Report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain: UK, North American and Continental European perspectives

Michael Banton , Will Kymlicka & Charles Westin

Review symposium

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It is a sad reflection on the materialism of Western culture that the turn of the millennium was marked more by fears of computer failures than by public debate about the implications of the information age. Similarly, the year 2000 has seen renewed public concern over immigration and asylum claimants with almost no attention being given to the contours of the multi-ethnic societies that represent the present and future reality for all of Europe and North America. The report of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, supported by the Runnymede Trust, is an important exception to this generalisation and JEMS is therefore very pleased to include three views on this landmark publication.

   The first is by the distinguished sociologist Michael Banton whose work will be well known to readers of these pages. Professor Banton was director of the then Social Science Research Council's Research Unit on Ethnic Relations in the 1970s when this report's predecessor, *Colour and Citizenship*, was a focal point for public debate on how Britain should respond to the presence of new citizens from the old empire. The second contribution is by Professor Will Kymlicka from Queen's University, Ontario, Canada. Will Kymlicka is, like the chairman of the Commission (Lord Parekh), a political philosopher but he is also a leading commentator on the principles involved in managing multi-ethnic societies. For many observers Canada and Australia represent the most advanced examples of how multi-ethnic societies can be made to work. In European terms, apart from Britain, the closest examples are perhaps Sweden and the Netherlands so it is highly appropriate that the third contributor should be Professor Charles Westin, director of the Centre for Research in International Migration and Ethnic Relations at the University of Stockholm.

   In Continental Europe the issues with which this report are concerned are rising higher and higher on domestic political agendas. This has prompted a number of official responses but very few countries have produced independent evaluations and to that extent the present report may be an example for others to follow. It is particularly significant, for example, that the Runnymede Commission contains so many commentators and thinkers drawn from the Asian, African and Caribbean British communities whose experiences lie at the heart of the relevant issues. The final contribution to this symposium is a response from the chairperson, Bhikhu Parekh, commission member Professor Stuart Hall and its academic advisor, Professor Tariq Modood. The report deserves a wide-

ranging public debate with the same level of commitment and thought that these comments and replies so clearly reveal.

Malcolm Cross

A UK perspective

By Michael Banton

In 1994 the Runnymede Trust organised a conference to air its proposal for a Commission on Multi-Ethnic Britain. The 1969 report *Colour and Citizenship* had proven very influential; its success inspired the Trust's belief that the time had come to reconsider the issues 'in order to create a new public philosophy for the twenty-first century'. That was to aim high, because it is necessary to expose the inadequacies of the prevailing philosophy before a new one can take hold, and this is work for intellectual heavyweights.

Colour and Citizenship was written, basically, by two men, Jim Rose and Nicholas Deakin, addressing themselves to readers who had some knowledge of public policy. The Commission, in contrast, had to bring together a more diverse body and to address a wider audience. Its first chairman said that they had set out to create a team 'whose report would carry conviction and would be regarded as authoritative by government and by the leaders of various sections in our society and at the same time, a commission which the grass roots in the country would feel knew about and respected their own views'. There were tensions, which had not arisen for *Colour and Citizenship*, between three objectives: making proposals that would be seen as authoritative, serving as a voice for individuals and groups, and finding a better way in which to define the issues.

Collective action, such as the agreeing of a commission report, depends upon the prioritising of objectives. The difficulties of doing so and of building a team may have had something to do with the Commission's early loss of its chairman, eight of its members and its chief administrator. A political philosopher, Bhikhu Parekh – who is now Lord Parekh – came in as the new chair, and, with new members, the Commission was expanded. Twenty-two individuals, all eminent in their fields, gave of their time and talent. Bhikhu Parekh surely deserves great credit for holding the enterprise together and ensuring the intellectual coherence of its report

The report seeks to exercise political influence by addressing the government in its own language, while reinforcing its message by publicising the views and complaints of groups and individuals up and down the country. To persuade others to act on their recommendations the commissioners have summoned up a rhetoric which reflects the sentiments of the present time and does not rely on slogans that have lost their bite. The recommendations are numerous (at least 138, depending on how the multiples are counted). Inevitably, they are statements about what other people should do, and will therefore evoke correspond-

ing resistance. Some are very demanding, like the recommendations that the UK should formally declare itself a multicultural state, and that the government should establish both an Equality Commission and a Human Rights Commission. These recommendations run the risk of sounding like the kind of demand that used to be disparaged as 'jobs for the boys!'. To overcome the expected resistance and achieve its aim of being authoritative, the Commission had to find a way of invoking shared values and mobilising enthusiasm.

The first obstacle lay in its title. Recognising that there are few votes in the slogan 'a multi-ethnic Britain', the Commission bypassed it: 'To avoid misunderstanding, the term ethnic is seldom used in this report'. Equally, if for other reasons, 'The terms "minority" and "majority" are not used in this report except in quotations from others', while 'integration' is said to be even more misleading than 'ethnic group'. On the other hand, the reader is told that 'The term race is of essential importance, since it alludes to racism'; indeed, it cannot be avoided, but for different reasons that I mention in the next paragraph. To elaborate a better philosophy it will also be necessary in the coming years to go further and be equally critical of the facile use of other words, including 'community' (as Gerd Baumann has demonstrated). Yet the process of conceptual deconstruction has to stop somewhere and, as the Commission says, the invention of a wholly new vocabulary would be no help. Being unrelated to the idioms of everyday life, it could not be a vehicle of meaningful dialogue. For myself, I believe that the Commission could have contributed more to a new philosophy while still communicating with a wider public had it brought Chapter 7 'Building a Human Rights Culture' to the very beginning, and shown how ideas of human rights have been built into English and Scottish law over the centuries. The new Human Rights Act is momentous in enabling so many more people to secure their rights but its content is not novel. Everything the Commission wants could be expressed as proposing better means for the fulfilment of universal rights.

