

OBSERVATIONS

ld, and say, 'Oh don't read that; oh, k at the weather!' They mean to help t, but they can't really relate to you in way members of the group can." The Philadelphia group meets monthly, ugh Deborah Spungen also gets a lot of one calls. Some of the parents are the d core group, who are well beyond the is but still like to come. Others need p until the trial is over, and may then need to come again. Yet others will p in from time to time. Any close reons of the murdered child can come: thers and sisters can be as badly affected parents. At the meeting, they tell their ividual stories. Those present, who often ik that no one else could have under- anything as awful as they have, realise listening to others that this is simply so.

There are two times in particular when ents need support. One is at holiday sons; the other is during the trial. Holidays are a very bad time," says borah Spungen, "and we help the family face this. Last Christmas, the meeting grew our house: people were sitting on stairs. And each of us who had gone ough it explained what we had done in erent years and whether it had worked not. All I said was that when the meet- was over, we were going to a Christmas ty. At any time in the last six years, e Nancy's death, we could not have ceived doing this. But we were now e to put it behind us."

As far as the trial itself, and the law criminal justice is concerned, parents are stly ignorant of all this and too bewil- ed and confused to know what to do. ng involved with legal matters interferes h their natural mourning, particularly if ural is postponed. Few are aware there ompensation for the victims of a crime. e Spungens did not know, for instance, t they were entitled to some money to- rds the funeral. The group helps new- ners with such information and retains a al adviser, who will liaise with any dis- t attorney outside the state. Group members themselves are, sadly, erts in the pitfalls a trial can bring. ents are encouraged to go to other rder trials before the one concerning m takes place. And they are warned that many cases—unless a small child who completely innocent has been murdered he defending lawyer may well attack the racter of the victim, the way they ked, how their behaviour "caused" it to open. Similar tactics, in fact, to those d in rape cases.

The group is also heavily involved in at they call a "court accompanying pro- mme." This means that they go along to trial to support the victim's family, pite their own stirred-up feelings. "I e not been through a trial myself," says borah Spungen (Sid Vicious died from overdose before it took place), "but I a terrible headache when I go to one. I

just sit holding a parent's hands or putting my arms around them." In Philadelphia, all those concerned in a trial stand together in the hallway. The family of the victim are next to all the witnesses for the defence and can find this very intimidating.

Parents may sometimes feel unable to cope with going to the trial, although they are encouraged to do so. In any case, members of the group go. "The victim's side could be empty, while the defendant could have a huge family around them," says Deborah Spungen. "It's rather like the different halves of the church at a wedding. So we are there to represent the victim."

There are, of course, many cases where a suspect is never apprehended or where there is insufficient evidence for an arrest. This needs to be talked out, and there is often a lot of anger in the Philadelphia group. This is encouraged as being not only therapeutic, but also leading to action—particularly over parole.

Though the death penalty exists in Pennsylvania, Deborah Spungen says that comparatively few in the group say they want the murderer to die. "They are too conscious of death, that their own child will never see a nice spring day, or sit down to

Nancy Spungen—at 14 months and 19 years



a meal with them. What really appals them is that the murderer could soon return to society, as so often happens with early parole."

Many parents do not realise they have the right to be involved with parole meetings, and the group encourages members to keep in touch with the prosecuting office. In one case, a man sentenced for 20 years applied for parole after eight. The parents concerned flew down to California and the parole was turned down. An official there said in surprise that he never knew a parent who had cared enough to come along. No one there had thought to tell them that they could.

But the drawn-out trauma tells. More than half, the marriages fail where a child has been murdered. And the remaining brother(s) or sister(s) are emotionally affected, too. The Spungens' son at college stopped working for exams or socialising, feeling everything to be pointless. Another woman kept her remaining small son protectively at home, not letting him go to school for three years.

The Spungens had a particular problem, with such a sensational murder. In her book, *And I Don't Want to Live this Life* (published last week by Corgi, £5.95), Deborah Spungen recalls the reporters camped out round the home; the TV skit on "Nauseating Nancy." She went to a therapist for some extra support a year or so after Nancy's death, explaining that she still kept thinking of her. The therapist told her to stop at once. Others in the group have received similar advice from therapists, psychiatrists and psychologists. Untrained in dealing with violent death, many of these do not understand how parents feel, how they *cannot* close the door on their thoughts.

