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Pilot Paper No. 2

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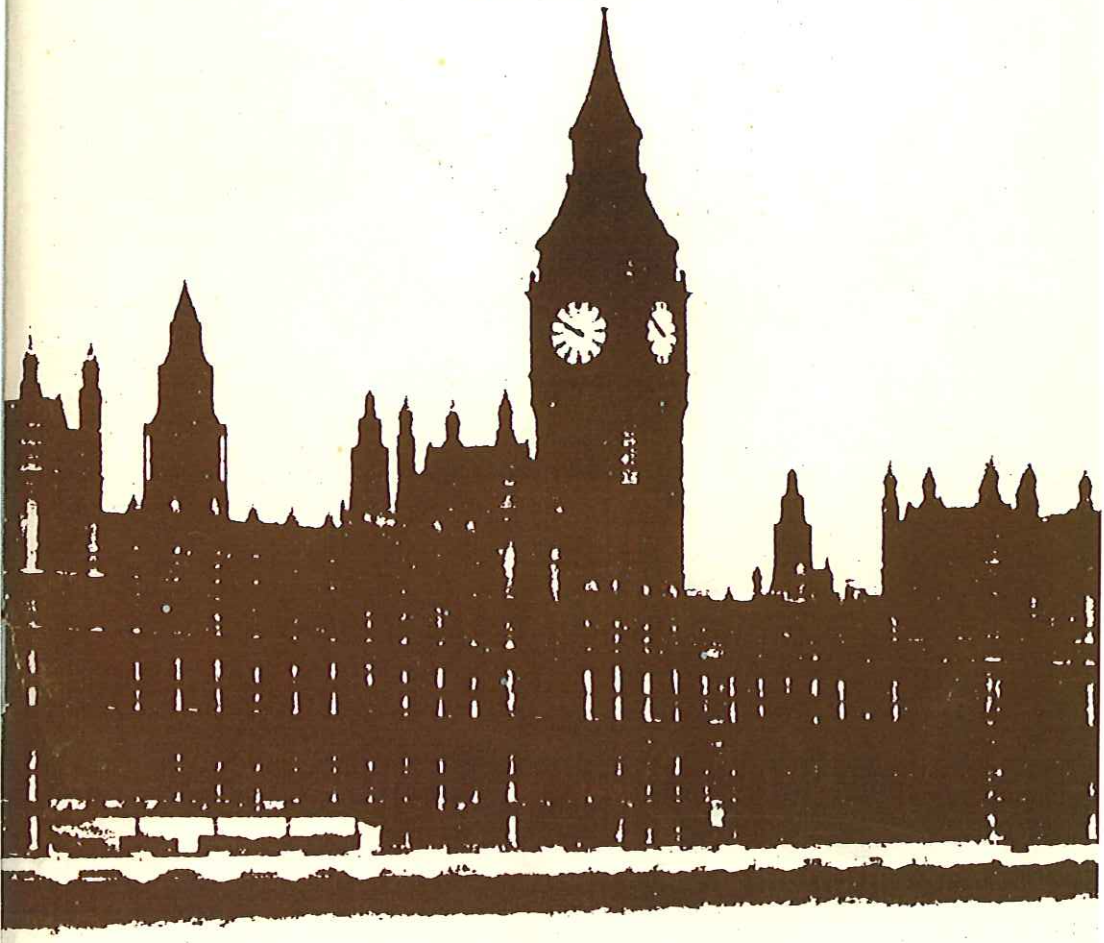
problems in multicultural education

Andrew Brown



CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES

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Trials of Honeyford

problems in multicultural education

Andrew Brown

CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES
8 Wilfred Street, London SW1E 6PL
1985

The author

Andrew Brown was born in 1955, and spent his early years in Egypt and Yugoslavia. He was educated at the Dragon School, Oxford; and subsequently attended Marlborough College and Bedales. He is now chief reporter of the *Spectator*. He has published articles on the Honeyford case in both the *Spectator* and *The Times*.

Contributions are chosen for their independence of thought and cogency of argument. The Centre for Policy Studies never expresses a corporate view in any of its publications.

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Foreword

When the English established colonies abroad, under foreign flags, they traditionally sought to preserve their Englishness, and to educate their children in the culture and religion of their fathers. One example of many is in Oporto, where they settled in numbers some two centuries ago. Their Portuguese hosts tolerated them, even though making them build a high wall around the Protestant church, to prevent the contagion of heresy spreading. But they allowed the English to educate their own children in their own fashion; and last century Mr Warre instituted a school for the families of port shippers very much on the model of the older foundation at Eton – of which his relation Dr. Warre was headmaster – so that English gentlemen might be turned out on the banks of the Douro in the mould of their cousins on the banks of the Thames.

The Portuguese, however, were not expected to pay for this educational transplant. And here may be raised the first of the many hard questions of multicultural education. For no one, surely, will object if those who come to England choose to set up schools which will help their people to retain the culture which they cherish. Indeed, no one will object if members of *almost* any creed or race in the country – Sikhs, Jews, Catholics, Chinese – seek to bring up their children in the ways of their ancestors, provided that they comply with the laws of the land. But the initial hard question remains. Should the taxpayers of the host country be obliged to pay for alien education out of the public purse?

It will of course be argued that sons of rich port shippers are in a very different case to those of West Indians or Asians today; and that we have a peculiar responsibility to the children of our Imperial past. To educate them, certainly. They are English citizens. But, if schooled at the nation's expense, should they be allowed to demand observance of their own culture? Or accept England's? And what *is* – and should be – England's?

Ray Honeyford, Headmaster of Drummond Middle School in Bradford, had the misfortune to find himself facing a sea of multicultural problems, few of which admit of any simple solution. He published articles in the *Times Educational Supplement* and the *Salisbury Review*, two of which are reprinted in the Appendix and led directly to his being labelled as 'racist' and persecuted at the hands of extreme political factions. As Andrew Brown's account of his ordeal unwinds,

it becomes apparent that questions of race, about which so much heat is so mischievously engendered, are of scant relevance. What matters are the differences of culture – religion, language, diet, habits, dress. Headmaster of a school whose character over recent years has changed out of all recognition, Mr Honeyford evidently adapted it, with whatever misgivings, to much of the culture which had come to predominate among parents and pupils – although it also concerned him that such adaptations should not prejudice the education of the new minority.

The value of a culture is not to be measured by the vociferousness of some of its champions. But to what extent should a headmaster – should anyone – claim or admit the superiority of this culture or that? Muslim fundamentalists may have less difficulty in answering such questions than latterday English agnostics: does that mean that Muslim fundamentalists are right? A Roman in the 1st century A.D., an Englishman in the 19th century, a Japanese or Frenchman today would dismiss such questions with contempt. Mr Honeyford, a Catholic, faced them with decent, liberal doubts.

It is not the purpose of Andrew Brown's paper, let alone of its foreword, to offer solutions or recommendations. The author is chief reporter of the *Spectator*, and the paper is written from the point of view of an independent journalist: one who is anxious – for all his evident sympathy with Mr Honeyford – to present the history as impartially as possible. Some may ask why he has chosen not to disentangle the conspiratorial web which Mr Honeyford's enemies have spun; the answer lies in his intention to provide not a polemic but a backcloth for informed discussion of what is agreed, on all sides, to be one of the most important and difficult social questions of the day.

The Centre never expresses a corporate opinion in its publications. Nevertheless, it does hope to receive comment from the readers of its pilot papers which may enable it to produce, in due course, recommendations of policy useful to those who govern us.

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATIONS

Power-crazed headmasters

In the autumn of 1980, Ray Honeyford, then aged 46, was appointed to the headship of Drummond Middle School in Bradford. He was a supporter of the Labour Party; a Catholic who had been born one of eleven children in a Manchester slum; gained an MA while head of English at a Manchester comprehensive, and later gained a second degree in psychology.

When Honeyford took the job, Drummond Middle School, which lies in the overwhelmingly Asian Manningham district of the city, had its pupil numbers balanced artificially by the Council's then policy of bussing. This was stopped in that year under pressure from the Department of Education and Science and the Community Relations Council, so that the proportion of Asian pupils has risen from 49% to 95% since he took over.

In 1981 Bradford City Council determined to do something about the immigrant population and their children; a policy statement on multiracialism was assembled. This had the support of all the parties on the Council, and seems to have been drafted by an intelligent, literate, and thoughtful hand. While it defines 'institutional racism' as anything that prevents equality of outcome, this is tempered by Yorkshire common sense, and by the point, repeatedly made, that all the Council can hope to ensure is equality of opportunity. The rift between these two equalities runs right through the document. Its unifying theme is that the Council should give all ratepayers the services they want; yet what the Asian community wanted was 'a successful and conflict-free re-creation of cultures and societies they have nominally left behind'. What really distinguished the Asians from the earlier immigrants who had successfully been absorbed into Bradford was that they did not want to be absorbed. They had 'a strong and distinctive cultural identity intimately bound up with language and religion' (several identities in fact, as a study of the history of the sub-continent would make clear, even if one were to confine it to the period after 1946); 'a social structure based on . . . the extended family system' and a 'communal rather than individualistic social environment stressing loyalties to ethnic and religious backgrounds'.

This led to a new definition of integration, one which 'did not assume a supremacy of one culture into which others would be easily assimilated . . . A society in which there is a co-operative and peaceful living together based on mutual respect for differences, a society that

is genuinely multi-racial . . . This can be achieved only by an equality of treatment, an equality of opportunity, equality of services and without discrimination based on skin colour'. This would appear to be something like the traditional Islamic policy towards people of the Book – or the policy of the later Crusader states towards their Muslim subjects. In so far as it is discriminatory and self-contradictory, this is because Asians are treated as if entitled to their rights as members of a collective grouping, while these rights themselves are defended (as I think they must be) as something due to all individuals, regardless of whatever. Nor is it the case that cultures can be wholly static; when they assimilate, they change. Though we say that the Jews, for example, have been assimilated into English society, and though the cultural continuity that this statement implies clearly exists, the society into which they have been assimilated is not the same as the one which confronted them when first they arrived. So it is misleading, as well as needlessly offensive to the inflamed sensibilities of immigrants who see their childhoods devalued in a foreign country, to say that assimilation into English culture is a possible goal. We hope they will be assimilated into a common culture with the rest of us. That culture will be, by definition, English. But it will not be what we now have.

The most controversial recommendations of the document, and the ones which have had the most direct bearing on the Honeyford case, dealt with policies on recruitment, and within schools. It was made compulsory for any Council employee who was in a position to recruit others to attend courses in 'Racism Awareness Training'. The evidence is that these probably insult as many trainees as they accustom to being abused for their alleged prejudices. When (in May 1985) seven of the 'race trainers' refused to have Honeyford on one of their courses, on the grounds that he was a 'known racist', they were convicted out of their own mouths of the inadequacy of their training. If racist attitudes are a problem in Bradford, the Council would do well to find other trainers, whose methods work on those trainees who can be presumed to need them most.

