

‘A Class Apart’?
South Asian Immigrants
and the White Working Class Left,
Yorkshire 1960-1981

David Jonathan Swift

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University of York

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Abstract

During the 1960s many thousands of South Asian immigrants arrived in the United Kingdom. At first they were, by and large, economic migrants looking to fill British labour shortages and send remittances back home. Through the 1960s and into the 1970s, however, the arrival of wives and dependents, and the growth of a British-born or raised generation of South Asians, led to the creation of a permanent settlement in the UK.

This thesis aims to examine the reactions of the white working class Left in Yorkshire to these new arrivals from 1960 to 1981, analyse the factors which prompted these reactions, and assess the implications of this reaction for our understanding of concepts such as 'class', and 'identity'.

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Author's Declaration

The work here is entirely my own, does not include any joint work, and as of September 2011 has not been presented at any conferences, nor published.

Introduction

On the 28th of April 2010, a week before the General Election to the British Parliament, the then Prime Minister Gordon Brown was on the campaign trail in Rochdale. A local woman named Gillian Duffy, on her way to buy a loaf of bread, happened to meet the Prime Minister and questioned his policy on pensions, the national debt, and immigration. A flustered Brown, after returning to the presumed safety of his Ministerial car, denounced Duffy as a ‘terrible, bigoted woman’; unfortunately for him, his lapel microphone was still switched on, and the outburst was recorded and instantly relayed across the news networks. Upon hearing of this misfortune Brown hung his head in despair; if he had not already lost the election, he surely had now.

For the years preceding the 2010 election the prevailing narrative concerning immigration and ‘multiculturalism’ – asserted by journalists such as Rod Liddle and academics such as Randall Hansen - was one of liberal elites imposing their values on an unwilling populace.¹ Yet to what extent is the British white ‘working class’ genuinely hostile towards immigrants and immigrants? Political parties of various hues have struggled with this question since the Second World War, be they far-right groups seeking to exploit this supposed racism; the Conservative Party looking to win working-class support through appeals to cultural nationalism and anti-immigration sentiment; or, most problematically, the Labour Party. Historians and political commentators have generally cited anti-immigrant feeling – expressed through both vocal protests and physical violence – along with electoral support for far-right groups such as the National Front and the British National Party, to answer in the affirmative. The cause of this supposed hostility is somewhat more problematic to identify. The blame has often been laid at the door of imperial legacy and the ideas of racial superiority that were interwoven with Empire, but scholars of the Left have usually cited economic and social factors; they argue that it is the undercutting of wages and the competition for work and welfare provisions which

¹ See, for example, R. Liddle, ‘Labour’s heartland won’t be fooled on immigration again’, *The Sunday Times*, (15th November 2009) and R. Hansen, ‘The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968’, *The Historical Journal* 42 (1993): 809-834.

creates working-class suspicion of immigrants, rather than any inherent xenophobia or cultural hostility. Yet there is rarely unanimity amongst Left-leaning academics and journalists on this issue, and there is even contradiction within the work of particular individuals. Ambalavaner Sivanandan, for example, claimed that working-class racism was the result of capitalist conceit, the product of a deliberate attempt to divide the ‘working class’ and prevent a militant class consciousness from emerging, yet he often strayed from this line and gave the impression that ‘racism’ was actually inherent to white Britons.²

This thesis aims to examine the working-class ‘Left’, which is roughly defined as those men and women who were members of the Labour Party or trade unions or at very least consistently voted Labour in general elections. Whilst there is not presumed to be any sort of strict ideological homogeneity amongst this section of society, there seems to be a contradiction between Labour supporters and union members – who are, in theory at least, committed to the equality of all and the idea of class interests superseding those of nationality and race – espousing ‘racist’ sentiments and undertaking ‘racist’ actions. This supposed contradiction leads us to one of the main themes of this thesis: does such a thing as the British ‘working class’ exist, and has it ever existed? Did men and women join trade unions and vote for the Labour Party due to ideas of ‘class’ consciousness and solidarity, or for more pragmatic reasons? Did similar economic and social circumstances lead people to see themselves as having shared interests and a common connection, or was it more subtle factors such as accent, religion, or skin colour? In examining the attitudes of left-leaning, manual workers in Yorkshire during the 1960s and 1970s towards South Asian immigrants, this thesis will attempt to illuminate the nature of ‘class’ in this specific time and place.

Given that this thesis will discuss the issue of ‘identity’ – whether a ‘class’, ‘racial’, ‘ethnic’ or religious identity – it is important to make a few preliminary points concerning this term. Depending upon the circumstances in which they find themselves, people often have plural identities: for example a white British factory

² A. Sivanandan, *Race, Class and the State: the Black Experience in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1976), and *A Different Hunger* (London: Pluto Press, 1982).

worker may enjoy a friendly relationship with his Pakistani colleagues at work, only to curse them at home, and a Muslim housewife who is very much the family matriarch and centre of attention at home may be a Burkha-covered outsider when she leaves the house. This thesis will therefore try to maintain an acute awareness of the different, interacting and often contradictory factors affecting identity, such as 'class', religion, and ethnicity, and the different ways and occasions in which they are expressed at work, school, and in leisure time. One of the most contentious forms of identity to be dealt with here is that of 'ethnicity' or 'race'. It is accepted here that 'race' is a social construct, yet there is no doubt that people saw themselves and were perceived by others as being part of certain 'ethnic' groups.³ 'Ethnic' groups and 'ethnicity' here is used to describe groups of people loosely linked by commonalities such as religious beliefs, geographical areas of origin, and 'culture' as expressed through clothing, food, language, and leisure preferences. There is no assumption here of any kind of homogeneity within ethnic groups. People coming to Britain from India, Pakistan and later, Bangladesh, were an electric mix of ethnicities, religions, and religious sects, and saw themselves as such.⁴ Since this thesis focuses mainly on Bradford and the surrounding West Riding towns, it is concerned mainly with Pakistani Muslims,⁵ but even amongst this narrower group there were significant differences: for example, Pakistanis in Bradford and Birmingham are nearly always from Mirpur, whilst their fellow immigrants in Glasgow and Manchester tend to come from Faisalabad.⁶ Even within Bradford's contingent of Pakistani Muslims there was no rigid cultural homogeneity during the

³ For a discussion on the idea of 'race' as a social construct see, for example, R. Miles, *Racism and Migrant Labour* (London: Routledge, 1982), and A. Pilkington, *Racial Disadvantage and Ethnic Diversity in Britain* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002). For more general discussions on race, ethnicity and nationalism see A. Cohen, *Urban Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 2004); P. Kaarsholm and J. Hultin (eds.), *Inventions and Boundaries: Historical and Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Roskilde, Denmark: International Development Studies, Roskilde University, 1994); B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2006); R. Ballard (eds.), *Desh Pradesh: The South Asian Presence in Britain* (London: Hurst and Co., 1994); T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

⁴ N. Ali, et al (eds.), *A Postcolonial People: South Asians in Britain* (London: C Hurst and Co., 2006); P. Bhachu, *Twice Migrants* (London: Tavistock, 1985).

⁵ Nearly 20% of Pakistani population lives in Yorkshire and Humberside, compared with 5% of Indian and 4% of Bangladeshi population. See C. Peach, 'Demographics of BrAsian settlement, 1951-2001', in *A Postcolonial People*, 177.

⁶ A. Shaw, 'Kinship, cultural preference and immigration: consanguineous marriage among British Pakistanis', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 7 (2001): 317.

period concerned, any more than there is a homogenous ‘white’ British culture. Finally, it is important to avoid the ‘assumption of racism’, that is to say, the assumption that racism was the defining aspect of the lives of immigrants, which both removes agency from immigrants as independent actors and distorts historical investigation.

As Wendy Webster has observed, ‘there are very few terms within the language of race discourse – perhaps none – which can be regarded as unproblematic’, and there is a certain semantic difficulty when discussing South Asian immigrants to Britain, due partly to the national, ethnic and religious heterogeneity described above, but also due to the fact their children were usually born in Britain, had no significant memories of life before Britain, and cannot be described as immigrants.⁷ ‘Black’ is an unsatisfactory term given that it suggests a polarity between ‘black’ and ‘white’, but also due to the long controversy within academia and community relations of whether ‘black’ should be applied to Asian immigrants and their children, or reserved solely for immigrants from Africa or the Caribbean and their descendents.⁸ The authors of *A Postcolonial People* decided on the term ‘BrAsian’ to describe people whose culture and identity was defined by both Britain and South Asia, yet this term is somewhat unsatisfactory for first generation immigrants, who certainly did not consider themselves British at first and who generally intended to return home after a short stay, and it is also too general. This thesis shall refer to ‘Asian immigrants’ or ‘South Asian immigrants’ for primary immigrants and ‘British Asians’ or ‘British Muslims’ when referring to the children of immigrants. This vocabulary is still somewhat problematic, but space and time constraints, as well as the demands of semantic consistency, mean it will have to suffice, as long as we remain aware of the heterogeneity within different ethnic or religious groups and the changing nature of ‘identity’ depending on location and time.

⁷ W. Webster, *Imagining Home: Gender, Race and British National Identity, 1945-1964* (London: UCL Press, 1998), xvii.

⁸ See, for example, the fierce debate over whether British Asians should be able to join ‘Black Sections’ of the Labour Party in S. Jeffers, ‘Black Sections in the Labour Party’, in M. Anwar and P. Werbner (eds.), *Black and Ethnic Leaderships* (London: Routledge, 1991): 63-83. Also T. Modood, ‘Political Blackness and British Asians’, *Sociology* 28 (1994): 859-876. Or more generally, *A Postcolonial People*.

For most of the latter half of the twentieth century sociologists and social historians were engaged in a contentious debate over the nature of ‘class’. There is a vast literature on this subject ranging from the Marxist and deterministic positions of Eric Hobsbawm and E. P. Thompson through to the more complex arguments of Gareth Stedman Jones, Alistair Reid, David Cannadine, and Jon Lawrence.⁹ Constraints of space and time prohibit anything more than a cursory review of the class debate – indeed one could write an entire thesis merely on the historiography of ‘class’. It must suffice to say that whilst the Marxist and economic determinist position held the ascendancy in the 1960s and 1970s, the publication of Stedman Jones’ seminal *Languages of Class* in 1984, combined with the continued electoral failures of the Labour Party and the erosion of the Soviet Union, gave fresh life to the debate in the 1980s. Post-structuralist treatments of class such as Stedman Jones’ looked instead to examine the relationship between culture, politics, ideology and socio-economic position (rather than take it for granted), and social and political historians focused on issues such as intra-class divisions and the relationship between ‘consumerism’ and class.¹⁰

As sociologists began to concentrate on immigration and race relations in the late 1960s and 1970s, academics such as John Rex, Robert Miles, Annie Phizacklea and Stuart Hall put forward arguments about the nature of race and the effects of a multi-racial workforce on ‘class consciousness’.¹¹ Many of these were sophisticated and compelling, particularly on the nature of race as a social construct. Yet while opposing positions were put forward as to whether or not there was a ‘racial

⁹ See, for example: E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz 1963); J. Lawrence and M. Taylor (eds.), *Party, State and Society: Electoral Behaviour in Britain since 1820* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1997); A. Reid and E. Biagini (eds.), *Currents of Radicalism: Popular Radicalism, Organised Labour and Party Politics in Britain, 1850-1914* (Cambridge University Press, 1991); A. Reid, *Social Classes and Social Relations in Britain, 1850-1914* (New Studies in Economic and Social History, Cambridge University Press, 1995); D. Cannadine, *The Rise and Fall of Class In Britain* (New York: Colombia University Press, 1999).

¹⁰ On the ‘cultural’ dimensions of ‘class’ and ‘race’, see P. Gilroy, ‘You Can’t Fool the Youths’, *Race and Class* 23 (1981): 207-222, and *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Routledge, 2002).

¹¹ J. Rex and R. Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict: A Study of Sparkbrook* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979); J. Rex and S. Tomlinson, *Colonial Immigrants in a British City: A Class Analysis* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); Miles, *Racism and Migrant Labour*; R. Miles and A. Phizacklea (eds.), *Racism and Political Action in Britain* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979); R. Miles and A. Phizacklea (eds.), *Racism and Labour* (London: Routledge, 1980).

underclass' beneath the working class, or whether there was only one working class which was racially divided, they all accepted that the 'working class' did indeed exist. While some held rather Marxist conceptions of 'class' - in particular Rex, Castles and Kosack - and others were more sceptical about economically determined class identities, there was general agreement that class was grounded in socio-economic reality. That is to say, that there was a group identity generated by how much money one earned and how one earned that money. Their arguments about the nature of inter-racial integration and class consciousness were therefore based on the idea that immigrants and white workers both found themselves in the same social and economic position – or, in the language of the Marxist scholars, in the same role within relations of production – and therefore they needed to explain why inter-racial class consciousness seemed absent, and why hostility along 'racial' lines was clearly prevalent. Castles and Kosack argued that the problem of racism was 'really a problem of consciousness of the indigenous workers, rather than of the actual habits and culture of the immigrants'.¹² In this quotation we see a key failure of Marxist arguments: the apparent racism of the working class posed a real threat to their theories, but rather than challenge these presumptions they simply blamed the weak class consciousness of indigenous workers. They did not question whether or not similar socio-economic circumstances *should* engender class consciousness, which they held as self-evident; rather they argued that the white workers were ignorant of their socio-economic position, ignorant of their oppression, and ignorant of their shared class position with their Asian comrades. This thesis will present precisely the opposite argument to Castles and Kosack, that is to say that the *habits and cultures* of the immigrants prevented their white colleagues from viewing them as fellow members of the same 'class'.

