



# WELFARE & WORK

## How immigrants live

A survey in Slough dispels some myths but confirms that housing is a crucial difficulty.

Slough has been a pioneer in many things. It was the guinea pig town for safety regulations, it had the first trading estate and the first industrial health centre. Now it has made the first detailed survey of the social and racial problems of Commonwealth immigration.

Three years ago the council for social services, with the help of grants from the county and local authorities and the Slough social fund, was able to appoint a full time general secretary, Mr. Ben Israel, a young American. His report *Colour and Community* (from the Community Centre, Slough, price 5s 6d post free) has been published with financial help from the Slough borough council.

The survey was carried out by a voluntary group. This limited the size of the sample of persons who could be seen, but one is impressed by its thoroughness and by the wholehearted cooperation of the immigrants. The document which served as the brief for the personal visits included 56 very comprehensive questions. They covered immigration background, marriage, household and family composition, housing, employment, migration within Britain, education, social life, recreation and leisure activities, and problems and difficulties. The picture of the life of the immigrant built up is surprisingly full. Coloured immigrants are usually not forthcoming in their response to questionnaires, partly from bewildered strangeness and language difficulties, partly from a fear that inquiries will reveal their infringement of health conditions by overcrowding. We are assured, however, that on this occasion, once the unofficial and confidential nature of the inquiry was understood, the immigrants "showed no hesitation in giving full and complete answers". The numerical breakdown of the replies to the various questions shows this to be true.

There is one obvious criticism to be made. The sample was small. The survey is based on the replies of only 165 immigrants and 314 of the "host community" (a neat description of the non-coloured residents). Care was taken to make the immigrants' sample representative of their countries of origin and the local sample reflective of the town's population. Even so one must be cautious in accepting all the conclusions, especially about the resident British because their questionnaire was sent by post and over one third did not reply. Answers would be likely to come from those most concerned about racial relations, not necessarily typical.

The population of Slough was returned as 80,781 in the 1961 census. It is estimated to be more than 84,000 now. There is no exact

figure of the immigrant population, and the survey is a little vague in its estimate. It says that including minors the immigrants may well number between 5,500 and 7,000. If we put the figure at 6,000, this is just over 7 per cent of the Slough population, more than three times as high as the national average.

The immigrants are almost entirely from India, the West Indies and Pakistan. The survey estimates that among the adults the respective numbers are approximately: Indians 2,100, West Indians 1,800, and Pakistanis 600. When asked why they came to Slough, 117 out of 165 said they were attracted by the employment opportunities; the district employment exchange records over 1,200 vacancies for jobs. It is indicative of the close community among immigrants that 73 reported that they had friends already living in Slough and 38 that they had relatives.

A surprising number are working in semi skilled and skilled trades, mostly acquired since they came to England. Of the 165, only 48 were in unskilled employment, 82 in semi skilled, and 24 in skilled. The net weekly wages, after deducting tax and insurance charges, are given as: under £10, 24; £10 to £12, 41; £12 to £16, 75; £16 to £20, 12. Two immigrants report net wages of over £20 weekly. One can appreciate what a magnet these rates of pay will have been. The immigrants mostly came to Britain from agricultural areas in their own countries, with sustenance level wages and only seasonal employment.

There is one disturbing feature in this section of the report. Only 37 of 154 workers are stated to be members of trades unions. This reflects a serious gap in integration with their fellow workers.

Work and wages are not a problem in Slough. Houses are. Workers pour into the town because of the availability of employment, but there is no accommodation for them. Overcrowding is rife. During three months I wrote to 123 couples whose weddings had been reported. I had replies from 69 and none had been able to get a house; all were living with in-laws or in one and two room lodgings.

When the local residents have these difficulties the crowded conditions of the immigrants can be understood. The number of immigrants to a room is twice as high as that of the general population. Generally one room is used for living and sleeping and more often than not it is shared between individuals and even families. These are the figures. Not shared: Indian, 31; Pakistani, 2; West Indian, 44. Shared: Indian, 58;

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Pakistani, 18; West Indian, 52. An insight into the overcrowding is shown by the number of WCs per person. Indians: WCs 16, persons 97; Pakistanis: WCs 3, persons 29; West Indians: WCs 15, persons 86. Larger rooms are often used as dormitories with three or four beds each. Sometimes each bed will be used by more than one person on a shift basis, with five or six persons sleeping in them.

