

What Will Happen Here?

by Ann Dummett

Scientists have been the poets of modern society. The myths of our age have been the creation, through popular repetition, of the genuine oracles of scientific discoverers, misunderstood, misinterpreted and misapplied by lesser men. The facts behind Darwin's theory have been of less importance than the altered view of humanity they came to imply, the higher beast rather than the lesser angel. The clinical work of Freud is a small affair beside the wholesale change in sex-conventions that he fathered. Einstein's few pages on Relativity revolutionized not only Physics but the concept of Truth itself in other disciplines and in popular understanding.

Not least important of the myths we have grown up with has been the notion of Race. Already in the nineteenth century, some evolutionists applied the idea of competing and differing species to the apparently different groups of mankind, defined by general differences of physical appearance. The survival of the fittest came to be seen, in terms of Race, as the story of Nordic man's superiority. The science of anthropology dealt in terms of 'backward' and 'advanced' peoples, with the assumption of European man's advancement implicit. Now, modern biology and anthropology no longer deal in these terms. Race, as the term is popularly used, is not a biologically valid or respectable concept. The anthropologist has discovered and learnt to respect the sophisticated culture and technology of the rest of the world's history. But the myth of Race remains solidly embedded in the intellectual apparatus of all educated people in Europe and North America. One of the evil results of this fact is that the myth forces us all to use its own terms, even in trying to discredit it. The subject of 'race relations' is essentially an artificial one that need never have existed. We have to talk about Negroes and Whites, or Europeans and Asians, when these very descriptions are unhelpful in finding the true solution to understanding the relationships between human beings.

In the same way, people in contemporary Britain are looking for solutions to the problems of human beings called 'coloured immigrants' or 'Commonwealth citizens' or 'black Britishers', when these very problems are largely the result of seeing people in these terms. It would be hard to find two groups of people more widely different from each other in appearance, language, custom and history than West Indians and Pakistanis. Yet to the British public at large they are all 'coloured' or 'immigrant' and all the same. The dark-skinned

man is seen as a dark-skinned man by racist, integrationist, indifferent man in the street or passionate rebel—alike.

Ironically, the racists have a glimpse—which the integrationists often have not—of the *importance* of the fact that Britain is now a nation of mingled European, Asian and Afro-American origins. The fact might have been unimportant had it come about at an earlier stage of British history, before the myth had taken hold; an easy and unselfconscious absorption might then have made a Prime Minister at 10 Downing Street called Mohammed Khan as easily acceptable as a Prime Minister called Benjamin Disraeli. But, in the present world, the all-important division in mankind is not between Christian and Pagan, or Catholic and Protestant, or Communist and non-Communist or Aryan and Jew: it is between 'black' and 'white'. These terms 'black' and 'white' do not, here and now, stand for actual colours: they stand for colonized, oppressed, deprived and poor on the one hand; imperialist, dominant, technologically equipped and rich on the other. It is this sense of 'black' and 'white' that Black Power politicians use when they talk of the Vietnamese as black—such politicians are not, as some Western journalists have condescendingly assumed, unaware of the look of Vietnamese. They use these terms consistently as descriptions of two different kinds of society to be seen in the world today—living sometimes in the different nations, sometimes beside each other as two societies in one nation, as in the United States. And although the 'black' citizens of Britain have not in fact the same history as the Negroes of the United States, they have been pushed into identification with that history both by their own present experiences here *and* by the power of modern communications. Telstar has been a more important agent of Black Power in Britain than Stokely Carmichael. Britain's West Indians and Asians see on their living-room screens the riots in Detroit, rough handling by the police there, the ghetto's slum housing, the white mayor nicely dressed in his well-appointed office, and they recognize these things as easily translatable into equivalents in British society. *Not identical, but translatable*. So, the situation in Moss Side, Manchester, comes to be understood in the starker terms of Detroit, Michigan, instead of being explained in terms belonging to British life and history alone. Britain finds itself at the moment having to solve part of a *world* problem, not by trained diplomatic approaches to the outside world, but within its own borders, using the whole of its people as plenipotentiaries. Can we possibly succeed?