Writing nearly thirty years after Castles and Kosack, in the introduction to the 2002 edition of *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, Paul Gilroy argued that 'taste and life style preference are much more important elements of identity than

¹² S. Castles and G. Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), 122.

ethnicity, class or regional ties could ever be'.¹³ Yet surely 'taste and life style preference' are vitally important demarcations of class? Take away the cultural choices people make and we are left with only socio-economic position; a mere option on a census form or a line on a graph. This is not to say that class is entirely divorced from socio-economic realities, but it is clear that one's position within society, one's job, and the amount of money one earns does not determine their politics, culture, or ideology. Sivanandan argued that Asian immigrants 'remained parallel in terms of culture [but] merged in terms of class'.¹⁴ It is argued here that this is not possible. The majority of Asian immigrants found themselves engaged in poorly paid manual work alongside white workers who very often held socialist or social democratic leanings, and who were often committed to the trade union movement. Yet they did not perceive immigrants as belonging to the same class as themselves, despite their identical economic circumstances. It was because of their cultural difference that they were not considered of the same class and, as we shall see, the language used to criticise Asian workers was interwoven with the language of class: they were considered a class apart.

This investigation will focus on the time period 1960 through to 1981, which encapsulates the first significant era of South Asian immigration into West Yorkshire; the 1962 Immigration Act and its aftermath; the election of the anti-immigration Tory candidate Peter Griffiths in Smethwick, West Midlands in 1964; the 1968 Kenyan Asian issue; the rise and fall of the National Front; and the 1981 Nationality Act. In addition to incorporating important immigration legislation, this time frame allows an assessment of the change of focus from the 'immigration' of foreign workers to 'race relations' with settled Asian workers and their children and the corresponding changes in political attitudes, as evidenced by both successive immigration controls and the 1965, 1968 and 1976 Race Relations Acts.¹⁵

¹³ Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, xxv.

¹⁴ Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 121.

¹⁵ For an overview of the most significant events during this period, see B. Schwarz, "'The Only White Man in There": the re-racialisation of England, 1956-1968', *Race and Class* 38 (1996): 65-78; S. Joshi and B. Carter, 'The Role of Labour in the Creation of a Racist Britain', *Race and Class* 25 (1984): 53-70; Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968'; A. Whipple, 'Revisiting the "Rivers of Blood" Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell', *The Journal of British Studies* 48 (2009): 717-735; C. Waters, "'Dark Strangers" in Our Midst:

Furthermore, we can analyse the changing position of the Labour Party and the trade unions from the beginning of the period, and dissect the reactions to the election of Peter Griffiths in Smethwick in 1964, the Grunwick strike, and the election of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative Government in 1979.¹⁶ Through an examination of the interaction of political, legal, social and economic factors we will see how certain issues – competition, welfare, culture and 'race' – became more and less prominent at certain times, and the reasons behind this.

Given that Yorkshire during this period was considered a 'white working class' heartland with solid support given to the Labour Party across the region, and also one of the main areas for South Asian immigration, it is an ideal area to examine the interaction between the Labour-supporting working class and the Asian immigrants who came to work and live alongside them. Nonetheless it should be noted that levels of support for the Labour Party and trade union membership varied across the region and across different industries. With the particular focus here on Bradford and the surrounding towns, the textile industry is particularly prominent, and within the specific industry there were further divisions depending on whether wool or worsted was used and whether one worked as a spinner, dyer, or weaver. The sub-industries in which immigrants were employed, the levels of unionisation in these sub-industries, and the status of particular jobs are all important factors which need assessment in detail, hence the rather geographically and industrially specific nature of this thesis. Furthermore, the fact that immigrants in the West Riding often inhabited rather small towns which did not always have the acute housing shortages and social welfare issues of the larger cities often affected how they were received, and this factor will also be given due analysis. There will be comparative references to other areas which were considered Labour strongholds and bastions of the white working class, and which also served as destinations for high numbers of immigrants, such as Manchester, Oldham and Rochdale. There will also be comparisons made with other areas of high South Asian settlement, such as the West

Discourses of Race and Nation in Britain, 1947-1963', *The Journal of British Studies* 36 (1997): 207-238.

¹⁶ On events at Grunwick and their significance, see *Race and Class* 18 (1977) and E. E. Cashmore, *United Kingdom?: Class, Race and Gender Since the War* (London: HarperCollins, 1989). For Smethwick see P. Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics* (London: Harmondsworth, 1965).

Midlands and the East End of London, in order to highlight the uniqueness or ubiquity of the issues affecting West Yorkshire. Clearly, the conclusions this thesis draws on the nature of 'class', 'race', and the reasoning behind support for the Labour Party may only be applicable to the specific conditions in the West Yorkshire textile towns during this period, yet it will be argued that the broader theories will be applicable across most of the United Kingdom.

This thesis will be divided into four main sections, examining the attitudes of the Labour Party and the trade unions – at both a national and local level - to race and immigration; the interactions between British and South Asian workers in the workplace; competition for welfare, housing, and 'cultural' assertion in communities; and immigrant attitudes towards the Labour Party. The first section offers a brief history of the Labour Party and union policy towards race and immigration issues since 1900. It will investigate the reasoning behind these policies, highlight when they changed and why, and draw out the tensions and contradictions between official policy and grass-roots practice, and the difficulty of connecting abstract notions of internationalism and anti-fascism with anti-racism on the streets and in the factories of Yorkshire. It will be argued here that the Labour Party was beset by a kind of schizophrenia from 1960 to 1981; torn between upholding its internationalist values and protecting its voter base. This tension increased notably after the Smethwick election of 1964 and only began to dissipate after the 1971 Immigration Act virtually ended all primary immigration and concern switched to wooing British Asians to Labour. Furthermore it will be argued that Labour supporters and union members were not particularly concerned with abstract concepts such as the international proletariat, but rather with their own pragmatic interests, and felt that the Labour Party and the Union movement should represent *their* interests (and they had a very clear idea of who 'they' were). The second section looks at the idea of competition for work and relations on the factory floor; it is argued that concerns over wage reduction or competition for work cannot explain resistance to immigrant workers, and cultural factors must be considered. In a similar vein the third section is concerned with community relations and fragmentation, and again asserts that the idea of hostility arising because of

competition between two groups for state welfare is entirely unsatisfactory for explaining racism. The fourth and final section concerns itself with the nature of British Asian politics, the reasoning behind their general support for Labour, and the implications of this for both the party and union leadership and the white working class in general.

It will be argued here that the hostility from Labour-voting men and women towards South Asian immigrants and their British Asian children cannot be satisfactorily explained by economic arguments. The alleged undermining of wages and competition for work and welfare was more of a convenient excuse than a real source of grievance. The white working-class Left did not see Asian workers as fellow members of the working class because of the cultural differences between them, and a conclusion we can draw from this is that similar economic and social position is not enough to create class consciousness; rather, cultural similarity is needed. Hence many Labour voters and trade union members saw no contradiction in their hostile attitudes towards their fellow workers; the labour movement was the movement of a specific people and meant to benefit a specific people, and Asian immigrants did not qualify, despite the similar role in production relations and their common economic position.

Chapter 1: The Policy of the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, 1900 – 1981.

Anti-racialist internationalism was not always an important tenet of Labour ideology, either in theory or in practice. The American sociologist Clarence Senior, writing in the 1950s, argued that in the United Kingdom ‘a powerful counter-weight to ill-feeling arising out of job competition is found in the Labour movement, in its trade union, political, education and cooperative activities where official doctrine frowns on discrimination’. Senior held that the Labour movement had been instrumental in guiding the British working class away from fascism and towards an understanding of foreign immigrants as fellow workers with whom they should cooperate.¹⁷ Whilst there are obvious flaws to this interpretation of British labour history in the first half of the twentieth century,¹⁸ it can certainly be said that, in theory at least, the Labour Party during this period pushed for racial tolerance and emphasised the primacy of class distinctions over racial and national identities. Whilst the 1905 Aliens Act – which introduced immigration control and registration - gained support from some on the Left, most notably from Bruce Glaiser of the Independent Labour Party, who argued that foreigners would ‘abuse our hospitality, overturn our institutions or violate our customs’,¹⁹ the only parliamentary opposition to the 1919 Aliens Act came from the Labour Party, in particular Josiah Wedgewood. Wedgewood set the theoretical tone for the party’s stance on immigration when he argued in the House of Commons that ‘the interests of the working classes everywhere are the same’, and that racism would not take root

¹⁷ C. Senior, ‘Race Relations and Labour Supply in Great Britain’, American Sociological Society, Race Relations Section, 8th September 1956, Labour Party Archives (LPA), People’s History Museum, Salford, Greater Manchester.

¹⁸ Much later scholarship has blamed Labour for working-class ‘racism’ through either passive inaction or deliberate exploitation of racism for electoral gain. See, for example, Joshi and Carter, ‘The Role of Labour in the Creation of a Racist Britain’, 53-70, and the interview with Jagmohan Joshi, of the Indian Workers’ Association, in *Searchlight* 46 (April 1979). During the first Labour majority government of 1945-51, ‘race’ and immigration issues were not the electoral liabilities they would later become, so it is likely that Senior’s favourable impression was accurate at the time.

¹⁹ However Glaiser did not necessarily represent the prevailing view in the labour movement at the time; the 1905 T.U.C. conference saw several speakers claim that immigration was not a cause of unemployment. See K. Lunn, ‘Immigrants and British Labour’s Response, 1870 – 1950’, *History Today* 35 (1985): 49.

amongst those who realised that ‘the brotherhood of man and the international spirit of the workers is not merely a phrase but a reality’.²⁰ The Parliamentary Labour Party united in a vote against the third reading of the Bill, which nevertheless passed with a sizeable majority. This ideological stance continued in the pre-war years, when newly elected leader Clement Attlee MP confirmed his support of the anti-Alien Acts lobby in February 1923, and the Labour opposition voiced constant complaints over the deportation of Jewish refugees back to Germany in the 1930s.²¹ It was not a problem for Labour to present a minority opposition to anti-immigration legislation when they were a minor party with little chance of winning a parliamentary majority, yet this principled stand would prove much harder to sustain when Labour became a major party in power after the Second World War. The debate over who the Labour Party was meant to represent – was it a ‘class’ party, an internationalist workers’ party, or only the representative of the British working class? – was not a real problem during this period, yet would cause serious challenges for the party during the post-1945 years of immigration.

The trades unions did not maintain the same ideological front as the Labour Party. For example, G. D. Kelley, secretary of the Manchester and Salford Trades Council in the 1890s, was both a champion of sweated Jewish workers and also virulently anti-Semitic when criticising Jews who had not kept up their union fees. In this respect, he set the tone for many of his successors: the union came first before any considerations of racism and prejudice.²² Indeed because of perceived threats from both poor Jewish immigrants and a concern over ‘international finance’, many of the early Labour newspapers such as *Clarion*, *Labour Leader*, and *Justice* had a distinct anti-Semitic tone.²³ Yet as the threat of fascism both at home and abroad grew in the 1930s, the whole labour movement, placing itself in opposition to fascism, became, almost incidentally, anti-racialist. This led it to stand in solidarity with Jews and immigrants against the fascists, as seen in events such as the ‘Battle

²⁰ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 105.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 110-2.

²² K. Lunn ‘Race Relations or Industrial Relations?: Race and Labour in Britain, 1890-1950’, in K. Lunn (ed.), *Race and Labour in Twentieth Century Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1985), 5.

²³ As argued by Mark Duffield. See M. Duffield, ‘Rationalization and the Politics of Segregation: Indian Workers in Britain’s Foundry Industry’ in Lunn (ed.), *Race and Labour in Twentieth Century Britain*, 200.

of Cable Street' in 1936. According to Joanna Bourke, the Trades Union movement in London's East End urged Jewish workers to fight 'with their English comrades' against 'capitalism and reaction'.²⁴ Yet crucially there was a difference between opposing fascism and opposing 'racism' – as evidenced by the call for Jews to stand with their *English* comrades – and this tension between opposing fascism and advocating racialist policies was to plague the Left for much of the twentieth century. To stand against fascism, an ideology directly opposed to the ideology of the Labour movement, did not create any ideological or pragmatic difficulties. However opposing 'racism' aroused uncomfortable questions about whom the labour movement was meant to represent.

In the immediate aftermath of the Second World War trades unions and the Labour Party presented a unified front on immigration, at least officially. Unions such as the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers, in the words of Mark Duffield, 'grudgingly agreed, partly out of loyalty to the new Labour government, to accept further temporary relaxation on the recruitment, training and upgrading of inexperienced or "green" labour'²⁵ - but this loyalty was not to last for long. The unions by and large accepted the employment of women, displaced persons and prisoners of war during the 1939-1945 conflict and its immediate aftermath, but certain unions began to reverse this position soon afterwards. In the 1950s, after a conference debate on immigration, the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers adopted a resolution calling for cooperation between workers of all nationalities in opposition to 'the common enemy', the employer.²⁶ Furthermore, in the aftermath of the 1955 dispute concerning black bus drivers and conductors, the TGWU adopted a resolution condemning discrimination and the 'shameful spectacle' of workers of different races in conflict with each other.²⁷ Finally, the

²⁴ J Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain, 1890-1960: Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge, 1994), 202.

²⁵ Such as Italian immigrants and European Voluntary Workers. Kenneth Lunn has argued that the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers opposed the induction in the Union of Polish workers, but shop floor members defied this ban, and by 1947 the leadership had to 'accept the inevitable'. It was partly a way of ensuring that Poles went to the A.U.F.W. rather than any other union but it also reflected grassroots pressure. Lunn, 'Immigrants and British Labour's Response', 51.

²⁶ Duffield, 'Rationalization and the Politics of Segregation', 156.

