

LETTERS

Case for vouchers

SIR: Rudolf Klein's advocacy of "over 75" vouchers, ("The case for a voucher system," 18 September)—for all its superficial attractiveness—provides yet another example of the way in which a number of leading social policy commentators have accepted (perhaps enthusiastically) that the "golden age" of state welfare has come to an end.

The task of the social policy analyst now appears to be one of devising cheap solutions for a limited number of officially defined welfare needs. Although the production of appropriate "technical fixes" might well be received by one's political masters they are unlikely to find favour with the disadvantaged, who recognise that more fundamental changes in our economic and social system are required if their position is to be improved in any dramatic way. In the not so distant past those who were poor, sick, old or disabled could look to social policy academics to champion their cause. Today, they may well feel entitled to ask "whose side are you on?"

Robert Page
Lecturer in Social Policy
Saint David's University College
University of Wales

Race violence

SIR: Your article on race attacks ("Self-help answer to race violence," News, 18 September), overstates Camden council's "success" in evicting tenants who have racially harassed their neighbours.

In the case of the Walsh family in April last year, the judge accepted our arguments but suspended the possession order on their flat indefinitely provided they never repeat their behaviour. In November the same year, Justice Burkett-Baker accepted that members of the Hawkins family had engaged in attacks which were racially motivated. And he described one of these incidents as quite possibly criminal. He then rejected our application for a possession order outright and the council later lost the appeal in the appeal court.

In spite of these disappointments, Camden council is determined to carry on taking tenants to court where there is good evidence that they have subjected others to racial harassment.

Councillor Barbara Beck
Chair, Race and Community Relations Committee
London Borough of Camden
Town Hall
Euston Road
London NW1

The dockers' dilemma

SIR: I am writing concerning the article written by Amanda Mitchison ("The dockers' dilemma," 28 August). We, the dockers, feel we must write and put the facts.

Along with the management of Seacon we

welcomed your reporter and photographer to Seacon, showed them how the work was done in the terminal, took them down into the ships hold, up into the crane, into our rest room, spoke with them on the docks situation now and in the future. But when we sat down and read the article, it came over as nothing at all like the true facts.

The facts are:

1. Dockers do share the recreation room facilities. We do not use the microwave, simply because we have our own, provided by management.
2. The dock force have monthly meetings with management to discuss and try to iron out any problems which might crop up.
3. Every Christmas the dockers, along with directors and office staff go to the firm's annual party, no distinction between anybody.

Does it sound as if we are anti-management? We, the dockers, feel that the true report was not written, because when Amanda started to ask us general questions other than dock work—gays, Labour Party (her choice, Tony Benn, did not go down well with us)—we, the dockers, feel we got her back up, her revenge was sweet.

Stewards and Dockers
Seacon

East Enders

SIR: I found Nick Mirsky's article interesting ("East Enders," *Voluntary Action*, 18 September), but would like to challenge Kumar Murshid's comment on Toynbee: "It's situated in an area which is 70 per cent Bangladeshi, and that is not yet reflected at any level of organisation."

While it is true to say that our staffing levels are not 70 per cent Bengali, we do have three project leaders, several members of senior staff and a considerable number of other staff who are all Bengali.

Bengali staff are particularly well-represented in our families' centre, mother-tongue classes and translation project. We have an Asian cultural studies section, and many local Bengali groups hire our rooms for meetings. A number of Bengali families make use of our multicultural playgroup and jobclubs.

We are not complacent and we recognise the need to make Toynbee open to all local groups. Indeed, I think, our new constitution will increase the possibility of there being a warden from an ethnic minority or other underrepresented group.

Alan Lee Williams
Warden and Chief Executive
Toynbee Hall
28 Commercial Street
London E1

MATTERS OF FACT

The answers to the questions are:

- The estimate for the cost of the legal aid system in 1987-88 is £48 million. (Source: *Hansard*)
- Pensioners' incomes from savings grew 52.5 per cent in real terms between 1979 and 1985. (Source: *Hansard*)

The post-Hungerford "binge" about life being an imitation of television has led to developments, which suit Mrs Whitehouse's purposes well, and others too. Douglas Hurd has announced a new watchdog council to monitor sex and violence on TV.

Like the press council, this could be another bureaucratic dummy to pacify the irrepensible public, but it does admit some liability on the part of TV pundits, (as do the increasingly self important prophetic debates at Edinburgh) and accepts the key role of TV in society.

Why, then, stop at sex and violence—what about racism?

The over-simplistic equation is that TV triggers off changes in human behaviour. At a deeper level it can sustain or transform ideologies and provide interpretations for social realities which people find credible or justifiable.

It has certainly perpetuated and given "common sense" credence to racist myths—something that producers coyly deny, claiming diplomatic immunity, like Diverse Productions in 1984 after an epoch making racist programme, and Peter Gill for *TV Eye*, (Thames).

And yet report after report has indicated that this is so, and there are daily new examples to be found. News is curiously selective. When Haiti liberated itself, four news programmes chose to do in-depth coverage of voodoo in Haiti. When Prince Charles remarked upon the poverty of British Bengalis living in London, BBC chose an in-depth on Bangladesh. And why isn't there nightly news on racial attacks in this country—like the relentless coverage of violence in Northern Ireland? The *Two Ronnies* doing offensive sketches, on "Chinks" and the Arabs, minutes

RACE AND SOCIETY

UPVIEW

Black and white TV

after the *Black and White Media Show* proves the point.

Royal tour coverage clearly reveals that base images and premises have not moved since the empire. And the concept of integrated casting is ignored as whites continue to black up (*The Far Pavilions*, Channel 4).

More ethnic minority employment on television at all levels would help to remove this kind of subtle racism, but only if black

individuals have power to influence the content and structure of programmes. While they remain a one off as they are now, most are likely to be absorbed, even unwillingly, into the prevailing ethos.

Employment of black people in mainstream television is tokenistic and low, in spite of laudable initiatives. Too many senior people still think the risks of taking on black staff are greater than say, a cutely anarchic PPE Oxbridge graduate



Maxine Walker

with life experiences around Hampstead.

In 1985, Bob Rowlands, Controller of Appointments at the BBC said that Pebble Mill—where all the ethnic programmes, including the very successful *Ebony* were being made—was to be the training ground for black journalists. Nothing significant happened, nor was it ever properly explained why the minorities needed special training when it is now clear that unconscious discrimination in large organisations is the central problem. This month another special scheme for black reporters was announced by the BBC.