Concepts belong in families. An approach from human rights needs to differentiate between behaviour on lawful and unlawful grounds. Race takes a place as an unlawful ground alongside sex, colour, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, property, birth or other status. Together with racial grounds go racial discrimination, racial disadvantage, racial prejudice, racial segregation, and so on. This approach has to recognise that social and psychological phenomena related to racial differentiation vary in time and place, and in the paths by which they are transmitted between generations. The Commission's treatment of this variable as producing different 'racisms' neglects the family in which the concept belongs. 'Racism' can be used to identify a set of phenomena in parallel with sexism, age-ism, species-ism, and other 'isms', but if 'racism' is to be used it should be partnered by a discussion of 'anti-racism' and there should be a search for methods of evaluating anti-racist measures. It is important not to imply that racism is so ingrained that it cannot be overcome. Chapter 5 signally fails on this score, and it weakens the Commission's case.

The report is divided into three parts. One: seven chapters on 'A Vision for Britain'. Two: nine chapters on 'Issues and Institutions'. Three: four chapters on 'Strategies of Change'. Parts Two and Three set out and explain the recommendations, but the chances of a favourable reception for the report as a whole depend to a significant degree upon the rationale elaborated in Part One.

The vision is of a multi-national state in which the cultural distinctiveness of

Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland is accorded greater respect. Groups resulting from recent immigration are to benefit from this so that the state is to be seen as a community of communities (a notion borrowed from a commission established by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research which recommends that British Jews should see themselves as an ethnic group). Policy is to be guided by three central concepts: equality, diversity and cohesion. This formulation may be compared with Norway's highlighting of the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity; Sweden favours equality, freedom of choice and co-operation, and France, of course, stays with *liberté, égalité et fraternité*. Policy formulations, it seems have to be trinitarian and it is the third term that is the most problematic.

The Commission wants people to revise their national self-conceptions, but I will probably not be the only reader to find the use of oppositions (like static/dynamic, intolerant/cosmopolitan, fearful/generous, insular/internationalist… etc.) and the later opposition of a closed and an open view of the other, as much too specious a way of encouraging this. Other readers may find this mode of approach persuasive for, after all, it is an empirical issue whether or not it, and the pathos of some of the quotations, generate meaningful dialogue.

The two chief ways of improving the performance of the main institutions considered in Part Two are ethnic monitoring and the use made of the resulting information by inspection services. Here the Commission may have missed a trick, because readers might be more ready to support the proposals were they to take pride in the knowledge that in these two respects Britain has gone farther than any other country. In recommending that the present monitoring arrangements be extended to the remaining functions of the criminal justice system, the Commission knocks at an open door since the key decisions have already been taken. It is interesting to learn from the truly excellent chapter on education that the requisite monitoring and reinforcement from the inspection services, despite all the talk in educational circles, have made less progress here than in the criminal justice system. The chapter on health is the one in which the advocacy of treating people equally but differently is most apposite. The Commission calls for the monitoring by ethnic origin, language and religion of patients and of children receiving social welfare services, and for the monitoring by ethnic origin of the employees of primary care trusts. The monitoring of ethnic origin in government service and in the armed forces is well advanced. The Home Secretary has issued to institutions responsible to him precise targets for recruitment, and progress in implementation is to be checked by the inspection services. The Commission recommends that parliament place a statutory duty on all employers to devise employment equity plans that are to include the monitoring of recruitment and promotion of staff.

Some other institutions discussed in this part – arts, media and sport, immigration and asylum, politics and representation, religion and belief – cannot be monitored in the same way (apart from representation on official bodies, a matter which is already in hand). The Commission may have attempted to develop a common view on what religious bodies might contribute to a community of communities but failed to agree, because this chapter does not go beyond recommending the establishment of a commission on the role of religion in the life of a multi-faith society. If Britain is to see itself as a community of communities, self-definition as either a religious community or an ethnic com-

munity (or an overlap between the two) will be an important issue for some individuals and groups.

The concern with effective monitoring is carried through into Part Three, which identifies ways in which governmental action might be better co-ordinated. The practice of target-setting (followed by inspection) might be extended to more institutions, governmental responsibilities might be better specified, public consultation improved, and new commissions created. These recommendations would require much new legislation but some will be needed in any case in order to bring the existing law on race and sex discrimination into a new framework adapted to European Union requirements. The practical recommendations are persuasive on their own merits and, taken separately, do not really need the rhetoric of Part One. Nor do they try to institutionalise the notion of separate communities any more than the present acceptance that it is good practice for official bodies to be representative and to consult with those who can provide more specialised advice on the interests of any section of the national population. *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* will attract well-disposed readers because in Britain, as in many European countries, the promotion of racial equality is a genuine public concern. It may well prove as influential as *Colour and Citizenship*. As a book, it succeeds as well as any could in attaining its three disparate objectives. Politicians and officials will take its proposals seriously. People at the 'grass roots' can feel that the Commission has listened to them. Moreover, it takes us a little further towards a new public philosophy.

A North American view

By Will Kymlicka

The task of transforming societies premised on myths of cultural homogeneity and racial superiority into societies that respect equality and diversity is not an easy one, and the 120 recommendations in this report give some sense of the scope of the challenge. The report envisages widespread reforms in virtually every major institution of British society: the schools, police and courts, health care, media, the arts, the civil service, political parties, and parliament.

Since I am not an expert on British race relations, I will not try to evaluate the merits of the specific recommendations. Rather, I will try to compare its vision of 'the future of a multi-ethnic Britain' with the various models of multiculturalism being debated in Britain's offspring: the former British settler societies of Canada, the USA, Australia and New Zealand. How do these countries compare in the way they are handling the challenge of ethnic diversity? It seems to me that Britain in fact faces two rather different challenges regarding ethnic diversity, only one of which is discussed in the report. First, like all of the settler societies, it has had sizeable levels of immigration in the postwar era, and unlike earlier waves of migration, these new migrants are typically non-white and

non-Christian. So all these countries face the challenge of accommodating this new pattern of ethnicity rooted in postwar migrations. I will call this the challenge of immigrant multiculturalism.[1]

Britain also faces the challenge of dealing with its 'nations within' – its non-immigrant national minorities whose historic homeland has been incorporated into the larger state: namely, the Scots, Welsh and the Catholics of Northern Ireland. Like national minorities around the world, these groups are seeking greater self-government, through some form of territorial autonomy or consociational power sharing. We can see the same dynamic at work in the settler societies: e.g., with the Québécois and Aboriginal peoples in Canada, the Puerto Ricans and Indian tribes in the USA, and the Aborigines and Maoris in Australia and New Zealand. I will call this the challenge of minority nationalism.