²⁷ In February 1955 strikes began at West Bromwich Corporation in protest at employment of an Indian conductor; in September of that year Wolverhampton workers refused overtime in protest at

Trade Union Conference passed resolutions against colour discrimination in 1955 and 1959.²⁸ Nonetheless despite the honourable rhetoric of sections of union leadership, there was strong resistance and hostility towards immigrants on many factory floors, and as the power in the unions shifted towards shop stewards in the 1950s, this posed a clear challenge to the union movement in the years ahead.²⁹

The aftermath of the Second World War, which saw Labour govern with a majority in the House of the Commons for the first time, in addition to the dawn of widespread Commonwealth immigration, presented fresh problems for the party, which began to concern the leadership during their long period in opposition from 1951. They were under no illusions that their support base was united in anti-racist internationalism, and received daily letters from Labour voters expressing opposition to immigration and urging the party to reverse their stance lest it benefit the Conservatives.³⁰ This letter sent to Hugh Gaitskell on the 6th September 1958 illustrates the message coming from many grassroots members:

Dear Mr Gaitskell, As a Lancashire woman, I am shocked at the lack of foresight by the Socialist Party regarding allowing, and even encouraging, immigrants, coloured or otherwise, to enter Britain. They are a dead weight thrust on the working population at a time when employment is dwindling and the housing problem is as serious as ever. I maintain that it is unfair to burden Britain with extra people to feed, clothe, and house. Fine-sounding speeches on international brotherhood are just nonsense in a country that will soon be fighting for survival in the world's trade markets. I ask you to suggest to the Government that immigration be stopped immediately for people who cannot support themselves, and that all unemployed immigrants already here should return to their own country. I wish to add that the clause made by your recent Socialist Government, which allowed payment of National assistance to people who had not subscribed to the scheme,

increased use of black workers and demanded a five per cent colour quota. See R. Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 131, and Senior, 'Race Relations and Labour Supply in Great Britain'.

²⁸ J. Wrench, 'Unequal Comrades: Trade Unions, Equal Opportunity and Racism', in R. Jenkins and J. Solomos, *Racism and Equal Opportunity Policies in the 1980s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 165.

²⁹ As early as 1956, the National Union of Railwaymen, for example, officially called for some form of immigration control. R. Miles and A. Phizacklea, *The T.U.C., Black Workers and New Commonwealth Immigration, 1954-1973* (Birmingham: S.S.R.C. Research Unit on Ethnic Relations, 1977), 8.

³⁰ Joshi and Carter, 'The Role of Labour in the Creation of a Racist Britain'. Waters, "'Dark Strangers" in Our Midst', 207-238.

is mostly responsible for the large influx of immigrants. I suggest that you tour the Lancashire and Yorkshire constituencies, that are loyal Socialists, and find out their opinions on immigrants. I am sure the result would surprise you.³¹

This letter reveals several of the tensions that would beset the Labour Party during the period 1945 to 1982. There was the awareness – felt keenly by Gaitskell himself – that the growth of an international market in labour and capital would restrict attempts at wealth redistribution and social justice; the dichotomy between the ‘fine-sounding speeches’ of the party leadership and the sentiments amongst many of their supporters; the fear of competition for work, wages, and welfare; and the real concern that this issue could lead to an increased transference of working class support to the Tories in constituencies where Labour had a near monopoly on the support of the population. The response offered to this letter, written by the Commonwealth Officer John Hatch, also illustrates how the party initially attempted to diffuse these tensions: Hatch emphasised that more people emigrated from the United Kingdom than immigrated at this time, and how it was important to support the Commonwealth ideal, which could not be done at the same time as proposing restriction.³² The response – a mixture of facts and appeals to principle – was typical of Labour responses to anti-immigration sentiments for most of the 1960s. They stressed that immigrants were not responsible for unemployment, that housing shortages had existed before large-scale immigration, that many people were leaving the country, creating a labour shortage in key areas, and that it was an essential ideal of the Labour Party to uphold equality and brotherhood of all.³³ These responses missed the point, however: for people such as the author of the above mentioned letter, the Labour Party existed to represent and support a specific group of people, and one could not gain entry to that group simply by occupying the same socio-economic position. Rather one needed to adopt the cultural identity of

³¹ Letter to Hugh Gaitskell from Anne Park, 6th September 1958, LPA.

³² Letter to Anne Park from John Hatch, (undated), LPA.

³³ See, for example, letter from Joan Wicken to the *Daily Mirror*, 3rd September 1958, where she asserted that emigration exceeded immigration and that pressure on homes and jobs was diminishing. Another example of this is the 100,000 leaflets distributed in workplaces by the Movement for Colonial Freedom, which rebutted the notion that colonial immigrants were a threat to jobs. See S. Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 287. Yet at this point Labour did not fully comprehend that it was the skin colour, culture, and habits of the immigrants, not their competition *per se*, that people objected to.

‘working-class’ people in a particular area, in terms of accent, dress, food, politics, and leisure pursuits, in order to be considered ‘one of us’ and enjoy the hard-won benefits of the post-War welfare reforms.

The Labour Party, of course, did not appreciate that ‘class’ could be divorced from socio-economic status in this way, and so, aware of the racism amongst much of their base, they began to look to assimilation and integration. The logic was that British and immigrant workers were of the same class, whether they realised it or not, and race relations and anti-discrimination legislation would mediate tensions and bring this realisation to light. With this in mind, party insiders in the late 1950s began considering the benefits of a ban on racial incitement. In 1958 the party began to plan for anti-discrimination legislation to be enacted when next in government, and at the end of 1958 the Committee for Inter-Racial Unity was established, which represented eighteen trade union branches, six Labour Party branches, and several local “black” organisations.³⁴

Yet these actions did not indicate that the party understood the nature and scope of the problem which faced them and were willing to tackle it head on; on the contrary, they believed that racism was a problem of class consciousness, and a bad habit which people could be ‘educated’ out of. (See, for example, a letter from Hugh Gaitskell to Dr Kenneth Little, Head of Department of Social Anthropology, University of Edinburgh, 9th September 1958: ‘We do appreciate that to get rid of colour prejudice through education is a pretty formidable task but I agree that it is something we shall have to try and do.’) In an internal memorandum discussing the statement of the National Executive Committee (N.E.C.) on Racial Discrimination, it was claimed that ‘almost everyone who discriminates against coloured people tries to hide the fact or rationalise it. This indicates that at the moment the majority of UK citizens believe that colour prejudice is something to be ashamed of’.³⁵ It was felt that racism was ‘un-British’; a problem confined to areas such as the southern United States or South Africa, and something that could be tackled with minimal

³⁴ ‘Race Relations Working Party: Race Relations’, in Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and Papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA; E. Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France: Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 41; Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures*, 203.

³⁵ ‘Evidence to Support N.E.C. Statement on Racial Discrimination’, LPA.

action (or, ideally, ignored as long as it did not have adverse electoral consequences). Indeed, given that Labour Party's success was built on support from various ethnic and religious minorities, it was hoped that immigration would present an opportunity rather than a crisis.³⁶ Throughout much of the early twentieth century Labour had built its foundations on ethnic blocks; much of its support in the East End of London, for example, came through courting Irish and Jewish votes, and Les Back and others have claimed that historically, 'loyalty to the Labour Party...has drawn on the strengths of community networks that have resisted the erasing force of assimilationist rhetoric'.³⁷ The Labour Party at the end of the 1950s, therefore, felt confident that it could overcome the problems posed by immigration, and capture the votes of both immigrant and British workers alike as a 'class'. Yet Labour's success in relatively ethnically and socially homogenous areas such as Yorkshire was built more on the strength of the union movement, and not built on ethnic building blocks. Events of the early 1960s, in Yorkshire and elsewhere, were to dispel these illusions.

The first four years of the 1960s saw the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigration Act, low unemployment, the death of party leader Hugh Gaitskell, and the dual events of a Labour victory in the general election of 1964 and the election of Peter Griffiths as Conservative Member of Parliament for Smethwick, having based his campaign on anti-immigration sentiment. Although the combination of low unemployment and the explicitly discriminatory immigration Act – which would restrict the rights of some British passport holders to enter the UK – allowed Labour to make a last stand on principled opposition to immigration restriction, the

³⁶ Clement Attlee's success in Stepney, for example, was based largely on his ability to win the support of both Irish Catholic and Jewish votes – probably because he was neither. See D. Howell, *Attlee* (London: Haus Publishing, 2006), 16 and 18-19.

In terms of Labour building a political base upon religious identities, one example is the interwoven nature of Labour and Methodism across much of the country, to the extent that many Labour clubs would not take a license to sell alcohol. See G. Pearson, "'Paki-bashing" in a North East Lancashire cotton town', G. Mungham and G. Pearson (eds.), *Working-Class Youth Culture* (London: Routledge, 1976), 62.

³⁷ L. Back et al, 'New Labour's White Heart: Politics, Multiculturalism, and the Return of Assimilation', *Political Quarterly* 73 (2002): 452. Notably, however, this was not the case in Yorkshire, where Labour had built upon the strong union movement and which, until the 1950s, was relatively ethnically and religiously homogenous, in comparison to areas such as the East End of London, Lancashire, and Western Scotland.

last three events conspired to make the party take a difference stance on race and immigration during this period.³⁸ Although most Labour groups in the country by this time contained people with anti-immigration sentiments, they were, in the words of Paul Foot, ‘led and instructed by people with some theoretical training in the Labour movement’, who stressed the importance of ideological consistency.³⁹

Gaitskell was outspoken in his opposition to the Commonwealth Immigration Bill during its passage through Parliament, denouncing it as unfairly restrictive and antagonistic to good race relations, given that the Tories had failed to act on integration of immigrants.⁴⁰ The National Executive Council (NEC) suggested an alternative handling of the issue with the publication of its ‘Integration of Immigrants’ pamphlet in 1962.⁴¹ Other Labour MPs such as Barbara Castle launched impassioned attacks at the Bill, claiming in 1961: ‘I do not care whether or not fighting this Commonwealth Immigration Bill will lose me my seat, for I am sure that the Bill will lose this country the Commonwealth’.⁴² The Labour opposition did have some success; opinion polls suggested that support for the Bill fell from 72% to 62%, and numerous constituency parties rallied to oppose the Bill. Furthermore, some concessions were gained, such as the right of West Indian common law wives to enter.⁴³ Nonetheless the Bill passed through Parliament and into law, although Labour had forced the Act to be subject to renewal every five years, and Denis Healey pledged that a Labour government would repeal the legislation - a proviso and pledge that the party would later come to regret. It was to be a ‘last stand’ on principled opposition to racially motivated immigration legislation. Senior Labour figures had different reasons for opposing the Bill; according to Foot, Gaitskell abhorred ‘anything that smelt of racial prejudice’, and ‘believed in the Commonwealth’.⁴⁴ Yet Gaitskell was also keenly aware of the

³⁸ The Act differentiated amongst British passport holders depending on the issuing authority. See Hansen, ‘The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968’.

³⁹ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 164.

⁴⁰ ‘Why the big rush to shut the door? Asks Gaitskell’, *Daily Mirror* (November 13th 1961), 21.

⁴¹ ‘Race Relations Working Party: Race Relations’, in Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and Papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁴² Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 191.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 171-2.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 175.

economic forces that lay behind immigration, and as the man who had tried to repeal Clause IV of the party's constitution - which committed it to nationalisation of key industries - over three decades before it was eventually repealed, he understood the challenges of the increasing 'globalisation' of labour and capital to the British labour movement. In the words of Bill Schwarz, Britain in the post-War era was 'peculiarly vulnerable in the world economy: organised as a global economic unit but with diminishing access to privileged markets'.⁴⁵ One suspects Gaitskell appreciated this and realised that uncomfortable changes would have to be made to overcome these vulnerabilities. The passage of the 1962 Act and Gaitskell's death in 1963 saw the party surrender control of the discourse on race and immigration. Henceforth when debating this issue with the Conservatives, anti-immigration groups, and their own supporters and voters, the party would not be able to uphold the ideological line – that of equality of all and the brotherhood of workers - which it had previously held.

The party began to turn towards 'restriction and integration', a process that had begun by 1964 but was accelerated by victory in the polls and the events of Smethwick. From 1963 after consultation with the N.E.C. it was decided that the British Overseas Socialist Fellowship should concentrate its activities on improving relations between Commonwealth immigrants and the party, and new momentum was given to the plans to legislate on race discrimination.⁴⁶ Frank McLeavy, MP for Bradford East, summed up the new position which the party began to take in the first four years of the 1960s, when he claimed that 'we cannot afford to be the welfare state for the whole of the Commonwealth. We have a responsibility *to our own people*'.⁴⁷ There was a clear idea of who the party had a responsibility to, and it was not affected by any ideas of an international proletariat; imagined or real electoral necessity had put paid to that concept. As Wendy Webster has argued for the period after the Second World War, there was a debate during this period concerning who

⁴⁵ Schwarz, 'The Only White Man in There', 66.

⁴⁶ 'British Overseas Fellowship report on race relations to the N.E.C.', in Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and Papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁴⁷ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 177. Emphasis added. The same language was also used in a letter sent to Clement Attlee by eleven Labour MPs urging him to adopt a restrictionist immigration policy. See Webster, *Imagining Home*, 25.

was British, and that debate gave ‘raced’ answers,⁴⁸ but I would argue that in the Yorkshire constituencies there were also cultural criteria; ‘our own people’ were people who spoke like us, dressed like us, and ate the same food as us – not merely people who worked in the same jobs as us. It was decided that the best way to represent ‘our people’, and win their votes, was the dual strategy of restriction coupled with integration and anti-discrimination legislation.⁴⁹ This policy was already in place after the passage of the 1962 Act and Gaitskell’s death, and only accelerated by the events of Smethwick and the change of priorities necessitated by forming a government, as evidenced by a letter from a Labour activist in 1963. David Chalkley, prospective parliamentary candidate for Brentford and Chiswick, wary of being criticised on immigration from both the Right and the Left, wrote to L. Williams at Labour headquarters urging for greater clarity on race and immigration in party material: ‘It certainly seems we should make our policy clear on this. As we have changed it why not say so clearly and not suffer on all sides.’⁵⁰

Writing in 1965, Paul Foot claimed that ‘ironically, if Labour had lost the 1964 election they may have halted the tide of racialism. Unfortunately for race relations, Labour in opposition and Labour in power are two completely different political phenomena’.⁵¹ There is certainly some truth to Foot’s observation. The party had already begun to change its position on race and immigration by the time of the 1964 election, but its transformation into a party of government and the events and Smethwick accelerated and solidified this change. Labour in opposition may have been able to criticise Tory immigration policies, whilst remaining silent about their own stance; or rather, contrary to Foot’s predictions, they may have tried to ‘outflank’ the Tories on race in a bid for broader electoral support. We cannot deal in counterfactuals, but we can be certain that while in power Labour attempted to avoid the issue, but were occasionally forced to act, demonstrating their increasingly contradictory policies.