"It's only appropriate that grieving parents think of their child," says Deborah Spungen. "We tell them that there are no rules with us, no 'shoulds.' One member had asked a therapist, 'Should I feel this way eight years after my daughter died?' and was told that no, she shouldn't. Another went to the cemetery for a few minutes each day and her therapist told her not to. And we said to her, 'If you need that five minutes, do it. And maybe it will take a year, or five years, before you feel you can stop.' I don't think the psychiatric community understands this. They say, 'Get back to your life,' and it may not be right for the present. They need more insight into the mind of a parent of a murdered child."

Aware of this, many often refer patients to the group and are allowed to come along themselves as observers. "It's not a grief club," says Deborah Spungen. "We do laugh at the absurdities of things and there is a great deal of affection, a special bond between us. Sometimes, though, parents say they don't want to live. They ask us how we do it. I can only say we have learned to put our life back together as best as we can."

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THE CULTURE CLASH IN BRADFORD

DAVID SELBOURNE

One man's halal meat is another man's provocation. Who is right in this tussle over race relations policy?

HE is a provincial middle-school headmaster, bearded and intense, a Chekhovian figure. He is pale and grows agitated while speaking. "I'm a working class intellectual. I left school at 15. I'm terribly working class. My mother had eleven children." Here are the aroma and sounds of schooldays; bells ringing, chalk, warmth, bodies. "I'm angry, Mr Selbourne," he says. He is the butt of what he calls Bradford's "race lobby." Ray Honeyford is 50, his beard greying; a subscriber (and contributor) to the conservative *Salisbury Review*; brought up as a Catholic in the Ardwick district of Manchester, and in serious trouble.

It is a grey spring morning, in what used to be J. B. Priestley's West Riding. There are now 27 mosques and perhaps 40,000 Moslems in the city. The air is heavy-laden with imprecations. Municipal directives on racism, culture, religion and language have divided Bradford's teachers; with nerves straining to breaking point over disciplinary moves

against them, the schools turned into a battlefield. Out in the city there are acres of abandoned Gothic mills, doomed and derelict; 50,000 jobs have been lost in Bradford textiles since the early 1960s. Once great palaces of worsted and weaving, of wealth and hard labour, they are now awaiting demolition, or the Day of Judgment. Most are now silent blackened ruins; with 30,000 unemployed, 19.2 per cent of the adult male population, and the city landscape ravaged. "Fiercely democratic" (and "entirely without charm"), Priestley called it in 1933, in his *English Journey*. It was the birthplace in 1893 of the Independent Labour Party; today, a descendant of one of the ILP's founding members is a leading council Tory.

Recently, Imam-led Punjabis and Kashmiris—once recruited *en masse* into textiles—marched for *halal*-meat school dinners, and celebrated the city council's 59-15 vote in favour of this Moslem version of kosher with hosannas to Allah. As cuts, and

Above: Children at Whetley Lane school, Bradford

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more cuts, impoverish municipal provision, the National Front runs in its own gutters, with street attacks and school-gate leaflets, while the local political influence of Bradford's Council for Mosques is growing.

Teachers like Ray Honeyford at Drummond Middle are not amused. Caught up in a clash of aims, he is now stridently denounced for his resistance to Bradford's education policy as a "racist." The city fathers—hitherto bipartisan in a Labour/Tory hung council, and with a "high profile" policy on race relations—have seen their imperative as meeting the special cultural needs of some 20,000 "ethnic minority children," most of whom speak a language other than English at home. Their critics accuse them of sacrificing a common school curriculum for all pupils to the obscurantist demands of Bradford's Moslem elders.

Yet the city education managers, seeking to "give parity of esteem to Islam," will disconcertingly tell you, though not for direct attribution, that much of the conflict has been "stage-managed." It is the end result, says Mike Whittaker—the Policies Development Officer for Educational Services, and ex-Trinity College, Oxford—of what began as "fear-

Almighty God, the Compassionate, the Merciful"—"and the destruction of a common education system." That would be what he calls the "Catholic solution." (Liverpool, for example, with an old history of Orange and Green religious rivalry, has many separate Catholic schools.) To avoid it, if I understand him, *halal* meat has been thrown to the Moslem lions; but Honeyford's scalp is wanted also.

Deeper into this Bradford bazaar, you will find that a founder member of the militant Asian Youth Movement, Marsha Singh, has been given a job in the education department, advising headmasters on how to combat racism; and that the Council for Mosques is doing its own British bit to keep the race relations show on the road, as the local economy founders. "I've never been bought by anyone," says Labour councillor Mohammed Ajeeb, one of the Asian community's leading political brokers, whose office wall at the Council for Mosques is covered with Koranic injunctions. "But I don't want separatism in any form. It's not on. People can't have it even if they want it. What we want is accommodation of our cultural needs, especially in the education system." He is speaking the same language as Whittaker; with a different accent.

