

rates of tax above these levels are best enough: 10 per cent on lifetime and 7.5 per cent on inheritances (provided the donor dies within three years) to a maximum of 75 per cent on transfers exceeding £2 million. In addition to these concessions the Bill included a change which, because of its generosity, was introduced very quietly. The change was announced in the October 1977 budget of Harold Lever's crusade to help firms by giving them special exemption from CTT. Businesses could already claim a 30 per cent discount on the value of their assets for calculating CTT, and this was to be increased to 50 per cent. Additional reliefs were to be limited to transfers of up to £500,000. No further change was made of the proposal in the budget statement, but when it fed back to the Finance Bill the upper limit disappeared—a fact of which MPs arguing on the bill were apparently un-

aware. The cost of the concessions already announced was estimated at £65 million in 1979 and £100 million in a full year. It only raised £320 million in 1977-78 (less than 1.5 per cent of all taxes). The Inland Revenue are expected to give the additional cost of abandoning the upper limit for transfers, which apparently dropped for administrative reasons. But they argue that since few firms are likely to die leaving firms worth more than half a million (and such people will have everything to live for) the effect on some firms and individuals will be relatively small. Nevertheless, the effect on some firms and individuals will be substantial: Mervyn King has calculated that a small firm worth just over a million would have been liable to tax 10 per cent on transfer last year. This year a firm will have to be worth three times that amount to become liable to tax at that modest rate.

## Housing Sale costs

WHEN MARKS writes: Sales of council houses by local authorities more than doubled last year. And a growing number are not sold to the sitting tenant—a trend which can only reinforce the harmful social sequences identified by opponents of council policies. Provisional figures for 1977 show a total of 12,600 sales by local authorities as against a 1976 total of 5,793. Sales in its turn represented a doubling of the 1975 total of 2,723. We are, however, a long way from the 1972 figure of 378. The major research to date on the long-term impact of council sales has been conducted at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham. Guy Forrest, a research fellow at the centre, describes the "typical" purchaser as "a long-established tenant, in middle age, with a fairly large family growing up, earning only average wages, in a skilled manual

# Race and the census

Joanna Mack

The next census, in 1981, will ask a specific question on ethnic origins. The government census office—the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys—had drawn up a question by the beginning of this year. But criticisms of the form of the question (see *NEW SOCIETY*, 5 January) have led to a re-thinking of the approach. This week the census office published three new versions of a "race" question which are now being tested (*OPCS Monitor*, CEN 78/4, OPCS, St Catherine's House, 10 Kingsway, London WC2, free). One version, probably the best of the three, is shown here. People are asked whether they belong to or are descended from eleven specified ethnic groups. If they are, they must identify which of these groups. If they are of mixed descent there is provision for identifying descent from these eleven groups, but none for integration between these groups and the English, Welsh, Scots and Irish majority.

A second version separates people of "European race" from "non-European race" and then asks each to identify which "ethnic group" they are descended from. An English, Welsh, Scots or Irish group is included among the European ethnic groups along with as in the first question, Italian, Greek/Greek Cypriot, Turkish/Turkish Cypriot, Polish and an other and mixed European descent category. The non-European groups are the same as in the first question with a category for people of other non-European and mixed non-European descent. There is a further part for people of "mixed European and non-European racial descent."

The third version has an introductory filter as in the first version. It asks if a person is descended from the following ethnic groups: West Indian, African, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Those who are have to identify which of these

groups. There is no allowance for those of mixed descent. This mere head-counting of certain non-white groups is possibly dangerous, offensive and of no use for formulating policies to counter the disadvantages faced by ethnic minorities.

The first two versions, however, answer a number of the criticisms levelled at the census office's original question. This asked people to identify the "race or ethnic group" to which they "belong" or are "descended"—not necessarily the same thing at all. The groups offered included an absurd "white" category and no European ethnic minorities, even though any justifiable case that can be made for identifying non-European minorities applies equally to, say, Greek Cypriots.

But though these criticisms have been met in one or other of the versions, faults remain. Identifying, as in the second version, a European versus a non-European race is highly questionable. It is certainly arguable whether there is any such thing as a clearly identifiable European race and if so which groups are included. It is dubious practice for an official government publication to back this belief in a European race.

The version below conveys the impression that the ethnic groups selected are somehow different and odd. Society is made up of ethnic groups and everyone is affected. The census question needs to reflect this, by making everyone identify their ethnic group and not just a selected few. A question asking people to identify the ethnic group from which they are descended and including an English, Welsh, Scots and Irish category along with other ethnic groups would do this.

The actual ethnic groups listed need to be more precise and more comprehensive than the census office's latest categories, improved though they are. African is too broad a category, covering many identifiable groups with different needs. There needs to be at least a West African group separated from another African group. African Asians (presumably intended by the census office to go into one of the Asian categories) should be listed separately as their needs are distinct.

**10 Ethnic group**

Does the person belong to, or is he or she descended (or partly descended) from any of the following ethnic groups?

<p>African</p> <p>Arab</p> <p>Bangladeshi</p> <p>Chinese</p> <p>Greek/Greek Cypriot</p> <p>Indian</p>	<p>Italian</p> <p>Pakistani</p> <p>Polish</p> <p>Turkish/Turkish Cypriot</p> <p>West Indian</p>
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If 'YES' please tick the appropriate box(es) →

<p>1 <input type="checkbox"/> African</p> <p>2 <input type="checkbox"/> Arab</p> <p>3 <input type="checkbox"/> Bangladeshi</p> <p>4 <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese</p> <p>5 <input type="checkbox"/> Greek/Greek Cypriot</p> <p>6 <input type="checkbox"/> Indian</p>	<p>7 <input type="checkbox"/> Italian</p> <p>8 <input type="checkbox"/> Pakistani</p> <p>9 <input type="checkbox"/> Polish</p> <p>10 <input type="checkbox"/> Turkish/Turkish Cypriot</p> <p>11 <input type="checkbox"/> West Indian</p>
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**If of MIXED DESCENT**

If the person is only partly descended from any group, please tick the group(s) the person is partly descended from and ALSO TICK THE BOX FOR MIXED DESCENT →

Mixed descent