

MOTIVE BEHIND THE RACE RIOT THAT WASN'T

SIXTY working-class children relieved their frustrations by fighting one afternoon in the streets of a south London borough. That evening and the next morning, the children and passers-by who had witnessed the skirmish read accounts of it in the newspapers that wildly contradicted the truth.

The children, from three comprehensives in Brixton, were all black, but could easily have been white, working-class youngsters. The papers were the "popular" Fleet Street dailies, and their motive was to create racial tension.

The "Evening News" ('the greater London paper') was especially imaginative in its reporting. Beside itself with glee, it screamed that "a mob of black youth" had "attacked mainly white pupils" and that "passers-by cowered in shop doorways as the white and black gangs clashed." Believing this was not sensational enough, it went on to say: "One gang of more than 100 coloured teenagers were armed with weapons, including a shotgun, stiletto, iron bar and milk bottles." It quoted Mr Stanley Rees, headmaster of Kingsdale school, as saying "I've never seen anything like it".

All this came as news to Mr Rees, who promptly issued a statement emphasising that no white pupils had been involved and that the quote attributed to him was pure invention.

TRUTH

The truth was there had been no "race war", no punch-ups between black children and white.

What happened was that children from Tulse Hill and Norwood comprehensives had gone to Kingsdale comprehensive, Dulwich, where there had been an argument the previous day involving a girl who claimed that some Tulse Hill pupils had insulted her. In the fighting that followed, no property was damaged and no one reported any injuries to the school or police.

"The day after the "Evening News" came out with its first fistful of lies, the early editions of the same paper came out with some more. It said: "More than 20 windows are smashed (at Kingsdale), locker doors can be seen to have been broken and blinds wrenched off." "Hundreds of parents", it alleged, had decided "not to send their children to Kingsdale school today". However, the paper was printed before school assembly and thus had no way of knowing which kids would show up at school and which would stay away. Refuting the lies about vandalism, headmaster Mr Rees pointed out that there had been no fighting on school premises and that there was "no damage at all" to school property.

LIE

The "Daily Mail" was another newspaper to lie through its teeth. Its headline on the race-war that never was cried out: "THE OUTSIDERS - BUSSED IN TO KEEP RACIAL BALANCE" (note the emotive phrase "bussed in"). But the paper's statement about "The Outsiders" (another emotive phrase) crumbled in face of the truth which, according to Tulse Hill's headmaster, is that no children are "bussed in" to Brixton at all. Only thirty per cent of Tulse Hill's pupils are coloured. At Kingsdale fourteen per cent are West Indian and five per cent Asian.

Once again facts shoot down the fairy tales of the Fleet Street lie merchants. The next time these parrots screech "race war", "race war", remember the Brixton incident and remember, also, that the ruling class has a vested (and invested) interest in turning workers of different nationalities against one another so that they make each other "the enemy" instead of "the real enemy, the capitalists."

* BECOME PART OF THE ORGANISED FIGHT FOR SOCIALISM, GET IN TOUCH WITH THE ADDRESS AT THE