But it is on Ray Honeyford's head ("I began life as a marxist, but for me Popper finished marxism"), and on the rest of Bradford's teachers, that these political deals have been loaded. In charge of a school where "86 per cent of the children have their origins in the Indian subcontinent," Honeyford has let off steam in the *Salisbury Review*, the *Times Educational Supplement* and the local press; "crossing the Rubicon," says Whittaker, to a point where the sack beckons for his too-public opinions. The papal bulls from Provincial House, the headquarters of the education department, and planners' edicts on equal educational opportunity, multi-cultural education, mother-tongue teaching, in-service "race awareness" training, and the monitoring and reporting of racist behaviour have driven Honeyford into a frenzy.

For him, it is not the job of schools to preserve and transmit "immigrant" culture. Those who think otherwise, he argues, his forehead shining, are suffering from a "neurotic obsession" about race relations, an obsession which is a Freudian compensation for their own racism. It is the work of "post-imperial liberal guilt," "political opportunism," "tokenism" and "harmful colour-consciousness."

English, he says in a Mancunian accent, is "dying in my playground." It is the white children in his school—now called "indigenous" in local official parlance—who are the ethnic minority; and "only 10 per cent of the Asian children put their hands up when I ask a class how many are British." In the two years since the acceleration of Bradford's new multi-cultural initiatives in education, the standards of attainment in English have fallen among Asian school-leavers. According to Provincial House figures, 45 per cent left school in 1983 without any English qualification; a statistic which now begins to threaten the director of education.

Off stage, in the distance, as I talk to Honeyford at Drummond Middle, I can hear *The Wombles of Wimbledon* being sung in chorus. On his desk are education department regulations permitting an Imam to lead the Jumma school prayers on Fridays, and Moslem girls to wear "a churidar-pyjama instead of a swimsuit in swimming lessons." Honeyford ("I'm not a member of any party and I'm not a racist"), hounded, is up against an "officially sanctioned and publicly funded municipal steam-

roller. Before that, we were getting on very nicely."

He quotes Gramsci at me: children must acquire the means to "put their baggage in order." He means that "English language is the key to every child's future, Asian and non-Asian, in Britain." The true "correcting of racial disadvantage" must begin with "the mastery of English."

No, say his critics in Bradford, he is "forcing Asian children to accept the majority culture." "Good English," they say, closing in on him, "is a camouflage. Racism is the problem. If there's racism, it will be there, however well an Asian speaks the language." Undaunted, Honeyford has insisted fervently that "the place for the preservation of a minority culture is outside the school, not in it," and that "the price to be paid for emigration to Britain is the pain of change and adaptation."

To local militants, like Riaz Shahid of the Moslem Parents' Association, this is code for "cultural genocide." But then Shahid wants to ban from Bradford schools "all extra-academic activities conflicting with the tenets of Faith and forbidden in Islam." Honeyford is pallid with exasperation about absenteeism. He calls it "comings and goings to the sub-continent," when children are "whisked away at particularly sensitive moments in their progress." And many Moslem girls at puberty disappear from the school rolls altogether. "How do we implement the principle of sexual equality," he asks in desperation, "when so many Asian parents don't think that education is important for their daughters?"

Yet in the *Salisbury Review* he himself referred to "half-educated Sikhs" and "Negroes" (there are very few Afro-Caribbeans in Bradford). "Why use such language?" I asked him. "Why not? I have anger in me," he answered.

"Disgraceful," says Phil Beeley, the Labour leader of the city council. "Distasteful," says Peter Gilmour, the Tory chairman of the education committee, and himself under a cloud as bipartisanism staggers. "Unleashing hatred and undermining the culture of our children," says Councillor Ajeeb. "Flouting the policy of the council," say Whittaker and Marsha Singh. Even the National Union of Teachers has called for Honeyford's resignation. "They know their arguments are unsound," replies Honeyford, himself cornered, "and they can't bear to be told it. If you don't accept their 'race-speak,' you're the enemy, or a racist." Come back Arnold, come back Carlyle, come back Ruskin—even Hoggart—and give your verdicts on Bradford's tribulations.

"We had to override teachers' objections," Mike Whittaker told me in a pub around the corner from Provincial House. "I'm a municipal hatchet-man, not part of the race relations industry. We couldn't allow them to run their schools as they see fit. The smack of firm government," he says, laughing, "has ruffled their feathers."