Recently, the facts about the history of Commonwealth immigration into Britain in the last twenty years have been well documented and described in a number of places. From these (see bibliography) it is possible to gain a much clearer and more accurate picture of the facts of the situation than this brief summary can hope to convey. But first, it is important to emphasize two things: the *variety* within the situation, and the *rapidity* with which it *changes*.

Readers of *New Blackfriars* will be aware of the wide differences already mentioned between Asians and Caribbeans. But one must also be aware that there are great differences between different Caribbean islands, and between social classes within islands, between the language of the city and the language of the countryside, between the large-scale industry of Trinidad and the undeveloped poverty of St Vincent, the climate of Guyana and of Jamaica, over a thousand miles apart. It really tells you very little about a man to say that he is a 'West Indian'. He may be a lawyer, son of a business-man, who has lived an urban and sophisticated life in Kingston, Jamaica: he may be a labourer, son of a smallholder, who talks French patois to his family at home and has had only a few years' primary schooling from a teacher who has never been to college. But let us call only one of these divers people a 'West Indian in Britain'. His experience will be different according to the town where he has settled. He might have been refused a job as a postman in Nottingham, because English residents (so runs the excuse) could not accept such a close personal contact with a dark man as to have him pushing letters through their doors; so he gets a job as a driver. Yet in North London, he might have been taken on as a postman, while being refused a job as a driver, because of a Union branch objection. In Oxford, he would get a Council house on a new estate, perhaps, within three years of arrival; in Birmingham, after twelve years he and his growing family might still be confined to a couple of rooms in a mouldering bourgeois Victorian house, sharing a lavatory and bathroom with several other families and cooking, perforce, in the living-room or in a shared kitchen. Two workers side by side, both West Indians, in a Midland factory may be, respectively, a country lad with little education who has worked his way up to the job, and a skilled bank worker from a city who has been unable to get work in a British bank, for fear of objections from the parents of girls working there (another familiar excuse), who has taken factory work to support his family. So the class divisions of the home environment have been obliterated, and these two have become members of the same group in Britain, as they never were before; brought together by their new situation, both equally sure of refusal if they enter the saloon bar of a particular local pub, both full of the same ambitions and fears for their children growing up in this country.

The same variety is, of course, to be seen among Asian immigrants. West Pakistanis and East Pakistanis come from completely different lands; their food and dress differ and they speak different languages. United in the Muslim religion and in national consciousness, they are different again from the Punjabi Indians, whose grandfathers inhabited the same villages as the Punjabi West Pakistanis, and who may be either Sikh, Hindu or Christian in faith. Most West Pakistanis in Britain come from the Punjab, most East Pakistanis from Sylhet. Indian immigrants are mostly from the Punjab and Gujrat, though

there are a few from South India, and a number of Indian-descended citizens of Malaysia and Singapore. Of people in the street you see who look Indian, you cannot tell by looking whether they are Indian, Pakistani, Malaysian, East African (from the considerable Indian community in Kenya and Tanzania) or, in fact, from Guyana or Trinidad!—the descendants, in that case, of indentured Indian labourers and, by nationality and upbringing, West Indian and not Asian at all. Again, there are many differences of outlook and character: above all, there are of course infinite *individual* differences—yet all, again, are often lumped together.