⁴⁸ Webster, *Imagining Home*, 25.

⁴⁹ Joshi and Carter, ‘The Role of Labour in the Creation of a Racist Britain’.

⁵⁰ ‘Letter from Prospective Parliamentary Candidate David Chalkley to L. Williams’, in *Immigration 1962-3*, LPA.

⁵¹ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 234.

The 1964 election result in Smethwick gave the Labour Party an almighty shock. Despite their return to government, their Shadow Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, lost his seat to a Conservative candidate who had based his campaign almost entirely on an anti-immigration platform. The new Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, reacted furiously, claiming in a speech to the Commons that Griffiths should ‘serve his term as a parliamentary leper’ –causing outrage on the opposition benches and no little embarrassment to his parliamentary colleagues.⁵² Wilson’s reaction can perhaps be attributed to his genuine dislike of Griffiths’ racist views, or the humiliation of having a high-profile member of his Shadow Cabinet unseated in the context of a large nationwide swing towards Labour. Yet surely a certain amount of the anger which led him to use such hubristic and un-Parliamentary language stemmed from his sense of betrayal over ‘gentleman’s agreement’ on the race issue being broken. Wilson and the Labour leadership feared the potential of anger over immigration to damage the party, and hoped that mainstream politicians would consider it bad form, and ‘un-British’ to openly campaign on such an issue. Peter Griffiths’ campaign in Smethwick brought the issue to centre stage, and forced Labour to take notice of a subject it would rather have shifted to the periphery. Wilson knew that Griffiths’ campaign and subsequent victory would exacerbate the tensions and contradictions over race and immigration that had beset the Labour Party since the Second World War, hence his uncharacteristically furious denouncement of Griffiths.

In many ways Gordon Walker’s desperate defence of his Smethwick seat captures the wider policy change of the party during this period. Originally he tried to dodge the issue, reiterate the doctrinal statements and emigration statistics released by the party leadership, and insist that race was a marginal issue (this despite the fact that the Smethwick Labour club operated a colour bar at that time).⁵³ After Griffiths seemed to edge ahead in the race, Gordon Walker and his activists abandoned their previous principled stance and began blaming the Tories for immigration, thus surrendering the moral high ground, losing ideological

⁵² Parliamentary Debates (Commons) (701), cols. 70-1, 3 Nov. 1965

⁵³ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 74.

consistency, and in return winning only a handful of extra votes.⁵⁴ After Smethwick Labour could never again remain aloof of race and immigration issues, and it began, in the words of Foot, ‘a stampede of both parties towards Griffiths’ policies’.⁵⁵ Had Labour wanted to draw a line under the issue after 1964, the requirement to renew the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act prevented this; Labour was forced to take a stand one way or the other, and as Bourne and Sivandandan have argued, Labour ‘capitulated to the racist ideology of the day’, with its White Paper to renew the Act in 1965.⁵⁶ In this White Paper Labour decreased the number of ‘A’ and ‘B’ category vouchers (for those with a job already secured in the UK and highly qualified professionals such as doctors and engineers), and formally abolished the nearly defunct ‘C’ category vouchers (for the remainder).⁵⁷ It may seem odd that a Labour government – which had so vigorously opposed restriction when in opposition – would further restrict the entry of doctors and immigrants with jobs awaiting them, yet this assumes a purely economic reasoning for the tightening of controls. While it is true to say that unemployment was increasing during this period, it was not competition for jobs that caused hostility to immigrants, but rather the colour of their skin, and Labour well knew this: A National Opinion Poll of 1968 asked whether white aliens or ‘coloured’ British passport holders should be given priority in terms of immigration. Forty-four per cent of respondents opted for white aliens and thirty-nine per cent for ‘coloured’ British passport holders. Furthermore, a 1967 poll by Research Services found that of those opposed to ‘coloured’ immigration, eighty-three per cent objected because they ‘created slums...and brought diseases into the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 62.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 77.

⁵⁶ J. Bourne and A. Sivandandan, ‘Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen: the Sociology of Race Relations in Britain’, *Race and Class* 21 (1980): 335. Of course it could be argued that this capitulation ‘to the racist ideology of the day’ is simply an admirable example of democracy, with the government responding to public opinion, yet this Labour government would inaugurate liberal reforms, which did not necessarily reflect public sentiment, on issues such as homosexuality, divorce, abortion, censorship and capital punishment. That it felt able to ‘lead’ public opinion on these issues and ‘follow’ it on race and immigration demonstrates the fear of the presumed ‘racism’ of the electorate and the internal contradictions and tensions within the Labour Party over this issue.

⁵⁷ Sivandandan, *A Different Hunger*, 108.

country’, whereas only fifty-nine per cent expressed concerns over jobs and thirty-eight per cent spoke of strains on schools, hospitals and housing.⁵⁸

The party was by no means united in its direction on immigration: delegates representing over 1.5 million votes stood against the government’s restrictionist policy at the 1965 conference.⁵⁹ Yet restriction coupled with anti-discrimination had been chosen as the path of least electoral resistance, and although Labour leaders were aware that legislating on race relations would anger many within their ranks, they felt it would be easier to ‘sell’ to their grassroots. The 1965 Race Relations Act was very much the doing of politicians, particularly Roy Jenkins, the Home Secretary, with little input from the electorate or ethnic minorities. Similarly the 1968 Act, which aimed to increase the scope of anti-discrimination laws and allow investigations to take place without prior complaints, was pushed for by bureaucrats and Jenkins, despite his displacement at the Home Office by Jim Callaghan. There was opposition to both Acts from within the Labour movement, most notably from the Trade Union Congress (TUC), which outdid the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) in objecting to the legislation.⁶⁰ The TUC’s main concerns stemmed from government involvement in industry matters, and fear that future Conservative governments would use the precedent to interfere in industry, but they would have also been aware that the Act would not be well received by some of their members. Nonetheless Jenkins and the race relations lobby within the party argued that legislation was necessary to avert future social turmoil: ‘the next generation – who will not be immigrants but coloured Britons – will expect full opportunities to deploy their skills. If we frustrate these expectations we shall not only be subjecting our own economy to the most grievous self-inflicted wound, but we shall irreparably damage the quality of life in our society by creating an American type situation in which an indigenous minority which is no longer an immigrant group feels itself

⁵⁸ ‘Public Opinion and Immigration by Dr Mark Abrams, January 1969’, Study Group on Immigration: Minutes and Papers: 6th June 1968 – 14th May 1969, LPA.

Interestingly, immigrants themselves described general discrimination and unfriendliness as the worst aspect of life in Britain, with housing difficulties second, and employment problems third. April 1967 P.E.P. report, cited in A. Buchan, ‘Multicoloured Britain’, *International Journal* 23 (1968): 526.

⁵⁹ Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, 47.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 59-60 and 70-80.

discriminated against on the grounds of colour alone'.⁶¹ In Jenkins' speech we see the key pillars of Labour policy vis-à-vis race and immigration in the mid-1960s: the denouncement of racism as 'un-British' and a foreign concept, the assumption that primary immigration had all but ended, and the concentration on integration. Indeed, the spectre of 'race riots' in the United States in 1964 was used very often by key figures in to anti-discrimination lobby to stress the need for urgent action: 'Fear of strangers has overcome the normal fair-mindedness of the people of this country. Unless steps are taken NOW to right the wrongs, we shall have ourselves to blame if in 10 years there are race riots on the scale of those in Watts County, California'.⁶²

Of course, the Labour Party was aware that despite its new policy of immigration restriction, anti-discrimination legislation could be a real electoral liability, as the Race Relations Working Party advised: 'If new policies are to be adopted, for reasons of political timing it is likely that the next few months [that is to say, the summer of 1967, a year into the Parliamentary term], offer the most opportune moment for the introduction of legislation against discrimination in employment and housing.'⁶³ Similarly, the British Overseas Socialist Fellowship stressed the need to act immediately in the summer of 1967, for it was 'unlikely that any effective anti-discrimination measures would be passed after 1968 in view of the possible electoral hostility'.⁶⁴ The party leadership was careful to portray anti-discrimination legislation of 1965 and 1968⁶⁵ as part of a long Labour tradition of state intervention to improve the lives of citizens: 'the second generation of coloured people...will leave school in the next ten years seeking better jobs and houses for themselves than have been enjoyed by their migrant parents'. In contrast, opposition to the legislation was denounced as typical Tory connivance against the working

⁶¹ Speech by Roy Jenkins 10th October 1966. Text from 'Campaign against racial discrimination, memorandum of evidence to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations', in Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁶² 'Statement by Mr Dermott De Trafford on behalf of the NCCI on the occasion of the publication of the PEP Report on Racial Discrimination', Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁶³ 'Race Relations Working Party, Race Relations', Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁶⁴ 'BOSF report on race relations to the N.E.C.', Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁶⁵ The 1965 Act outlawed discrimination on 'grounds of colour, race, or ethnic or national origins' in public places; the 1968 Act extended this to the provision of employment, housing, and services.

class: ‘Many Conservative backbenchers would, no doubt, oppose any extension of the law to cover job or housing discrimination, on the ground that it would interfere with rights of contract or property. This traditional Conservative argument against social reform should not find sympathy against among Socialists.’⁶⁶ This argument was echoed by Mark Bonham Carter, Chairman of the Race Relations Board, who claimed in a speech in April 1967 that ‘all the arguments against positive action of any sort, and against legislation in particular, amount in the end to this: that exhortation and voluntary action can cure everything and that if it can’t, legislation won’t’.⁶⁷ In other words, to argue against state interference on this matter was a Tory attitude, and the claim that if individuals were left alone they would sort out their problems themselves had no place within the Labour movement.

Although Labour had hoped to draw a line under immigration and made a valiant stand on anti-discrimination, the immigration issue refused to be buried, and was brought back to the centre of politics with the Kenyan Asians crisis and Enoch Powell’s ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech in 1968.⁶⁸ There can be no doubt that Powell’s speech had a tremendous impact on British politics and the lives of many immigrants: London dockers marched in support of Powell, whilst anxious immigrants faced great uncertainty; there was not only the increased chance of violence due to the racist sentiments stoked by Powell, there was genuine concern amongst many immigrants about the viability of a future in Britain.⁶⁹ With the heightened racist feeling in the aftermath of Powell’s speech – such as the thousands of letters of support sent to newspapers and Powell himself and numerous

⁶⁶ ‘The Need for Legislation by Anthony Lester’, Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁶⁷ ‘Speech by Mark Bonham Carter, 27th April 1967’, Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

⁶⁸ On Powell, see Whipple, ‘Revisiting the “Rivers of Blood”’; Schwarz, ‘The Only White Man in There’; D. Wright and R. Ricketts, ‘Powell in “Two-Round” TV Battle’, *Daily Mirror*, (January 4th 1969); B. Levin, ‘Mr Powell “a man so various”’, *The Times*. (11th May 1971).

⁶⁹ For an example of this see the *Guardian* interview in 2010 with the comedienne and screenwriter Meera Syal, who grew up in Walsall, West Midlands in the 1960s: ‘I have vivid memories of my parents and all their friends talking about a certain speech that Enoch Powell made. I always thought that the reason there were packed suitcases on top of every wardrobe was that we might have to leave the country in the middle of the night because of Enoch Powell. It was only years later that I realised that everybody’s families had suitcases on top of the wardrobe.’ Interview with N. McGrath, *The Guardian*, 9th October 2010.

strikes in support of his sentiments⁷⁰ - many Asians were uncertain as to whether it was wise to invest in a house given the surprising level of repatriationist sentiment evoked by Powell.⁷¹ Similarly, the clamour caused by the Kenyan Asian issue, with even the usually moderate *Daily Mirror* warned of an ‘uncontrolled flood’ of immigrants, caused Labour to go ‘more Tory than the Tories’ with the 1968 Immigration Act.⁷² Despite the fact that moderations were made to the 1962 Act, for example, allowing individuals to gain entry regardless of time spent on waiting list, and allowing non-British students to stay in Britain after graduation,⁷³ there was perhaps some truth to Sivanandan’s 1982 statement that ‘what Powell says today, the Tories say tomorrow and Labour legislates in the day after’, in terms of restriction at least.⁷⁴

The political discourse surrounding immigration changed in the 1970s as primary immigration virtually ceased after the 1971 Immigration Act, immigrant families began to settle in the UK and the proportion of ethnic minorities born in the UK increased, and the National Front (NF) came to national prominence.⁷⁵ Whereas Labour in the 1960s feared losing votes due to apparently lax immigration policies, the rise of the NF and the increasing number of immigrant votes to be won created yet another *volte face* in policy. National Agent of the Labour Party Reg Underhill warned prospective Parliamentary Candidates in 1974 that they ‘should have in mind that National Front candidates almost always stand in seats where there are more immigrant votes to be lost to Labour than Labour votes to be gained by the

⁷⁰ See Whipple, ‘Revisiting the “Rivers of Blood”’ and F. Lindop, ‘Racism and the working class: strikes in support of Enoch Powell in 1968’, *Labour History Review* 66 (Spring 2001).

⁷¹ Cassette 306A, ‘Asian Community’, Huddersfield Oral Histories Collection, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Kirklees Library, Huddersfield.

⁷² Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 107.