London Weekend have proved themselves relatively enlightened in comparison. Since 1979 good minority programmes, like *Skin* created a pool of excellent black journalists who now work in established areas. In that company some powerful white individuals, like Barry Cox, saw the development as a core part of the LWT and not as a charitable gesture to good community relations.

Ironically, the BBC has poached from that very crop of talent at LWT in the form of Samir Shah, deputy editor, current affairs, and Narendra Morar, editor on *Network East*. The last time they did this with Beverly Anderson, the polished presenter was put into an untenable position. Nobody explained why. And as Shah candidly put it, when asked about his new job, "one swallow does not make a summer. We now have to get on with proper strategies—stop talking and just do it."

The sluggish indifference with which TV companies have treated these issues have deprived us and them of the kind of television there might have been.

Musical pressures

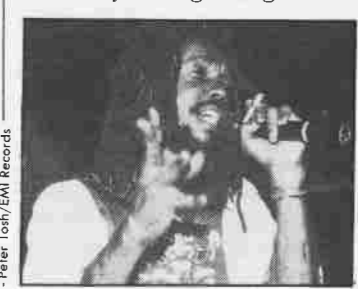
As Michael Jackson's "Bad" is pronounced universally good, and his tour pure genius; the death of Peter Tosh hit the headlines as a sad accompaniment.

Tosh—one of the original performers with Bob Marley's Wailer's trio—was shot dead in his house in Jamaica. He is not the only black musician to have died violently this year. In April, Carlton Barrett, the drummer with the Wailers was also shot outside his house in Kingston. Bob Marley was almost assassinated in 1976.

Tosh represented a style of reggae that took black rights as well as black voices into the white music market. In Jamaica politicians listened to his voice and in a "peace concert" in 1978 he called for the legalisation of marijuana, the end of apartheid and the end of police brutality in Jamaica.

Jackson represents a very different form of black music—a form not without its victims. As Terence Trent D'Arby, commenting on Jackson's straightened nose, thinned lips and whiter skin, put it

recently in *City Limits*: "The transfiguration close up is a sad indictment of black identity in America: the brown boy in the bubble so distrusted his own sepia image that every distinguishing feature



Peter Tosh/EMI Records

likening him to his father is now a prize conversation piece in a plastic surgeon's parlour . . ."

Despite their differences Tosh and Jackson shared an industry that for all its rich rewards, also has its tragedies—both black and white. But they also shared the added complexity of being black. One chose to stay in his community and champion the causes he believed in and is now dead. The other chose seclusion and metamorphosis and a sanitized form of music. Few white musicians face such stark alternatives.

UPDATES Dewsbury revisited

Parents of the 26 Dewsbury children who are refusing to go to the largely Asian Headfield school have adamantly disclaimed any racist motives. Do these denials stand up?

Certainly, Eric Haley, the parent's leader, is full of alternative justifications for their stand. First he says: "We never chose Headfield, we don't like being told what to do by the council." But would they really mind being told what to do by the council if they had been told to go to the white Overthorpe school which they prefer? There is no foundation for claims that Headfield is a poorer school academically. Gordon Hibbert, Headmaster at Headfield, has been quoted as saying: "The curricula are the same and both schools run on the same lines." Haley also told me he could not possibly be labelled a racist because he is soon to open an Indian restaurant.

Next, they produce the notion that it's a "cultural" problem, a disingenuous distinction. Haley's "educational adviser" went to "check out Headfield" but was not allowed to. He concluded: "Stands to reason,

Right down to the racist graffiti on the walls of Overthorpe, everything about the Dewsbury parents' row with Kirklees education authority evokes not just whiffs, but stink bombs of racism.

They must have something to hide. Why the hell should we learn Urdu or Hindi? We're never going to visit Arabia." Not many in Arabia understand Hindi or Urdu.

Even more dubious is the claim of language problems the white children will encounter if they go to Headfield. Children there are second and third generation Asians growing up in this country. Every child I poke to in Saville Town, the school's main catchment area, had a broad Yorkshire accent. Mohammed, ex-Headfield pupil said, "We don't talk unny, we speak exactly like they do."

They then tried religion. Mr Haley contends: "You can't mix Islam and Christianity." Nobody had suggested the two *should* "mix." Both hold several tenets of faith in common, one of them being the tolerance of other religions. The point—perhaps somewhat muddled in practice—of multicultural education has been to incorporate in the curriculum an awareness and understanding of the diversity of other British cultures. The distortion of this merely fuels ignorance of the school curriculum, and the essence of a different culture. These parents make much of the fact that they have the support of fundamentalist separatist Muslims (not representing the majority view) who also reject inter-faith education as a "farce."

Most Asians have made Britain their home, they do not plan to rush off in a hurry. Muslims in Saville Town want their children to receive the Church of England state education. Mohammed Ismail, 20, went to Headfield eleven years ago. His nieces are pupils there now. He told me: "You've got to have a mixture of people at school. We don't go there to learn about our religion, but to learn about other subjects. We've got our own Muslim schools where our kids go to learn about Islam." Another mother added: "It is a good school. Why are these people being racist against us?"

Right down to the racist graffiti on the walls of Overthorpe, everything about the Dewsbury parents' row with Kirklees education authority evokes not just whiffs, but stink bombs of racism. **Razia Iqbal** ■

ASMIN ALIBHAI continues the analysis.

Behind the Dewsbury story lie some important fundamental debates about the nature of education in a multi-racial society. The likes of ay Honeyford are challenging the notion of multi-ethnic, anti-racist

education and using Dewsbury as a peg to set the clock back to the fifties, when assimilation and "immigrant teaching" were the dominant philosophies. The media onslaught on Brent, and the creeping criticism of the IEA seem part of the same movement. Parallel to this is the forthcoming education bill which allows increased parental choice (with the Ray Honeyford case the black parents rights were subsumed to the rights of the white head) and schools to "opt out." This combination may produce the end of multicultural education and racially mixed schools in Britain.

Most ordinary white and some black parents are misinformed or deeply prejudiced about the nature of multicultural, anti-racist education, thus falling prey to the kind of sensationalising that the press so regularly comes up with—of the chapati and pancakes on Shrove Tuesday variety. The assumptions are, that an excessive amount is being done for black people, at some enormous cost to the principles of *real* education. But is it only black children who need this approach? And it begs the question of what constitutes a *real* education.