Within schools, parents were informed of their rights under the 1944 Education Act, and allowed, should they wish, to withdraw children from assemblies with a religious content; this right was further extended, in Bradford, to cover mixed swimming or PE, if the parents felt that the modesty prescribed by their religion was endangered by their children's participation in such activities. A new system of monitoring and classifying racial harassment in schools was laid down: all incidents of racialist behaviour, be they the appearance

of racialist graffiti or literature, or racialist abuse and insults, as well as *any* violence or threat of violence where the parties to the act were of different racial groups, were to be recorded, along with the actions taken to combat them.

These measures were considered by many headmasters to be an intrusion into areas of their traditional authority. After one meeting, a council officer came out in a furious temper, and complained to the waiting press about 'power-crazed headmasters' sabotaging the Council's policies. Ray Honeyford further objected to them on the grounds that they lacked intellectual coherence.

In 1982, an article of his was published in the *Times Educational Supplement* attacking some of the theories current in multicultural thought. Not all of these theories were embodied in Council policy, though some Council employees certainly held (and hold) them. He also wrote a letter to the local paper, on school notepaper, demanding that some public-spirited ratepayer sue the Council for building a West Indian Community Centre after it had been threatened with a race riot if the centre were not built. This caused, as may be imagined, considerable bad feeling among the Council officers who believed themselves his employers.

In 1983, Honeyford considered himself embattled with the Local Authority, and was by now aware of the dangers consequent on making himself awkward to his employers in public. A second article of his in the *TES*, describing a week in the life of his school, had drawn intemperate criticism from anti-racists. He saw in the *Spectator* an advertisement for the *Salisbury Review* and decided that he had at last found a journal obscure enough for him to speak his mind in it. He sent off an article attacking multicultural thought, which appeared in the Summer 1983 issue, and followed this with another one, in the Winter 1984 issue, which dealt more closely with his own experiences as a heretic. In March 1984, Mike Whittaker, a council employee, found this article and passed it on to the *Yorkshire Post*. Whittaker's then title was 'Policies Development Officer' for the Educational Services Department. Much later, he told *New Society* that he was a 'municipal hatchet-man, not part of the race relations industry.'

Honeyford's first enemies were found in an alliance between City Hall and the Muslim Community leaders who had been summoned into existence by Bradford's original race-relations policy document. This document, it is worth noting, is still subscribed to by all parties in Bradford. The original anti-Honeyford coalition broke up when the Bradford Education Department began to wonder who in this

partnership was the tiger, and who the young lady of Riga. It was then replaced by an alliance between the Labour Party and elements of the Bradford Community Relations Council.

In any case, Whittaker believed that Honeyford's views were so alien to the spirit of Bradford's multicultural policies that they constituted grounds for dismissal. The reader of this pamphlet must judge for himself, after studying the articles reprinted in the Appendix, the merit of this accusation.

The immediate consequence was that a 'Parents Action Committee' (DPAC) was formed, chaired by Ms Jenny Woodward, a white parent at Drummond, who was elected a parent governor on a large vote with the intention of getting Honeyford sacked. In this she was supported by the Bradford Labour Party. The Council itself ordered a complete inspection of Drummond Middle School, which was carried out by a team of eight advisers and two psychologists between 11 and 20 June. During this inspection, the Parents Action Committee organised a boycott of the school, in which about 200 (out of 550) children took part. They went instead to an 'alternative school' housed in the Pakistani Community Centre. Soon after this Mike Whittaker was seconded to the Home Office for two years, on the recommendation of Bradford's Chief Executive Officer.

On 22 October 1984, the Education Sub-committee met to consider Honeyford's future. The DPAC organised a demonstration in which the Council offices were invaded by extremely angry hecklers, who made normal business impossible to carry out. The Council none the less concluded that Honeyford should write six reports on various aspects of his school and deliver them by 16 March. The intention, he believes, was so to load him down with extra work that he would prefer to resign. He did not. He was also required to submit any further articles to the Director of Education before publishing them. Two were submitted; the Director advised against publication in both cases; Honeyford accepted these decisions, but regarded them as acts of censorship. On 16 March 1985, the Education Sub-committee suspended him on full pay, pending an enquiry into the allegations against his 'racism' and a judgement by the governors. On 25 June the governors found that the allegations against Honeyford were 'not fully proved', and voted by 7-4, with three protesters absent, to reinstate him. Honeyford and his union, the National Association of Head Teachers (NAHT) obtained a judgement in the High Court compelling Bradford Education Department to abide by this decision. He returned to Drummond shortly after the beginning of the autumn term. This

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By this time the campaigns around Drummond resemble trench warfare. The original cause of the dispute almost irrelevant. Honeyford was a national figure, a defended on party political lines with increasingly little in the state of affairs in Drummond itself. Conditions there very bad indeed. Children were given badges exhorting t Honeyford' the 'Ray-cist'. A picket-line was set up outsi which he could only pass with police protection. The Labour groups on Bradford Council prepared to try to bu figure of £100,000 was mentioned. Honeyford would r until *all* parties were behind the deal and the Conservativ discuss the deal until Honeyford wished to negotiate. T against Honeyford and the passions this had aroused no the authority of his employers far more than his original 'h have done. At this point the Court of Appeal revised the earlier decision in Honeyford's favour, and returned Department of Educational Services the final right to di dismiss its Headmaster. There, as I write, matters teeter.

A new approach

The questions of principle arising from the Honeyford case are many and profound. The easiest way to approach them is by a consideration of the specific points in dispute; and the most illuminating way to approach these is by studying another school where great efforts have been made to involve the largely Asian pupils and their parents, and then comparing the results there with those at Drummond.

I have chosen for the purposes of comparison 'Summerfields', another inner-city middle school operating under similar financial constraints, and with a similar ethnic mix among the pupils. Since Bradford's policy on multiracial education is based on the principle of providing the sort of service that *particular* groups of ratepayers want, it would be pointless to choose a school with – say – a large West Indian population for this comparison.

Summerfields has recently been inspected by the local authority, so that a detailed and impartial account is available. Any quotations that follow are taken from this inspection unless otherwise sourced. No more than Drummond is it a showpiece school:

> 'As a middle school, the premises offer few advantages . . . [and] many disadvantages . . . The classrooms cannot be linked to form year bases; there are no quiet areas, no shared resource areas, and no sinks in the classrooms. The acoustics are bad, and sound carries from the halls, which are used as gymnasia and thoroughfares, into adjoining classrooms . . . There is a small and inadequate staff room . . . reached by a narrow, dangerous staircase . . . The building, despite all the difficulties it presents, is kept very clean and tidy, for which the caretaker and the cleaning staff are to be commended.'

Despite these disadvantages, and despite frequent changes of function as educational fashions changed, the school is a harmonious and happy one. Part of the credit for this must go to the Headmaster, Mr Bembridge, who was encouraged to apply for the job on the strength of his previous experience in similar schools, and of the intelligent interest he showed in the special problems of multiracial education.

> 'Summerfields is the first school in which many pupils will meet with even a few white children . . . [but] within groups of the same sex the children appeared to mix well both within the classroom and outside. White parents commented to the team on

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the firm inter-ethnic friendships established between children whilst in school but were concerned that these tended to end at the school gate. [This they ascribed to] Moslem children attending religious schools and classes who therefore could not play with their children once school had ended . . . The children were co-operative, well-behaved, and industrious, and there was, with very few exceptions, a comfortable teacher/pupil relationship which was the result of respect on the part of the pupils and the care and concern shown by members of the staff . . . The general ethos of the school as seen and felt during the week encourages courteous behaviour towards others, though the rules tend to be negative rather than positive in their approach. The merit system is seen by the school as having considerable importance as a way of rewarding effort and achievement.

'Most of the children are at least bilingual; many use a language other than English outside school, and are learning through what is not their first language . . . With the lack of a sizeable number of native English speakers, the children learning English as a second language may lack the opportunities to hear and use colloquial English . . . Yet the linguistic abilities of a large number of pupils is very considerable, and they have developed a sound command of both spoken and written English. But for a proportion of pupils, the use of English presents difficulties and they consequently experience considerable problems over and above the difficulties they would have in learning in the first and stronger language . . . Changes are planned in the support given to these pupils both for remedial work and E2L [English as a Second Language] support: as a result of the increase in staff, the E2L teachers who at present teach their own classes will be available for part of the time to work alongside other teachers in their classrooms and at other times to use one of the two rooms which are being carefully prepared to be attractive to pupils with special needs . . .

'Care is taken to ensure that there is no overt denominational approach in assemblies, though in doing so there is a danger of losing the sense of the spiritual . . . nature, with a sharing of values and worth, that ought to be a fundamental part of assembly.'

It seems that Summerfields has gone too far in this direction; Drummond, on the other hand, has been criticised for lack of interdenominational zeal by the advisory team who descended on the

school in the middle of a teachers' work-to rule and a pupils' strike and found that 'the understanding and tolerance of diverse religions, cultures, and races' was an insufficient aim for the school: 'If the children in the school are to be encouraged to understand diversity especially among themselves and others in Bradford, then the school must openly acknowledge the values of different cultures and belief systems . . . "Tolerance" would now seem a rather negative term for the kind of understanding, appreciation, and mutual respect that the RE agreed syllabus seeks to promote'.

But then Summerfields is almost completely adapted to Muslim sensibilities. Halal meat is served in school twice a week; all PE is conducted in single-sex classes, while within these segregated classes Muslim girls of any age may wear concealing clothing if they wish. Mr Bembridge constantly consults with his Asian teachers to avoid giving unintentional offence; the textbooks are checked over by every teacher as a matter of course. School policy here was laid down by Mr Bembridge in a memorandum some years ago:

'In a school as old as this there must be material somewhere which contains attitudes now considered out-of-date and inappropriate. If teachers come across this, I should expect them to have the common sense to throw it out, or, with older and more intelligent children, to use it to illustrate how times have changed.'

Despite all this, some problems remain.

> 'Summerfields offers a variety of out-of-school activities, but the fact that many pupils attend Islamic religious classes after school, together with the concern of many parents that their daughters should return home as soon as school finishes, mean that there is a considerable reduction in the level of participation in out-of-school activities, and in the number of activities that can be offered to all pupils . . . Summerfields encounters great difficulty in getting parental support for educational visits and holidays.'