Most of the houses occupied by immigrants are immigrant owned. This is possible even in overcrowded Slough by a number of individuals pooling their resources to purchase a house. Sometimes one individual by austere living will save enough to buy a house and he will then let out rooms or beds to others. The survey estimates that one or more rooms in 80 to 95 per cent of the houses owned by coloured immigrants are regularly let to persons other than members of the owner's family. It is a lucrative business. Extortionate landlords are not limited by race.

The charge is often made against immigrants that they are content with cramped housing because of the primitive circumstances from which they have come. The survey does not bear this out. It reports that 77 per cent are dissatisfied with their housing and unhappy about it. It is often said also that they are conditioned to filthy and unhygienic conditions. The survey repudiates this impression emphatically. It records that "the interiors of virtually all the many dwellings visited during the study were visibly clean and neat".

It is inevitable that in overcrowded Slough there should be resentment against the occupation of accommodation by 6,000 immigrants. The survey reports that 49 out of 142 men and 72 out of 140 women gave the housing of immigrants as the first ground of criticism. (Other reasons in order of priority were: background and ways of life, lower standard of living, taking jobs, and inability to speak English.) The resentment on housing gives rise to many false allegations. It is widely charged that immigrants enjoy priority for council houses and that they are provided before residents who have been for many years on the housing list. The survey records that of the 6,800 council houses fewer than ten are occupied by coloured families.

Most of the immigrants are married. Of those questioned, 10.4 per cent of the Indians were single males, only one of the Pakistanis was single (one divorced and another awaiting divorce) and 28.4 per cent of the West Indians were single, of whom five were female. The immigrant popula-

tion as a whole is "young adult". The median age among the Indians seen was 3 among the Pakistanis 32 and among the West Indians 29. Very frequently the wives had been left in the country of origin, temporarily at least. Of the married Indian 63.8 per cent have their wives residing with them. When asked about plans to have the families come to Britain, 14 Indians indicated that they hope to bring their dependants to this country, eight were undecided and three reported that they do not intend to transfer their families.

Many more of the married Pakistanis were living without their wives, perhaps because many of them are more recent arrivals. Only 15.8 per cent have been joint in this country by their families. Five of the Pakistanis plan to bring their families here, nine have decided against, and two undecided. It is possible that these decisions are influenced by a reluctance to have Muslim wives exposed to the less formal and restrictive social environment here. It is also due to an intention of the Pakistanis to return to their own country.

As many as 89.6 per cent of the married West Indians have their wives with them, the remainder, four have decided to bring their families over, and one is undecided. It is sometimes said that coloured immigrant marriages invariably result in large numbers of children and that this will threaten white Britain. The Slough survey does not endorse this thesis. It was found that 67 Indian couples have a total of children, that is 2.36 children per marriage. Two of the Indian marriages are childless. The largest Indian family includes five children. Eighteen Pakistani marriages brought 52 children, or 2.88 children per marriage. One couple has no children; the largest family includes four children. Two of the West Indian couples reported no children, and 45 couples have a total of children, or about 2.51 per marriage.

A section of the report deals with the allegation of the spread of tuberculosis among immigrants spread infection of tuberculosis and venereal diseases. It finds no evidence that either of these diseases among immigrants "necessitates immediate or urgent concern" and says that the health problem in these respects is social rather than racial. Similarly the allegation that immigrant more prone to crime is rebutted. The statistics that crime is not proportionately greater among them than the residents of Slough as a whole.

The absence of a working knowledge of English among Indians and Pakistanis ("approximately 55 per cent either do not speak English at all or could only communicate in a fragmentary form of English) creates difficulties in medical treatment. Slough health centre attempts to meet this by issuing pamphlets in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi, but doctors find it difficult to understand patients in their surgeries. The level of the education of the children is more difficult. The progress of English children in primary classes is sometimes obstructed by the delays caused in attending to non-English speaking children. Some has done something about this by appointing two Pakistani women to teach English.