Beverley Anderson, a black educationalist, thinks that these controversies have often arisen because of a lack of communication. "I think this shows," she says, "how important it is to take the parents along with you. Sometimes educators underestimate public anxieties and do not inform their constituent parents enough." She also strongly believes that this kind of education is vital for white children who have a history of "superiority" they have to free themselves of, in order to appreciate equality and diversity in an international world. The cognitive development of children from the southern US was shown to be impaired because of their sense of self-superiority and their racist upbringing. "It is crucial for these children to broaden their horizons and learn to work equally with other cultures in the world in which they are going to live," she says. Give or take a Falklands, there are no viable prospects of a new empire.

Britain is the only European country where the majority of the citizens are wilfully mono-lingual. In terms of communication and technology these narrow attitudes produce dinosaurs, believes Carlton Duncan, who was the black head of a largely white school in Bradford and is now the head of a community school in Birmingham. He is worried that Dewsbury is just the beginning. "It is a shame," he says, "a monocentric curriculum denies *all* children important information. Should not black and white children know what Mary Seacole, a black nurse, did during the Crimea?" At Bradford he successfully established a wide curriculum

Can anyone educated in only one culture be said to be fully educated? Even the Victorians went off on grand tours and oriental adventures.

with the parents (though not all the teachers) and every year for four consecutive years, the pupils showed marked improvements in their exam results. "We battled on, refused to be undermined, and everybody stood to gain because they understood it was a better education."

Ray Pinder, author and ex-head of a school in North London feels these issues go even further. "Can anyone educated in only one culture be said to be fully educated? Even the Victorians went off on grand tours and oriental adventures. The most disturbing trend is the narrowing of the concept of education, which should be expansive. The reasons for encouraging bigotry are economic and political. Ignorant people are easier to control, but appealing to the basic instincts can only harm the children."

The Dewsbury parents show the deprivation of an ethnocentric upbringing. They cannot appreciate the fact that Asian children have been shown to be top achievers, (IEA report, July 1987) or that seven top literary prizes in Britain and the US have recently gone to Asians writing in English. Would they demand their children be taught only the geography of Yorkshire, and would curry and chips be "Asian" or "English" culture? ■

Talented twins in trouble



Amrit and Rabindra Singh Sunday Times

The case of two Sikh twins fighting to have their second class degree awards reviewed by Liverpool University, highlights serious ambiguities faced by black university students.

Amrit and Rabindra Singh, who studied for their Art degrees at Chester College were told in a letter from the Vice Chancellor of Liverpool University, "You did not appear to have knowledge consistent with the level of scholarship undoubtedly shown in your art dissertation." However, David Holmes, the Senior Registrar at Liverpool told RACE AND SOCIETY, "There was no formal accusation of cheating, the work of the twins was simply of a lower second standard."

That statement also contrasts sharply, with what examiners told the twins in the vivas—that their dissertations were "superhuman" and "expert," and that they were

not capable of such work.

"We were not told who we were supposed to have asked for help, or where we had lifted passages from," says Amrit Singh. Michael Mawle, the twins legal adviser at the NUS, told RACE AND SOCIETY, "If Liverpool University thought the twins cheated then they shouldn't be awarded a degree at all."

The students' tutor at Chester College, Joyce Emerson, said that their dissertations were consistent with their course work, which "stood out as of the highest order."

Professor Hennells of Manchester University, who has accepted the twins in his department commented, "Substantial allegations are being raised about the integrity of these students. I have faith in their work and ability."

Valerie Roebuck, the future supervisor of the twins who has a doctorate in Indian art from Cambridge added, "Having seen the

BBC TRAINING SCHEME

The BBC—much criticized for its record in recruiting black staff—has launched a pilot scheme to train Asians and Afro-Caribbeans as TV reporters.

Six places are offered on a two-year course combining work experience and intensive training, giving candidates skills to "compete successfully" for future posts on TV. There is no guarantee of a job at the end. The initiative is being funded by the Asian and Afro-Caribbean Reporters' Trust set up by the BBC under Section 37

of the race relations act.

Although the BBC has no shortage of black cleaning staff, it has a feeble record in recruiting across the board. Since 1980, on its prestigious news training scheme, only 7 out of 106 trainees were black.

But at a press conference to launch the scheme, Bob Rowland, head of the BBC's management and development, said the main problem was that few black people applied. He admitted that the scheme would serve a dual purpose.

"Not only is it the first course of its kind, but we hope that their

twins work in their first year, I wrote to the Vice Chancellor at Liverpool to say that the work was highly original and was not plagiarized. I feel there are elements of racism and sexism here, as if two such pretty little heads couldn't possibly produce such work."

Rabindra commented, "The issue of racism has been raised, and the question of our academic abilities and integrity is crucially important. Perhaps we focussed too much on Indian art."

Hennells elaborated, "I don't think it is racial consciously. If Chester College felt that the twins were "narrow-minded" by focusing so much on Indian art, why are people who specialise in European art not considered narrow-minded? Indian art is much wider."

The method of disputing degrees is cumbersome and the twins cannot start at Manchester until it is resolved. There are no guidelines on assessing bias or discrimination. Sohbad Hussain is in the twelfth year of his dispute with Bradford University over their refusal to grant him a PhD.

A spokesperson for the Commission for Racial Equality said, "We get many complaints about degree results but very few of them can be pursued or proved. Often people do not complain until their result is out because they are afraid to rock the boat. The result is that it looks like sour grapes."

In July 1985 the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals in their guidelines on academic standards in universities, indicated that claims of prejudice should be grounds for appeal. The present system, according to Mawle of the NUS has "scope for favouritism and allows prejudice to creep in."

Claire Sanders ■

notable presence on television will make the BBC more accessible to black people and encourage them to apply for our jobs," he said.

However, the scheme could gloss over the failure to recruit blacks at less conspicuous levels, and be regarded as inferior in status to other BBC training.

Jocelyn Barrow, the BBC's only black governor, said there was a danger of complacency, adding, "we must maintain stringent checks at all levels and a high profile in our equal opportunities policy."

Mohini Patel ■

UNJUST JUSTICE

Two recent cases in Leeds highlight the inadequacies of the way in which the criminal justice system processes blacks.