The report is almost exclusively concerned with the first sort of challenge. When it discusses 'the future of a multi-ethnic Britain', its primary concern is with the future status of groups formed through postwar immigration into Britain. It says nothing about what sorts of arrangements should be adopted to accommodate Scottish, Welsh or Irish nationalist aspirations. It says nothing about which sorts of powers should be exercised by the Scottish assemblies, or about appropriate policies regarding the use of the Welsh language, or about how power should be shared between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (or how power over Ulster should be shared between Britain and Ireland).

This report sets these issues aside, and focuses instead on issues arising from postwar migration. It notes that new powers now reside in legislative assemblies in Cardiff and Holyrood (and, presumably, Belfast), and hence that some of their proposed recommendations must be adopted by these assemblies, not only by Westminster. But the report neither endorses nor criticises the desirability of devolution, nor discusses whether devolution has gone too far or not far enough. Its official position seems to be one of agnosticism towards minority nationalism. The report says, in effect, that if and insofar as powers are devolved, then these powers must be exercised in a way consistent with equality and diversity for communities of immigrant origin. Insofar as Wales and Scotland (and Northern Ireland) form distinct political communities, with their own systems of education, law, health care, criminal justice and media, they must themselves adopt multicultural conceptions of their political community and of their public institutions. If the UK is or becomes a federation of nations, each nation should be seen as a multicultural nation. In line with this view, immigrant multiculturalism is neither friend nor foe of minority nationalists in their struggle with Westminster over the division of powers and resources: regardless of how that struggle is settled, the outcome must respect the requirements of equality and diversity.

This strategy is perfectly understandable. It would require another volume and years of study to tackle these complicated issues of minority nationalism. However, it is not clear to me that debates about immigrant multiculturalism can be neatly separated out from debates about minority nationalism. As I discuss below, changes in the latter may significantly affect the former.

First, however, I want to discuss the report's conception of immigrant multiculturalism, and how it relates to the conception in other countries. Both Britain and its former settler societies have a long and fairly successful history of integrating immigrants. Successive waves of immigrants and refugees in the last

150 years have successfully integrated, despite differences in religion and ethnic origin.

As a result, by the 1960s and 1970s, a certain complacency had arisen amongst liberals in all these countries about the process of immigrant integration. It was widely believed, if not always stated explicitly, that this process of integration was almost inevitable, so long as immigrants were able to acquire citizenship and were not subject to discrimination by the state in its laws and public institutions. Of course, it was recognised that this integration does not occur overnight. The first generation, raised and educated in their countries of origin, speaking a different language, could not expect to have the same economic or political success as people raised and educated here, with English as their mother-tongue. But this disadvantage would be largely overcome in the second generation, and fully overcome in the third generation. And all of this would happen without state support or intervention: it was just the 'natural' process of integration.

We could call this the 'liberal expectancy' regarding immigration. What we have seen over the past 30 years, both in Britain and the settler societies, is a series of challenges to this liberal expectancy, and the growing recognition that it needs to be modified. Different visions of immigrant multiculturalism can, in part, be understood as reflecting different assumptions about what more or what else is needed to ensure the successful integration of immigrant groups.

As I said, the traditional liberal expectancy assumed that immigrants would have the right to naturalise, and that they and their descendants would be protected from discrimination by the state. It is now widely accepted that these minimal requirements must be supplemented by additional government policies, including the following four types of reforms:

(1) the provision of various settlement services, language training and citizen-ship education, to help immigrants become familiar with their new country and its culture, laws and institutions, and to naturalise successfully;

(2) greater recognition and accommodation of the distinctive cultural practices and identities of immigrant-origin groups in public institutions, such as the schools, health care institutions, the police, the courts, the army, the media, museums and other arts institutions, and so on. This includes adopting a more multicultural curriculum in the schools, training health care workers to provide culturally sensitive care, adapting dress codes and dietary practices to accommodate the cultural or religious needs of particular groups, and so on. These sorts of 'multicultural accommodations' are needed to ensure that public institutions truly reflect the population they serve, and to ensure that their rules and symbols do not unintentionally disadvantage or stigmatise particular groups;

(3) the extension of non-discrimination requirements into the private sector, so that private sector employers or landlords cannot discriminate against immi-grants and their descendents. Non-discrimination by the state is not sufficient to ensure equality, if immigrants are subject to pervasive prejudice and discrimination in the economy and civil society;

(4) the adoption of employment equity or affirmative action plans to improve the recruitment of immigrant-origin groups, and to set targets or quotas to redress the under-representation of certain groups in schools, or the public service, or parliament, or in private sector employment.

Most models of multiculturalism make reference to all four of these require-
ments. However, they differ in how broadly or narrowly they interpret and
apply each of them, and in how much weight they give to each.

How then does the report's view of multiculturalism compare with those
being discussed in the settler societies? At the most general level, the report falls
within the broad range of models present in the settler societies. There is little
in the report that will be novel or unheard of for those familiar with multicultur-
alism debates in the USA, Australia, Canada or New Zealand. However, I think
there are some interesting variations in tone and emphasis. I will briefly examine
each of the four requirements in turn.

First, it is interesting to note how little attention is paid in the report to the
first set of issues I listed: i.e., issues of settlement services, language training and
naturalisation. This is understandable, of course, since these issues are of
primary concern to newcomers, and Britain no longer has many newcomers. It
no longer recruits immigrants, and accepts only a trickle of newcomers on the
basis of (a very restrictive view of) family reunification and refugee claims. The
big influx of immigrants was in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain, and the majority
of members of immigrant-origin groups are therefore second or third generation.
So this first set of issues is of far less significance to Britain than to the settler
societies.[2]

Still, I find it interesting that the Commission perceived the issue of naturalis-
ation, for example, to be unimportant for 'the future of multi-ethnic Britain'. The
report notes that it might be advisable to adopt an official naturalisation
ceremony, to provide a symbolic affirmation of membership in the British polity.
It does not, however, discuss the terms of naturalisation: should immigrants
have to know English? Should they have to know about the nation's history and
institutions? Should they have to take a loyalty oath, or swear allegiance to the
constitution or the crown? Should they have to renounce their prior citizenship?
Should they have to be free from a criminal record? All of these questions are
of both practical and symbolic importance: they tell newcomers and native-born
citizens about what it means to be (and to be accepted as) a member of the
political community. They help to determine the cultural, historical and ideologi-
cal associations of membership. It seems odd to me that the report, which is so
intimately concerned with changing people's understanding of the cultural and
historical meaning of Britishness, is so unconcerned with the clearest legal
expression of this very question: namely, the terms of naturalisation by which
people are accepted as British.