On Moslem parental rights, on Moslem sensibilities, on racist behaviour, Whittaker says, "We told the teachers, 'You will, you must, you have to, or face disciplinary proceedings, like any other council employee or servant.' We're not just paying their salaries and ferrying exercise books and chalk around the city." He describes Bradford's race relations policies as "imposed from the top, bipartisan, consumer-led and open-ended"; and a "justification for local government" into the bargain; and there'll be "no retreat," he says, as the tempo quickens.

In Durham Road, white working class mothers gather in their houses to give battle in defence of Honeyford, and the outrages he has com-



Moslem women outside Bradford town hall

mitted against municipal Islam—a mutant form of the municipal socialism of the old days. Pauline Sawyer, a non-teaching assistant at the Lilycroft First School, is in the parlour clutching yet another draft letter to the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*. She says she was "booed out of the Drummond school hall"—"they were all talking Asian, really aerated"—at a recent meeting to discuss the current shemozzles. Liz Green, a dinner lady in blue eyeshadow, and a last-time Tory voter ("but the Tories are no better than Labour with all these Asian voters"), calls it a "disgusting situation."

"We've needed someone to speak for us for a long time," Liz Green says. "Now Mr Honeyford's done it. If they really sack him, there'll be uproar. Can we take them to the race relations, that's the question. The Asian girls and boys, with all this reporting, say to the whites, 'I'll have you for racial,' and now our kids can't answer." The decent terrace house swells with indignation.

"We're not racials," say the voices in chorus. "It's inciting us to be racial. We all want to get on and live together. Colour doesn't come into it. It's the balance. It shouldn't have gone over 50-50. It's 90 per cent at Drummond." Nineteen schools in the city of Bradford have more than 70 per cent of "bilingual" children.

inner ladies serving dal meat



ing a plume of smoke rising over the city." Whittaker is described with asperity by Honeyford as "an eminence grise, who has never set foot in any of my classrooms"; Whittaker describes himself as "one of nature's Tories who votes Labour."

"For 25 years," he says briskly, pushing the bridge of his glasses back into place with an index finger, "the local authority could get away with letting sleeping Asians lie. Racism was a taboo subject. At the time of the riots in Toxteth, there was panic, fear and ignorance in Bradford. No one knew what was going on in the streets, no one knew who in the community to turn to. There were no institutional bridges, no structures to negotiate with. Now we can cope with Moslem demands."

"We have trained people to shout, provided they shout acceptable slogans," says Whittaker, sounding like a good district officer in darkest India, several upper middle class cuts of the cane above the *Jewel in the Crown's* Merrick. What slogans? "*Halal* meat, mother-tongue teaching. The issues where we can deliver."

And if you concede them, I ask, bowling a full toss, can you head off the agitators? "Yes," he says, swiping it to the boundary, "the alternative is separate Moslem schools"—demanded by the Moslem Parents' Association "in the name of



Right: Evening class learning the Koran at a Bradford mosque
Opposite, below: Teacher talks to Asian father at Whetley Lane school

You can hear the tide of Islam crashing down here, and flowing through these terrace houses. "It's one demand after another," says Pauline Sawyer. "They go to the mosque in the evening, and that should be enough for them. They should leave it out of the schools."

"They don't even want *halal*," says Liz Green, who, as a dinner lady, is in the front line of it. "They love fish and chips, you should see them look at it. They want to eat our food, so why shouldn't they, if they want to? It's the old men from the mosque. They say we have no morals in England, won't let them mix or go dancing. It's insulting."

Mrs Billadeau, a home help, says, "Our Scott hasn't got a clue. He's eight. He's at Whetley Lane, full of Asians, and he came home the other day, and asks me, 'Who were Mary and Jesus?' I don't go to church, but I'm having to learn him myself, it's shocking. They all know about Diwali [the Hindu festival], but what do they know about Christmas, that's what I'm saying."

Up the Great Horton Road, you pass in succession the Shimla Sweet House and Take-Away (at new VAT-added prices), the Bank of Baroda and the Shearbridge, a Tetley boozier with its sign a florid drinker, quaffing his Anglo-Saxon ale in riding pink and monocle. The passers-by in the cold, blustery rain are mostly Asian. A few yards up, at the junction with Back Laisteridge Lane, "ACID IS SUPER" is spray-painted on a salami manufacturers' street-corner wall. Here, the skyline is of the derelict hulks of mills; and around you are the dour ruined terraces, stuck with Urdu posters.