Mr Ghulam Mertzza, a 48 year old ex-teacher was shocked when he saw two customers attacking his son in the doorway of his shop in south Leeds. He went to his son's assistance, and hit one of the men on the head with a stick. He then called the police who charged him with Section 18 wounding. Robert Andrews, one of the assailants, who pleaded guilty to assault, received a conditional discharge.

Mertzza was sentenced to 18 months immediate imprisonment. Unusually, the judge granted bail pending an appeal. At the appeal the High Court judge was surprised that the trial judge had refused to allow any discussion of the racist context of the case. After submissions from barrister Courtney Griffiths, the appeal court suspended the sentence.

Mr Fatahjat Singh's case was, comparatively trivial, but caused almost as much suffering. Singh, a 30 year old glass cutter, was driving when a mini smashed into his car. The driver, who seemed drunk, swore and drove off. Singh was later informed by the police that the driver had no licence, tax or insurance and Singh was asked to give evidence.

"I couldn't believe it when the next thing I knew was that I was summoned to court for careless driving," said Singh. "I was right upset, it was diabolical." At the Magistrates' court, where no prosecution witnesses appeared, the case was thrown out.

Mr Mushtaq Hussain, of the Harehills and Chapelton Law Centre, who advised both Mertzza and Singh, said: "There is something seriously wrong with the police and the court procedure when it comes to dealing with black people." He says that he has dealt with other similar cases in which the police appear to have discriminated against black people in making their initial arrest or summons. "It's my opinion that some of the police are racist."

Barrister Courtney Griffiths adds, "Many lawyers don't realise what happens outside the court is as important as what happens inside. They don't see the criminal justice system as a whole."

Max Farrar ■

Future laws and housing

The government's new housing plans could undermine efforts to end racial discrimination in the rented sector. The proposal to give council tenants the right to "pick a landlord" could sabotage attempts to clamp down on racial harassment. And ethnic minorities will be among those who suffer most if new legislation fails to bring about the hoped-for revival of rented housing.

These are the conclusions of a wide range of housing organisations and experts, not all of whom oppose Conservative public housing proposals.

According to a government advisor: "The race dimension has rarely entered into discussions about the forthcoming housing bills at all. But I must admit that there are bound to be problems of this sort which we haven't yet considered."

At the annual conference of the housing charity, Shelter, last month, speakers warned about the particular problems facing ethnic minorities as a result of the planned legislation. A succession of local authority speakers warned of how they would be increasingly unable to meet their obligations to the homeless, 90 per cent of whom are black in some areas.

June McKerron, who chairs the national Federation of Housing Societies' housing management committee, spoke of "the pressure on associations to reduce costs by scrimping on maintenance and management and putting up rents. The people who will suffer will be the homeless, women, black people and vulnerable people generally."

There are four main elements to the government plans for housing:

- 1 A new right for local authority tenants to transfer to another landlord and opt out of council housing management.

- 2 The creation of new "housing action trusts" to remove housing from council control in selected inner city areas.

- 3 The deregulation of the private rented sector by removing rent controls on new private lettings.

- 4 A big increase in rents in both the council and housing association sectors in order to attract private investors and to pay for an

increased programme of improvements and repairs.

The housing minister, William Waldegrave, says that the objective is to increase choice and free council tenants from "the dread drug of dependence." But Kevin Veness, who chairs Ealing council's housing committee told RACE AND SOCIETY: "This notion of choice is no choice at all for most people. At the moment, for example, the right to buy is open effectively to people in nice houses with gardens, the majority of which are occupied by white tenants. It's the same in education. 'Choice' is going to mean schools with resources versus schools which have had a bad deal. We could end up with black sink estates and segregated schools."

Jon Mordecai, the ex-chair of housing in Brent, now at Sheffield city council, says that the people to benefit from the government's extension of choice will be those who have most choice already. Those in the poorest housing—and those who haven't got into the public sector at all—will have fewer opportunities to improve their position, less security and increased rents.

Mordecai also warns that by giving tenants the right to vote themselves out of council control, the government will be opening the door to racist or otherwise prejudiced tenants who want to bar ethnic minorities, "problem families" or the homeless from access to their estates.

Tenants associations such as on the Exmouth estate, in Tower Hamlets, which in 1985 organised a petition against Asian families moving onto the estate, could get their way by threatening to opt out of council management, or even by taking over and running the estate independently of the local council altogether. "Local authorities could be blackmailed by tenants into changing their allocation or equal opportunity policies," says Jon Mordecai.

The government argues that by relaxing controls on private landlords and bringing in more private investors it will increase the supply, quality and variety of rented housing—to the benefit of everyone in housing need. The new land-

lords will be covered by the race relations act, just like local authorities.

The problem, however, as the recent experience in Dewsbury demonstrates, is that actions do not have to be overtly racist—nor laws broken—for them to be racist *in effect*. The government's proposal to give council tenants a right to set up housing co-operatives to run their homes, for instance, is virtually unopposed by even the most fervent supporters of municipal housing. But although few housing co-ops would operate an overt colour bar, many would argue for other allocation policies—such as apparently unobjectionable ones in favour of the sons and daughters of existing tenants—which have the effect of excluding certain groups.

The government's new plans make it more important than ever that other landlords begin to give the same priority to fair allocation policies—and not just in relation to ethnic minorities—as that now being accorded to the issue by some local authorities.

Steve Platt

Future laws and immigration

This year, black people's immigration and nationality rights will be restricted still further as a result of two laws: the proposed new immigration bill and the ending of the right of some Commonwealth citizens to become British. Both will break firm promises given in previous legislation to long-settled Commonwealth citizens, adding to their insecurity, and diminishing the rights of black Britons.

The 1971 Immigration Act promised two groups of Commonwealth citizens that they would be able to enter Britain. Millions of Commonwealth citizens with a parent born here (who are nearly all white) were given the right of abode and entry into this country without restriction. That promise has been kept. At the same time, Commonwealth citizens who were already settled here by 1973 were given the right to bring in their wives and children without any further tests. That promise will be broken in the proposed law.



The bill will remove the only absolute right to family unity in British immigration. It will mean that people who have been here for many years will not be able to bring in their families—unless they can show that they can support and accommodate them without recourse to public funds, and unless their marriages can pass the notorious primary purpose test.