Second, a great emphasis is by contrast placed on the next set of issues:
multicultural accommodations in public institutions. Socialists used to talk about
'the long march through the institutions': social democracy would not come
about through revolution, but through patient and persistent efforts to reform all
of society's institutions in a more equitable and democratic direction. And this
requires, not the overthrow of liberal democratic political institutions, but rather
the active participation and representation of social democratic forces within
these institutions. Multiculturalism, in the report's view, is very similar: it will
require a patient, ongoing and systematic effort to monitor all of society's
institutions, to identify ways in which they disadvantage or stigmatise minority
groups, and to propose remedies for these failings. And this process requires the
active participation and representation of minority groups within these public
institutions.

This process is, of course, already underway, both in Britain and the settler societies. There have been literally thousands of commissions, task forces, advisory groups and ad hoc committees in all of these countries studying issues of diversity and multiculturalism. They have arisen at the local, regional and national levels, within schools and universities, hospitals, police forces, the media, museums and elsewhere.

From one point of view, therefore, 'the long march through the institutions' is already well advanced. But the report wants to speed up the march, and provide it with more centralised guidance, though the adoption of an official Multiculturalism Act, modelled on the Canadian example. I believe that the presence of such an official Act has worked well in the Canadian context to provide an official endorsement of the need for this sort of institutional rethinking, and to provide some (modest) financial and intellectual support for institutions to do so.[3]

In the USA, by contrast, the long march through the institutions remains more diffused and decentralised. As a result, the process is more ad hoc: some institutions have gone through intensive rethinking and reform, others have barely started. But one could argue that, at least in the American context, this too is working reasonably well, and that attempting to define a single national vision of multiculturalism would in fact have slowed the pace of reform at the grassroots level. As Nathan Glazer has recently argued, despite the absence of a national multiculturalism act in the USA, 'we are all multiculturalists now', committed to this process of institutional reform.[4]

So the report's endorsement of multicultural accommodations is broadly consistent with the pattern in the settler societies. Of course, the report does not provide an unqualified endorsement of such accommodations, and insists that they must be limited by respect for human rights (i.e., husbands cannot beat their wives, or deny education to their daughters, even if this was a cultural practice in their country of origin), and by some notion of 'reasonable accommodation' (i.e., schools need not revise their entire school schedule to accommodate every religious holiday of every religious minority, no matter what the cost to others). These limits are consistent with the emerging patterns in the settler societies, although the report is frustratingly vague about what these limits might mean in practice regarding such things as polygamy, the exemptions for Gypsies from mandatory education requirements, or the recognition of Muslim divorce laws. Nor does it discuss one of the most contentious forms of multicultural accommodation in the settler societies: namely, the role of bilingual education for children whose mother tongue is not English.

Third, the report affirms the extension of non-discrimination requirements to the private sector, but argues that there must be improved mechanisms for individuals seeking redress against private discrimination, since existing mechanisms are too slow, too costly and establish a burden of proof that is often difficult to meet. Prejudiced employers and landlords have become increasingly subtle in devising seemingly reasonable rules or qualifications that are in fact intended to keep out members of minority groups. This sort of discrimination is much harder to prove.

This too is a familiar issue in a North American perspective, where there have been various attempts to develop new forms of adjudication and arbitration of discrimination claims that allow for claims of indirect discrimination (or 'disparate impact' in the American terminology), that lower the burden of proof,

and that seek negotiated agreements rather than prosecutions. The report does not provide much by way of concrete suggestions about how to resolve this tricky issue, and does not consider the models adopted in other countries. But it is certainly a problem facing all of us.

Fourth, the most controversial part of the report, I suspect, will be its insistence on the adoption of employment equity plans, both within government and for private employers. This certainly is one of the main flash points in both the USA and Canada, where affirmative action remains deeply controversial, and indeed is gradually being scaled back.

One reason why these plans are controversial is that they involve what the report calls 'monitoring by ethnicity', or what American critics call 'counting by race'. The whole idea of requiring people to officially declare their race or ethnicity, and to define themselves in relation to some set of officially prescribed racial categories, is deeply offensive to some people. I am not one of those people, and indeed I think that monitoring by ethnicity would probably be desirable even if we dropped all affirmative action plans. We need to know whether our society is becoming racially stratified and segregated, and whether our public institutions are serving ethnic groups inequitably, even if we reject affirmative action as a remedy for this problem.

However, there is another reason why people object to affirmative action, which is that it is widely thought to be justified only in very special circumstances, which do not typically apply to immigrant groups. In particular, affirmative action is often seen as justified if either (a) a group has been subject to severe historic injustice, and affirmative action is a way of compensating for that injustice; or (b) a group is in danger of becoming a permanent underclass, so that existing inequalities will be passed on to future generations.

In the context of the settler societies, neither of these justifications is available for many immigrant groups. Korean or Arab immigrants have not been victims of historic injustice in America, Canada or Australia (they are mainly postwar immigrant groups, and have arrived at a time when anti-discrimination principles are already well-established). And while the first generation may have below-average income, they are in no danger of becoming a permanent underclass in society, since the second and third generations are steadily improving their educational and income levels, and indeed often have above-average levels of educational attainment and income. They are integrating not only economically, but also socially, with growing levels of intermarriage, low levels of residential segregation, and declining levels of prejudice.