Note that the *Daily Mirror* began to change editorial direction after the resignation of the influential Hugh Cudlipp in 1967. Under Cudlipp’s editorship in the 1950s the *Mirror* often held a notable anti-racist, anti-colonial standpoint, in contrast to most other national newspapers. See, for example, J. Lewis, ‘“Daddy wouldn’t buy me a Mau Mau”: the British popular press and the demoralisation of empire’ in J. Lonsdale and A. Odhiambo, (eds.) *Mau Mau and nationhood: arms, authority and narration* (James Currey: Oxford, 2003): 227-250, and more generally M. Pugh, ‘The *Daily Mirror* and the Revival of Labour, 1935-1945’, *Twentieth Century British History* 9 (1998): 420-438.

⁷³ ‘Study Group on Immigration Minutes 12th September 1968’, Study Group on Immigration 1968, LPA.

⁷⁴ Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 24.

⁷⁵ P. Chippindale, ‘Front “defector” tells of meetings to plan violence’, *The Guardian*. (August 11th 1977).

National Front, so candidates should beware of appearing to make any concessions to National Front arguments'.⁷⁶ Nonetheless there was concern and alarm that the NF seemed to take votes from Labour; Huddersfield MP Ken Lomas claimed in 1974 that 'at least 40% of [the NF vote] came from traditional Labour voters, and this is something we should note for the future'.⁷⁷ Muhammad Anwar summed up the change in Labour policy when he argued in 1975 that while 'in 1964 no party thought the immigrant vote worth bidding for with the concomitant risk of losing native support. Ten years later, in 1974, all three main political parties did their best to win immigrant support in general, but Asian votes in particular'.⁷⁸

Anwar notes that there was no guarantee that Asians would vote for Labour, and attributes their success in capturing much of the Asian vote to Labour policies after the February election of 1974, such as reuniting Ugandan Asian families, giving amnesty to those affected by the retrospective clause of the 1971 Act, and giving equal rights to non-resident husbands and fiancés of women in the UK.⁷⁹ (Perhaps surprisingly this did not result in heavy criticism from either the press or the general public, and nor did Labour's overwhelming support for the Conservative government's acceptance of the Ugandan Asians in the first place. It may be that the emphasis on the 'middle-class' nature of the Ugandans, or their portrayal as refugees from the despotic rule of an 'African Hitler', made their admission more tolerable; given that the 1971 Immigration Act had all but ended primary immigration they may have been seen as an acceptable 'one off'.⁸⁰)

Furthermore, in 1975 the Government prepared a White Paper on expanding the powers of the 1968 Race Relations Act. The NF certainly perceived Labour as an

⁷⁶ 'Circular to all Prospective Parliamentary Candidates, 19th September 1974, from H. R. Underhill', N.A.D. Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

⁷⁷ 'Letter to Reg Underhill from Kenneth Lomas, MP for Huddersfield West, 13th November 1974', N.A.D. Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

⁷⁸ 'Loyalty of Asian voters crucial for Labour', *The Guardian*. (October 24th 1972); M. Anwar, 'Asian Participation in the 1974 Autumn Election', *New Community*, 4, 3, (1975), 378.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 378.

⁸⁰ Mike Bristow has argued that 'the [Conservative] government continually emphasised the educated middle-class character of the refugees, who, it seemed, were not at all like ordinary Asians but more like ordinary people'. Although it was also significant that Amin was the focus of widespread public anger at the time, I would broadly agree with this view, as most hostility towards Asian immigrants stemmed from their supposedly 'low status' or 'low class' nature. See M. Bristow, 'Britain's response to the Uganda Asian crisis: government myths versus political and resettlement realities', *New Community* 5 (Autumn 1976): 268.

‘immigrant friendly’ party, even though, as Sivanandan and others have argued, this was not necessarily the case, and targeted Labour activists with abuse and intimidation. Alison Kelley, of the Blackley Labour Party, reported NF supporters pledging to ‘get you Commy bastards’, and claiming that the Labour Party was ‘a Communist-dominated dictatorship’.⁸¹ *Spearhead*, the NF magazine, constantly raged against the Labour Party and trade unions and emphasised the need to attack ‘the Reds’.⁸² Given that NF candidates usually failed to secure enough votes to regain their deposits, it may be argued that the Left overestimated the significance of the Front, yet in many ways it was helpful for Labour, and certainly far-Left groups such as the Communist Party of Great Britain, to hold up a paradigm example of everything it stood against. It was easy to stand in opposition to the National Front; it was electorally difficult to present a coherent immigration policy to the electorate. In this respect the Front allowed Labour, and the Left generally, to ‘gloss over’ the tensions and contradictions concerning race and immigration.

It is fair to claim, as Stephen Castles and others have, that the policy of the Trades Unions Council (T.U.C.), went from one of welcoming immigrants and expressing solidarity whilst taking no action to integrate them, through to quiet support for the 1968 and 1971 Immigration Acts whilst denying the existence of widespread racism, to finally acting when the NF came on the scene.⁸³ Whereas Labour made a concerted attempt to attract immigrant votes in the early 1970s, the position of trade unions was more inconsistent. There were many instances of unions taking action against racism: Doncaster Trades Council, for example, established a committee for racial harmony in 1974 and sent delegates to take part in counter-NF demonstrations. The Brodsworth branch of the National Union of Miners, upon learning of a pub used by the NF for meetings, sent letters ‘to the manager...and the brewery expressing disgust’.⁸⁴ Nonetheless for every example of unions taking an active stance against racism there are examples of unions failing to act and even

⁸¹ ‘Letter from Mrs Alison Kelley, Honorary Agent and Secretary of Blackley CLP, to Reg Underhill, 14th November 1974’, N.A.D. Papers on Racism and the National Front.

⁸² See *Searchlight* magazine, April 1975, for examples of anti-Labour material in *Spearhead*.

⁸³ S. Castles, H. Booth and T. Wallace, *Here for Good*, London: Pluto Press, (1984), 150-6.

⁸⁴ “‘All for the Cause’”, *The History of the Doncaster and District Trades Union Council, 1891-1991*, Working Class Movement Library, Manchester.

collaborating with employers against Asian workers.⁸⁵ Early 1970s strikes at Mansfield Hosiery and Imperial Typewriters, to name just two, saw the workforce divided along racial lines and the strikes undermined from the start and doomed to failure. It took the growth of the NF – which spent a great deal of effort looking to infiltrate unions and with some success – to motivate the unions into action.

But why did the unions react so strongly to the NF, given their previous stance of passivity or active racism? The answer probably lies in the poor strategic choices made by the Front: had they focussed entirely on immigration they may well have won more support amongst the white working class and perhaps avoided confrontation with the unions. Instead they devoted as much time to decrying Communism, ‘international Jewry’, unionism, and, in the late 1970s, issues of ‘public morality’ such as abortion. As early as 1968, NF founder A. K. Chesterton said: ‘If you hear any more whining about “workers” tell the whiners to get the hell out of the National Front and join the Communist Party where they belong.’ And in May 1974, Front leader John Tyndal wrote in *Spearhead* that ‘the intention of the National Front is to do what the Tories have not done and cannot do, fight the Left on its own ground in the unions’.⁸⁶ The electorally pragmatic tactic of claiming to be the only party representing the interests of the white working class clashed with the fascist ideology in which the movement had its origins.⁸⁷ The far Right was as ideologically constrained on race issues as the Left: whilst one spoke of the international brotherhood of the proletariat, the other spoke of international Bolshevism and Jewish conspiracies; both were highly irrelevant to most people in the streets and factories of Yorkshire. The 1974 elections were noticeable for the general agreement between the Conservative and Labour parties over ‘race’; given that the 1971 Immigration Act had essentially ended primary immigration and the Conservatives did not repeal the Race Relations Act, the issue had – ten years after taking centre stage – retreated to the background, and the manifestos of both major parties barely mentioned race or immigration. This well suited Labour, which began

⁸⁵ See R. Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* (Aldershot: Gower, 1987), 269-309 and 324.

⁸⁶ Quoted in *Searchlight*, April 1975, 17.

⁸⁷ Cited in ‘Labour Party Research Department, Information Paper No. 24, October 1976, Britain’s Extreme Right’, N.A.D. Papers on Racism and the National Front, LAP.

to move on from the contradictory positions of the 1960s, and presented a united front against the NF.

1976 was a seminal year, with NF activity and electoral success reaching a peak, and a clear change of policy made by the Unions during the Grunwick strike.⁸⁸ In 1976 there seemed a real and intractable dichotomy between the official position of the Labour Party and many unions, and the views of much of their grassroots. Edna Robert, a Labour councillor in Blackburn, lamented that ‘the Englishman’s attitude to Asians is similar to what Adolf Hitler’s was to the Jews’,⁸⁹ and felt sure that nothing could be done about this situation. Yet despite NF activity reaching a new level of visibility in 1976, it would turn out to be a short-lived peak; indeed as early as September 1976, Ken Lomas reported that ‘the National Front are a spent force in Huddersfield, both locally and at Parliamentary level, and race relations in the town are good’.⁹⁰ By 1981, there was a certain unity throughout much of the Labour and Union movement on race and racism, as they began to unite in opposition to Margaret Thatcher’s Conservative government and its 1981 Nationality Act. (This Act required children born in the U.K. to have at least one parent also born or ‘permanently resident’ in the U.K. in order to qualify for British citizenship.) The beginnings of a more inclusive discourse on race within the Labour movement were demonstrated by meetings such as one held in Keighley in January 1977. This was attended by a modest fifty or so people, but the panel constituted local MPs Bob Cryer and Alex Lyon, Mohammed Ajeb of the Bradford Community Relations Council, and Ray Andrews of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. Andrews lambasted the Labour leadership for their inertia on this issue, and claimed that ‘we are now seeing something in the trade unions which I regret we are not seeing very much of in the Labour Party – and that is coloured shop stewards

⁸⁸ In 1976 the predominantly Asian workforce at Grunwick Film Processing Laboratories went out on strike over pay, conditions, and union recognition. Although led mainly by East African Asian women – with the exception of Jayaben Desai, who was born on the subcontinent – the strike cut across ethnic lines and, unlike previous disputes at Imperial Typewriters and Mansfield Hosiery, the workers received support from the mainstream Left, with Labour MPs and senior union officials joining the pickets. See *Race and Class* 18 (July 1977),

⁸⁹ Letter from Edna Robert to Reg Underhill, 14th May 1976, NAD Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

⁹⁰ Letter from Ken Lomas to Reg Underhill, 10th September 1976, NAD Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

and immigrant branch officials'.⁹¹ From 1976 there is a definite increase in 'bottom-up' initiatives and action within the Labour movement, as opposed to the hypocritical lecturing which had characterised much of the policy of the Labour leadership up until this point.

Whilst Labour resisted calls for a ban on NF marches for fear it could be used to ban Leftist activity in the future, in the latter half of the 1970s most unions began to rally against racism and look to actively include Asian and Afro-Caribbean members. In October 1976, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, which had been intransigent on this issue in the past, announced that it would give full co-operation to a Labour Party led campaign against racism.⁹² There were calls for increased measures to engage black and Asian workers in union activity; Mansfield Hosiery and Imperial Typewriters were held up by new union leaders as shameful examples of how racism could divide work forces and hamper the trade union movement.⁹³ This drive for inclusion and cross-racial co-operation was mirrored in the attitudes of many black workers; the Asian workers' strike committee after Imperial echoed the long-standing attitude of the Indian Workers' Association and other bodies when it asserted:

Black workers must never for a moment entertain the thought of separate black unions. They must join the existing unions and fight through them...Right now the trade union movement in Britain is functioning as a white man's union and this must be challenged. In challenging this we believe in the unity of the working class. This unity must be solidly established in deed and not only words. It is the main task of the trade union movement to create this unity.⁹⁴

The new-found enthusiasm of the union movement continued throughout the late 1970s even as the NF shrank back into insignificance. Keighley Trades Council president Mr B Thorne stressed the need to 'stand up and be counted at school, at work, on the shop floor, in the street, and elsewhere'.⁹⁵ The Regional Council of the

⁹¹ *Keighley News*, 21st January 1977.

⁹² Letter from R Buckton, General Secretary Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen, to R Hayward, General Secretary of the Labour Party, 7th October 1976. NAD Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

⁹³ 'Labour Party Research Department, Information Paper No. 24, October 1976, Britain's Extreme Right', NAD Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ Quoted in *Searchlight*, No. 19, 1977.

T.U.C. mobilised 20,000 for a counter-NF rally in Tameside, while the Transport and General Workers Union (TGWU), the National Union of Public Employees and the General and Municipal Workers Union pledged a day of non-cooperation, refusing to allow the Front use of buildings or facilities.⁹⁶

Many unions began to expel NF members, and across all industries and regions of the country, a united front against the NF was built. In July 1979 – probably twenty years after it was first called for – the T.U.C. launched its own thorough going campaign against racism.⁹⁷ The active policy adopted by the Labour Party and most of the union movement towards the end of the decade stemmed from a desire to tap the support of Britain’s sizeable immigrant community, and in this respect Labour was ahead of the Conservative and Liberal Parties: in 1979, of 107 Labour general election candidates, 98% said ethnic minorities should be encouraged to vote, whilst 2% were unsure. In contrast, amongst Conservative candidates only 83% felt ethnic minorities should be encouraged to vote, whilst 11% were unsure and 6% felt they should be discouraged; amongst Liberals the numbers were 92, 6, and 2 respectively.⁹⁸ By 1979 then there was a certain unity across the labour movement on race issues, but given that Labour was about to enter eighteen years in opposition, it came rather too late.

The Grunwick strikers were supported by the TGWU, TUC and the Union of Post Office Workers, (UPW), and Labour cabinet ministers turned up on the picket line.⁹⁹ Sivanandan’s 1980 assertion that in 1976-7 ‘the Labour government was beginning to dismantle institutional racism...because big capital need[ed] it no longer’ is overly cynical and should not be taken too seriously, but there is no doubt that the new policies of both the Labour Party and the unions owed to a pragmatic concern with votes and members.¹⁰⁰ The slow change in the position of the unions vis-à-vis black workers is perhaps best illustrated through Sivanandan’s later comment:

⁹⁶ *Searchlight*, No. 28, 1977.