The actual situation of West Indian immigrants was much the same in 1949 and 1959 and 1964, yet public awareness of that situation was non-existent to begin with, limited and inaccurate after the Notting Hill and Nottingham riots of the 1950s, and suddenly acute in 1964 with the Smethwick election campaign. Once public notice was aroused, this awareness itself altered the immigrant's situation. Since 1964, there has been an increasing coverage in Press and television of Britain's 'race problems', and with this has come a hardening of attitudes, a drawing together of ranks by racist and formerly uncommitted on one side, by egalitarian and uncommitted on the other. Many Commonwealth people who left Britain before 1964 and returned after then have told me how changed they found the atmosphere—a much greater self-consciousness about race, often a more open hostility. Even well-intentioned publicity had often had this bad result, by making journalistic capital out of random incidents and presenting them for readers' titillation as major 'race issues'. (The Preston strike at Courtaulds in 1965 was a classic example of how a straightforward labour dispute was turned into a racial confrontation by the combined attitudes of British employers, British trade unionists and British journalists.) Since 1965, there have been many isolated news items hailed as 'encouraging signs', like the appointment of three West Indian magistrates. Such things help to salve the British conscience, yet the total situation for the immigrant communities has continued steadily to deteriorate. The problems that racial prejudice has created for them in Britain, the ghettos and limitations on certain kinds of job, the petty social ostracism, have been tackled hardly at all, and what attempts have been made in recent years are all too late for the situation they had to meet. We are rapidly approaching a major crisis, of which there are plenty of signs already, when we shall no longer be dealing with Commonwealth *immigrants* but their dark-skinned *British* children, grown into adult British citizens. The first generation of immigrants has produced its own defensive mechanisms as far as it can, and has its own organizations in tremendous variety: the Indian Workers' Associations, Pakistan Welfare Associations, many West Indian groups, partly united in a Standing Conference, are only a few. But the children of this generation face life, belonging neither to the

parents' homeland that they have not known nor to the life of a Britain which rejects them. They lack the security of an alien national consciousness, and within their own country, Britain, they go with their contemporaries to ask for jobs, and are refused; they find that marriage between themselves and a fellow-Briton is considered disgusting. They are not treated as human beings in their own country.

Racial prejudice has undoubtedly steadily increased over the last five years, and those who have been working against it are few, scattered, and are not sufficiently backed by the real sources of power in the community.

All immigrants, from and to any country, experience problems of adjustment and have to face the difficulties of watching their children grow up foreign to them—belonging to the new and not the old country. Commonwealth immigrants to Britain have these experiences, as do Poles in New York and Greeks in West Germany. The Commonwealth immigrant here faces other and far graver difficulties in the prejudices against him of the surrounding community and the unequal treatment he is in many ways accorded. He can put up with a certain amount of this, but when he sees it happen to his wife and to his children, and feels powerless to help them, his acceptance of fate can turn to bitterness, and all his security as a person, his very individuality, can fall away. From being treated not as a whole person but as one member, undifferentiated, of an unwanted group, he comes to *be* less individual, less confident, diminished.

Of course he will have misfortunes that are not due to the hostility of 'white' English people towards him. But, after experiencing over and over again the effects of racial prejudice, he would be odd indeed if he did not begin to see and suspect it everywhere. So often he is right.

The following cold conclusions are made in the independent P.E.P. report published last April:

Page 10: 'It is those immigrants with the highest qualifications and general ability (language ability, familiarity with British ways of life and customs, etc.) who experience most discrimination.'

Page 8: 'In the survey, immigrants were found not to be hypersensitive about their colour or over ready to claim discrimination or a colour bar.'

'The extent of claims of discrimination by immigrants is less than might be expected from independent evidence of the degree to which discrimination actually occurs.'

Here are a few genuine—and typical—stories.

Mr Ali is a young man earning fourteen pounds a week in an unskilled job. He speaks quite good English and is honest and

conscientious. His father was killed by a lorry and he has had to take over responsibility for the house his father was buying on mortgage. The house is old, damp and small; it was all that could be had. No building society would give a mortgage on it; building societies often charge higher rates to Pakistanis than to English applicants. The Council would not give a mortgage on property of that age. So the father got a mortgage from a private lender and was repaying £10 a week. The son had to let all the rooms except his own to pay for the mortgage. Such a house would not attract many tenants—no bathroom, and only one kitchen. So Mr Ali took in two Irishmen who had a lot of noisy friends in, and an English girl who came home late at night with men friends and bottles of whisky. The neighbours were annoyed and complained. Mr Ali found he could not ask the girl to leave in less than six months because of the Rent Act. He was being blamed by neighbours for his typical 'immigrant' noisy household. But he was in a dilemma every way.