Contact with the parents, which might help to overcome these difficulties, is impeded by language problems. Mr Bembridge is a keen advocate of courses in Asian languages for headmasters in his position; and has organised classes in Urdu as an alternative modern language for pupils, which parents may also attend. But in the meantime, efforts to involve more parents in the life of the school continue. Mr Bembridge takes one morning off a week to visit parents, in company with a qualified interpreter. As Mr Bembridge points out, many parents have difficulty in visiting the school – fathers are often on shift work, while mothers have large families to look after. So crèches are

laid on at parents' evenings, and the children are encouraged both to bring their parents, and themselves to prepare some of the food. As a result of these measures, the number of parents attending such meetings has tripled since Mr Bembridge took over, and while he is still not happy with an attendance rate of 60%, this is more than could be expected in a comparable inner-city school with a predominantly white population.

As should by now be obvious, 'Summerfields' is in fact Drummond Middle School. Mr Bembridge is Ray Honeyford, and *all* the quotations in the text are taken from the advisers' report on their inspection of the school conducted between 11-20 June 1984.

Mr Honeyford is not being attacked solely for his views, nor solely for his manner. But it is essential to bear in mind at all times how trivial are those of his actions or omissions that have been criticised, and what immense parts have been played in the story by ignorance, malevolence, and the tendency shared by all parties involved to attribute the worst possible motives to their opponents.

Fairness for racists

Bradford is a city built on hills.From Drummond Middle School, you can see clear across the city centre to the moors on the other side. The Asian district runs down the hill towards the enormous, deserted Manningham Mill. Mostly it's terraced housing. Some is run down, but a surprising proportion of the houses have had their roofs converted; and many are painted in luscious bright colours. At a building site there are signs saying 'Danger. Keep Out' in English and – presumably – Urdu. The little girls run around with bright pantaloons showing beneath their skirts. On my first visit to Drummond there were some Asian children of about three or four playing on a pavement as I walked past. One stood up and gravely offered me a handshake.

On the whole, this part of Bradford seemed cleaner, brighter and more prosperous than some of the districts further down the hill, where there were large furniture warehouses with signs in the window saying 'DHSS Quotes Welcome'. The higher you climb up the bowl of hills that surrounds the city centre, the more attractive Bradford becomes. Jenny Woodward, the parent governor, lives over the crest of this rise altogether, in a flat in a street of soundly built fawn brick Victorian houses.

Ringing the doorbell was clearly not the done thing round here. Her head poked from the upstairs window, and she shouted at me to come on up. This mixture of openness and suspicion – to leave the door open, yet be suspicious of anyone who expected to find it closed – was typical of the group. Were it not for the fact that this story involves race, it would be an interesting study in cultural clashes among the white community.

The flat was small and neat. The Parents' Action Committee seem to dislike any mention of their personal circumstances or mannerisms: perhaps they feel that this would distract attention from their ideas. They may fear that they will be typecast as agitators of a sort particularly distressing to the genteeler wing of the Conservative Party; and though this fear may seem quaint when it comes from people who have been so ready to blackguard Honeyford, it is not groundless. But the Drummond story cannot be understood without reference to personalities, and Ms Woodward is no more a typical parent than Honeyford is a typical headmaster. To say this does not illuminate their ideas, but ideas alone could not have caused what has happened, and an account of the personalities involved is essential.

So; Ms Woodward has a Scots colouring – dark hair, pale skin, blue eyes. She is by turns courteous and intense; she has clearly read widely and thought a great deal about race and education: I recognised on her well-filled bookshelves some of the works of A. Sivanandan, a Tamil Marxist intellectual, which every serious student of race relations should have read. On the evidence of two hours' conversation, I would conclude that she was a conscientious parent, and one of the few people I have ever met who, finding themselves in a position to learn from an Islamic culture, would try intelligently to do so. On the subject of Honeyford, she is wholly unreasonable.

I had expected to be the only guest, but Ms Woodward had arranged a sort of impromptu press conference by inviting four other Drummond parents to the meeting. All were Pakistani men. One brought his son, who sat silent and well-behaved on the floor. Two of the fathers were sufficiently competent in English to handle the discussion that developed. Two were not. One, a Mr Liaquh, a thin, moustached man, turned out to be a cook working night shifts, who had turned up in his sleeping time to add his weight to the complaints. He sat silent the whole time except when he told me his name at the beginning, and once, later, when he was asked directly whether he was satisfied with the *academic* performance of his children at Drummond. He replied that Honeyford was a very bad Headmaster, and none of the parents wanted him.

The most articulate person in the room was neither Asian nor a parent at Drummond, but a West Indian lecturer at Bradford University,Dr Olivia Foster Carter. She had first come across Drummond Middle School as a post-graduate student doing comparative research into the teaching of geography in suburban and inner-city schools. She did not think that Drummond was necessarily worse than the (unidentified) suburban school she had examined. There,the children had been asked whether they wanted to meet the people whose lives they had been studying.All had recoiled from the prospect.They had said things that had quite horrified her when she and another researcher had asked them for their opinions on the countries they had been studying. She had thought that the fact of her being black would have led the children slightly to moderate their language, and she still believed it had; but what they said had none the less shocked her profoundly.

Dr Foster Carter's objections to what she had seen some years ago in a Drummond classroom had more to do with the teaching than the children's attitudes. This is hardly surprising, considering that the

school must even then have been nearly fifty per cent Asian; nor have I come across any evidence of racial tension between children at the school in the advisers' reports, Honeyford's own accounts, or even the complaints of the Parents' Action Committee. Such tensions are not unknown in Bradford. There are reports of trouble at another school. But it is worth noting, in all the fuss about Honeyford's views and their supposedly pernicious effects, that not even his most dedicated opponents have suggested that the white children at Drummond behave worse (or even badly) as a consequence of his headship. The anti-racist view is that Honeyford's ideas are pernicious not so much because they corrupt white children as because they dishearten blacks. Thus, Dr Foster Carter complained that the children at Drummond seemed to have the impression that crocodiles were the largest single cause of death in Africa; the texts used were very old-fashioned; and the teaching concentrated on the more rural and primitive aspects of the third world, which was all lumped together as one undifferentiated problem area.

These complaints may have been justified, though it seems odd to blame Honeyford for the inadequacy of textbooks used by the geography teacher under the authority of the previous headmaster.

The late Shiva Naipaul once gave a splendid speech against the idea of the 'Third World', and his criticism of the concept was much the same as Dr Foster Carter's: that it was an intellectually sloppy European idea which reduced all 'black' countries to a single, unanalysed state of helplessness and made further serious thought almost impossible. But because Shiva Naipaul was regarded as 'right wing' he was thoughtlessly taken to be malevolent when he made such comments, and I doubt Dr Foster Carter will be pleased to find herself lumped together with him. When I quoted her in *The Times* as dismissing Shakespeare as 'Sixteenth century racism' she was offended. What she had meant was that parts of Othello and The Merchant of Venice expressed attitudes she found repugnant. What she said was what I quoted; and if the story has a moral, it is that PhDs' susceptibilities are as tender as those of the rest of us. Nor is it certain that her revised version of this complaint – I quote from an unpublished letter to *The Times* – materially alters her position: 'Shakespeare . . . reproduces the biasses of his time and his work should be carefully considered before it is introduced into schools in twentieth century multi-racial Britain'. This statement can be interpreted in at least two ways: it could mean that Shakespeare, like every other author used in schools, must be thought about before he

can be taught effectively; or that he should not be taught, lest he interfere with our modern attitudes.

Dr Foster Carter went on to express surprise that I had concluded in my *Times* article that 'Honeyford was not a racist unless the word be redefined to mean only a man of whom anti-racists disapprove'. The High Court, she said, had not yet delivered its verdict in the matter. This is a perfect example of the style of thought of the Parents' Action Committee. The High Court was at no time asked to judge whether Honeyford was a racist, or held racist views. The point at issue was whether the LEA had the right to discipline him further if the governors were satisfied with his performance.

While it is essential to an understanding of the *issues* to present as clearly as possible the arguments of Honeyford's opponents, and to show that many of their fears are shared by people (including Honeyford) who would, however, choose to express them differently, such a presentation can hinder an understanding of the *story* since it leaves out the unreasoning but constantly rationalised hatred of Honeyford personally that animated the whole conversation in Ms Woodward's flat.

The great pyjama argument is germane here. One of the very few concrete changes brought about by the multicultural policy in Bradford is that Muslim girls are now allowed to take their (segregated) Physical Education classes in tracksuits or pyjamas instead of more revealing, though less hampering, gym clothes. Children are even able to swim and shower covered up, if their parents feel strongly enough about it. Honeyford thinks that this is wholly ludicrous (though since it's Council policy, he carries it out). His argument is that the purpose of PE is exercise, and that children should dress in the way most conducive to this purpose. To attempt hard running in a tracksuit is as ludicrous as it would be to turn up for a music lesson wearing a Sony Walkman. Ms Woodward finds this quite ridiculous. She thinks that *all* girls should wear tracksuits if they want to, since thirteen- and fourteen-year old girls go through a phase of natural modesty; nor should this be discouraged. It seems to her the blindest ethnocentricity to refuse to take advantage of such a useful Asian addition to British culture: 'And the only argument he has against it is that you can't run as fast in a tracksuit!'

A similar argument was deployed against his criticisms of Islamic views about women. There is no doubt that Honeyford does believe that within the state education system the emancipation of women should take precedence over the preservation of religious or cultural

patterns. This may seem a paradoxical view for a Catholic to hold; there are Catholic countries where it would be considered almost blasphemous. But it is reasonable and defensible, and it does seem to underlie such policies as compulsory sex education. At least twice, Honeyford has used the phrase 'Purdah mentality' to describe in his articles the undoubted reluctance of many Asian parents in Bradford to allow their daughters to participate in non-academic activities in school. The first time he was quoting his head of Girls' Physical Education; the second time he used it himself.

Jenny Woodward's first objection was that 'You cannot talk about Islam without talking about racism, virginity tests, and so on.' At first sight this is ludicrous: you (or I) can talk about Islam in any connection we like. On second thoughts the statement makes more sense. The need of successive governments to defend what I (and its victims) take to be the racist administration of the immigration laws has led to people using religious excuses to mask their racial prejudices. You can talk about Islam, and even criticise it, without defending the Home Office, but this needs to be done carefully, and with a sense of what Islamic practices are in any particular community. To talk about 'Islam' in general is as little rewarding sociologically as it would be to talk about 'Christianity' in general.