⁹⁷ *Searchlight*, No. 51, 1979.

⁹⁸ Muhammad Anwar, ‘The Politics of the BrAsian electorate’, in *A Postcolonial People*, 191.

⁹⁹ Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 42.

¹⁰⁰ Bourne and Sivanandan, ‘Cheerleaders and Ombudsmen’, 342.

Where they were not unionised, black workers first used the unions who were rarely loath to increase their numbers, however black, to fight management for unionisation – and then took on the racism of the unions themselves. Unions, after all, were the organisations of their class and, however vital their struggles as blacks, to remain a people apart would be to set back the class struggle itself. They had to fight simultaneously as a people and as a class – as blacks and as workers – not by subsuming the race struggle to the class struggle but by deepening and broadening class struggle through its black and anti-colonial, anti-imperialist dimension.¹⁰¹

By 1981 both the Labour Party and the unions had largely resolved their schizophrenic attitude towards race and immigration. The realisation that there was more to be gained by chasing immigrant votes and members than there was to be lost, coupled with the frightening rise of the NF, had allowed for this. But perhaps most importantly, by 1981 Labour was out of government, and would be for a further sixteen years. ‘Safely’ back in opposition, grappling with the growth of the Militant movement, and faced by a Conservative government which made little secret of its ambition to break the trade unions, Labour could afford reassert the ideological consistency it had held before the Second World War. We have seen in this chapter how the attitude of the Labour Party and the trade unions towards immigrants was inconsistent and often electorally counter-productive during the period 1960 to 1981. Yet to understand the real attitude of working men and women towards South Asian immigrants we need to go beyond the official doctrine of the Labour Party and the union hierarchies and look at relations in the workplace itself.

¹⁰¹ Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 34.

Chapter 2: At Work: Interactions between White and South Asian Workers in the Workplace.

For the first Asian migrants to Britain the workplace was the main site of interaction with the white working class, and originally hostility towards South Asians was framed in the language of competition for work and the undermining of wage levels. The first section of this chapter deals with the concept of ‘competition’ for work between South Asian immigrant workers and the white British workers in Yorkshire, and argues that there was minimal competition given the acute demand for labour in the textile industry. The following section is concerned with issues surrounding unionisation, shop floor politics and strike action. The third and final section examines work place relations on the shop floor. Whilst it is true to say that there was little competition for work or undermining of wage levels, and Asians generally did unionise, strike and enjoy cordial relations on the shop floor, it is argued here that this did not necessarily create a shared ‘class’ identity.

I

Whilst we should understand South Asian immigration into communities in Yorkshire and elsewhere as the results of British imperialism and the internationalisation of capital and labour which followed from it, Ian Law has made the important point that it was actually socialism, rather than capitalism, which brought about the first significant movement of post-war labour from the New Commonwealth. There were significant skill shortages for public sector workers in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, and these were exacerbated by the creation of the National Health Service (NHS) by the post-war Labour government.¹⁰² Although the developments in the West Yorkshire textile industry with which we are primarily concerned - the increasingly unviable nature of the industry, the demand for labour produced by the availability of more desirable jobs

¹⁰² I. Law, *Racism, Ethnicity, and Social Policy* (New York: Prentice Hall, 1996), 154.

elsewhere, and the availability of cheap, migrant labour – were outcomes of international capitalist development, it is worth bearing in mind that this was not always the case. The idea of the exigencies of international capital dictating the social conditions of the poorest and least influential in society is overly simplistic and problematic. Nevertheless the factors producing South Asian immigration into Britain in the 1960s were, overwhelmingly, economic.

As many commentators have noted, both at the time and subsequently, immigration usually kept pace with labour demand. Only around half of the vouchers issued under the 1962 Act were actually used, as the economic downturn of the early 1960s made many hesitate before moving to the UK: if they could not be sure of a job then they lost their sole purpose for migration. It seems, therefore, that there was a definite correlation between labour demand and immigration numbers.¹⁰³ Within the UK itself migrants – usually unencumbered in the early 1960s by families or other commitments – often moved around the country as work dried up in one area and was promised in another.¹⁰⁴ In his discussion on immigration into the West Midlands, Paul Foot described the case of the ‘missing Indians’, who although registered to work in the area, left ‘as silently as they came’ when there was no work to be found, and certainly did not try to claim National Assistance or any other state benefit.¹⁰⁵ Indeed, many of the first generation immigrants who were interviewed for the West Yorkshire Archive Service’s oral histories compilation arrived first in the West Midlands, or elsewhere in the country, and made their way to the West Riding due to lack of work elsewhere and the promise of a high demand for labour in textiles.¹⁰⁶ Yet this loose correlation between labour demand and immigration was skewed by the 1962 Act, which created a rush to ‘get in before the door closed’. For example, of Muhammad Anwar’s sample of 570 Pakistani workers in Rochdale,

¹⁰³ See Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 188-9 and D. Hiro, *Black British, White British* (London: HarperCollins, 1991), 114.

¹⁰⁴ S. Allen, *New Minorities, Old Conflicts* (New York: Random House, 1971), 151.

¹⁰⁵ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 14.

¹⁰⁶ See Oral Histories Collections, West Yorkshire Archive Service, in Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield.

only twenty-nine came to Britain before 1960, while 273 came between 1960 and 1963.¹⁰⁷

Of course even if it is true to say that immigration generally followed labour demand, only to be distorted by the 1962 Act, it does not necessarily follow that there was not competition for work between South Asian and British workers, or that high labour demand prevented immigrant workers from undermining wages and conditions. Immigration from the ‘New Commonwealth’ helped to meet the acute Labour demand of the post-war period (which had been exacerbated by the seemingly contradictory policy of the Attlee government of urging ‘British stock’ to emigrate to the ‘Old Commonwealth’ countries¹⁰⁸) in the least desirable occupations such as foundry and mill work, whilst creating problems – in theory if not in reality – relating to the provision of housing and state services. Immigration was, in short, an economic solution which led to a social problem. As Foot noted when discussing the ‘beat-the-ban’ rush of 1960-3, houses and jobs could be found some time; the important thing was to get in before the door closed.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, many of the immigrants towards the end of the 1960s – women, children, and the elderly – were not necessarily competing for jobs, and the response to their arrival cannot be understood in the context of economic competition.

If immigration generally followed labour demand in the early 1960s, and created a social problem whilst providing an economic solution, we now need to examine the accuracy of the idea of competition for work in the district with which this thesis is concerned, the West Riding textile industry.

In 1965 the inaugural edition of the anti-racist magazine *Searchlight* reminded readers that apart from in certain areas there were still more job vacancies than unemployed workers.¹¹⁰ Certainly this was the case in the textile mills of West Yorkshire; men and women who worked in textiles during the post-war era insisted that labour started to leave textiles in 1946 because of the exceptionally low wages,

¹⁰⁷ M. Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London: Heinemann, 1979), 24.

¹⁰⁸ See K. Paul, “‘British Subjects’ and ‘British Stock’: Labour’s Postwar Imperialism”, *Journal of British Studies* 34 (1995): 233-275, and A. Rattansi, ‘Racism, Sexuality and Political Economy: Marxism/Foucault/“Postmodernism”’, in S. Fenton and H. Bradley (eds.), *Ethnicity and Economy: ‘Race and Class’ Revisited* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 57.

¹⁰⁹ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 15.

¹¹⁰ *Searchlight* No. 1 Spring 1965.

and that men who had been demobilised from the army ‘wouldn’t go back into textiles if they could help it’.¹¹¹ Furthermore there were increasing opportunities for women – who had usually supplemented the male workforce during the War and during periods of high labour demand – to find more attractive work elsewhere, most notably in retail.¹¹² The poor wages – amongst the lowest in any industry in the country at the time – and the onerous conditions combined with better opportunities elsewhere to create an acute demand for textile labour in the 1950s which lasted through the 1960s. There was a drastic labour shortage after the Second World War and it seemed that the textile industry was doomed unless extra labour could be brought in.¹¹³ Interviews with South Asian immigrants reveal an awareness that there were plenty of jobs in textiles, and experienced British textile workers were usually in no doubt that extra labour was needed to run the mills, and had to be found from somewhere.¹¹⁴

So great was the labour shortage in certain areas that immigrants often found themselves in a position of some power; an Asian in Halifax claimed that during the 1960s one could leave a job one day and find another the next.¹¹⁵ Certainly from the immediate post-war period until at least the early 1960s there were plenty of jobs in textiles. The wages and conditions had driven British workers away, and firms were desperate for labour of any kind in order to stay operational. Hostility towards immigrants from the largely Labour-voting working class of West Yorkshire was not, it seems, due to the *reality* of competition for work and the undercutting of wages (although it is possible that the *perception* of competition and undercutting may have played a part). Indeed, as conditions and wages in the industry improved in the late 1960s and the 1970s, white British workers began to move back into

¹¹¹ Respondent A. 0112, interviewed 21st May 1984. Oral Histories Collection, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford Central Library, Bradford (Bradford Archive).

¹¹² Webster, *Imagining Home*, 20-23; R. Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination* (Aldershot: Gower, 1984), 56-9; B. Cohen and P. Jenner, ‘The Employment of Immigrants: A Case Study within the Wool Industry’, *Race* 10 (1968): 41-56.

¹¹³ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0008 interviewed 25th November 1983.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, Respondents A. 0008, interviewed 25th November 1983, A. 0012, interviewed 1st December 1983 and 21st June 1984, and A. 0041, interviewed 1st February 1984, Bradford Oral Histories Collection, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Bradford Central Library, Bradford.

¹¹⁵ Respondent WYC:1338/18/1, interviewed 27th March 2006. Halifax Oral Histories Collection, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Halifax.

textiles, often at the expense of the South Asians whose toil had made the revitalisation of the industry possible.

As early as 1968 Cohen and Jenner argued that South Asian immigration had been vital in halting (or at least decelerating) the contraction of the textile industry.¹¹⁶

Workers on the shop floor did not necessarily see it this way, however. The journalist Gerda Cohen wrote in 1971 that a ‘union stalwart’ claimed that if there had not been immigrant labour, the employers would have improved conditions: starved of labour supply, they would have been forced to improve wages, or conditions, or both, in order to continue manufacturing.¹¹⁷ There was a theory that in addition to providing the much needed labour, immigrant workers were easily exploited and brought down the bargaining power of the existing workers. On one level this seems a reasonable argument, yet textile employers had, in the words of Ralph Fevre, ‘an *obsession* with keeping wages low’: they had resolutely refused to commit to any significant wage increases for decades, and in the context of the post-war labour shortage, when the position of workers was strengthened, they were quite unable to increase wages given the moribund state of the industry.¹¹⁸ In 1963 John Ashton, the President of the Managers and Overlookers Society, urged new capital investment and claimed that ‘with new machinery...we could outstrip all our foreign competitors in quality and price’, yet employers generally failed to act.¹¹⁹ British textiles in the 1950s and early 1960s lagged behind foreign competitors in both production efficiency and quality of machinery. It would have been difficult to introduce new machinery and remain economically viable, and even if they had, that was no guarantee that wages or conditions would have improved.

Even after textile employers had invested in new machinery in the 1970s, conditions were still poor: a 1977 Health and Safety Executive report found that the percentage of accidents involving moving machinery in the wool textiles industry

¹¹⁶ Cohen and Jenner, ‘The Employment of Immigrants’.

¹¹⁷ G. Cohen, ‘Mirpur in Yorkshire’, *New Society* 2nd July 1971. Quoted in Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 3.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 31. Emphasis in the original.

¹¹⁹ ‘Challenge to wool textiles. Modernise call.’, Bradford *Telegraph and Argus*, 18th November 1963.

was nearly twice the national average for manufacturing.¹²⁰ Furthermore an article in the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* found that noise-induced deafness was ‘endemic’ in the industry as late as 1979, and that UK textile employees worked longer hours than those in other European Economic Community (EEC) countries.¹²¹ Therefore even as the industry returned to profitability in the 1970s – and was able to make significant capital investments in machinery – wages and conditions remained poor, and it is difficult to argue that the presence of immigrants was responsible for this, for if it were not for the immigrants then the industry may well have ceased to exist.¹²²

On the contrary the limited investment made in new machinery by the late 1960s was probably made feasible by immigrant workers. According to Fevre, ‘most woolcombers began their first major phase of capital investment in fifty years in 1976’, and each firm in Fevre’s survey spent an average of one million pounds in capital investment in the 1970s.¹²³ An article in the appointments section of the *Telegraph and Argus* in 1970 was proudly headlined ‘Wool textiles – where opportunity knocks’, although this statement was a little optimistic, not to say misleading.¹²⁴ One cannot imagine this ‘reinvention’ of textiles as a viable industry had it not been for cheap South Asian labour. It was the introduction of night shifts in particular which made the most significant contribution to improving the efficiency, productivity, and economic vitality of British textiles, and these had rarely existed before the arrival of South Asian immigrants, and thus it was rare that they were recruited into jobs which had previously been held by British workers.¹²⁵ As early as 1965 a Labour party working group concluded that it was the willingness of migrants to work night shifts that had made the recent increase in production possible.¹²⁶ An article in the *Telegraph and Argus* described an incident which encapsulated this change: on a February evening in 1967 a coach load of

¹²⁰ Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 39.

¹²¹ *Telegraph and Argus*, 15th November 1979.

¹²² Cohen and Jenner, ‘The Employment of Immigrants’, 54.

¹²³ At 1978 prices. Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 44.

¹²⁴ Appointments section, *Telegraph and Argus*, 5th May 1970.

¹²⁵ Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 59.

¹²⁶ ‘Immigration - Draft Paragraphs for First Secretary of State, 9th April 1965’, European Immigration 1965, LPA.

Asian workers arrived at Taylors Mill, and for the first time in twenty years the carding and spinning departments began to work night shifts. The owner, a Mr Kagan, claimed that within a short time of the shift changes production had increased by more than 100 per cent and was still rising.¹²⁷ The idea of ‘competition’ for work, therefore, is not enough to explain hostility towards immigrant workers.