These tests are used at present for husbands, and for wives and children of people who are not Commonwealth citizens or who settled here after 1973. They will in future be applied to all families but inevitably, as now, they will fall hardest on black people and poor people. Virtually no white husbands are refused entry on primary purpose grounds: 55 per cent of men who apply in the Indian subcontinent are refused. Black unemployment rates and discriminatory housing policies mean that proportionally far more black families fail the public fund tests, which is a means test on family unity.

The new bill will also prevent the entry of second and subsequent wives, and will cut down the appeal rights of those facing deportation and of children claiming citizenship through descendency.

Present immigration laws already severely damage the family life of black Britons providing inadequate mechanisms to challenge the Home Office's arbitrary decisions. Black families are divided by the primary purpose rule, the restrictive rules on the entry of elderly parents, and the difficulty of proving family relationships to immigration officials. There is no appeal for refugees refused entry or people classified "illegal" entrants.

The new proposals seek to remove some of the few safeguards immigration law has provided. The rights of wives of Commonwealth citizens here before 1973 to register as British will cease after the 31 December of this year. Everyone will have to naturalise to obtain British citizenship. This costs much more and can be refused without any right of appeal, if people are held not to be of "good character" or not to speak English well enough.

Thousands of black people are now rushing to become British and paying £60 to do so. Those who cannot afford the fee in time will

lose their right: no help is available to those on social security and people cannot pay by installments. There is widespread confusion and anxiety. Many people believe, wrongly, that if they do not register by the end of the year they will lose their right to stay here, or their right to state welfare provision, or will never be able to apply for British citizenship. In fact, settled Commonwealth citizens will gain little immediate benefit by deciding to register as British.

The main advantage, under present law, is that they will be able to return to Britain after going abroad, no matter how long they stay away. (At present, they have to come back within two years to be sure of return.) This will help people who wish to work or study abroad, or elderly people who want to retire to their country of origin

but want to retain the option of returning to their families here.

But many people are opting for British citizenship, not for its practical benefits but as an insurance policy. Before 1962, all Commonwealth citizens had free right of entry to Britain. Now some need a visa even to transit through the UK. Access to health care and welfare is increasingly linked to immigration status.

There is no reason to suppose that this steady erosion of rights has now ended. Indeed, the new immigration bill is clear evidence that it has not. Ironically then, the present rush by black people for British citizenship, is largely a reflection of their deep mistrust of the racist attitudes and future actions of the country whose citizens they are seeking to become.

Anne Owers

Contract compliance to end

As opposition grows to the local government bill, which seeks to bar almost totally contract compliance policies—which use public purchasing power to encourage equal opportunities in companies—Tom King declares, in America, that he is absolutely devoted to equal opportunities in Northern Ireland—even talking of "sanctions" to ensure action. The irony is not lost on an ex-GLC employee, who said, "The Irish are white. The GLC, which started the policy, helped blacks." Contrary to popular lore, the GLC did not pluck the notion from a little red book. It merely activated an inert, but potentially highly effective part of the 1976 Race Relations Act, emulating America where it has been operational for 20 years.

John Carr, Labour member for ILEA, said "After initial hostility, big business in America really supports it. When Reagan tried to scrap it, the National Association of Manufacturers publicly dissociated from the move." A spokesperson at the Pittsburgh headquarters of giant multinational Westinghouse, illustrated the point. He told RACE AND SOCIETY, "Even if federal laws change, we will continue the policies."

The CBI, in contrast, opposes the small exemption included in the bill, allowing authorities to enforce compliance where they can show that companies practice "unlawful racial discrimination" but *not* for failing to promote equal opportunities. This, says Carr, "is an artificial division. The ambiguity makes it fertile ground for courts to narrow the remit of contract compliance."

Lesley Courcouf of the Association of Metropolitan Authorities has other anxieties, "Competitive tendering, promoted by this bill for council services, means cowboy firms who can give a lower bid because they don't have to fund equal opportunity initiatives. This most adversely affects women and blacks."

The CRE has just published guidelines on contract compliance emphasizing that it isn't a punitive, but a practical guide for progressive companies. This will help to reduce confusion and avoid eccentric demands by purchasers. The misuse of contract compliance for "political" purposes before has helped the Tories.

Carr also feels, that the Tories—shamelessly expedient and contradictory—disliked their success. "We persuaded 150 companies, including Rank Xerox, to comply. As more authorities took it up, the bill was published to kill it all stone dead. They have removed the critical commercial leverage essential for equal opportunities. Unless we can find ways of getting amendments through, we are left with floundering policies, badly enforced. And when that happens it will be a bad day for all of us."

Yasmin Alibhai

Black journalists and the white media

RONNIE SMITH, a black journalist, describes the problems facing black journalists and why they have to be overcome.

Racism in the media is not a simple case of white journalists setting out to deliberately re-inforce and bolster black stereotypes in newspapers, over the air, or on TV screens. Indeed, as individuals, journalists do not hold racist views to any greater degree than any other sector of society.

So, why then, do we time and again witness racist reporting? And, given that the best way to tackle racist reporting is from the inside, how do black journalists combat it from inside newsrooms?

Much of what we call racist reporting falls into the category of entrenched ideas perpetuated by the old guard of journalists—news editors, directors, and others. All those who determine what goes out, those who possess that much sort after commodity, news-sense. Often racist thinking, usually sub-conscious, underscores the news-sense of those people who decide what we see, read and hear.

To see how this works take the case of the middle-aged black man who, in the early 1980s, was awarded damages against the Metropolitan Police in a High Court case. He won a case for unlawful arrest and malicious wounding having suffered a broken leg in the back of a police van. A rarity at the time, so one would suspect a good news story.

So thought our intrepid, eager, black radio journalist. He used his contacts to gain the station a first interview with the victim. His news editor agreed the story merited a slot. But rather than run the normal type story, "aggrieved man wins victory over bullying vicious cops," he editor chose to run a story through the eyes of the man's neighbours, using a news agency. So, the piece in the bulletin said how the neighbours thought he was a little touched because he would wear African clothes in the winter, with very little background to the story.

When questioned the editor claimed he was making a heavy story lighter and more palatable to a wide audience. That is racist reporting because he chose not to give the same seriousness to a story that he would have done had the main protagonist been white. But this editor

People in the BBC say we advertise jobs and we just don't get applications from black people and I say, how do you expect them to apply when they see it as a white, middle class activity?