Affirmative action was (grudgingly) accepted for African-Americans, who can plausibly appeal to both justifications. But when affirmative action was extended in both Canada and the USA to all non-white immigrant groups, it lost a great deal of its legitimacy, since most non-white immigrant groups in the settler societies are neither victims of historic injustice nor likely to form an underclass. Is it fair that there be affirmative action for Asian-Americans and not for Portuguese-Americans, who are in fact below-average in education and income, just because the latter are white? Is it fair that there be affirmative action for Arab-Canadians and not for white Canadians from poor regions or lower classes, given that the latter are in greater danger of suffering from enduring intergenerational disadvantage? Once divorced from claims of historic injustice or serious and enduring intergenerational disadvantage, the use of affirmative action plans seems arbitrary and unfair.

From a North American perspective, therefore, the report's confident and unapologetic assertion of the need for targets and quotas for various ethnic groups is quite striking. The report offers little justification for the systematic use of employment equity, and little explanation of which groups should be the beneficiaries of these plans. The report does note, in passing, that some immigrant-origin groups are facing the prospect of intergenerational disadvantage. It says that the second generation of some groups faces the same disadvantages as the first generation, and hence it 'is not a short-term problem and things are not getting better' (p. 145). If so, this would mean that non-white immigrant groups in Britain are faring worse than most non-white immigrant groups in the USA and Canada, since things are getting better for the Asians and Arabs in North America, in terms of both economic wellbeing and social inclusion.

The report gives little evidence for either the magnitude or durability of this disadvantage, so it is difficult for me to judge the severity of the problem. If the North American experience is any indication, I suspect that employment equity will only be widely accepted if clear evidence is provided of the severity and durability of the disadvantage facing immigrant groups. Given that most post-war immigrants to Britain cannot appeal to claims of historic injustice, the acceptance of employment equity will depend on making good the claim to serious intergenerational economic inequality or social exclusion.

In short, while the report's vision of a multicultural Britain shares many similarities with models of immigrant multiculturalism in the settler societies, it differs in two major respects: it pays less attention to issues of settlement/ language training/naturalisation for the first generation; and defends a more systematic form of employment equity for the second and third generation.

I do not want to question whether the report's vision is the right one for Britain. These differences may well be an appropriate response to the distinctive circumstances of Britain today. I do, however, want to return to my earlier point about how this picture of immigrant multiculturalism relates to the claims of minority nationalisms in Britain.

As I noted earlier, the report does not discuss recent British reforms regarding Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. It neither endorses nor criticises the desirability of devolution, and its official position seems to be one of agnosticism towards the claims of minority nationalism. However, reading between the lines, one can also detect an unofficial position in the report that is less sympathetic to minority nationalism. Many people believe that it will be much easier to develop a more tolerant and pluralistic conception of 'Britishness' than of Scottishness (or Welshness/Englishness/Irish Catholicness). One can envisage a notion of 'being British' which is multicultural, multiracial and multifaith, open to Sikhs, Afro-Caribbeans and Pakistani Muslims. By contrast, the idea of 'being Scottish' (or Welsh, English, Irish Catholic) seems tied to myths of a shared descent, history, culture and religion, and hence inherently exclusionary of immigrant-origin communities.

In line with this view, the prospects for developing a robust form of multiculturalism in Britain depend on retaining 'Britishness' at the core of people's identity, and at the core of the 'national story' which is taught to children. If the centrality of Britishness is displaced by growing emphasis on people's substate national identities – if political debate is increasingly structured in terms of ideals of Scottishness/Englishness/Welshness, rather than ideals of Britishness – then the prospects of successful multiculturalism are reduced.

According to this line of reasoning, the pursuit of immigrant multiculturalism, then, is opposed to minority nationalism, partly because traditional notions of Scottish or Welsh or Irish Catholic nationalism are exclusionary of immigrants, and partly because the strengthening of minority nationalism will inevitably spur a rise of English nationalism, as the ethnic English assert their own national distinctiveness in response.

The report does not explicitly raise this objection to minority nationalism, although it quotes sympathetically several presenters who do (e.g., it quotes several people who say that they can imagine becoming British, but cannot imagine becoming, or being accepted as, English, Scottish or Welsh). Moreover, this concern arguably underlies the report's opening claim that 'Britain is at a turning point', and can either become 'divided and fragmented among the three separate countries', in which a 'Little Englander mentality and its equivalents in Wales and Scotland hold sway', or it could become a cosmopolitan and out-ward-looking Britain united by a national story that emphasises how Britain has always been a diverse polity (p. 21). Throughout the report, it is Britain and Britishness that is the soil on which multiculturalism will take root. There is little attention paid to how to reinterpret Scottish, English, Welsh or Irish national identities and national stories to make them more multicultural. To be sure, the report says that Scotland, England and Wales must recognise themselves as multicultural countries, but it does not say anything about how to reconceive Scottishness as a multicultural identity. Instead, it suggests that Scottishness is one part of a larger multicultural British identity.

This may come to be seen as a major lacuna in the report. In 25 years, it is not inconceivable that Scotland will have seceded, and that Catholics will come close to forming a majority in Northern Ireland capable of voting to rejoin the Irish Republic. If so, notions of Britishness may fade to irrelevance in Scotland and Northern Ireland, and shortly thereafter in England and Wales, since both are in fact overwhelmingly English in ethnicity and religion. Without Scotland and Northern Ireland, it's not clear whether the idea of Britishness would continue to serve any useful function.

Of course, this may not happen. Perhaps Britain will remain a 'united kingdom', and withstand its centrifugal forces. But the question remains: what should defenders of immigrant multiculturalism think of these centrifugal forces? Should those who care about ensuring respect for equality and diversity oppose these centrifugal pressures, and fight to retain a strong and united Britain? (If so, does that mean we should resist any further devolution to Wales or Scotland or Northern Ireland?). Or should we instead say that substate nations are fully capable of diversifying their national identities and stories, and that Scottishness is just as fertile a soil as Britishness for multiculturalism, so that defenders of immigrant multiculturalism need not fear greater powers, even independence, for Scotland?