We have seen how, as far as the West Yorkshire textile industry was concerned, South Asian immigrant workers did not ‘compete’ with British workers for jobs. Asian workers allowed the industry to survive and even improve its position, albeit temporarily. Despite this, when the redundancies began as textiles once again became unprofitable in the 1980s, the Asian workers were usually the first to be made redundant. Naturally, we should be wary of extrapolating the situation in the West Riding to elsewhere in the country, even to similar environments such as the iron foundries of the West Midlands, which also featured low wages and terrible working conditions.¹²⁸ Yet the idea of ‘competition’ does not satisfactorily explain resistance to immigration even in areas where immigrants were in direct competition for work, and genuinely did undermine the wages of British workers. Economic arguments alone do not explain why people objected to immigrants *in particular* and ‘black’ immigrants specifically. Nor do economic arguments explain why Labour-voting, working-class men and women objected to immigrants who did not intend to work, such as women and children.¹²⁹ The economic arguments which have been used to explain racist and anti-immigrant sentiment are unsatisfactory, and we need to consider other factors.

As Sivanandan and others have noted, by the 1970s there was little need for the importation of cheap labour, and increasingly capital could move to cheap labour.¹³⁰ Thus did the British manufacturing industry decline ever more rapidly, as

¹²⁷ *Telegraph and Argus*, 18th September 1967.

¹²⁸ In the foundries it was, of course, West Indian and South Asian workers who took on the worst paid, least desirable jobs. A notable exception to this trend was the mining industry, where New Commonwealth workers were rarely found. This is probably attributable to the strength of unionisation within mining communities and their relative isolation from areas where other work was available.

¹²⁹ In Yorkshire, unlike London, South Asian women did not tend to go out to work in the period 1960-1980, although there were exceptions.

¹³⁰ Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 28.

production began to be outsourced to regions with considerably cheaper labour costs. This decline was not the ‘fault’ of South Asian immigrant workers – indeed it seems that in textiles, and other areas, they allayed this decline somewhat. Yet the appearance of immigrant workers was a definite ‘feature’ of the industrial contraction of the decades following the Second World War.¹³¹ International capital and labour positioned once vital industries such as textiles at the mercy of the vagaries of the free market. For many of the workers of West Yorkshire, this new reality was brought home by the appearance of South Asian immigrants in their factories and their streets. John Rex and Robert Moore summarised this development quite succinctly in 1967: ‘The origins of Pakistani immigrants’, they wrote, ‘show how the events of world history impinge on a small section of English society today’.¹³² West Yorkshire, unlike areas such as London, Liverpool and Glasgow, did not have a long history of receiving non-European immigrants. Small towns such as Halifax, Huddersfield and Keighley contained relatively homogenous communities that had largely been unaffected by international labour movements prior to this point. Suddenly they were visually confronted with the realities of the globalised world. Bill Schwarz has argued that with immigration, ‘the colonial frontier came home’, and problems relating to imperial legacy and racial superiority were brought to the forefront.¹³³ I would suggest that actually it was the realisation of the weakness of small communities, the powerlessness of trade unions, and the vulnerability of Social Democratic governments in the face of the international free

¹³¹ Immigrants became, in the words of Kenneth Lunn, ‘visible explanations for the changes facing the working population’. K. Lunn, ‘Immigrants and British Labour’s Response’, 49. For British debates surrounding industrial decline and economic performance during this period, see M. Daunton, *Just Taxes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); G. Bernstein, *The Myth of Decline* (London: Pimlico, 2004); J. Tomlinson, ‘“Inventing Decline”: The Falling Behind of the British Economy in the Postwar Years’, *The Economic History Review* 49 (1996): 731-757; J. Tomlinson, ‘The British “Productivity Problem” in the 1960s’, *Past and Present* 175 (2002): 188-210; S. W. Tolliday and J. Zeitlin (eds.), *The Power to Manage? Employers and Industrial Relations in Comparative-Historical Perspective* (London: Routledge, 1991); S. Newton and D. Porter, *Modernization Frustrated: The Politics of Industrial Decline in Britain since 1900* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988); S. N. Broadberry and N.F.R. Crafts, ‘UK Productivity Performance from 1950 to 1979: a Restatement of the Broadberry-Crafts View’, *The Economic History Review* 56 (2003): 718-735.

¹³² Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 115.

¹³³ Schwarz, ‘The Only White Man in There’, 73.

market.¹³⁴ This creates the paradox that while it was the cultural attributes of the newcomers which were the real source of hostility, rather than a supposed threat to jobs, the insults levelled against them used the language of ‘class’. Labour-voting men and women in West Yorkshire had realised by the 1960s that the New Jerusalem would not be built; in South Asian immigrants they had visible examples of the reasons why. Hostility to immigrants makes more sense in this context than in terms of ‘competition’ for work.¹³⁵

II

Trade unions at both a national and shop floor level had often voiced resentment against the employment of immigrant labour. There is a view which holds that the concept of unions was alien to many immigrants. Phizacklea and Miles argued that West Indians, for example, came from a decidedly different background to that of formal apprenticeships and craft and trade unions.¹³⁶ Whilst this may not be true for all South Asian immigrants – there were trade unions established in British India and the Movement for Colonial Freedom had tried, without success, to forge links between them and their British equivalents – most immigrants from the subcontinent came from a rural, agricultural background into an urban, heavily industrialised environment.¹³⁷ Witness the statement of an Indian furnace-worker in the West Midlands in 1974, who claimed that ‘only workers join unions. We are peasants, agriculturalists’.¹³⁸ The entry of East African Asians later in the 1960s and in the 1970s complicated this picture, as many were bourgeois

¹³⁴ In his essay on ‘Paki-bashing’ in Accrington during the 1960s, Geoffrey Pearson argued that racially motivated attacks could be interpreted in the same manner as the machine-breaking riots of the early nineteenth century; an attempt to resist forces which were changing their lives. G. Pearson, ‘“Paki-bashing” in a North East Lancashire Cotton Town’, in G. Mungham and G. Pearson (eds.), *Working Class Youth Culture* (London: Routledge, 1976), 73.

¹³⁵ Kenneth Lunn has made a similar argument: that immigrants became scapegoats because they provided ‘visible explanations for the changes facing the working population’. Lunn, ‘Immigrants and British Labour’s Response’, 49.

¹³⁶ A. Phizacklea and R. Miles. *Labour and Racism* (London: Routledge, 1980), 80. Also see W. W. Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in England* (London: Penguin, 1968), 135-6.

¹³⁷ Howe, *Anti-Colonialism in British Politics*, 282; Anwar, *Myth of Return*, 22.

¹³⁸ *Race Today* 6 (1974): 102.

professionals familiar with urban life. While they were from a decidedly different background to the rural migrants of the Punjab or East Bengal, they were not necessarily anymore accustomed to unionism, having usually worked as bureaucrats or small business owners in Africa.¹³⁹ However, if most South Asian immigrants had little experience of trade unions upon arrival, they soon began to unionise (when the unions would allow them to), and formed the base for many industrial actions. The strike at Imperial Typewriters in Leicester, for example, involved the unionisation of a group described by Dilip Hiro as ‘hitherto steeped in petty bourgeois values and aspirations’.¹⁴⁰ The quick adaptation of Asians to the industrial politics of the UK is perhaps best demonstrated by the Grunwick strike: the workers were mainly East African Asians but the most prominent, Jayaben Desai, was from the subcontinent, and support for the strike was not drawn exclusively from the Asian ‘community’, but rather from various trade union bodies, as we shall see.

The new labour source which arrived from the subcontinent in the late 1950s and early 1960s was criticised by some amongst the unions for subverting the usual recruitment methods and unionisation.¹⁴¹ Certainly some textile mills in the West Riding were sending recruitment delegations to the subcontinent as early as 1945, and many Asians who arrived jobless in the UK would use family or kinship networks to find work rather than the official channels.¹⁴² Furthermore, when in work many Asians developed an unofficial communication system: Muhammad Anwar described how ‘go-betweeners’ advised Pakistani workers to not make too

¹³⁹ The Ugandan Resettlement Board recorded the occupation of refugees resettled in Bradford. They include mechanics, engineers, masons, carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmith, businessmen, midwives, teachers and students. Very rarely is someone described as a general or unskilled labourer, and no one is described as a farmer, peasant or agriculturalist. See correspondence of Ugandan Resettlement Board and Town Clerk, Bradford, BBD1/7/T16150 – Commonwealth Immigrants, 1st September 1971 to 31st December 1972, Bradford Archive.

¹⁴⁰ Hiro, *Black British, White British*, 167.

¹⁴¹ See, for example, M. Duffield, ‘Rationalization and the Politics of Segregation: Indian Workers in Britain’s Foundry Industry’, in K. Lunn (ed.), *Race and Labour in Twentieth-Century Britain* (London: Frank Cass, 1985), 165. Duffield argues that Indian workers often circumvented not only trade union control but also that of the labour exchange.

In a survey of 223 Asian men and women in Bradford in the 1960s, 60.5 per cent had used the employment exchange at least one time, yet only 10.7 per cent had obtained their current occupation in that way. See Allen, *New Minorities, Old Conflicts*, 139.

¹⁴² Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0041, interviewed 1st February 1984; D. Brooks and K. Singh, ‘Asian Brokers in British Foundries’, in S. Wallman (ed.), *Ethnicity at Work* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 102.

many demands or to go on strike.¹⁴³ Unions – when they existed – were concerned about these practices as they undermined their own control of the labour force, vital if the union was to have any meaningful position vis-à-vis the employers. In ‘closed shops’ many union leaders refused to sign men into their unions if they had not served the appropriate amount of time in the job.¹⁴⁴ These inevitably meant that many Asian immigrants were denied union entry and therefore work, but often the primary concern for this restriction was maintenance of the union position, rather than racial discrimination. At Hollybrook mill, for example, Asians did not join the union but only because unionists were barred from working at the plant; in this way they undermined the union control over the labour force, but not intentionally.¹⁴⁵ When unions were present¹⁴⁶ the immigrants generally did join up, and often took their membership quite seriously: Avtar Brah has described how trade union meetings were held in immigrant homes, and holy books were used to ‘solemnise commitment to workers’ unity’.¹⁴⁷

A key factor affecting Asian recruitment into industries was the presence or absence of unions within a particular industry or factory. Duffield has noted how unionisation was low or even absent in West Midlands iron foundries after the Second World War, and argued that and this allowed more immigrants to join the industry than may otherwise have been the case. According to Duffield, when workers were well organized, ‘blacks’ were often absent or marginalised.¹⁴⁸ This does not necessarily reveal racist motives on behalf of the unions; many had a history of resisting the recruitment of inexperienced labour, be it from Irish immigrants, prisoners of war, European Voluntary Workers, British women, or New

¹⁴³ Anwar, *Myth of Return*, 105-6.

¹⁴⁴ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0008, interviewed 25th November 1983.

¹⁴⁵ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0117, interviewed 4th June 1984.

¹⁴⁶ It is worth noting that textiles generally had low levels of unionisation, which continued to decline during this period. Exact numbers for membership of textile unions are difficult to ascertain: in 1963 the nationwide membership of the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers stood at 58,177; the Amalgamated Weavers’ Association Membership was 55,647 in 1960 and 33,066 in 1968. See ‘Minutes of the Executive Committee of the National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers: September 1964’, WYB123/1/4/1/8, Bradford Archive, and E. Hopwood, *History of the Lancashire Cotton Industry* (Manchester: The Amalgamated Weavers’ Association, 1969). See also L. Pryce, ‘“No Trouble at t’Mill”: the Inhibition of Trade Unionism in the Post-War West Yorkshire Woollen Textile Industry’ (PhD diss., University of York, forthcoming).

¹⁴⁷ A. Brah, ‘The “Asian” in Britain’, in *A Postcolonial People*, 42.

¹⁴⁸ Duffield, ‘Rationalization and the Politics of Segregation’, 160.

Commonwealth workers. Similarly, unions were often absent in the textile industry: according to a respondent from the Bradford Oral Histories collection, in the post-war years one was obliged to join a union in the dyers trade, but not in textiles.¹⁴⁹ Ralph Fevre supported this view, noting that resistance to the recruitment of ‘green’ labour was vocal and organised in the dyeing, woollorting, and finishing trades, but far less so in textiles.¹⁵⁰ Another man claimed that when he joined his firm immediately after the War, only four out of fifty workers were members of a union. He was eventually able to create a closed shop, but it did not apply retrospectively, and he found it very hard to recruit people into the union.¹⁵¹ It seems that textile unions before the Second World War did very little, failing to ameliorate the dreadful conditions found across the industry, and textile workers were very rarely on strike. Indeed one man proudly proclaimed that he had ‘never been on strike’, and that the textile industry had a very good record where industrial disputes were concerned.¹⁵² Due to the fact that textile work was usually unskilled and undesirable, the industry had relatively low levels of unionisation. Having said that it should be borne in mind that, as Fevre points out, textile workers who were unionised were not ‘backwards’ in terms of the labour movement, and historically had a strong record: textile workers were prominent in the Chartist movement, women’s suffrage, the founding of the Independent Labour Party and the TUC, and in the 1926 General Strike. Nevertheless the nationwide strength of unionisation in textiles had declined throughout the twentieth century. As we have seen, the poor pay and conditions in textiles after the Second World War meant that very few local men (or women) wished to work in the industry. Asian workers were probably able to find work in textiles because of the low level of unionisation, but a job in textiles was no longer seen as a prize worth defending by many white workers. In contrast to the general nationwide trend, unionisation in specific mills did improve somewhat in the 1960s and 1970s, as did work conditions, efficiency and productivity, and Asians were at the forefront of this movement. Yet ironically, as John Wrench has argued, just as

¹⁴⁹ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0110, interviewed 15th May 1984.

¹⁵⁰ Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 160.