Mr and Mrs Belvedere are Jamaicans with three children. Until recently, they were living in one attic room, sharing the kitchen and bath with the Pakistani owners and Pakistani and Irish tenants. The oil heater was the only form of heating possible, and the Health visitor said the room was too stuffy for the baby. Mr Belvedere lost his job in a car factory as a result of the 1966 squeeze. Since then, he has been unable to get any work, though he goes regularly to the Labour Exchange. He wanted to emigrate to Canada, but found that only men with ten years' full-time education were wanted (a provision which neatly excludes most West Indians: seven years at school is common).

Bill Walters is an Antiguan, a welder. He lost his job in the squeeze, too. Welders are supposed to be in short supply, but every time he is sent by the Labour Exchange for a job, he gets refused. At one place, the foreman was pleased with the test he did and wanted to take him on—but was countermanded by the personnel manager: West Indians were not wanted. He is still out of work.

Miss Manuel is a young Indian teacher who came to England on a 'B' work voucher wanting to teach here for a few years. She found her qualifications were not recognized by the Department of Education and Science, so she could not get work. After a few months, her money running short, she began to look for any job at all and applied to be a bus conductress. She was told by the company: 'We don't employ coloured women.'

Mrs Baxter is an English lady who tells you some Pakistanis in her road are sleeping on a shift system and overcrowding dreadfully. When you offer to go to the house and see what can be done, she does not know the address!—You ask her to show the way and, confused, she declines. However, she knows some other Pakistanis in her sister's road that have horrid habits. She is not prejudiced against them,

mind you. She wouldn't want you to think that. Why, she thinks some of the little darkie children look perfectly sweet in their frilly dresses, and she's nothing against the West Indians at number 10; they're so quiet, they never seem to go anywhere, and they never let the children play on the street and they clean the doorstep, every day. No, she doesn't know their names and wouldn't dream of speaking to them. She likes to keep herself to herself. Anyway, she doesn't think these people want to mix. And if the teenage son there were to get to speak to her teenage daughter—well, it wouldn't be very nice, would it? Not that she has anything against him: he seems a good boy and helps his mother. But then intermarriage—well, one feels so sorry for those little half-caste children. She has, of course, nothing against them.

Mr O'Hara is a Catholic Trade Union official. He doesn't like the blacks, and doesn't see why his Union should waste its time on them. Mr Brown is another Union official who conscientiously treats immigrant members of the Union on equal terms and goes to a lot of trouble to investigate difficulties. Mr Truelove is a Catholic employer who feels the public is not quite ready to accept dark people behind a counter, though perhaps in twenty years' time it may be all right. (Mr Truelove will have retired by then.) Mr Hackett is an employer who was faced with a walk-out by his office staff when he took on a West Indian girl typist. He went and spoke to the staff and told them he was taking on this girl; she was a nice girl and a good typist and he was not changing his decision. The staff then stayed on.

A few Browns and Hacketts can do a great deal within a small radius, but there are not enough of them. It is arguable that not until there is really militant action by immigrants and their children themselves can the situation radically alter.