Thus: it is absolutely morally wrong under all circumstances to stone a woman taken in adultery, or even to content yourself with beheading her, no matter whose culture such behaviour is part of. But such things do not go on in Bradford – and even if they did they would be illegal no matter how multicultural the LEA's policy were. Nor is Bradford the only place where Muslims live in large numbers without the benefit of Sharia law. Ms Woodward says that Purdah is not a problem in rural Pakistan, since it is applied only on the comparatively rare occasions when strangers come to the village. Within the villages and among their own communities, the women are not secluded, and even if this were thought desirable, only the rich could afford to arrange their lives in such an uneconomic way. Whether or not this is true – and I have no idea – the method of argument does bring out the profound disagreements between Honeyford and his opponents about the nature of Muslim life. In one of his articles, he quotes the case of a teenage Muslim girl in Bradford driven to repeated suicide attempts by her father's intransigence. It also illustrates the difficulties of escaping from one's culture: Ms Woodward would certainly consider inferior any culture in which women were oppressed more than here, so she considers that they are *not* oppressed in peasant Muslim societies. It is

hard to suppose that all Muslims would agree with Ms Woodward that the happiness of women is a prerequisite for the good society. One of the men in the room grandly announced that he would send neither his daughters nor his sister's daughters to school if Honeyford returned. No mention of the sister's views.

But some of the things the group in Ms Woodward's sitting room found most objectionable were the result of earlier efforts at anti-racism. For example, one textbook, in trying to suggest the experience of slavery, showed blacks being abused as 'niggers'.There was even their experience with the alternative school, set up for a week in June 1984 as a demonstration of parental lack of confidence in Mr Honeyford.

'The teachers who volunteered to help us came to turn the whole thing into a crèche. We had to hire a skip to take away all the egg-boxes, squeegee bottles and so on' Ms Woodward, as often, balanced between astonishment and delighted reminiscence at the discovery of other people's ignorance; it did seem from the conversation that they had made a serious effort to educate the children who attended the school. No outside witnesses were allowed inside; though the Council Education Department was unhappy with what it could surmise about physical conditions inside the building used, it decided to do nothing as the action would soon be over. Those teachers leaving their other duties to haul multiracial squeegee bottles across Bradford so as to help teach twelve-year-olds how to cope with the world represent everyone's nightmare of multiracial education. It is worth noting that such a concept is as offensive to Ms Woodward's group, and to the Asian community outside it (as the story of the Muslim schools shows) as it is to Honeyford.

The Parents' *Action* Committee is not a discussion group on multiracial education: it is a committee to get Honeyford sacked, an action which seems to its members the essential preliminary to any further improvement of the world. Though Ms Woodward and Dr Foster Carter said a great deal that was reasonable, sensible, and interesting about multicultural education in abstract, as soon as the conversation turned to Honeyford, truth and reason alike were abandoned, and replaced by a passionate sincerity.

In the light of the attention that has been directed at Honeyford's articles, it's worth examining some of the material that the DPAC has put out. Jenny Woodward gave me two broadsheets in English: one printed 'Newsletter No 1' dated October 1984; and one undated, duplicated set of three typewritten sheets stapled together, some time

after October 1984. Considered as a work of propaganda, the newsletter is a model of competence; its assertions of fact are difficult to check unless one has a copy of the advisers' report, but are not so grossly overstated as to seem unreasonable, while in the messages of support one sees an instructive display of ignorance and intolerance.

The Islamic Youth Mission contributed a press release. 'We demand . . . The sacking of Mr Honeyford . . . That the Council fully investigates all complaints of racism and on the completion of its investigations take firm action against both its racist officers and its racist members'. It would be interesting (and perhaps profitable for the people accused) to know which members of the Council are racist.

The main message of the Newsletter is simple: Honeyford's 'campaign of vilification of black parents', his 'unceasing writings and public utterances' mean that 'no action [is] unjustified to hasten his departure.' Unfortunately, the campaign has been obstructed. The governing body defeated by eight votes to four a proposal to sack Honeyford, '[which] leads one to the conclusion that [they] are not truly concerned with the children's welfare and are prepared to go to great lengths to obstruct the parents' wishes'.

The Parents' Action Newsletter accuses Honeyford of refusing to readmit Asian pupils into school after extended trips abroad, yet treating similar trips by white pupils favourably. There is no doubt that Honeyford regards extended absences from school as undesirable and probably illegal. But the advisers' report states unequivocally that all children who had spent time abroad in 1983-84 were readmitted to the school; nor am I aware of a single case in which a white child has been removed from Drummond for a comparable period, with or without Mr Honeyford's permission.

Though I have, so far as possible, quoted individuals as talking (for obvious reasons it is best not to identify the parent who announced that if Honeyford returned to school he would 'cripple him. Honest to God I will, even if I get six months for it') the listeners, whoever was talking, seldom gave any sign of disagreement or disapproval. It seemed all of them thought that they were articulating a shared experience, and that the truth of what they said was proved by the fact that their friends agreed with them.

Nor would they admit the good faith of anyone who disagreed with them. Everything was Honeyford's fault. His observation that white parents at his school were for the most part disadvantaged and inarticulate seemed to them only an astounding tactical blunder. They took for granted that anyone who said rude things about Pakistan or

Islam was a racist, and hence pro-white. The idea that he was trying impartially to tell the truth about all his parents, without assigning undivided blame or praise to any group, was wholly alien to them. But the matter was not complicated. Their own actions had contributed nothing to the disruption in the school; and if only everyone else would see sense and do exactly as they wanted, then there would be no problem.

The only time Dr Foster Carter seemed at a loss for words was when I asked her if it was entirely fair to describe Honeyford's articles as 'a sustained campaign of vilification of black children'. To an extent I think this reaction was honest intellectual discomfort. She hadn't said it herself, and she must have realised that the description was indefensible – yet there was also an element of shock that anyone could think it desirable to be fair to Honeyford. He was a racist. You'd no more be fair to him than to a Nazi.

What was the fuss about?

Honeyford has two manners as a writer: polemical and reasoning. The first predicates the hostility and bad faith of his opponents, and has come to preponderate over the second, a change which reflects the growing hostility shown by his opponents in Bradford, and their distortions of his views. But the ideas themselves have remained very much the same since his first article on the subject, in 1982, in the *TES*. The argument there starts from the existence of:

> 'some teachers [who] regard the whole notion of multicultural education with scepticism and even resentment. They would argue that the responsibility for the adaptations and adjustments involved in settling in a new country lies entirely with those who have come here to settle and raise families of their own free will. Their commitment to an English education was implicit in their decision to become British citizens. Maintenance and transmission of the mother culture has nothing to do with the English secular school. If they want their children to absorb the culture of Pakistan, India, or the Carribean, then this is an entirely private decision, to be implemented by the immigrant family and community, out of school . . .
>
> 'This is pragmatism, not prejudice, and it is based on equality. There should be a welcome for the strangers in our midst, but no attempt by the education service to confer a privileged position on this sub-culture or that.'

This is as clear a statement of Honeyford's general position as you will find anywhere. He goes on to justify it by an attack on the intellectual pretensions of multicultural education, and on the theory of positive discrimination, but for the moment it is worth staying to examine his positive ideas.

It is important to realise that he is arguing for a homogeneous system of state education. 'Multicultural education' might mean two quite different things: either that children from different cultural backgrounds are taught about each others' cultures as a route towards a common understanding of the world; or that children are split up by culture, and taught, so far as possible, about their own. The educational *system* then becomes multicultural, but it is made up of numerous different monocultural educations. This maintains the administrative homogeneity of the system, but at the risk of sacrificing its coherence.

Bradford's policy on multicultural education can be read so as to yield either interpretation. All the same, one of the more powerful aims of the Bradford Education Department has been to *avoid* the emergence of Muslim denominational schools. These may be undesirable on all sorts of grounds: when the mysterious 'Muslim Parents' Association' proposed such schools, it could provide neither finance nor qualified teachers; and it is hard to see where qualified Islamic teachers could be found. On the other hand, I was told in Jenny Woodward's living room that there is an increasing belief in *private* Muslim schools as a way of raising academic standards, even for girls. This argument seems reasonable and powerful, considering what most inner-city unstreamed comprehensives are like.

When Honeyford argues against 'multicultural education' he is referring to the second interpretation. The modifications proposed in Bradford so far are peripheral to the main business of the school: *Halal* meat is served where a sufficient number of children demand it, Muslim girls may do PE in tracksuits if their parents insist, while the contentious issue of sex education appears to have been shoved under the carpet for a while. It is possible to justify such changes on two main grounds, which have little to do with each other. Much of the ideological confusion surrounding the Honeyford case arises from a conflation of these motives. The first possible justification is that such things are part of Pakistani culture, which should be nourished and encouraged; the second that there is a group of British parents, Bradford ratepayers, (whose colour is irrelevant) who wish their children to be brought up in certain ways.

Any British citizen, wherever born, and of whatever religion, has exactly the same right as any other to attempt to influence the school which his children attend. This right is not, of course, unlimited. It does not extend to withdrawing children from schooling altogether, while all schools must conform to certain standards – as must even education in the home – and state schools are more tightly controlled than private ones. This does not invalidate, but it does weaken, Honeyford's argument that the choice of a British education was implicit in the decision to move to Britain, since the assumption of active British citizenship, and with it participation in British political life, also gives rise to the possibility of changing the nature of an English education.

To say this does not help one to decide which changes are desirable and which are not. Still less does it approach the wider problem of how much power parents ought to have. But it does

suggest where the limits of tolerance may be drawn, and why. There is a crucial difference between the right of Muslim (or vegetarian, or Catholic) parents to demand that their children's dietary demands be met, which is a matter for individual schools to accommodate if they can; and a demand, as it might be, that Muslim girls (and *only* Muslim girls) be excused sex education, or allowed to do PE in tracksuits. Either such a right should be extended to all children in state schools, or to none.

A similar argument can be directed against Honeyford's remark that 'the responsibility for the adaptations and adjustments involved in settling in a new country lies *entirely* (my italics) with those who have come here . . . of their own free will.' It is hard to imagine an immigrant who would not consider the country he has moved to as inferior in *some* respects to the country he has left behind. The food, for example, is often vile. We don't and we shouldn't expect a Punjabi or a Frenchman to tolerate English food. We wish them to promote the adaptations and adjustments in English eating habits necessary to enable them to shop for and eat the dishes they are accustomed to. There is of course the world of difference between free choice and forced implementation: Honeyford could counter-claim that adaptations in schools necessarily fall into the latter category.

Still, any immigrant to any culture has a perfect right to expect that adaptations and alterations are a mutual process, even if not a balanced one. It was a far greater change for Lewis Namier or Nirad Chaudhuri to move to Oxford than it was for us to start reading the works they produced as a result. But they have changed the way the English think about themselves, and we are duly grateful. Honeyford himself would regard some aspects of Pakistani culture – the children's courtesy and eagerness to learn, for example – as superior to prevalent English standards, and presumably hopes that these virtues will rub off on the native population, which will alter and adapt its behaviour accordingly.