This question is not unique to Britain. The same question arises for defenders of immigrant multiculturalism in Canada, Belgium or Spain. If greater powers (or even independence) are granted to Quebec, Flanders or Catalonia, will that help or hinder the cause of immigrant multiculturalism? Do Quebecois/ Flemish/Catalan national identities and stories provide as fertile a ground for multiculturalism as Canadian/Belgian and Spanish national identities and sto-ries? Are immigrant groups and national minorities allies in the struggle against centralised nation-states that seek to impose a stifling cultural homogeneity on

all the population, or are they in conflict, as national minorities seek to displace the sort of broader and more inclusive state identity on which immigrant multiculturalism depends? The report diplomatically avoids this question, but I think it needs to be squarely addressed.[5]

A view from Continental Europe

By Charles Westin

The final report from the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain represents a work of great importance, not only to Britain but also to Europe as a whole. It addresses for the first time the full range of policy issues brought to the fore when multiculturalism is imported into the older structure of the nation state. A lot has been written about multiculturalism and probably even more on the nation state. However, much of the work on multiculturalism is inspired by experiences in countries based on immigration (Australia, Canada, the USA). These experiences do not necessarily apply in the older European nation state context. On the other hand, most work on nation state formation departs from European experiences, but rarely addresses the issues of incorporating people of immigrant origin. The importance of the commission's work is that it brings together these two different discourses. The commission, chaired by Professor Bhikhu Parekh, has involved some of the most distinguished thinkers and commentators in Britain, theorists and practitioners from all walks of life and representing a range of different communities.

   Postwar labour migration started more or less simultaneously in the industrialised countries of north-western Europe. Britain, however, always seemed ahead of other countries in a number of respects pertaining to actual immigration flows and problems encountered. It also had a leading position in its analyses of the phenomena and the strategies it adopted to counteract discrimination and deal with racism. European scholars have sought inspiration in the work of British colleagues in this field of migration and ethnic/race relations, and European policy-makers have given heed to British experiences. It also needs to be borne in mind that racists and nationalists outside Britain were encouraged by the example of Enoch Powell and the National Front long before Le Pen or Haider had appeared on the scene and that the racist developments of skinhead culture originated in Britain. When other European countries mostly recruited labour from Southern Europe, migrants to Britain were coming from former colonial possessions, predominantly from South Asia and the Caribbean. Thus Britain encountered intercontinental immigration on a large scale earlier than most other European countries. Racism and discrimination were prevalent in all countries of immigration, but in Britain racial injustice was more consistently tackled, debated and analysed than elsewhere in Europe. However, we should also remind ourselves that Britain also led the way in embarking on a policy of reducing spontaneous immigration through the Commonwealth Immigration Act in 1968.

Britain's move to a policy of multiculturalism (along with the Netherlands and Sweden) came at a time when Germany still had not officially recognised that it has a large, resident population of immigrant origin. This was before Le Pen had started to attract a large part of the French vote, and well before Italy and Spain realised that they were new target countries of intercontinental immigration. Britain has held a leading position in the European discourse on multiculturalism and *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* fits well into this pattern. It is an excellent account of the current multi-ethnic situation in Britain and analysis of what needs to be done to promote racial justice. In the European perspective it is a breakthrough for a truly holistic approach to the issue area. Policy-makers, academics and concerned citizens in Europe will undoubtedly find this report a source of inspiration to rethink the situation in their countries.

The report consists of three parts. First an overall assessment of the context is presented ('A Vision for Britain'); second, an analysis of institutions and issues to be addressed in bringing about change; and third, strategies for change. The analyses and proposals presented in the second and third parts deal with the important institutional contexts (the police, the criminal justice system, the educational system, the media, health and welfare services, government leadership, legislation, organisations etc.) to which it is vital to bring change. The freshness and novelty that may be read into these parts of the report must be seen against the backdrop of the vision in Part One. In these comments I will confine myself to the first part.

A basic value premise of democracy is that all individuals have equal worth and that equal treatment requires that differences are recognised and respected. However, significant numbers of people in Britain and Europe as a whole are the victims of discrimination, racism and social exclusion. How does one then strike a balance between equality and difference of identity? This is the question that has occupied the commission's thoughts. The formula proposed is that multi-ethnic Britain is to be understood as a community of individuals *and* a community of communities, a liberal and plural solution at the same time.

The 'Vision for Britain' part consists of six chapters and a summary. Two chapters identify the basic problems at hand – dealing with racisms and reducing inequalities. Two other chapters spell out essential analytical approaches – understanding identities as being in transition, and rethinking the national story. Finally, two chapters define the policy tasks lying ahead – building a human rights culture, and developing a balance between cohesion, difference and equality (in the report the chapters are grouped in another order).

To tackle the root problems of racisms, social exclusion and inequality, to combat discriminatory practices, rules and regulations, one has to appreciate that identities in a multi-ethnic multicultural society are in a constant state of change. Identities are multiple and new (previously unexpected) combinations of identity are constantly produced. Perhaps even more importantly, it implies scrutinising the popular understanding of the nation state itself, to critically reassess the national story of who belongs and who is not accepted. The importance of rethinking the national story has not generally been recognised by European commentators. It goes without saying that many countries besides Britain need to rethink their national stories.

In a sense the British set-up is special with its three countries historically dominated by England. No other European state has four 'national' teams in football (in 1958 all four teams qualified for the World Cup finals). However,

most, if not all, European nation states have been through complex processes of nation-building and state formation. These stories differ from the British one but they nevertheless exhibit similar simplifications of historical processes. Just think of Germany with its different *Länder*, not to mention the sensitive project of forging together the two postwar Germanies. Think of France and Italy with their different historical and linguistic regions, not to mention the intricate balances between ethnic, linguistic and national groups in countries such as Spain, Belgium and Switzerland. Countries in Eastern and Central Europe show still more problematic structures. Even the Scandinavian countries and the Netherlands, often thought of as culturally homogeneous nation states, show a lot more historical, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity than generally believed. These are all countries of immigration in which racism, discrimination and social exclusion are present. None of them have adequately counteracted racism. In some countries nationalistic parties of the far right have a significant share of the vote. In others neo-Nazi terrorists target not only Jews but also Muslims and Africans. Rewriting the national story involves society as a whole. It is not merely about a limited number of policy recommendations. It has implications for policies in every field of human interaction.