In 1945, very few British people were dark in colour. There were some, mostly living in seaport towns (such as Tiger Bay, Cardiff, and the East End of London) whose parents or grandparents had been seamen. Shirley Bassey is perhaps the best-known of these long-established dark-coloured British people. They were a small minority whose presence was taken for granted but who, with the exception of a few like Miss Bassey, have not attained a high economic status. Up to 1945, emigration from Britain to other Commonwealth countries had been extremely common (any reader of these words will have more than one relative or acquaintance somewhere else in the Commonwealth) but emigration from them to this country had been negligible. Since 1945, for a variety of reasons, there has been significant immigration here from Australia, South Africa, the Caribbean, Pakistan, Cyprus, India, and to a lesser degree from East and West Africa, Hong Kong, Malta and other places. Immigrants have arrived from the Caribbean since 1946, in a slow but fairly steady trickle, in search of employment which was unobtainable at home but, until 1966, obtainable here. New restrictions after

the end of the Second World War on immigration into the U.S.A. and Canada prevented their following friends and relatives to those countries, and it was natural to them to look to the mother country of the Commonwealth, where labour was short and a welcome might confidently be expected. From about 1957, there has been a small flow from India and Pakistan. Some Indians and Pakistanis have come, not because they faced unemployment and poverty at home, but because they were qualified professional people searching for new and better opportunities and a change of experience—readily comparable with English nurses going to the U.S.A. and English cashiers going to Australia. Others have come from rural villages, wanting to save money here for children's education or for buying a plot of land on returning home: others seeking qualifications in engineering and other technical skills. It is estimated (using the Home Office estimates, and the 1961 Census) that the total population of Commonwealth immigrants in Britain is 1,011,673. That is, less than two per cent of the total population. This figure includes people from all Commonwealth countries. Of these, 288,493 are from the Caribbean, 293,159 from India and Pakistan, and 39,093 from Australia. Eire is outside the Commonwealth, but it occupies a very privileged position, different from both alien and Commonwealth countries, in sending immigrants to the United Kingdom. As the above figures show, total Irish immigration heavily exceeds immigration from any other single country. (421,500 Irish immigrants admitted compares with 252,317 West Indians in the same period, 1946-1962.)

Before 1962, Commonwealth citizens had a free right of entry to Britain. In that year, a Conservative Government, against Labour opposition, passed the Commonwealth Immigration Act to restrict entry: many of the arguments made in the House of Commons stated frankly in support of the bill that control was needed to keep down the number of people of dark colour entering Britain. Others used the argument that we were too heavily populated an island to allow unrestricted immigration, but the Irish were none the less specifically excluded from control.

The bill received wide publicity in other parts of the Commonwealth during the eighteen months it was under discussion and before it became law. As a result, Commonwealth immigration soared to three times the usual figure during that period, with immigrants trying to beat the Act. It levelled off again afterwards at much the same figure it had been before, so that the net effect was little more than the abandonment of a principle, bad publicity in other Commonwealth countries, and a new bureaucratic structure.

In 1965, a Labour Government, panicking about the whole issue of Commonwealth immigration after the defeat of Gordon-Walker in first Smethwick and then Leyton, brought in new and much stricter controls, under the 1962 Act, in a White Paper. These controls cut

down the numbers of immigrant work-vouchers to be issued for the whole Commonwealth to 8,500, of which 1,000 were reserved for Malta, in each year. The dependants of people already here were also severely restricted; parents who had saved up and sent for children to join them have had the heartbreaking experience of going to meet the child on arrival at London Airport, only to have the child refused entry and sent home on the next plane, because the child was, or was thought to be, over sixteen. Others, spared this experience, have spent months pleading for entry certificates for their children, or their niece in Jamaica whose mother is poor, has seven children and cannot support her, or their younger brother, when the father becomes ill and can no longer work and support the boy in Pakistan—only to be refused under the regulations. These rules have worked in practice severely against ‘coloured’ immigrants, but they have hardly affected people arriving from Australia, Canada or New Zealand. A young Australian can arrive at a British port and pass through without any questioning at all, stay two or three years or more, and take a job though he has technically been admitted as a visitor and has no work voucher. A young Indian, on the other hand, if admitted (after close questioning) as a visitor, will be warned to take no paid employment: if he does so, he soon finds the Home Office after him telling him to leave the country.