This is a lot of exegesis for two paragraphs of argument. But it is important to bring out the underlying confusion in Honeyford's apparently clear statements, since it accounts partly for his own surprise at being attacked, and partly for the ferocity of those attacks. Like many of us, he generalises from what he knows, and when dealing with what he does not know, reaches for the first phrase that comes to hand, and seems to fit his purpose. There may seem to be little difference between the assertion that 'maintenance and transmission of the mother culture has nothing to do with the English

school', and the argument that 'the responsibility for the adaptations and adjustments involved in settling in a new country lies entirely with those who have come here to settle and raise families'. But in fact these are statements about two quite different things. The first is about the proper function of State schools. The second is a generalised remark about immigration, which it seems to me he has elsewhere contradicted.

It is the juxtaposition of the two which makes the first seem hostile to Asians. The rest of the article, which attacks multicultural theories as damaging to the prospects of immigrants' children, should make it quite clear that Honeyford is not hostile to Asians unless you take it as axiomatic that hostility to theories of separate education automatically entails racism. That is of course the premise from which Honeyford's ideological opponents would wish all discussion to start, and it was his most earnest intellectual endeavour to destroy it. In this he has certainly succeeded. Even one of the men trying hardest to sack him remarked to me that 'racism is an icon word' – which is exactly Honeyford's formulation.

Honeyford's first objection to the ideas of multicultural education is that they have no coherent intellectual foundation. Some are based on the idea of 'self-image', which in turn relies on a belief that a child will learn only if it is expected to learn. This was further developed by Bernard Coard (at that time regarded as an educational authority, now jailed in Grenada awaiting trial for his alleged part in the murder of Maurice Bishop) who asserted that a child who is not expected to learn will actually become educationally sub-normal. He wrote a little book on the subject, which enjoyed a tremendous vogue, called 'How the West Indian Child is made Educationally Subnormal in British Schools'. It is here that race comes into the argument: West Indian children, says Coard, are thought stupid, and thus made stupid, because – British teachers are racist.

Several things are meant to follow from this argument. The first is that the measure of a teacher's racism becomes the performance and behaviour of his *black* pupils: the attitudes of the white children become completely irrelevant. If you have a mixed class in which there is no interracial misbehaviour, and all the white children believe in the equality of the West Indian children, who still do worse, this proves that the teacher is racist. Or if he is a disciple of Coard, then it proves that the school is racist. Or, if the school is in Lambeth, West Indian failure proves that Mrs Thatcher is racist.

The second is that a white teacher cannot really believe that any

black child is intelligent, since to do so would entail admitting the equal validity of black culture with white. This is just what a racist cannot do.

The third argument is that since a teacher cannot believe his black children are intelligent as individuals, he must see them as part of a cultural matrix. Curiously enough, the children cannot see themselves as part of their own cultural matrix either, so they must be taught to do so.

Why are these arguments false? The first objection is patent: If you are taught as if you were stupider than you in fact are, you may remain ignorant, but you will not be made more stupid. The second is that it grossly overestimates the role of school in cultural transmission. The third is empirical: there is no evidence whatever that the mechanism of 'self-image' does work in the way Coard postulates. Honeyford in his *TES* article made the second two of these points, and added a sharp twist to the argument. His explanation for the comparative failure of West Indian children was partly that their parents tended not to support the values and work of schools, and partly that the ideas and practice of multicultural schooling with their 'patronising tokenism' damaged the children's hopes of a decent education. This idea was developed in his attack on positive discrimination:

> 'Those who argue for positive discrimination want more spent on the education of black and coloured children; lower admission standards for higher education for such children; and quotas to ensure more immigrants get into the professions.
>
> 'It is difficult to see how positive discrimination could, in the long run, benefit the immigrant communities. It might well, indeed, exacerbate their difficulties. Would not other groups resent the favouritism and demand special provision for their children? And would the public respect a professional class which has had privileged treatment in the process of selection for training? Would there not, indeed, be a real danger of the public assuming lower levels of professional competence? And would *that* help the cause of racial harmony?
>
> 'The effects of a quota system based on skin colour on the failed indigenous candidate hardly need to be spelt out.'

In conversation, Honeyford has expressed great concern over the shortage of suitably qualified Asian teachers for schools like his, which he ascribes to the natural self-interest of Asian parents who do not wish to see their children enter a profession with so little status and such bad pay as English teaching.

There is only one point in the *TES* article on which he appears to have changed his views since 1982. This is the question of the inevitability of integration; and it illustrates the way in which his articles, as they have become broader in their subject matter, have also become more political. In 1982, he was arguing against the teaching of immigrant culture on the grounds that the culture of the children of immigrants is necessarily different from that of their parents: they will have watched English television; they are most of them bilingual; they read English comics, support English football teams, and so on. Later, he has seemed to believe that there is a real danger that schools run in line with the demands of Muslim fundamentalists could in fact wholly exclude Asian children from 'mainstream' English culture. Specifically, he thinks that the development of the video recorder, which means that children no longer watch British television, but Indian or Pakistani films in the evenings, makes it much more urgent for schools to introduce Asian children to English culture, as does the vast numerical preponderance of Asian children in schools like his own.

There is, incidentally, a passage in the advisers' report on Drummond which points out that many of the pupils there will never have shared a classroom with a white child before they come to Upper School.

Since then, he has added two specific assertions about the effects of the presence of large Asian communities in British cities that have caused great offence. The first is that: 'Pakistan is the heroin capital of the world, a fact reflected in the drug problem of English cities that have large Asian populations.' This remark he later rephrased in the *Yorkshire Post* as follows:

> 'There has been a dramatic increase in heroin addiction in British inner cities, and . . . this is a direct consequence of this country's link with the Indian subcontinent. (Anyone who doubts the accuracy of this should read the lengthy articles in *The Times* of 8 May 1984).
>
> 'As a teacher and a parent, I feel that I not only have a right to point this out, I have a duty to do so – the heroin trade is having an appalling effect on the lives of an increasing number of youngsters and their families.'

No one I have spoken to denies the essential truth of this – certainly derogatory – statement about Pakistan. But Jenny Woodward thought it objectionable because Honeyford did not mention the Opium Wars, when we did to the Chinese exactly what Honeyford

says some Pakistani traders are doing to us. This assumes, in a manner typical of Honeyford's opponents, that because he disapproves of Pakistani heroin dealers, he approves of English ones. But he was not primarily talking about the heroin trade, but about the requirement he felt was imposed on him to pretend that any country from which immigrants had come was a nonpareil. And while a certain such tact is desirable in a classroom, Honeyford was writing in the first instance in the *Salisbury Review*. This journal is of course apostrophised by his opponents as 'The-Salisbury-Review-a-right-wing-journal-whose-first-issue-carried-an-article-calling-for-the-compulsory-repatriation-of-immigrants.' But when he sent off his first article there, he had never even seen the magazine, only an advertisement for it in the *Spectator*.

But the real fuss came from his remarks about the deleterious effects of large Asian or black populations on the white children of the inner cities:

> 'The plight of the white children who constitute the "ethnic minority" in a growing number of inner-city schools [is never mentioned by multiracialists]. Yet their educational 'disadvantage' is now confirmed. It is no more than common sense that if a school contains a disproportionate number of children for whom English is a second language (true of all Asian children, even those born here), or children from homes where educational ambition and the values to support it are conspicuously absent (i.e. the vast majority of West Indian homes, a disproportionate number of which are fatherless) then academic standards are bound to suffer. This intuition is supported by the findings of the DES Assessment of Performance Unit on primary school English; and there is suggestive evidence in the National Council for Educational Standards' report 'Standards in English Schools'. The absence of concern for the rights of this group of parents is due to three factors: they are overwhelmingly lower working class with little ability to articulate their social and educational anxieties; they have, so far, failed to produce a pressure group generating appropriate propaganda; and – unlike non-white children – they have no government quango to plead their cause.'

This is the crunch. Of all the things that Honeyford has written which have been disingenuously used to accuse him of stirring up racial prejudice, this passage is the most open to misrepresentation. I think he is aware of this: whereas, in the *Yorkshire Post*, his comments about the connection between Pakistan and heroin addiction were if

anything more outspoken than in the *Salisbury Review*, when he came to rewrite this passage, he toned it down:

> 'Where a school has a disproportionate number of children for whom English is a second language – true of all our Asian children – then, since English is the medium of instruction, standards are likely to decline. I expressed a particular concern for the effects of this on those white indigenous children who form the true "ethnic minority" in a growing number of inner-city schools – Bradford now has 19 schools in which 70% or more of the pupils are of Asian origin.'

'Likely to decline' – no longer 'bound to suffer'; and while he reiterated in the *Yorkshire Post* that a disproportionate number of West Indian children come from broken homes, and that this had 'predictable and harmful educational consequences', there was no longer any assertion that the vast majority of their homes (in addition to those which are broken) conspicuously lacks the values and ambitions to support a school. Still, Jenny Woodward is herself a single parent, while Dr Olivia Foster Carter presumably considers that her children have acquired plenty of the values and ambitions needed to support a school. To offend two such formidable opponents in one sentence with remarks that *both* could take as personal insults was unfortunate.

Nor can the remarks about West Indians, who comprise only 2% of Drummond pupils, be justified by his personal experience. They are derived from published sources available to all of us (e.g. the Swann report).

And if Honeyford is opposed to special education for ethnic minorities *qua* minorities, what difference does the colour of their skin make? It is a perpetual temptation to tease the Left by pointing out how silly it is to define people by their membership of groups or minorities, but if it is silly, it shouldn't be done at all.

The assertion that the presence of large numbers of Asian children in British schools damages the prospect of the white minority may or may not be true. Honeyford believes that it probably is true; that the proper remedy is bussing to diffuse linguistic minorities; and, last, but not least, that the decline in standards consequent on a high proportion of Asian pupils in some schools is a result of their being taught in their second language, and has nothing else to do with 'ethnicity'.

All these ideas are contentious. And it needs pointing out that if the attainments of children in 'ghetto' schools do suffer as a result of

most children being taught in their second or third language, then the chief sufferers are the Asian majority and not the white minority. Honeyford's views, as usually shortened by the newspapers, would seem to neglect this consideration.

Still, it is a defensible hypothesis that a school in which almost everyone is taught in their second language will not be as effective as one where all the pupils are naturally fluent in the language of instruction. The advisers' report makes exactly this point:

> 'There is a growing number of schools where the majority of children . . . use another language (s) in addition to English. For many British Asian and some British West Indian children, there will be few or no opportunities to meet white children until they go to upper schools . . . There are likely to be implications for the children's linguistic development. There will be reduced access to models of colloquial, idiomatic English for social purposes. Teachers need therefore to be aware that children need many opportunities for talk in order to develop English as a medium for learning.'

