in every area — and every area includes the rural community.

"If you look at the Wild West when the pioneers went out to get land, they were on their own. They had to live on their wits and be brave. To a certain extent being a black farmer out here is the same sort of thing."

Mr Emmanuel-Jones also sells spicy sauces at the Frome Country Show. "I call my products The Black Farmer, because that was what I was called locally when I first arrived," he said.