The immigration controls are a very plain example of racialism masked by self-deception. The doctrine behind the White Paper of 1965 was, explicitly: dark people already here must be ‘integrated’ before we let any more of their kind into this country. But the assumption behind the White Paper, that people of dark colour were liable to receive bad treatment from English people, and that the Government’s duty lay not in upholding dark people’s rights, not in admitting their equality and guaranteeing it to them, but in surrendering to the prejudices of the British public and avoiding trouble *that way*—this assumption, a cowardly and un-Christian one, doomed the White Paper to be the instrument of unequal treatment. The same White Paper, as compensation, made the first positive step in race relations any Government had taken in the nineteen years since Commonwealth immigration had got under way. It set up a new Government advisory body, the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, and gave it money for the purpose of collecting information and undertaking public education on racial tolerance, and money to grand-aid local organizations, so that these could employ one full-time worker each in the cities with a sizeable number of Commonwealth immigrants. One full-time worker per city could not be called a major national effort. But it was the very first step in recognition of some Government responsibility for the particular needs of Commonwealth citizens. (Twenty-five of these full-time workers, called Liaison Officers or Community Relations officers, have now been appointed. They serve local voluntary

liaison committees, which are independent and separate multi-racial bodies, roughly similar in constitution and aims, in different cities. These committees are the fruit of spontaneous local efforts through the 1950s and early 1960s.)

The autumn of 1965 saw the passing of the first legislation in Britain attempting to guarantee equal rights to people of dark colour. This was the Race Relations Act. It did not come suddenly: private members' Bills with many far-reaching provisions of the same kind had been introduced regularly by Fenner Brockway for ten years. This Act outlawed racial discrimination in 'places of public resort' and prohibited words or writings about any section of the community distinguished by colour, race or ethnic or national origins which were 'likely to stir up hatred against that section' on grounds of colour or origins. A central board was set up under this Act, consisting of Mark Bonham-Carter, Alderman Langton of Manchester and Sir Learie Constantine, with powers to set up local bodies to enforce the Act. The terms of the Act are at present very limited, since even places of public resort do not, under it, include shops, hairdressers, or the majority of small hotels. Moreover, it leaves the key issues of housing and employment untouched. However, it is now certain that the parliamentary session beginning in autumn 1967 will see a greatly extended Act, and this step, provided the law that is passed is not amended into ineffectualness, will be the most important step forward in race relations in Britain that has yet been taken, for it recognizes at last, explicitly, the degree of discrimination that exists against dark citizens, and the duty of the Government to fight it.

Commonwealth immigrants are now familiar figures in many large cities. They are not evenly distributed through the country, as they naturally go to places where they can find work. London has the largest number in any city, as might be expected: Birmingham, Manchester, Bradford, Leeds, Slough, High Wycombe, Gloucester, Reading and many more cities can show you immigrant faces. In Sussex or Cumberland, though, for instance, you can spend days and travel miles without ever seeing a dark skin. We are therefore in a position comparable with the Northern half of the United States: the bulk of our 'coloured' population has arrived comparatively recently, and is confined in most cases to particular areas of particular cities. Immigrants are housed in particular areas because, simply, these areas—often decaying and lacking in amenities—are the only ones where they are accepted. They are sometimes crowded because this is the only alternative to sleeping on the street. The P.E.P. report cites sixty personal applications by, in each case, three 'testers', one English, one European and one 'coloured', to landlords, in forty-five of which discrimination occurred; and 120 telephone applications to landlords, in seventy-four of which discrimination occurred (that is, the West Indian was either told the

accommodation was taken when the others were told it was vacant, or the West Indian was told a higher rent than the others). The manager of a bureau is quoted by the report as saying: 'I used to work in a bureau in London and about three-quarters of the property we handled was marked in our files as "Whites Only". That was four years ago and I think perhaps it's got worse.' Many City Councils demand a long qualifying period of residence in their city before an applicant can even go on to the waiting list for a Council house—a provision which works against all new arrivals. In some places, immigrants who reach their turn on the housing list are allotted old houses purchased by the Council for demolition and not new smart Council houses on estates—for fear of objections from English residents. The areas where immigrants have to find a home are in a few cities, though happily not in all, already the home of the misfits of society: alcoholics, prostitutes, unemployables. By association in the popular mind, the immigrant relegated to such an area becomes himself a social misfit and undesirable.