How do the immigrants spend their leisure hours? It would appear that the greatest relaxation is social conversation with one to another. The table of recreational and leisure activities is one of the more revealing in the report. Here it is con-

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A charge is often made against immigrants that they are content with cramped quarters because of the primitive circumstances from which they have come. The survey does not bear this out. It reports that 90 per cent are dissatisfied with their housing conditions and unhappy about it. It is often said also that immigrants are conditioned to filthy and unhygienic conditions. The survey repudiates this impression emphatically. It records that the quarters of virtually all the many dwellers visited during the study were visibly clean and neat.

It is inevitable that in overcrowded Slough there should be resentment against the occupation of accommodation by 6,000 immigrants. The survey reports that 49 out of 100 men and 72 out of 140 women gave the opinion that immigrants as the first ground for criticism. (Other reasons in order of importance were: background and ways of life, standard of living, taking jobs, and inability to speak English.) The resentment gives rise to many false allegations. It is widely charged that immigrants are a priority for council houses and that they are provided before residents who have lived in the area for many years on the housing list. The survey records that of the 6,800 council houses fewer than ten are occupied by immigrants.

Of the immigrants are married. Of these, 10.4 per cent of the Indian men were single males, only one of the Indian women was single (one divorced and awaiting divorce) and 28.4 per cent of the West Indians were single, of whom 10.4 per cent were female. The immigrant popula-

tion as a whole is "young adult". The median age among the Indians seen was 30, among the Pakistanis 32 and among the West Indians 29. Very frequently the wives had been left in the country of origin, temporarily at least. Of the married Indians, 63.8 per cent have their wives residing with them. When asked about plans to have their families come to Britain, 14 Indians replied that they hope to bring their dependants to this country, eight were undecided, and three reported that they do not intend to transfer their families.

Many more of the married Pakistanis were living without their wives, perhaps because many of them are more recent arrivals. Only 15.8 per cent have been joined in this country by their families. Five of the Pakistanis plan to bring their families here, nine have decided against, and two are undecided. It is possible that these decisions are influenced by a reluctance to have Moslem wives exposed to the less formal and restrictive social environment here. It may also be due to an intention of the Pakistanis to return to their own country.

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It is sometimes said that coloured immigrant marriages invariably result in large numbers of children and that this will in time threaten white Britain. The Slough survey does not endorse this thesis. It was found that 67 Indian couples have a total of 158 children, that is 2.36 children per marriage. Two of the Indian marriages are childless. The largest Indian family includes five children. Eighteen Pakistani marriages have brought 52 children, or 2.88 children per marriage. One couple has no children; the largest family includes four children. Three of the West Indian couples reported no children, and 45 couples have a total of 113 children, or about 2.51 per marriage.

A section of the report deals with health. It disposes of the allegation often made that immigrants spread infection of tuberculosis and venereal diseases. It finds no evidence that either of these diseases among immigrants "necessitates immediate or undue concern" and says that the health problem in these respects is social rather than racial. Similarly the allegation that immigrants are more prone to crime is rebutted. The survey states that crime is not proportionately greater among them than the residents of Slough as a whole.

The absence of a working knowledge of English among Indians and Pakistanis ("approximately 55 per cent either could not speak English at all or could only communicate in a fragmentary form of English") creates difficulties in medical treatment. The Slough health centre attempts to meet this by issuing pamphlets in Urdu, Hindi and Punjabi, but doctors find it difficult to understand patients in their surgeries. The problem of the education of the children is still more difficult. The progress of English children in primary classes is sometimes obstructed by the delays caused in attention to non-English speaking children. Slough has done something about this by appointing two Pakistani women to teach English.

How do the immigrants spend their leisure hours? It would appear that their greatest relaxation is social conversation and visits one to another. The table of recreation and leisure activities is one of the most revealing in the report. Here it is condensed:

watching television, 48; visiting pubs, 41; listening to radio, 32; social visits to homes of friends, 129; use of public library, 44; sightseeing, 45; attending dances, 6; indoor sports or games, 23; going to cinema, 57; outdoor sports or games, 16.

Among the "host community" there was an extraordinary difference of opinion about the character of the immigrants. These are the estimates given in the replies received: well behaved, 238; troublesome, 29; industrious, 132; lazy, 138; quiet, 170; noisy, 86; anxious to "fit in" to the community, 123; deliberately trying to live by themselves, 139; honest, 216; dishonest, 19; clean, 147; dirty, 99; polite and courteous, 199; ill mannered and rude, 62.