The Commission dismisses the concept of integration on the grounds that it denotes a one-sided process of adjusting to existing structures of dominance. Indeed, this is how social psychological theorists often understand the concept. In the European context the concept of integration is essential. There is no reason to reject it on the grounds of previous inadequate analysis. Like segregation, a concept to which it is related, integration should be understood as a property of a system, not of the system's components. It is a society that is more or less integrated (or segregated), not the individuals, as many social psychologists would have it. This leads us to sociology's classic questions: how is society possible? How is society held together? How is social cohesion achieved?

Cultural and ethnic diversity can be an enormous asset to society. The report establishes several times that the multi-ethnic composition of Britain's population is perhaps the country's most important advantage in facing the future. But diversity can also become a cause of social tension. This highlights the question of social cohesion in a multi-ethnic society. The issue of cohesion is central but has not been addressed by policy-makers and rarely by researchers of multiculturalism. (Parenthetically, let me mention that the Swedish word for society – *samhälle* – literally means 'holding together', which is a good illustration of cohesion as a basic fabric of society.) Social cohesion needs to be built upon a body of common and generally accepted values. Because values and identities associated with specific religions and or with traditional cultures are exclusionary by nature they will not do in a multicultural society. Neither will the values rooted in national belonging suffice. The report discusses various models of cohesion arriving at the 'community of communities' and the 'community of individuals' model built on the basis of human rights.

The issues to do with cohesion deserve further analysis. The term conflict is barely mentioned and yet conflict is intertwined with diversity. How much diversity is possible without overt expressions of conflict in a multi-ethnic society? How much diversity can be accepted without loss of control over social developments? Avoiding conflicting interests in a multi-ethnic society, concealing them or ignoring them does not bring about social cohesion. On the contrary, conflicting interests, differences of opinion or perspective have a part to play in

generating social cohesion. Cohesion, then, is not the equivalent of consensus. The formidable task is to develop procedures for handling conflict and differences while respecting the opposite side and working out resolutions acceptable to all parties. Social cohesion is brought about by interdependence on a societal scale as Durkheim correctly observed. It embraces both conflict and congruity. The policy objective of a society that professes itself an adherent of diversity is then to enable such interdependence. An important element of such an objective is empowerment of those who are at risk, those who are vulnerable and those who are the underdogs of society.

The report presents a vision of what a good society can be. It points to the necessary re-valuation of customary ideas about the nation state. It examines a large number of policy areas that must be addressed. Great care is taken to refer to communities, groups and people in ways that are acceptable to them. There is one problematic case. The external classification Gypsy is consistently used to refer to people of Romany descent. The persecution of the Roma peoples is possibly the most serious problem of racial/ethnic injustice in Europe today. In view of the steps taken by the federation of Roma people to gain recognition as a 'nation without territory' I would think twice about using the term Gypsy. In Continental Europe the term Roma or Romany or other self-categorisations are gradually replacing *Zigeuner* in German and equivalent terms in other languages.

The European Union policy is to reduce immigration from non-EU countries. How does this tally with promoting diversity and the community of communities model? Well, it does not. Diversity is linked with immigration. If immigration is stopped, diversity is jeopardised. Policy-makers should reassess immigration policy. Diversity should not be seen as a means to handle what is perceived as 'problematic immigration'. Rather, immigration needs to be seen as the positive means to achieve the goal of diversity. All Western countries have ageing populations. If welfare systems are to be maintained immigration of labour power will soon become an economic demographic necessity. Since all EU member states are facing the same problem, the freedom of movement within Schengen is not a long-term solution to the upcoming need for labour power. Opening up for what can be agreed as a reasonable immigration programme is then support for diversity. Opening up for a generous refugee policy is in effect to support human rights values.

Instead of being on the defensive, and thus appeasing an ethnocentric opinion, the authorities need to be on the offensive. This is one lesson from *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* that is highly relevant to the future of a multi-ethnic Europe.

In response

By Bhikhu Parekh, Stuart Hall and Tariq Modood

We are most grateful to Professors Kymlicka, Banton and Westin for their comments on our report. Although they all think well of the report, they also

make critical comments to which we would like to respond within the space limits set by the editor of this journal.

Kymlicka distinguishes between immigrant multiculturalism and minority nationalism and criticises the report for being exclusively concerned with the former. He misunderstands the purpose and context of the report. Since our primary concern was with the future of multi-ethnic Britain, the discussion of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland was not central to our inquiry. However since the latter impinges upon and cannot be dissociated from the question of minority communities, we could not ignore it altogether and refer to it at some length.

Kymlicka argues that we do not take a clear stand on the merits and demerits of devolution. Devolution is already an inescapable fact of British public life. Rather than pronounce on whether it should be supported and what should or should not happen if it failed, the Commission decided to work within the framework of the new constitutional settlement. Even though we do not directly comment on it, we say enough to indicate our sympathy for it. This is why we criticise the English hegemony within the UK, including the failure to integrate the Celtic cultural elements within the dominant British self-understanding, and seek to make all our recommendations regionally sensitive. We believe that a looser and federally constituted polity is at present the most realistic political prospect for the country. In Wales the nationalist sentiment is quite weak. And even the Scottish nationalists have chosen to operate within and give a fair chance to the devolutionary project. If any of the constituent parts of Britain were to become independent, our general analysis of Britain would apply to it as well. In theory minority nations can be as hostile to cultural diversity as the larger nation states. What happens in practice depends on how effectively multicultural forces are mobilised.

Kymlicka observes that we do not say much about bilingualism. We do so because it is no longer a major problem in Britain. The same applies to the terms of naturalisation. The number of new immigrants is almost negligible. Unlike Canada and other immigrant countries where naturalisation is assigned ontological significance and raises the kind of questions Kymlicka mentions, Britain rightly takes a rather relaxed view of it. Naturalisation does not represent a break with the past, and citizenship does not signify a new political birth. This is not to deny that acquisition of citizenship has considerable symbolic and political importance, which is why we suggest that more should be made of it than is currently the case and propose formal citizenship ceremonies.

Kymlicka finds the report 'frustratingly vague' about the limits of diversity including such practices as polygamy and Muslim divorce laws. Although we do not discuss these and other practices in great detail, for that would have taken up a large part of the report, we say enough to indicate where we stand, and more importantly how in our view controversies surrounding such issues should be resolved. We lay down basic procedural and substantive principles that in our view should structure the moral and political life of Britain, and argue that practices that deeply offend against them should be discouraged. We also argue that deep moral differences are bound to arise once we move beyond patently outrageous practices, and that these are best resolved by discussion and compromise.