Vastiana Belfon, series producer of *Ebony* on BBC2 (*Wealth* magazine).

I was put in a position which I found intolerable. I was treated awfully and abominably trivialised. Television people exclude anyone who is not like them, not just blacks.

Beverly Anderson, former presenter on BBC.

At long last the issue of equal opportunities is very high on the agenda in all the board rooms at the BBC. We have got a lot of catching up to do. It is time to replace the posturing with action and results.

Michael Grade, Director of Programmes, to RACE AND SOCIETY

THE WHITE WORLD OF BRITISH TV



did not set out to ridicule the man on purpose, it just came naturally as part of his own notions of black people as colourful characters who cannot command a serious news story. He was unable to decipher the story from his own collective "memory" of what black people represent because of entrenched stereotypes.

This shared, stored memory of what black people are, is very difficult to break down. To many people in Britain black people don't exist except as anthropological specimens without an individual identity.

But as black journalists working in newsrooms, how do we steer clear of taking on watered down versions of the existing views of black people, whilst in search of news-sense which has to be learned on the job?

One black journalist I worked with in the past was asked to do a piece on the Notting Hill Carnival, the biggest street festival in Europe, after I had spent the week telling all and sundry how significant it was to the Afro-Caribbean community. He then proceeded to describe how a thing "once only of interest to a small minority, now attracts a wide cross-section of people." Would he have described the Henley Regatta as something which is only of minority interest? No, he did not because it belonged to the upper-middle class, the class of the opinion makers. The journalist had never been to the carnival but had been to Henley.

"Those of us who go straight into the white press are often shocked into the reality of the racist stereotypes prevalent in that environment," says NUJ president, Lionel Morrison—one of the first black journalists to work in Fleet Street.

"It is almost impossible for black journalists to combat racism in newsrooms if they don't know who they are. If you don't have your roots firmly in the black community it is easy to become isolated, get sucked in, become too strident or go astray. The community is the lifeline," he continues.

"The very presence of black journalists in a newsroom helps to curtail the nonsense white journalists write about us, if nothing else by explaining the variety that exists in our various communities. But this won't change what they write because they don't live among us."

"The presence of six black journalists in the *Sun* newsrooms would do more good than any number of disciplinary actions against them for racist reporting," he believes.

Ensuring that more black people join the media must be the main priority, says Morrison, and this should be done through strengthening the minority press; raising standards there to provide a genuine training ground for black reporters to be able to move into the mainstream; whilst at the same time ensuring that the talents of black journalists remain at the disposal of the black press.

Someone who holds a slightly different view of why newsrooms are difficult places for black people to work in is the former presenter of BBC's *Ebony*, Juliet Alexandre, who now works in Granada's Liverpool centre. "It boils down to the fact that newsrooms don't care about people. They don't care about our lives. They are only after the sensational. But having more black people in newsrooms will mean eventually more stories about black people—like having more women means more stories of interest to women."

Racism in newsrooms is only part of the manifestation of institutional racism in British society. "Institutional racism is much more insidious than the overt racism we experience daily in the news media," says London TV reporter, Marc Wadsworth. "It is responsible for denying able black workers jobs in the communications industry. I believe that the greater employment of black people is the key to eradicating the white media values which make nonsense of the claim that Britain is a multi-racial society."



Plans to introduce ethnic monitoring for existing staff and equal opportunities training for managers. Has an equal opportunities officer (job not externally advertised). Implemented training for black reporters. But Aug. '86 and Jan '87 out of 78 trained journalists taken on, none black.



Equal Opportunities Policy, including monitoring and revised recruitment procedure since 1980. Commitment to genuine implementation of policy and equal opportunity officer in post. Company taking it "very seriously." But in Oct. '85, 97.28 per cent of staff white, 0.74 per cent black, rest others.



Beginning serious ethnic monitoring. Instituted technical training for black people. Small current staff. But in Aug. 86 6.6 per cent of staff were black (that is, 19 out of 293). No equal opportunities officer. Channel 4 News (ITN) commented, "Ethnic monitoring is not fair on white people."



Has an equal opportunities policy but no officer and no plans for training or positive initiatives. Monitoring not been successful—out of a staff of 2,004, only 20 self-identified themselves as black. The station is, "disappointed at low application rates of blacks."

Blind spots on British TV

BOB FERGUSON writes about British television and the race debate.

Racism in broadcasting is not an easily discussed subject.

Broadcasters do not like to consider that racism in their programme can be unintentional and yet most effective. The response of the mass audience (itself composed of a constantly changing set of sub-groups in relation to the time of day, television channel, age, race and gender of the viewing group) is often hostile to issues of race and racism. Any suggestion, therefore, that either viewers or producers should change their habits is met with antagonism.

The employment of black people in television is minimal. Those who are the subjects of so many racist representations on television have little or no voice in debates about what should change in broadcasting. The parentheses have been pre-determined by white journalists whose first allegiance is to the values of their employers. For many white people, representations of race are something to watch, to fear, to thrill to, to hate by. The situation is bleak, and we are all implicated.

This was recognised by the BBC in *The Black and White Media Shows*, (*Panorama*), where it examined its own broadcasting practices and their effect.

These programmes had shortcomings. Far too few black people were given a voice, and (for some) what was said was ineffectually soft. Nevertheless, their prime significance lay in the fact that the BBC publicly admitted that there is an issue to be addressed.

The starting position for most

television chat shows or current affairs programmes is whether we can be over-zealous in our concern about racism, particularly in its more subtle manifestations. The *Black and White Media Shows* start from the premise that certain portrayals are racist. Their concern was not with *whether* television is racist, but *how* it is. The programmes produced indignation in many producers, but Michael Grade as Controller of Programmes, it seems, was more willing to recognise the racism within broadcasting.

To some extent this self-appraisal was radical, especially as Independent Television, which fared no better than the BBC, have yet to produce a prime time programme which interrogates their own practice.

Television obviously has considerable impact when it addresses directly both producers and consumers of media messages.

Such a simple device shatters the illusion that something as private as television carries with it no responsibilities. It explains why many viewers are angered at this infringement of their ideological privacy.

When television asks what *it* and *you* are up to, a new relationship is implied in which the viewer is faced with two possibilities. The first is to form a relationship of complicity with conventional television output. The second is to assume some responsibility in the affair.