The survey concludes rather optimistically about race relations in Slough. "For every one respondent who thought the race relations atmosphere was dismal", the report says, "six considered it bright." One can only hope this is a true reflection of opinion. My own knowledge of Slough would lead

me to the view that it is a minority who harbour race prejudice, but a larger minority than one in six.

This is not the place to discuss the broad issues of national policy such as the limitation of immigration, but one must record that the overwhelming impression left by the Slough report is the need for drastic action on housing. The truth is that the immigrants are being made the scapegoats of a housing failure which, if there were not a single coloured person in the country, would leave many thousands of our people inadequately housed. The areas of concentrated immigrant population need special attention, but we must be careful not to make special provision for the immigrants. That would only incite more racial feeling. The extended housing must be for all. If the attention now being given to the subject of immigration leads to a recognition of the urgency of the housing need, we shall have reason to thank rather than abuse the immigrants.

## Shadows over community care

Eugene Heimler

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The disappearance of London and Middlesex County Councils on 1 April 1965, and the emergence of 33 new local health authorities in the Greater London area on that day, foreshadow problems that may affect the future of psychiatric community care in this region as well as in other parts of the country. The London Government Act 1963 made no more provision for a continuum than that present services must be carried on. Now the boroughs who have the sole responsibility for this service are faced with several problems; they may have no experience of community care; and they therefore may interpret in their own and widely varying ways of what is needed, which may result in fragmentation of the service.

The new borough councillors have little or no experience of the content of professional social work functions and skills, and may unwittingly appoint to responsible posts people who lack the necessary training and experience, although the Ministry of Health's circular on this matter emphasized their importance. In London and Middlesex such similar committees could in the past rely on the experience of the professional advisers, but the officers of the new boroughs, with a few exceptions, have had little or no past experience of psychiatric care and in consequence are not in a strong position to advise their committees.

There is also the problem of salaries. The range of salary scale for chief mental welfare officers is extremely varied: some boroughs pay £1,055 to £1,340 (as from 1 April 1965); others offer £2,215 to £2,705. These salaries are offered for the same job and responsibilities. Not surprisingly, some boroughs are not always able to attract "trained and experienced" personnel.

Many boroughs have already appointed their chief mental welfare officers who have charge of the mental health subsection of the borough community care section. Many have had little training in social work, which could have serious repercussions on training generally. Professionally trained social workers may feel that their status is threatened, and leave the field of community care altogether; and since they have been supervisors to social science, Younghusband

and mental health courses in fieldwork placements, these courses might not be able to use some of the new boroughs for placements at all. In consequence the lack of training placements would seriously jeopardize future expansion in this field envisaged by the Mental Health Act 1959, and the Younghusband report. Many professionally trained social workers viewed community care with some suspicion in the past, because of absence of the traditional clinical team approach (psychiatrist, psychologist and PSW) and only about 10 per cent of the membership of the Association of Psychiatric Social Workers ventured into this field.

Now, it seems that their suspicion may be further justified, and it is unlikely that they would wish to enter community care where the top positions are in the hands of untrained people, who may not understand the skills and techniques of social work, and may be in fact threatened by them. The social worker's skill lies in the field of prevention, care and after care, in the social rehabilitation of patients to the community, to family life, to work. Many untrained people put the emphasis on admission to hospital. We could, if we are not careful, put the clock back to 1890, when the function of the predecessors of mental welfare officers (the duly authorized officers) was just that. There is the further problem of in-service training. The present staffing of community care consists of both social science and Younghusband personnel with a few PSWs scattered here and there. The bulk consists of ex-mental nurses, who were attracted to this field by its importance and higher salaries. But they need adequate training, both on the job and in the skills of social work. Ideally they should have a full time social science, or Younghusband training. But at present only a fraction can be released, because of staffing difficulties, and because of lack of places on these courses. For some time yet, they will need an adequate in-service training on a day release basis.

Middlesex County Council has provided such a three year day release course (attached to the Department of Extra Mural Studies, London University) since 1960 lead-