Kymlicka argues that the report recommends a policy of 'affirmative action' and that this constitutes its 'most controversial part'. His use of the word

'affirmative action' to describe our proposals is misleading. We do not advocate reserved places, quotas, etc., which is what the term generally, refers to. Our strategy is to rely on strategies such as audit, targets, managerial responsibility, inspection, public scrutiny. And our references to the 'duty to promote equality' do not involve quotas, but rather diversification of the work force, creation of an occupational culture that is hospitable to all groups, encouraging neglected talents, and so on.

Kymlicka argues that affirmative action, as he understands it, is only justified when there is either a case of severe historical injustice or a danger of a group becoming a permanent underclass. In our view this is too restrictive a moral framework. He ignores situations when not the whole group but a substantive number within it is in danger of becoming an underclass, or when a group has been subjected to systematic discrimination in the past, or suffers from severe historically derived and self-reproducing disadvantages. Whether or not affirmative action in Kymlicka's sense is justified in such cases, the kinds of measures we recommend certainly are, for there is no other effective way to create a broad equality of life-chances and a widely-shared sense of justice and social cohesion. So far as Britain's minorities are concerned, we show in various chapters that some of them suffer from intergenerationally accumulated racial disadvantages and effects of institutional racism. Besides they are not ordinary economic migrants but come from Britain's ex-colonies with their history of injustices and exploitation. On Kymlicka's own criteria, they therefore qualify for the type of support we propose in the report.

Let us now turn to Professor Banton. He assumes that human rights culture is enough to sustain a multicultural society such as Britain. We give reasons why we do not share this one-dimensional view. Human rights are obviously of the greatest importance, but they largely provide the moral minimum and not the whole of political morality or culture. Furthermore they are essentially individual rights and need to be mediated by the imperatives of cultural diversity. Hence while fully supporting human rights, the report locates them in a wider framework that respects both individuals and communities and allows for a creative interplay between the logics of individualism and multiculturalism.

We simply fail to understand Professor Banton's criticism of our report's discussion of racism and anti-racism in Chapter 5. The report tackles racism head on, analyses its etiology, and proposes ways to combat it. It also locates racism in a larger context and, unlike many other discussions of the subject, traces its cultural and other forms. In our view this adds to the strength of the report and moves away from shallow discussions of racism that homogenise and reify it. Our proposals to counter racism add up to a comprehensive antiracist programme. And the very fact that we advance them shows that racism in Britain is *not* ineradicable. We therefore cannot at all agree with Professor Banton when he takes us to say that racism is too ingrained to be overcome or that we are silent on antiracism.

Professor Banton thinks that since our recommendations are persuasive on their own, Part One is superfluous. He is wrong to take this view. Part One does four things. It provides a vision of Britain without which our recommendations lack moral justification and emotional appeal. It also analyses the obstacles that stand in the way of Britain becoming a racially just society and suggests ways of overcoming them. It offers a distinct way of conceptualising and describing contemporary Britain, a vitally necessary theoretical exercise if we are to evolve

a satisfactory vocabulary and public philosophy. And, finally, Part One seeks to encourage new attitudes, sensibilities and national self-understanding without which anti-racist measures lack a conducive political climate and which are too subtle and complex to be amenable to legislation.

Professor Westin reads the report with the requisite degree of sensitivity and insight and displays a most commendable grasp of its context and central concerns. He appreciates the importance we assign to the need to integrate equality and difference and to relate economic inequality and racism. He also recognises that we stress the constructivist and transitional character of most collective identities and the need to take a critical view of national self-understanding. We are therefore surprised that he should misunderstand our discussion of integration. We are not at all opposed to integration but to a particular way of understanding it, according to which the wider society is falsely assumed to have a homogeneous cultural structure into which minorities are expected passively to merge. We see integration as a dynamic and fluid process involving reciprocity, negotiation, and democratic contestation. We therefore prefer the term 'cohesion' to integration and devote a whole chapter to it. We do of course appreciate that the diversity can become a cause of social tension, and hence we explore the limits of diversity, the legitimate place of difference in a reasonably cohesive society, and the social and economic conditions necessary to render diversity non-conflictual and even a positive asset.

Professor Westin suggests that we should not have used the word 'Gypsy'. In Britain Gypsies do not object to being so called, and only a few policy activists use the term Roma to refer to them.

Notes

1 The report does not use this term, presumably because most of the members of the Asian, African and Irish communities in Britain are now second or third-generation, and hence not immigrants themselves. A more accurate term, therefore, would be 'multiculturalism policies related to the accommodation of diversity arising from groups of immigrant origin'. To save space, I will use the shorthand "immigrant multiculturalism'.

2 The report does not directly challenge the decision to massively restrict immigration, although it encourages a more open-minded debate on the topic. It hopes or assumes that the ability to achieve a more multicultural society is not impaired by the decision to shut the doors on new immigration. That may be true, but I suspect that the fact that immigrant groups in the settler societies are constantly replenished with new arrivals both increases their strength and self-confidence, and also provides a symbolic affirmation that the larger society does not consider their presence on the soil to be a regrettable mistake. By contrast, Britain is in the awkward position of saying to its immigrant-origin groups: 'we're glad you're here and appreciate the diversity you've brought, but we don't want any more of you, and so have repudiated the policy which allowed you to come in the first place'. It may indeed be possible to welcome to immigrants who have already arrived without welcoming any new immigrants, but I think this is a difficult line to walk.

3 Kymlicka, *Finding Our Way: Rethinking Ethnocultural Relations in Canada* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

4 Nathan Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

5 My own view, for what it is worth, is that minority nationalisms can be fully accommodating of immigrant diversity, and that substate national identities can provide as fertile a ground for multiculturalism as central state identities. But it is not always or necessarily so, and much work remains to be done in thinking about the conditions under which minority nationalism and immigrant multiculturalism work well together. See Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular* (Oxford University Press, 2000), Chapter 15.

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