Relations between Commonwealth immigrants and the police are always wary and in a few places appalling. Although in many cities there are now specially appointed police liaison officers working to improve relations, their work is hampered by widespread knowledge among immigrants of the cases that have occurred in some places of police brutality or police indifference to the beating-up of immigrant citizens. Immigrant suspicion of the police is common, even in the cities where no such incidents have occurred; and the police liaison officers have a hard task in trying both to gain the immigrant's confidence in the police force as an agency existing to protect his rights, and in convincing all the members of their own forces that an immigrant's rights are the same as those of other citizens.

CONCLUSION

It is a hopeless task to eradicate the ignorance and prejudice of millions of English people overnight. The theory behind the Race Relations Act is that, although opinions and inclinations cannot be changed by law, behaviour can be, and that once discriminatory behaviour declines, under legal prohibition, the actual situation of the immigrant and his children will improve and the attitudes of British society will *then* gradually alter. The theory behind CARD (Campaign Against Racial Discrimination) is that voluntary action against discrimination is as essential as legislation, and that a pressure group is needed to further the interests of minority groups. The theory behind the Government's own National Committee is that the encouragement of local voluntary action towards integration can, by involving respected individuals, voluntary groups and local authorities, improve relationships and quality of life within local communities. The theory behind Michael Abdul Malik's movement (he

used to be known as Michael X) is that white men are all cheats and liars and never to be trusted; the only way to act is to stop being a pawn and a yes-man.

If the weight of prejudice is so great in Britain, what is the solution? We have lost the opportunity for what I have called above 'easy and unself-conscious absorption'. We have to go through the stage of acute racial self-consciousness, which the country is now unhappily in, and overcome it by its explicit rejection. It is sad that the opportunity has been missed, for ten years ago prejudices had not yet hardened. They were there, shrilly uttered by a few, passively held by a very large number, but in the majority of people prejudices would have wilted and died if the tone set by the Government, the Press, the Churches, the Trade Union movement and other leaders had been honest and realistic. The majority of people hold conventional views that filter through to them from the opinion-forming agencies in society. The views that have filtered through, in the crucial period since Commonwealth immigration began, have been confused, hypocritical, evasive, and sometimes downright racist. We have therefore to experience a long, painful process, rectifying the errors of omission and commission already made. The Commonwealth Immigration Act is a pattern of the sort of mistake it is appallingly hard to rectify. If the Act had not been passed, it is extremely unlikely that Commonwealth immigration would have continued to grow indefinitely; the movement, as the annual figures show in the 1950s, was sensitive to the employment situation in Britain and involved a large proportion of adult men without their families, contributing to the economy without taking much from it. The Act has resulted in a great number of dependants arriving, because the husbands are afraid that once they leave this country they will find it hard to get back. But, if the Act were now repealed, there would undoubtedly be a sudden enormous inward flow of immigrants, trying to get here before a change of Government, or of heart, brought back the restrictions. It is hard to see the right answer to this problem. Ghettos have grown in some large cities because of evasion and inaction by their local authorities, and the lack of local pressure to provide equal rights in housing for the immigrant. But how do you do away with a ghetto once it is there? This is the apparently insoluble problem now being wrestled with in America's Northern cities—but not yet tackled here.

