The six-week strike against racism of Islington Council workers who are members of the Trade Union National & Local Govt. Officers (Nalgo) ended on 11th Sept. The strike began on Aug 5th arising from the following. The Council found three white members of staff guilty of racially harassing black staff over a long period of time. Their actions led to black people leaving the Council, being verbally abused and listening to racist remarks. Throughout the hearing the racists were represented by a lawyer whose fees were paid by an extreme right-wing fascist lady Birdwood.

The Council's 'penalties' to the three staff were to slot them into the new decentralised plan working with the public & to reprimand them. Nalgo called on the Council not to allow the racists to work in these positions. The Council agreed to two of the workers not being in the sections maintained it's position on the third. This woman VI Howell was to start work in an influential post in a neighbourhood office. As the strike progressed the Council remained entrenched in it's position refusing to meet Nalgo to negotiate a settlement and therefore increasing it's strike action, pulling out all its members for a one day strike, and later 'specialist' workers joined the strike on an indefinite basis.

In looking at this Strike action it is quite evident that the image of the 'Left-wing Radical Islington Labour Council' has been blown off on one more time for all who have eyes to see and ears to hear. The local Labour party politicians who met out these sentences to racists found guilty by their own procedures are typical of their colleagues attitudes towards race--purely a service tokenism. Their individual interests, their careers and their loyalty to the Capitalist Labour Party are their prime concern. Those of us who set store by the Labour Party need to look at the roots & history, and their view on racism. As their present leader would say there is no racism in this party.

The demands Nalgo made to the Council were extremely concessionary. The demands could have quite easily been met had the Council wanted to settle the dispute. Nalgo in making weak demands made the Trade Union mistake of asking for tokenism and therefore received next to nothing. What these demands also show is the failure of black workers as members of Nalgo to organise, and to push for real demands. Black workers allowed liberals to speak for them, and therefore allowed their strength to dissipate. It also highlights the pressing need for Black workers to organise effectively in their workplace-to make links with other workers struggling elsewhere. Black people must be in the forefront of our struggle, especially as racism is still rampant in Trade Unions. The strike ended with a vote to go back to work despite the fact that the Council had not budged. Those who voted to return justified this by talk of mounting an 'anti-racist' campaign. Black workers who are staff at these Councils must not be conned by the soft option, they must organise to effect change, both in their workplaces and in the Community.

THE RISE AND FALL OF
O. W. A. A. D

OWAAD's organisation of women of African and Asian descent) formation in 1979, by a group of dedicated and conscientious Black sisters was a bold and courageous initiative. Sisters were urgently aware of the need to establish a national framework to harness and support Black women's political awareness into a cohesive force to tackle more effectively the problems which beset Black people and Black women in particular.

The first major task tackled by OWAAD was to convene a national conference in March 1979. Over 300 sisters attended. Various struggles were highlighted and an overwhelming recognition that all convictions are shared and not held in isolation. The struggles raised were not all female specific, e.g. Campaign against SIS, Imperialism, Racism in Education etc. But special attention was given to the manner in which Black women were forced into a 'third-class' position because of racial and sexist practices in education, employment and society in general.

A communication network was established to bring sisters out of isolation in various regions to form their own groups. A co-ordinating Committee was established to develop a Newsletter to act as a life-line supporting vehicle, to maintain awareness and solidify relationships. Black women publicly address their struggles by themselves and for themselves, moreover, identifying their objective reality - that it is the task and obligation of the oppressed to free themselves.

OWAAD's progressive beginning laid the foundations for an effective national organisation to rally and support the diverse struggles of Black women and Black Liberation.

THE TRANSITION

Despite much optimism, OWAAD was unable to withstand several setbacks which emerged. Conflicts and contradictions surfaced, and in consequence OWAAD cooled in at the 1982 conference.

The reasons for the failure of OWAAD remain somewhat contentious. However four major causes may be discerned:
1) The assumption that Black women form an homogeneous group.
2) External political pressures and state manipulation.
3) Failure to establish self-sustaining local groups.
4) Liberal reorientation of the Blackness movement.

Despite OWAAD's collapse, the achievement are in no way diminished. OWAAD represented a major turning point in the political consciousness of many Black women. Many sisters attained a greater sense of collectivity. The tempo to pursue further actions and organise in defence of Black people's interest. Clearly, OWAAD's legacy strongly reaffirms the reality of Black women's continuous involvement and participation in all spheres of Black struggles.

Although this battle has ended, the antagonists to the struggle continues and will continue until all exploitation and oppression based on sex, class and race are overcome. In effect, Capitalism and Imperialism must be eliminated.