The first is a reactive mode of viewing, where the broadcasters

PERSONAL VIEW

Whatever happened to England?

JONATHAN STEINBERG

I arrived in England a year before *NEW SOCIETY*'s first issue, and a very English England it was then. Harold Macmillan ran the country like a benevolent landlord. He was a gent surrounded by gents. The country smelt of coal dust and pipe smoke. It had its incomprehensible currency with huge half-crowns and florins, tiny sixpences and varieties of pennies. It had an independent deterrent, its own space programme, parts of an empire and a motor industry. England looked unmistakably English and bore that difference casually, as a sign of superiority.

Cambridge undergraduates wore tweed jackets, checked shirts and cavalry twills. They were gents, too (or pretended to be), and had recently commanded bodies of men in Malaya or Kenya. I had one rather eccentric friend who, like me, had been in the ranks. We understood each other instinctively.

The first year as married graduate students cost us just under £1,000. By comparison with others we were well off. We could even afford to run a car; it was a little grey Standard 10 with a floor shift, old-fashioned even then.

My supervisor told me that he still considered the PhD a new-fangled Germanic invention and that "black MA was the gentleman's gown." First you were plain Mr and then in due course Professor and Sir.

I had no intention of staying, let alone turning into the resident, semi-professional American that I have become. But 1 October 1961 was the best day to begin a PhD in the history of British universities. My seniors kindly left Cambridge to take chairs in new universities, leaving more jobs than people.

On arrival I found a note from my supervisor telling me that the person who normally taught American history had gone off to be vice-chancellor of a new university. Would I be willing to supervise 13 pupils? I had no qualifications except a passport, an authentic accent and a fund of stories about American politics which might cover my pathetic ignorance. I kept roughly one chapter ahead of my pupils in Morrison and Commager's *The Growth of the American Republic*.

Early in that year a tutorial went wrong. The victim was a dour little man from Stoke-on-Trent whose passions were chess and train spotting. The object of our study was supposed to be President Jefferson and what historians have called "Jeffersonian democracy," that is, Jefferson's vision of an agrarian republic of yeoman farmers. I asked my train spotter in some exasperation what he made of it all. He looked at me sourly and said, "I think it's bunk."

Paper cannot do justice to the strong U in the Stoke variant of standard English. I was

shattered. At my progressive New York school we used to take spring trips to meet the real people because, thorough Jeffersonians that we were, real Americans by definition lived on farms. It began my education as an American, a process which 25 years have not completed.

Those first years teaching American history uncovered to me the oddity of American attitudes: our refusal to accept the state and the stunted evolution of our political ideas. Bourgeois liberalism in one of its variants covers the whole acceptable spectrum of positions.

I saw that America was a kind of deviant in western development. It had no real right with its pessimism and passion for order nor a real left. European radicalism with its attack on property was too collective for a society so fiercely individual. In America even religion rests not on sacrament or sacred text but on whether the individual *feels* saved. The "born-again" embody that most American of hopes that by your own efforts you can achieve perfection. I saw how the famous American "equality of opportunity" depended on great natural wealth. There was always so much to go round that one man's fortune did not exclude another's.

At the same time I gradually came to see that being an American in England was more than a simple social fact; it was a state of grace. Whatever games the English played around me, I need not take part. I was exempt. As one of my liveliest students once said to me (it was the 1970s and pupils had become students), "Oh, Jonathan! it's so nice having you around; you never know what is going on!" She was right. I have to ask about things that you all know.

For example, I do not know without inquiry who you are. I can make crude distinctions between "posh," middle and below but not, for example, distinctions among "posh" and middle.

Yanks by definition have no class. I see my fellow human beings instinctively as equals and forget that in this country it is not so. I remember being appalled at the introduction which the chairman of an East Anglian teacher's forum gave me. She implied that it was good of somebody so "high" to come to talk to them. I do not accept this description.

In the early 1960s the Pilkington Report on broadcasting appeared. The Labour Party endorsed its recommendation that the BBC not ITV be given a second channel. Ninety-five per cent of those who voted Labour, if asked, would have wanted more ITV; they were not asked.

The two great governing parties disagreed

across a wide spectrum of issues, but on one they united in a tacit compact: the people ought to be given what they need, not what they want. It was odd for an American to be granted a wonderful, free health service, a marvellous noncommercial radio and TV service, a benevolent welfare state, and not to have earned it. My betters were looking after me.

It is all different now. I still enjoy living here but England is not the same. Twenty-five years ago nobody mentioned how much they earned; it was not a lot in any case. The upper middle class squalor in which many of my friends lived used to stupefy me. They had huge Victorian houses filled with dilapidated furniture and a stygian cold in winter. It did not matter. Those houses have been gentrified and BMWs line the streets. Even in college the old wreck is no longer treasured.

Motorways criss-cross the country and except for the side on which one drives could be anywhere. Airports, luxury hotels, shopping malls and supermarkets accept the decimal currency, the plastic money and the metric measurements to be found anywhere.

England is less English than it was when I first knew it, but that is true everywhere. The world has become one market place and the teenager walking down the street in Benetton clothes listening to Level 42 on her Walkman could be any nationality, or none.

Great political ideas seem to have expired. When I first came to England, friends used to meet for intense political discussions. We considered plans for improving the world. We marched. We sent petitions. We swelled in righteous wrath. We thought that political engagement mattered. I still think that, but the young don't. I have had precisely two students in the past five years who canvassed on election day. I had to assure them that once upon a time many people did.

I feel less safe. The present government are not "gents." They know what is right and impose it. They invade our liberties and our offices, ban books and programmes, impose curricula and poll taxes, and we can do nothing. The benevolent consensus that united the Etonian Macmillan and the Wykehamist Gaitskell, always a fragile protection of our liberties, has crumbled. England is not as nice as it was. It has the most authoritarian government and the worst hooligans in Europe, not perhaps, a coincidental linkage.

Quiller-Couch once said, "poor old Henry James! He never did understand that conversation on the manor house lawn." I find that strangely consoling. If the master could not understand what the English were up to after a longer stay and with greater talent, I can be forgiven my modest errors. Maybe I am still getting the wrong signals: maybe behind the glass facades and gentrified terraces, behind the glittering shop windows and shiny cars, behind the table thumping of politicians, the good old English are as nice and mild, as tolerant of oddity and nonconformity, as sensitive to their own and others' embarrassment, as oblique, indirect and "amusing" as ever. I would like to think so after 25 years.