This year, there has been a noticeable change, since the publication of the P.E.P. report, in the Press coverage of race relations. Although there are still plenty of 'Brides for sale racket exposed' type stories, there is a stronger awareness in all the newspapers of the existence of discrimination and, in the more responsible papers, much more actual news. Much has been said of problems, little of solutions. The reaction of the public to all this may well be not so much the feeling 'Something must be done' but 'This is hopeless'.

It is important that an attitude of resigned onlooker, as of the watcher of brutality on the TV screen murmuring 'how dreadful' and then going to make a pot of tea, does not take hold. Because, even from the most selfish, practical point of view, we simply cannot afford to fail to find solutions. If racial discrimination is allowed to flourish in a society, that society is doomed to tensions, fears, wasted lives, lost opportunities, breakdown and violence. This may seem an absurd and exaggerated prophecy to an Englishman—surely that couldn't happen here! Yet a look at the world shows, depressingly, that people of English descent have not been conspicuously successful in their relationships with those they choose to consider racially different.

I believe there is still a chance for us. The greatest hope in the immediate future lies in the extended Race Relations Act. The Act will allow employers who discriminate for fear of what other people (customers, employees) will think, to have the courage to follow a fair employment policy. It will give a chance of redress to workers in the large sector of British industry which is not unionized. It will alter the actions of local Councils in the allotment of houses. Above all, it will give a public commitment to the cause of rooting out discrimination, and will operate nation-wide: it will set the *tone* for change.

For the public at large, it is very important that they should be willing to listen, learn and try to understand. The Commonwealth citizen is a great deal written about, interviewed, surveyed and analysed, but not often listened to—and he is rather fed up with being in this position. He is told about his syndromes, folk-ways, marriage-customs, verbal aptitudes and so on: he is discussed as a problem, a phenomenon, a happy, tropical sun-lover, a health hazard and an educational statistic. Meanwhile, he goes on punching bus-tickets and remembering his days at, perhaps, the University of the Punjab, and wondering if his child will come home crying again for being called a black bastard by another child at school—and his conversation is limited to 'Fares, please'. Often he is discussed as a person with a social handicap, and conferences are held about him together with discussions on alcoholics, homosexuals and the disabled. We need to learn that it is we who are white who suffer the social handicap—the terrible handicap of not being able to have a natural, unself-conscious relationship with a large number of our fellow human-beings; the handicap of thinking of ourselves as 'us', the ones who know best, who take decisions, who give to others; and of people defined by their colour as 'them', the grateful ones, the poor souls who can't be blamed for not knowing better, the people we must be terribly nice to, and tell how they ought to bring up their children.

The Christian should be the first to understand this. To see the image of God in another human being, he needs first to be able to see *himself* in that other human being, to put himself in the other

person's place and understand, from within, what life is for that person. Only so he can do to others as he would have others do to him. Only so can he treat other human beings with respect. It then becomes plain to him that he has a duty not merely to show kindness to his brother, but to seek justice for him.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Quoted above:

'Report on Racial Discrimination': P.E.P., 12 Upper Belgrave Street, London, S.W.1.

A few books on the immigrant in Britain:

'Immigration and Race in British Politics': Paul Foot (Penguin).

'How Colour Prejudiced is Britain?': Clifford S. Hill (Gollancz).

'Black British': R. B. Davison (Institute of Race Relations, 36 Jermyn Street, London, S.W.1).

'Race, Community and Conflict: a study of Sparkbrook': Rex and Moore (I.R.R.).

Reports:

'Immigrants and the Youth Service' (Report of Lord Hunt's Committee): H.M. Stationery Office.

'The Pakistani Family in Britain': Dr Farrukh Hashmi, N.C.C.I., 6 Tilney Street, London, W.1.

'Young Englanders': Stuart Hall, N.C.C.I.

Other books:

'The Autobiography of Malcolm X': Malcolm X (Hutchinson).

'Crisis in Black and White': Charles E. Silberman.

'Black Like Me': John Howard Griffin (Panther).