(Note, incidentally, that little piece of multiracial arrogance concealed by the lumping together of West Indian and Asian children as suffering from linguistic disabilities. What do the advisers think West Indian children talk at home if not colloquial, idiomatic English?)

Jenny Woodward denies that the Asian children do in fact suffer in this way: she says that English functions as a *lingua franca* between different linguistic groups among the children at Drummond; this seems as possible as the alternative theory. Without research, one cannot know; while Honeyford, the advisers and Woodward alike all assert that the English of most of the pupils at Drummond is perfectly adequate. The point in dispute is whether this adequacy is threatened by the drastic changes in pupil composition brought about by the end of bussing.

Certainly, it was *careless* of Honeyford to write something both offensive and so vulnerable to selective quotation. As it stands, the crucial paragraph was taken to mean that British academic standards are suffering as a result of the presence of large numbers of Asian children in particular schools, and that this is regrettable mainly because it affects whites. I don't think that is what he meant to say, and I don't think that to imply it by accident justifies his persecution. But there is no crueller judge than hindsight. And with hindsight I do think that a man in his position should have realised how his article might have been abused.

Conclusions: the limits of tolerance

But what is to be done? The local conclusions are easy enough to draw. There is no point in making recommendations about Honeyford's future. That will be decided in Bradford and in the House of Lords. Meanwhile so long as he continues to stay at his post, the DPAC will just have to lump it. If its members cannot reconcile themselves to having their children taught by Honeyford, then they are entitled to found an alternative school. There is a great deal of energy and intelligence in that group which is at present misdirected to encourage only prejudice, ignorance, and anger.

Such a course would be unwelcome to the LEA, and to the Council; it would involve them in great difficulties. They need more middle school premises as things stand. But it should not be forgotten who started the business of trying to force headmasters not just to obey policies, but to believe in them, and to 'sell' them. The whirlwind that engulfed Bradford was sown by the Council's attempts to huff and puff at Honeyford's proper prerogatives. It is not the function of head teachers to 'sell' policies, but to understand and transmit the intellectual and moral values which alone enable us to judge them. No one would deny the privilege and occasional duty of headmasters to attack the policies of the DES; why, then, should LEAs be immune to attack?

More general lessons fall into two parts: those which can be derived from Honeyford's experience, and those which can be derived from his ideas.

From his experience we learn that training should be given to teachers in Urdu and other appropriate languages; and that proficiency in these languages should be rewarded. If there is a shortage of qualified teachers who speak Asian languages, this may be remedied in two ways. Either native speakers of Asian languages may become qualified teachers – in the normal way – or already qualified teachers can learn the necessary languages, and be thoroughly tested before they are paid extra for the skill. But money should be made available to ensure that one way or another (it matters not which) one can avoid a situation like that at Drummond where only two teachers out of twenty-nine can converse fluently with the overwhelming majority of their pupils' parents.

Finally headmasters should not assume that they know what their parents are thinking, or what they ought to think. Honeyford may with justice feel that what he wrote should not have given offence. But what gave offence was at least as much his apparent reluctance to see or try to see that parents and others might reasonably have been offended. He was asked, both by the *Spectator* and by *TV Eye* whether he had any regrets about what he'd done, and in both cases replied that he hadn't. The *Spectator* does not matter in Bradford; television does. Yet he could not have been expected to foresee how his article would be distorted. Decency is a handicap in politics.

The morals to be drawn from his writings are more complicated. It is odd that they have been used by some Conservatives to promote a kind of social engineering which is regarded as being of doubtful utility in other contexts. We do not have to engineer a multicultural society; if we attempt to do so, we may do considerable harm. But the same objection applies to any attempt to engineer an 'English' society. We have one already. We may try to improve it; that is not to make it more English, but more virtuous. We are what we learn to become – and a principal object of education is to teach children certain skills and certain values. For the purposes of the argument, these may be defined as those necessary to recognise and conduct a reasoned discussion. We can only apprehend these through the medium of a culture: thus tolerance seems to Honeyford a British virtue; hard work seems to me, who have lived in Sweden, a Swedish one. But they are valuable because they are virtues, not because of the culture through which we came to apprehend them. Cultures continually change. Each generation – and every historian – must rewrite history to an extent. What we can hope to transmit are the rules by which history must be written. We cannot hope to specify the results of applying these rules in the future.

These simple and unexceptionable principles may justify some of the reforms that anti-racists favour. An idea, or a policy, should not be dismissed just because bad reasons have been advanced in its support. There are bad reasons for doing everything: the difficulty for conservatives should be to find good reasons for doing anything; to reject an idea just because it comes from the 'race relations lobby' is as foolish and as objectionable as has been some of the treatment of Honeyford's ideas. That said, it is worth pointing out the folly and inconsequence of left-wing anti-racism, and of the slogans to which Bradford Council found itself committed when it tried to do something about the genuine, non-political needs of some of its citizens.

There was a time when racialism and racism meant very much the same thing: a set of beliefs or attitudes which led to unjustified discrimination between people on the grounds of skin colour. 'Racism' being the shorter word, drove out the older term, but has come to mean something rather different which is much closer to such 'isms' as sexism and ageism than to terms such as nationalism or even antidisestablishmentarianism.

The difference between these two sorts of 'ism' is that the older sort allowed one to establish differences of degree. They described qualities, not essences. You could be a good nationalist or a bad nationalist: but the idea of a 'good racist' seems a contradiction in terms. This is not just because racism is an unequivocally bad thing but because the word 'good' in 'good nationalist' really means 'thorough-going' or 'consistent', whereas 'racism' in its modern sense is indivisible. You are either a racist or you are not (in which case you must be an anti-racist).

This definition of 'Racism' in its modern sense entails the acceptance of two main slogans, one of which is meaningless, and the other palpably false. These are 'Racism equals Power plus Prejudice'; and 'No culture is "superior" to any other'. The redundant quotation marks around 'superior' are usually found in the original.

Worst things first: 'Racism equals power plus prejudice'. This slogan is well-adapted for teaching teachers, as it seems nothing but a clumsily expressed truism. All forms of anti-social behaviour, or even of social behaviour require power; as for 'prejudice', this merely amounts to an assertion that racist beliefs are unfounded, which is comforting to know, but doesn't tell us what they are, or how they may be recognised.

It is the subtext of this slogan that is false; for it is meant not as an assertion about racism, but as an assertion about English society, which is of course, by this definition, racist. This conclusion is arrived at with the help of Pidgin Marxism, as Jean Francois Revel calls the use of vaguely marxist terminology ripped loose from its conceptual frame, from the original grammar, as it were, which gives the separate ideas their meaning and relation to each other. Blacks, you see, cannot be racist, because only whites have power in our society, to quote a teacher who wrote to the *Times Educational Supplement* trying to explain the Honeyford case.

This seems at first a Marxist argument, or one analogous to Marxism: skin colour has here replaced class as the defining factor in exploitation; otherwise little has changed. But this is to ignore the

nature of collective power in a Marxist analysis. The power of the bourgeoisie consists only in their ability to act, and think, as the bourgeoisie must. They cannot escape this power, and it must work towards its own ending, just as they must work towards its ends. Prejudice, or any other mental activity, is wholly irrelevant: their consciousness is determined by their class, no matter how hard they try to be philanthropic, or even to resist the march of history.

But the usage is very widely accepted: in the aftermath of the Handsworth disorders, a white reader wrote to the *Guardian* to complain that he had been arrested there some years ago for the possession of a minute amount of cannabis, while only a hundred yards away, black dealers stood unmolested with ounces of the stuff. This he described as 'inverted racism', yet the burden of his complaint was that the police had picked on him because of the colour of his skin. What is 'inverted' about that? Only the assumption that racism is a condition unique to whites makes sense of the phrase.

To talk about racism as if it were a disease – or a taint inseparable from the possession of a white skin – is not just intellectually repellent. It is morally disgusting, because it doesn't help at all to solve the problems caused by racist acts. If I cannot help being a racist, and will still be one whatever I do, then what incentive have I to modify my behaviour? What power have I to combat my own prejudices?

If you say to an Asian Englishman that someone is a racist, he has a pretty clear idea of what you mean. Skinheads were racist; the schoolchildren in Newham who commit almost all the racial offences noted by the police are racist. It is clear to me that the British immigration laws are racist in their application. It will not do, even for Conservatives, to maintain that the *only* issue in race relations is that the law be upheld while our immigration laws are administered as they are. No one should study British history who cannot delight when vice pays a tribute to virtue, but payment should not be tendered in counterfeit coin.

It is from such reflections that the enormity of the accusation that Honeyford, or anyone, is a racist emerges. Racism is too serious a matter to be left to the anti-racists.

Yet it is the slogan that 'No culture is superior to any other' which matters most in the Honeyford case, for if it were taken seriously, it would make all education unthinkable. In fact a good working aim for a multicultural education would be to produce people who can see why the slogan must be rubbish, yet who do not feel threatened by this insight. (An examination question suggests itself: '"No culture is

superior to any other" – discuss, with reference to Nazi Germany and Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge.') Of course, no one does take the slogan seriously, least of all the people who say it. They believe profoundly that their own, non-judgemental culture is superior to all the others which brazenly assume their own superiority.

It is arguable that if the principal function of culture is to make people feel rooted and confident, then almost any will do as as well as any other. One may be a contented Pakistani peasant as well as a contented skinhead: both can regard themselves as the crown of creation. But this is not usually what is meant by 'culture'; nor is it usually regarded as the function of education to turn out people who are unaware of their own limitations. If we demand that our schools turn out tolerant, sceptical children, able and accustomed to learn – as we should – then we do so because we think that such children will contribute to a more civilised society (or a superior culture) than would arrogant, ignorant blockheads.

The idea of a hierarchy of cultures and values is fundamental to education (even if all cultures cannot easily be ranked). Everyone in the business assumes that education is important precisely because it introduces children to cultures superior to the ones they started off from. The Left, with its faith in education as a way of transforming society, believes this just as much as the élitist right. Just as fundamental is the idea that these hierarchies are not just ethically desirable, but part of the nature of learning. Two plus two is always four; 'throughout' cannot be spelt 'threw out'; France is not the capital of Dover, and so on. The subjects taught impose their own authority on teacher and pupil alike, one which is quite separate from any discussion about authoritarian methods of teaching.

This hierarchy of values applies on a moral plane too. Sid may be genuinely unable to understand why it is wrong to taunt Aziz; Walter may keenly enjoy pulling his sister's hair. In both cases, the teacher must impose alien values on them, and quite rightly – and it is in both cases more important that the sinner desist than that he be brought to repent.

In this perspective, many of the problems of multicultural education turn out to be very old ones that have little to do with skin colour. Cultural values are often less difficult to inculcate than moral ones: socialising the children of Pakistani immigrants in Bradford to accept the evolving patterns of English culture is not a more difficult task – in many ways less difficult – than socialising the white children of Newham to accept a few standards of civilised behaviour.