RACE AND SOCIETY

define the terms of debate or entertainment. The second implies activity and is one of the ways in which a mass but differentiated audience can participate in a cultural and political process for change. The audience can refuse to accept without questioning the motives, for example, of the people who framed the debate around a programme on education in Brent, *Panorama*—where the issue of anti-racism was presented as a more significant problem than racism.

The audience needs a strategy for challenging such representations. Conventional channels such as writing and making access programmes are useful, but these

activities are mere drops in a hegemonic ocean. Viewers must take their arguments and feelings out of the domestic situation and into workplaces, political parties, trades unions or other organisations.

Finally, television has an educative function, and it is the responsibility of those involved to ensure that representations of race (amongst others) are taught and analysed. When broadcasters are seen in their practice to be anti-racist, this will accelerate or impede the growth in the numbers of active viewers. Television audiences must find their voices away from the box. Anti-racist producers must find their voice on it. ■

Equal opportunities?

Usha and Marcia are both black (Marcia obviously so and Usha exceptively not) and successful. What's more, they have done well on television—an area not noted for its promotion of black women. But despite their success, both now that if they were white and male they would have done better and both know that they are typical.

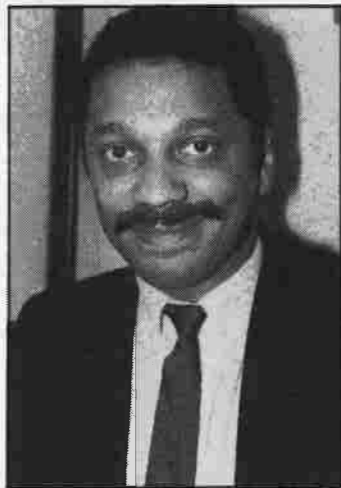
After a successful career in PR, Usha entered journalism seven years ago. She contributed to the BBC and Channel 4, and is now working freelance. But in seven years she applied for 60 staff jobs at the BBC and only got one interview. Despite numerous attempts she cannot get a staff job as a reporter in a major newsroom.

After a two week spell in the newsroom at Channel 4, she was not taken on permanently. Instead, a white colleague who was frequently off sick and whose work was told to improve, got the job. When Usha asked why, she was told that she was a good worker, but that "there was a lot of competition to work there." "How can you deal with something as amorphous as that?" she asks. "I wouldn't have minded if they had told me where I was going wrong, I could have improved then. It made me start to doubt my own ability. Honestly, it's like trying to work your way through a fog."

Marcia is a young sports reporter. She is aware and suspicious of media manipulation and

"I am not a journalist who happens to be black. I am a black person who happens to be a journalist. One black journalist cannot overcome the racism in the media alone. Black self-organisation is the key backed up by white support."

Marc Wadsworth, black journalist with *Thames News*.



Colin Patterson/Hamb Press

yet still concerned to talk. "Things look so bald in print, you can't tenderise your words."

After University she applied to City University to study journalism. She was turned down and spent two years working for nothing on community newspapers. She reapplied and got in. She pushed to get into TV and landed a job with Central as soon as she left.

Her contract at Central was not renewed after one year. "If I was white and male it would have been different. Being female and black people don't know how to take me—especially in a football commentary box. You can imagine."

In her next job, she was sacked. One of the presenters didn't like her scripts, "but he never told me why. I can't have been all that bad because the other presenter was quite happy with my stuff."

For Usha, who could be mistaken for an English person, the racism she faces is rarely overt. Occasionally it is inverted—one employer told her that she didn't look black enough. She has become tired of trying to get in: "after a while you are worn out. But someone has to keep going and fight it." She describes her CV, with its description of her education in English boarding schools in India, as the "kiss of death."

Marcia faces both overt and covert racism. "I am always aware of being black. I think that all black people are. You always know where you stand." But that doesn't lead to a dismissive, defeatist attitude—she describes her present job as "completely fresh." And she got the job because she pushed for it, suggested it and created it. "I got it because I'm me."

Claire Sanders ■

EVENTS

Black history month (October) organised by the Race Equality Policy Group of the ISPU. Talks on black arts, black women, Afro/Asian unity. Contact 01 633-3610.

Tara Arts have collaborated with the Calicut University Little Theatre, Kerala, for a dynamic new production—"Exiles in the Forest." The epic, based on the Mahabharata, is about the pain, chaos, struggles and growth experienced by migrants. It is of course, the story of Asian immigrants in this country, particularly timely since Dewsbury unleashed afresh anti-Asian racism. It is a beautiful synthesis of the spectacular and ordinary though some trimming would have improved it. Stunning performances by Paul Bhattacharjee and Shehnaz Khan. Information 871-1458.

RACE AND SOCIETY is edited and produced by NEW SOCIETY and sponsored by the Commission for Racial Equality.

EYE SORE

These then are some pearls of prejudice from the intrepid Mr. Coleman:

- "Of the hundreds of drug pushers I have seen in New York few have been white. I do not know why, I just know it is so. Just as it is a matter of observation, in the courts and newspaper reports that in a city 60 per cent white, most criminals are black or Hispanic."
- "I know it is a foolish Englishman who will try to navigate the turbulent waters of pan-African history."
- "Only a man who has never been to Africa could conceive of that country as united when it has a hundred languages."
- "The Cubans of 1980 have

- been a criminal pest."
 - "The whole dreadful situation is compounded by the enormous influx of Hispanics and the insistence of these immigrants on their own separate identity."
 - "I found Mr Jessie Jackson devious and self serving and a . . . bloody nuisance to Mondale."
 - "I do not like the way the us assisted in the rapid collapse of the British Empire."
 - "You want to check a few names in a Peckam park and are told, in effect to write it the way they want it or never walk those streets again. The race relations industry which has encouraged such nonsense have a lot to answer for."
- Yasmin Alibhai



The drawing shows an amiably incredulous chunky face. It is Terry Coleman, the Guardian's common man (as common as filofax) and anti-iconoclast all in one. And he has a problem. He cannot understand non-white people. He *does* try. Clumsily stumbling into these dark(!) areas, signing a plastic naivety, he reduces "controversial" remarks which turn out to echo the ignorant social attitudes of the *Sun*, in (lightly) bigger words.