In 1933, Priestley, looking back to 1914, lamented

how "miles of semi-detached villas had been built where once I rolled among the gigantic buttercups and daisies." Today, many of these villas are themselves condemned housing. Fifty years on from his journey, the flora and fauna of these rundown streets is Asian. The buttercups have become kebabs and the daisies chapatis, in an urban wilderness as bleak as anything in Britain.

So, too, as the local economy goes under, the welfare network of public and voluntary provision, overlapping with and woven into the education sector, spreads across the city to replace the old world of production. It is a labyrinth of casework agencies, family service units, and neighbourhood advice centres; a jungle of mutual dependencies between the providers and their clients, which is known as the welfare system. And that in a local culture proud of its working class traditions of self-reliance.

The Bradford law centre works for Asian tenants and against rack-renting Asian landlords. Forty-four Council for Mosques' "advice workers," funded by the MSC, are available at local mosques to give advice on "where to go for welfare benefits, housing, education, social services, nationality and immigration, etcetera." The social services and a dozen other agencies toil in the same thankless vineyard: of urban dereliction, tangled welfare regulation, jesuitical immigration rules, fuel debts, marital problems and slowly rising unemployment.

Yasmin Rifat, the young Pakistani advice worker at the Citizen's Advice Bureau, a former nurse, speaks English with a broad Yorkshire accent. "My grandad is buried in Newcastle," she says.



David Selbourne teaches at Ruskin. His new book, *Against Socialist Illusion: a radical argument*, will be published by Macmillan in September

"My dad is a textile worker in Huddersfield and my mother was 13 when she married." Her beat is "housing benefits, immigration, matrimonial, and unfair dismissals."

Her friend, Anne Perkins, a Bradford social worker, speaks a modest Urdu and is today hot under the collar about the fostering of two Asians in a "white home," because "they will lose their culture." She claims to be "teaching them the language they have lost." Across the city, Ray Honeyford, pursued by what he calls "diktats," writes to the *TES* denouncing as the "worst kind of patronising tokenism" attempts to "teach an immigrant culture by those"—like Anne Perkins—"manifestly not part of that culture."

But it is all a propping up, and patching up, and covering over of the true lineaments of things; less a welfare state than a welfare civil society, in which the multi-racial struggles of the clients of the state and their "expert" advisers—against everything from electricity disconnection to deportation—have become a parody of productive effort.

In the decay of the inner city, a gibe is made or a job is lost, and the act is monitored and the statistic collected. The fine art of "ethnic head-counting," authorised by Bradford's post-Raj planners, can even tell you the proportion of bacon-eating Hindu children (67.6 per cent), and how many young Sikhs eat chicken (92.6 per cent). This is "mandatory" toleration and "parity of esteem," expressed in mathematics.

The city council elections take place next week. The hidden revolt against bipartisanship on race is growing; it may well be finished after the votes have been counted. The political clout of the Asian voter, the fear of a white working class backlash against the wetter Tories, and the Friedmanite issue of the "rights of Moslem parents," have between them let loose several multi-coloured cats among the Conservative pigeons. And, behind the Labour scenes, the ranks of councillors—some much less "progressive" than their Tory opposite numbers—have their own domestic problems. "When in Rome," the Labour mayor, Norman Free, told the Moslems in the "great debate" on *halal*, "do as the Romans, or pay the difference." But most of the other Labour councillors want Honeyford's removal.

Meanwhile, the race planners continue to lean over backwards on ethnic issues, only to get further up people's noses. It is a manoeuvre worthy of Tantric yoga. In pursuit of what they think is enlightened self-interest, they are in fact getting tough with the (white) natives, while endorsing the Asian community's control over its own younger generation. Dafter still, they are accommodating Islamic reaction—hostile to coeducation, sex education, women's emancipation, "Christianisation," mixed drama, mixed swimming and mixed dancing—in the name of "good race relations"; and even, some of them, in the name of "socialist" progress.

But this is the politics not of the 19th century Bradford Nonconformist or the Victorian liberal merchant. It is the Islam of north Pakistani villages which has come to Bradford, in its darkest hours of economic failure. Indeed, it is the village Islam of a quarter of a century ago which Bradford's Imams are trying to hang on to, remembered from the days of the exodus to the West Riding.

The planners plough on, though increasingly uneasy. "Education in Bradford," say Bradford's administrators, "is working at the frontiers of experience and knowledge." It looks as if the demand for Moslem girls to wear their clothes in the showers has really got them flummoxed.