The most familiar difficulty comes with religion. When we teach Christianity in secular state schools, this cannot now be justified on the grounds that it is part of the children's culture. It is an essential part of the culture to which we wish to introduce them, but that is another matter. If the purpose of religious education were to accustom children to British society, we would have to hold classes in agnosticism. That is not a particularly good idea, if only because *all* education should teach a sceptical temper of mind, which, if not agnostic, is at any rate aware of the limits of knowledge, and of the difference between reason and faith. But the idea of classes in agnosticism does bring out the extent to which the teaching of Christianity in schools involves the imposition of an alien culture even on whites.

This has implications for the teaching of other religions: if you teach Christianity to white children, most of them are learning about something as new, in its details, as Sikhism or Islam. But when you presume to teach Islam to the Asians in Bradford, you are teaching it to children most of whom are already spending up to ten hours a week at (private) 'supplementary schools' whose sole purpose is to give them an Islamic upbringing. So it can be justified only on the grounds that you are teaching Christians or agnostics or Sikhs about Islam and in that case Muslim children should be taught about all these other religions.

This is of course an argument about state schools, which institutions are unlikely to satisfy all parents. But private Islamic schools need not be frightening, provided that they are run within the existing legal framework. Islamic justice may follow from Islamic faith, but while the faith is legal in England, the 'justice' is not, and cannot be. That is where the limits of tolerance must be drawn in a liberal and tolerant democracy.

As far as most parents are concerned, the purpose of schools is to fit their children for employment, so they have an abiding incentive to ensure that their children emerge from school with the sort of qualifications that employers want. These are not to be had from schools that teach a strict Islamic syllabus and parents know it. Besides, there is considerable evidence that employers in the main do already discriminate against black and Asian applicants for jobs. If black or Asian parents set up their own schools, these would have to be especially good to overcome the double handicap of suspicion of both their pupils and their teaching methods and syllabi. It was on these grounds that the Council for Mosques had its most serious doubts about Islamic schools. But if such schools were set up, they would

demand an informed enthusiasm from both parents and staff which might go a long way towards overcoming these handicaps, and if that could be achieved, it would benefit the whole of society, in the way that all good schools do.

On a similar principle of encouraging diversity, it might be as well to allow those LEAs that wanted to do so to return to the practice of bussing children to ensure their schools were more racially mixed. This is not to say that bussing would necessarily be a good thing; if done on too large a scale, it would almost certainly be a bad thing. But it is by no means certain that the DES is best placed to decide in all cases what should and should not be done. Local Authorities, subject to local control, should be allowed to make up their own minds.

Tolerance and open-mindedness are desirable not as the means towards a multicultural society: multicultural or cosmopolitan societies should be seen as desirable insofar as they can be a means towards tolerance and civilised values generally.

Final questions

1. **Should Islamic schools be publicly funded?**
No one can speak with confidence about the problems of multicultural education who has not addressed this problem. There may be no right answer. There is certainly no easy one. Some religions – most Christian denominations, Judaism – have by now acquired an unquestioned right to public funding in education. Others – Rastafarianism will serve as an example – have no such right; nor should they be granted one. But where does Islam fit along this spectrum?

2. **What's new about multicultural education?**
By one definition, British education has for centuries been multicultural. Generations of schoolchildren have absorbed Greek, Latin, and Christian thought; and have been taught to respect these as much, or often, more than their own. In another sense, the culture which resulted from such an education was a discrete and recognisable whole. No doubt if children were brought up in different 'new' cultures such as those of Islam or China a monoculture would eventually emerge. But the question remains, do we wish in state education deliberately to steer towards the creation of this monoculture or that; and if we do want to add new elements in different parts of the country, what do we think are the limits to the number of cultures which our children can absorb?

3. **Should government set limits?**
It is the Government's policy to make schools more responsive to the wishes of parents. This was what Bradford DES thought its multicultural policy on schools would achieve. Ms Woodward's consistent argument has been that the majority of parents affected by Honeyford were on her side. Suppose this had been true. Would the destruction of Honeyford have been a fair price to pay for the benefits to be expected from a policy that so closely accords with this Government's philosophy? And if one is doubtful about the unlimited exercise of parent power, who should limit it? Should there be explicit national guidelines on how far multiculturalism will go?

4. **Should social considerations determine our answers?**
It has been a central argument of this paper that race is not fundamental to questions of multiculturalism. Yet in the minds of

many people, including most politicians' and journalists', the two are inextricably tangled, as is shown by the conflicting rhetorics of 'racism' and 'swamping'. Given that race is one of the most inflammatory questions of the day, should one attempt to draw off some of its poison by conceding some 'multicultural' demands which should be resisted on straightforward educational grounds? Should intellectual standards be sacrificed for social harmony?

5. **Should sex confuse us?**

One of the things which most deeply horrify Muslims about Western countries are their sexual mores. This is the question that in Bradford aroused more heat and anger than any other – witness the great pyjama row. Wherever there are large, coherent ethnic minorities such problems have to be faced, and will not disappear simply because we wish they would. Should Western mores be imposed on Muslim children? Can we avoid imposing them? It is possible that a common teaching on sexuality and the proper role of women may emerge, one that would be acceptable to Muslims, Christians, and agnostics. What could that teaching be? How explicit should it be made?

Chronology

Rise of Asian population in Bradford
1961 – 7000: 1966 – 13,500: 1971 – 28,000: 1976 – 39,000:
1982 – 58,000 (Total population of Bradford 464,000).

Ray Honeyford Headmaster of Drummond Middle School. 1980

Bussing stops in Bradford under pressure from Department of Education and the Community Relations Council. Drummond 49% Asian 1980

Bradford Council produces policy on multicultural education; and observes that 15,000 of the city's 80,000 schoolchildren are now Asian 1981

Honeyford writes first anti-multicultural article in *Times Educational Supplement* 1982

Drummond 65% Asian. 1981

Honeyford writes second *TES* article. 1982

Drummond now 74% Asian. 1982

Honeyford sees an advertisement for the *Salisbury Review* in the *Spectator*, and writes article for it. 1983

Bradford Council's Educational Policies Development Officer passes Honeyford's article to the *Yorkshire Post*.
March 1984

Drummond Parents' Action Committee formed. March 1984

Drummond inspected by two psychologists and eight 'educational advisers'. First boycott and alternative school arranged by DPAC. June 1984

Schools sub-committee meeting overloads Honeyford with work. Drummond now 87% Asian. October 1984

Honeyford's special reports submitted: schools sub-committee votes 8-7 that it has no confidence in him; Honeyford suspended. March 1985

Governors reinstate him. June 1985

The High Court finds the governors' decision binding on Bradford Department of Educational Services. September 1985

Honeyford returns to school; greeted by demonstrations, another boycott. Drummond now 95% Asian; children in this boycott exhorted to 'hate Honeyford'. October 1985

Boycott fizzles out after Honeyford wins majority in elections to new board of governors October 1985

Court of Appeal reverses the High Court's decision, and returns to Bradford DES the final power to dismiss or discipline Honeyford. Appeal to the House of Lords under consideration. November 1985

Appendix I

Salisbury Review (June 1983)

Multi-ethnic Intolerance

A growing number of Afro-Asian settler children are now in our schools. Their presence alongside indigenous children – working and playing together – presents a real opportunity to establish a society that is both multi-racial and free from racial prejudice. It is very difficult for either English or settler children to view each other as odd, much less as inferior, when they have grown up together. Exposure to the enormous range of natural variations within racial groups will prevent the growth of fixed ideas about group characteristics – the individual will be viewed as such, regardless of his origins or colour. But this great opportunity is in danger of turning into a multi-ethnic nightmare – created, in large part, by a new and insidious form of intolerance.

There is now within the education service a group of people who have been called 'the multi-ethnic brigade'. They claim to be concerned for the welfare and future of ethnic minorities; in practice their ideas do great damage to the minorities, by prompting a backlash from the overwhelming majority of tolerant teachers and parents. I suspect that at the heart of this group – which no doubt began with good, humane intentions – is the sort of extremism already well established in the feminist movement and in radical politics. Indeed adherents are invariably militant in all three areas. Anyone questioning the validity or wisdom of their ideology is dismissed as a 'racist' – a device which has two effects: the stifling of open and frank discussion, and the building up in the adversary of strong internal resentments. And yet the central ideas of this latter-day, inverted McCarthyism have only to be stated to be exposed as both questionable and dangerous.

For instance, I recently heard a volatile Sikh, whose anti-white prejudice was apparent to everyone but himself, passionately arguing not only for the teaching of Indian languages in English schools – a reasonable if, at the moment, impracticable suggestion – but for the use of a minority language as the medium of instruction. Now this is quite simply, a prescription for linguistic chaos in the classroom. Moreover, it would seriously impede the acquisition of fluent English by Asian children – and English is the key to such a child's future in the Western work place. If the principle were conceded it would set a precedent, which would be used by the large number of other nationalities whose children have been in English schools for generations. If Urdu is used for teaching, then why not Polish, Hungarian, Italian, German, or Hebrew? I cannot think of a measure more likely to create faction and confusion.

The assertion is also frequently made that the schools have a duty not simply to study other cultures as an aid to understanding – a process established in English schools long before Asian and West Indian immigration here – but to foster and maintain distinctive, foreign cultures in opposition to the majority culture. This notion is as impracticable as it is undesirable. The natural, organic location of a minority culture is outside the school, within the minority group itself – in the family and neighbourhood; a fact long since established by our successful Jewish, Polish, Hungarian and other communities, and already in evidence in Moslem neighbourhoods in Bradford and Birmingham.

We are also – if we are to pass muster – to teach all our pupils to denigrate the British Empire. This unbalanced view of history inconceivably overlooks the fact that the builders of the British Empire, despite their many sins, laid the foundations of our multi-ethnic society, by conferring British citizenship on people from Asia, Africa and the West

Indies. As a result of this anti-British prejudice, the opportunity that our post-colonial, multifarious, society affords for tolerant and humane courses on the development of the British Commonwealth cannot be exploited.

The same intolerance is evidenced by the fanatical determination of multi-ethnic 'experts' to purge and sanitise our school libraries. Gillian Klein, of the 'Centre for Urban Educational Studies' in London, has actually issued guidelines by which all books are to be judged. All existing books and other materials are to be rigorously examined, and weeded out if they fail the multi-ethnic purity test. And woe betide the author of any new book whose imagination strays from the multi-ethnic straight and narrow. Is the sort of mind which underlies this literary censoriousness likely to produce a wise and balanced policy for creating school libraries?

A fundamental of respect for racial minorities is reflected in the notion of 'positive discrimination' in education. According to this idea schools, universities and the professions should be compelled – by law if necessary – to accept lower standards from young black people; unaccountably, this does not appear to be necessary for youngsters whose skin happens to be brown or yellow. The purpose is to enable blacks to cope with the demands of a meritocracy. What an insult to the individual and his origins, and what a cast-iron method of confirming the prejudice of those psychologists who argue that blacks are intellectually inferior! The creation of a formally established second-rate citizenry could not be more effectively assured. Nor could the abolition of genuinely balanced multi-ethnic schools more reliably follow than from the multiracialist assault – via the so-called Commission for Racial Equality – on bussing. The Local Education Authorities' humane and sensible desire has been to create schools reflecting racial proportions in the populations. But this policy is certain to be replaced in many areas by the creation of mono-ethnic, minority schools. Such institutions are widely regarded, even by many 'immigrant' parents, as ghetto schools.

Worst of all this insidious movement's claims has been the assertion that black children suffer from some sort of defective 'self-concept' – an offensive and patronising myth effectively demolished by the West Indian sociologist Maureen Stone in the recent book, *'The Education of the Black Child in Britain: The Myth of Multiracial Education'*. The school, it has been claimed, is not only in large measure responsible for this mysterious aberration in the black child's psyche, it should also be charged with remedying it. This belief has issued in such absurdities as the seconding of an English teacher to the West Indies to learn Creole, in order to teach it on his return to London-born youngsters who, while knowing no Creole, happen to be black. The comparative failure of West Indian children to acquire basic education skills and qualifications may be due to this sort of nonsense. In any case, the failure has been implicitly accepted by those concerned West Indian parents who have set up their own Saturday schools, institutions which teach the basic skills formally within a context of respect for authority – a concept correctly understood by the vast majority of West Indian parents as being central to the process of real education.

The multiculturists are a curious mixture: well meaning liberals and clergymen suffering from a rapidly dating post-Imperial guilt; teachers building a career by jumping onto the latest educational bandwaggon; a small but increasing group of 'professional' Asian and West Indian intellectuals; and a hard-core of left-wing political extremists, often with a background of polytechnic sociology. They are united by two false and subversive notions: that we all ought to sentimentalise and patronise ethnic minorities, and that society has a duty to impose racial tolerance by government dictat. The same people often welcome race riots as signs of healthy revolt, rather than as the criminal

violence of a small proportion of adolescent thugs, from both black and white communities. Such people insist that personal responsibility is a bourgeois archaism, and that people act criminally because of social or racial deprivation – a demonstrable and insulting fallacy in the British context. They are supported by an irrelevant, if not positively malign, quango (The 'Commission for Racial Equality'), by a huge ragbag of dubious voluntary organisations, and by a growing army of so-called 'advisers' hired by misguided authorities in order to prove their progressive intentions.

This movement is creating a wholly artificial and unhealthy colour consciousness in our schools. In those of us who believe in good relationships, high expectations, and the natural tolerance of children it is producing growing frustration and mute despair.

II

Times Educational Supplement (September 1983)

When East is West

MONDAY Mrs Hussain is waiting in the corridor on my arrival. She's been there since 8 o'clock according to the caretaker. I usher her into my office. She has virtually no English but Amina, her daughter and one of our third years, is with her, so we can cope with the language problem .

"What can I do to help?" Amina translates and Mrs Hussain launches into what proves to be an intense and animated diatribe against her ex-husband. Amina explains the gist of it in concise, correct English. Mr Hussain is trying to kidnap the children and take them off to Pakistan, and can I please stop this. The Job-like powers with which Mrs Hussain has invested me have to be temporarily suspended while I answer the phone.

I then proceed, via Amina, to advise her that if Mr Hussain really is trying to take the children away, in defiance of the court order giving her both care and control and custody of the children, then this is a matter for the police. I promise to send Mr Chowdhray, our Asian EWO, round later to do what he can.

The caretaker comes in to explain something in shocked tones; someone has defaced the school entrance with paint-sprayed graffiti. Nothing improper, of course, only three Asian boys' names – but such behaviour is rare in this Moslem area. I promise to investigate.

Assembly completed, I am met by one of our pupils' fathers who is enquiring anxiously about his boy's progress – or rather the apparent lack of it. I am somewhat less than patient. If he insists upon whisking the boy off on a family visit to Pakistan for six months, as he had done the previous year, what did he expect? Interrupted schooling leads to educational failure. He leaves after promising not to take him off again.

The office rings: Can I offer 11 places for children from the language centres? I can, but only just. Did they realize, I ask, that the end of bussing and the concentration of Asian pupils in far fewer schools means there might soon be no places for language-centre children in local schools? They might, ironically, have to travel to find places. Well no, they hadn't actually, but they saw what I meant. Perhaps we'll need high-rise schools in the inner-cities soon!

TUESDAY Sajida comes in. She is 10, has long, beautifully plaited hair, gorgeous brown eyes and a Yorkshire accent. "What's wrong?" She is tearful. I piece together the story from the disjointed ejaculations which come between the sobs. Three of her friends have

been bullying her. "Why?" More tears. It turns out her father owns two houses and has recently let one to a West Indian family. They insist upon playing loud reggae music till two in the morning, and their Moslem neighbours – severely sober and early to bed – are up in arms. The two miscreants are messengers of their parents' displeasure, and poor old Sajida is bearing the brunt.

Mrs Williams from the school meals service rings. She has heard there is to be a festival in the school and is rather upset we are considering outside caterers. Can she not come along with some of her staff and experiment with some Asian dishes? I am sure the committee would be delighted, and she promises to attend the next meeting.

As I start on my daily inspection of the toilets I bump into Wahida, half an hour late. She looks at the floor. She has, she explains, been to the doctor with mum. "But your doctor is Doctor Saedd is it not?"

"Yes, sir,"

"Well, why do you need to interpret?"

More probing reveals the truth: she has had to look after the little ones while mum went off to the doctor and dad went to the job centre – he'd been made redundant last Friday.

My tour of the toilets has to be postponed. A figure straight out of Kipling is bearing down on me. He is tall, straight-backed and transparently troubled. He wears white baggy trousers, long black coat buttoned, military-style, up the front, and a white hat; and he sports a beard dyed orange. His English sounds like that of Peter Sellers' Indian doctor on an off day. I send for our Asian teacher – the school's unofficial, and unrewarded interpreter, and a man of immense patience and courtesy.

The visitor is one of our parents, though he has never been to school before. He has discovered his son has stolen money from his brother's pocket at home. He has conveyed his displeasure to the boy by beating him, and would I kindly do the same so as to impress the wickedness of his ways upon him. It has taken courage for this man to come and tell me this. As a devout Moslem of the highest moral principle, he is deeply ashamed of his son's behaviour. He is determined to do all he can to prevent a recurrence. Deprived of the rationalisations we in the West employ to explain and excuse delinquency, he simply regards his son as a moral agent responsible for his own behaviour. And sin must be suppressed by authority. I don't think my promise to speak sternly to the boy convinces him.

WEDNESDAY My head of girls' PE is furious. Why am I giving in to the Moslem extremists and permitting even first year girls to wear track suits? PE is a vital part of the curriculum, and as important for girls as for boys. Besides some of the Pakistani girls have sporting talent and they have no chance of developing it if we try to restrict their training. I entirely agree. "How", this dedicated teacher quite reasonably asks, "can we talk of sexual equality while this sort of purdah mentality is reflected in school?"

I have no argument. The school's attempts to act as a cultural bridge, enabling the Asian girl to feel at home in the bi-cultural ideality chosen by her parents, are being undermined by a combination of religious fanaticism, official timidity and the misguided race relations lobby. I have been ordered to concede by the office – and I disobey at my peril. I recall the true story of the Asian girl in a neighbouring senior school who has slashed her wrists more than once in rebellion against the dictates of her fundamentalist Moslem father, who insists upon denying her that freedom of expression she sees being everyday enjoyed by her English schoolmates.

THURSDAY It's Mr Sahid again. He has two questions to ask me: why do I allow boys and girls to sit facing each other during school dinners and when are we going to serve *halal* meat? I have little patience with the first question. The school has had great difficulty in getting the growing numbers of children in the school through the school meals system; facilities are woefully inadequate and afternoon school has been frequently starting late. My deputy and I had carried out an exact "time and motion" study so as to improve efficiency. Among other things we had, reluctantly, concluded that we should have to arrange the tables as continuous benches with the children sitting in rows – it was quicker that way and reduced the fire risk. We had separated boys from girls because they tend to divide naturally at this age anyway. Besides no other parent had complained and the children, predictably, had quickly adapted to the row system. If we listened to the Mr Sahids of this world, coeducation would be impossible at any age.

The *halal* meat issue is much more serious. Proposals by the local authority to introduce meat obtained under strict Islamic slaughtering conditions had created an enormous outcry in the local press. The English regard for animal welfare had been much in evidence. The indigenous population, including official bodies such as the RSPCA, regard the manner in which *halal* meat is obtained as cruel, since the beast is not stunned before it is killed.

I, as the Head and official in charge of school dinners, would certainly be uneasy about this: how do we reconcile that sort of indifference to animal care with one of the school's values – love of dumb creatures and respect for their welfare? Besides, the introduction of this meat would present enormous and costly practical difficulties; some school kitchens would have to be redesigned and there would be problems about non-Moslem kitchen staff touching it.

I told Mr Sahid to direct his anxieties to the offices.

FRIDAY Nazokat is dragged into my office by his mother. She has him by the scruff of the neck with one hand while carrying his shoes with the other. She has made him walk barefoot to school. Nazokat is the school's number one truant. He is also a liar, thief and bully. Already in trouble with the police, he seems destined to follow the wayward footsteps of his older brother, who dominates him. His mother has seven children and no husband, and she is being driven mad by her erring sons. She screams her displeasure at the boy, then throws his shoes at him.

I stand about looking suitably stern. I can do little to replace the controlling, authoritarian hand of the absent father. More law-abiding than their indigenous counterparts, Asian boys respond well to the principle of unquestioning obedience demanded in their Islamic family. But once father, the focal point of authority, dies or departs their decline into delinquency can be catastrophic. Nazokat's need for a father-figure is now displaced onto his older brother, who provides a bad model. Mother is bewildered.

I promise her we will do our best to hang on to him. By break time I know we have failed: my secretary comes in to say he has disappeared. I ring our long-suffering EWO – a man who deserves a knighthood for his work in the community – and he sets off to hunt the miscreant. At 4.30 I get a phone call from Nazokat's older sister. She is Anglicized and fluent. Why, she demands, her voice at fever pitch, has the school not locked Nazokat away somewhere. Why have we not tied him up to keep him in school? Why not, indeed.