¹⁵¹ Respondent 326, Oral Histories Collection, interviewed 20th August 1987, West Yorkshire Archive Service, Kirklees Library, Huddersfield (Huddersfield Archive).

¹⁵² Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0110, interviewed 15th May 1984.

black and Asian influence in unions was increasing, the power of unions themselves was beginning to wane.¹⁵³

At first immigrants were slow to join the unions. Often they were completely unaware of their labour rights, and not necessarily concerned; their priorities did not extend beyond finding work, keeping the job, and earning money.¹⁵⁴ Nor were unions overly keen to admit immigrant workers, and although some employers cited racial discrimination as the contributing factor to this exclusion, it is probably more accurately understood as an attempt to control labour supply, as discussed above.¹⁵⁵ In 1967, the Race Relations Working Group claimed that: 'We have received no complaints of racial discrimination by trade unions in barring or expelling workers from membership on racial grounds'. However, there was evidence of unfair treatment of coloured workers by unions, and complaints of pressure by unions on employers not to employ specific groups, such as 'turban-wearing Sikhs'.¹⁵⁶ In addition, unions had pressed that in the case of redundancies, British workers should not be fired before foreigners.¹⁵⁷ The report continued:

All these discriminatory practices were prevalent during the period of full employment, but are now aggravated by the effects of the present recession. Practices which were originally applied to immigrant workers, who had recently arrived in Britain, continue to be applied to coloured workers who have lived here for much longer, or who were even born here.¹⁵⁸

These two quotations convey contradictions within shop floor politics in the Yorkshire textile district and elsewhere in the 1960s. While it is naïve to think that no immigrants were prevented from joining the union on racial grounds, unions were rarely loath to swell their numbers, so long as they retained control over the labour supply. They had to deal with the disappearance of old constituencies and the emergence of new areas of recruitment during the economically and socially

¹⁵³ Wrench, 'Unequal Comrades', 178.

¹⁵⁴ Brah, 'The "Asian" in Britain', 42.

¹⁵⁵ The textile employers interviewed by Ralph Favre blamed union discrimination for the segregation of workforces, but it was the employers who were reluctant to take on Asian workers for any job for which white British workers could be found. See Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 117.

¹⁵⁶ R. Miles and A. Phizacklea, *The TUC, Black Workers and New Commonwealth Immigration, 1954-1973* (Birmingham: S.S.R.C. Research Unit on Ethnic Relations, 1977).

¹⁵⁷ B. Radin, 'Coloured Workers and British Trade Unions', *Race* 8 (1966): 161.

¹⁵⁸ Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and Papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967. LPA.

turbulent 1960s.¹⁵⁹ Yet simply because unionists were willing to include immigrant workers did not mean that they saw them as comrades and equals – cultural or ‘racial’ differences prevented that.

Aside from granting access to ‘closed shops’, many immigrants saw very little point in union membership. ‘We have come to work and earn money’ read an article in the Urdu newspaper *Akhbar-e-Watan* as late as December 1970, ‘not to get involved in militant organisations’. Yet many immigrants soon learned that in order to work and earn money they would have to engage with unions, take an active interest in labour politics, and go out on strike.¹⁶⁰ Union membership amongst immigrant workers was largely for pragmatic, rather than ideological, reasons. Anwar, for example, found that almost a third of his respondents who claimed to be members of a union did not know its name.¹⁶¹ Whatever their reasoning, immigrants did begin to join unions; indeed John Rex claimed in 1979 that the film processors at Grunwick – who had been prevented from unionising - were an exception to the rule and that immigrants ‘overwhelmingly’ joined the appropriate unions.¹⁶² Furthermore, organisations such as the Indian Workers’ Association (IWA) and the Pakistani Workers Association (PWA) did not act as separate trade unions and encouraged Asians to join the existing unions.¹⁶³ One Rochdale unionist exhorted his fellow Pakistani workers to ‘join the same unions and be effective as workers and not as Pakistanis or English’.¹⁶⁴ In terms of work and union activity then, there was often a great deal of interaction between British and immigrant workers. This interaction seems more pronounced in the most unpleasant jobs in the least desirable industries (of course it was those jobs in which Asians largely found work, and the white British workers felt they had less to protect than more ‘prestigious’ workers in other industries). Describing the West Midlands, Paul Foot claimed that ‘it was in the foundries and the factories that the integration process as most pronounced’. A

¹⁵⁹ Duffield, ‘Rationalization and the Politics of Segregation’, 143.

¹⁶⁰ *Akhbar-e-Watan*, 2nd December 1970. Cited in B. Dahya, ‘Pakistanis in Britain – Transients or Settlers?’, *Race and Class* 14 (1973): 258.

¹⁶¹ Anwar, *Myth of Return*, 120.

¹⁶² J. Rex, ‘Black Militancy and Class Conflict’, in Miles and Phizacklea (eds.), *Racism and Political Action in Britain*, 76.

¹⁶³ Castles and Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe*, 145.

¹⁶⁴ Quoted in Anwar, *Myth of Return*, 119.

foreman at Midland Motor Cylinder, Jack Morris, claimed that he had witnessed only one incident of ‘racial’ violence in other twenty years and that all immigrants were members of unions and paid union rates.¹⁶⁵ Yet this economic integration and joint union membership did not create the impression of shared ‘class’ consciousness; culturally they were distinct, and the two groups did not, as a whole, consider each other part of a unified ‘working class’.

Asian workers may have gained admission to unions in the workplace, but it did by no means follow that they would be able to exert influence within these unions. In some factories however, their weight of numbers soon began to tell. In Huddersfield, for example, immigrants from the New Commonwealth constituted a majority of trade union members in the textile industry by the end of the 1970s.¹⁶⁶ In Bradford a Mirpuri migrant who was refused the position of foreman because he refused to work night shifts complained to his shop steward, who took no action: in response the Asian workers voted for an Asian shop steward instead.¹⁶⁷ Despite the initial reluctance of many immigrants to involve themselves in labour politics, towards the end of the 1960s and the start of the 1970s many were calling for unions to be more overtly political.¹⁶⁸ Indeed Duffield has claimed that in the West Midlands foundries Indian workers became a ‘vanguard’ for better pay, conditions, and equal opportunity.¹⁶⁹ This activism was not as evident in the textile firms of the West Riding, but it is fair to say that in addition to ensuring the continued viability of the industry, South Asian immigrants also shored up the ailing textiles unions. The testimonies of white workers in the Bradford Oral Histories collection are quite clear on this. The trade unions and their new Asian membership worked together to prevent the lowering of wages and living standards and brought immigrant wages and living standards up to British levels. Far from lowering the living standards (not to be confused with ‘status’) of white British workers, immigrants enjoyed better

¹⁶⁵ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 18.

¹⁶⁶ Huddersfield Oral Histories, Respondent 326, interviewed 20th August 1987.

¹⁶⁷ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0030, date of interview unknown.

¹⁶⁸ In Phizacklea and Miles’ survey of trade unionists, it was West Indian women who were most likely to want a greater political role for their union. See Phizacklea and Miles, *Labour and Racism*, 107.

¹⁶⁹ Duffield, ‘Rationalization and the Politics of Segregation’, 167.

conditions than those they had left behind, and as one white British worker argued, ‘that’s why they stop here’.¹⁷⁰

As Pratibha Parmar and many others have argued, the ‘black’ experience of trade unions in Britain has often been very bitter. In industrial disputes, however, immigrant communities often made use of ethnic cohesion in maintaining worker solidarity and preventing blacklegging.¹⁷¹ One of the earliest disputes involving South Asian workers occurred at Red Scar rayon mill in Preston, Lancashire, in 1965. The Asian workers found that the wider movement was anything but supportive, and despite the support of the Racial Action Adjustment Society (RAAS), the strike failed. When Asians constituted an important part of the workforce the white British workers who controlled the unions were more than willing to use their numbers at strike time – especially since, like miners, they could usually rely on strong community support.

Mike Rodda, who had emigrated from Calcutta to South London, claimed in 1974:

My experience in factory is that if there’s a strike, it’s more supported by the immigrant workers than the white workers, which to me means that they are not prepared to accept a raw deal. They come from...places where conditions are bad. They expect to find better conditions over here.¹⁷²

Furthermore, Beryl Radin’s 1966 investigation found that:

Almost all of the officials interviewed had nothing but praise for the solidarity of coloured workers during a strike. Time after time, trade unionists gave examples of instances when coloured members (as newcomers) might have been tempted to break a strike and return to work or to take employment when regular workers were on strike. “But they’d never black-leg”, several union officials commented.¹⁷³

Yet aside from industrial actions unions rarely concerned themselves with Asian workers, and the support of immigrants for strikes led by white, British workers was usually not reciprocated. Indeed given the loyalty often shown by immigrant workers to unions with little gained in reward, John Wrench’s assertion that ‘black workers have served unions far better than unions have served black workers’ seems

¹⁷⁰ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0012, interviewed 1st December 1983 and 21st June 1984.

¹⁷¹ P. Parmar, ‘Gender, Race and Class: Asian Women in Resistance’, in CCCS, *The Empire Strikes Back: Race and Racism in ‘70s Britain* (London: Routledge, 1982), 264.

¹⁷² Quoted in *Race Today* 6 (April 1974).

¹⁷³ Radin, ‘Coloured Workers and British Trade Unions’, 168.

quite accurate.¹⁷⁴ By the end of the 1960s and start of the 1970s, however, Asian workers were beginning to take an ever more active role in industrial politics and unions, either reluctantly or willingly, were utilising this activity. In this respect the 1976 Grunwick strike was a key event in the interaction between South Asian and white British workers; white workers from all over the UK had stood on the picket lines with Asian workers, and while their priorities may have been defending ‘the movement’,¹⁷⁵ it was an important symbolic turning point.

Although the situation in North West London was different from the conditions of the West Riding (the former relatively economically vigorous while the latter was stagnating, with Asian workers making up the vast majority of workers in an industry that was highly undesirable to white British workers), events at Grunwick represented changes that were occurring nationwide. The owner of the factory was himself part-Indian, and attempted to use ‘ethnic’ loyalty to end the strike; when that failed he then threatened to ‘shame’ Desai and other leaders in the Asian community. The Association of Professional, Executive, Clerical and Computer Staffs (APEX) recognised the strike, as did Brent Trades Council. Senior union leaders and Labour MPs joined the pickets, and the strike received unprecedented coverage. Although it would take another long struggle for the workers to receive union recognition, it was an important turning point in terms of immigrant representation in, and power within, established trade unions. In the words of Dilip Hiro, Grunwick ‘helped to bury the widespread belief among white workers that ethnic immigrants were prepared to work for a pittance and thus depress their living standards’.¹⁷⁶ Yet joining together in unions and taking strike action together did not create the sense that immigrant workers and white Britons were all members of a ‘working class’, either in North London or West Yorkshire. As E. Ellis Cashmore has noted, the leaders of the Grunwick strike were ‘working class, female and Asian’, yet it was never clear ‘in what order’.¹⁷⁷ Membership of the same unions did not, by itself, engender feelings of ‘class’ solidarity any more

¹⁷⁴ Wrench, ‘Unequal Comrades’, 162.

¹⁷⁵ As argued in Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class*, 308.

¹⁷⁶ Hiro, *Black British, White British*, 168.

¹⁷⁷ Cashmore, *United Kingdom?*, 1.

than similar social and economic circumstances did. It was the cultural changes that were taking place at the same time – either amongst first generation immigrants or their British-born children – which created a sense of joint ‘class’ identity.

III

A significant feature of the West Yorkshire Archive Service oral histories collection is the relative absence of comments concerning immigrant workers. In the Bradford collection, current and former textile workers are pointedly asked about Asian workers and their feelings towards them, and very little hostility emerges. In Huddersfield, by contrast, interviews do not specifically enquire about race, and immigrants are very rarely mentioned. Similarly, of the Asian migrants interviewed, very few recalled any discrimination or ‘racism’, although many seemed to believe that it was more prevalent at the time of the interviews (conducted in the mid-1980s) than during their time in the factories (1960s-1970s).¹⁷⁸ Obviously there are problems with the accuracy and reliability of oral history, but it seems reasonable to assume that ‘racism’ was not a defining feature of the workplace in West Yorkshire, for either British or immigrant workers. It seems that generally the burdens and pressures of the workplace - especially in industries such as textiles where the noise was deafening, the safety record dreadful, and the work onerous - were the main concern of workers. The picture conveyed by many immigrants is that if one worked hard, one would be treated reasonably. At first that was the extent of their aspirations; to work hard and earn money. Describing Asian settlers in 1960s Middlesbrough Panikos Panayi argued that ‘many of the newcomers did not have a social life because their main aim remained the desire to secure as much money as possible to send back to their families’.¹⁷⁹ Yet a myopic concentration on work and

¹⁷⁸ Bradford and Huddersfield Oral Histories. Interestingly, many of the Asian respondents believed that Afro-Caribbean immigrant suffered more from discrimination and prejudice than they did.

¹⁷⁹ P. Panayi, ‘Middlesbrough: A British Race Riot of the 1960s?’, *Social History* 16 (1991): 142.

earning money would not necessarily improve their esteem in the eyes of their British contemporaries; in fact quite the opposite could be the case.¹⁸⁰

After they had been hired the main demands made upon immigrant workers by their employers were reliability and punctuality – poor timekeeping was the easiest way of getting sacked. Furthermore immigrant workers soon developed a reputation for not ‘sticking’ with their jobs, and leaving after short time periods.¹⁸¹ There was the idea that one needed loyalty, and that ‘Pakistanis will leave for £1 extra down the road’.¹⁸² There is some evidence from elsewhere in the country which contradicts this idea: the labour exchange manager in Smethwick, for example, reported in April 1955 that labour turnover amongst ‘coloured’ workers was much lower than usual.¹⁸³ Nevertheless, in the West Riding textile industry of the early 1960s, jobs were not hard to find, and conditions and wages poor. Immigrants would, it seemed, ‘shop around’ for the best jobs they could get, and as the whole rationale behind their entry to the UK was to earn as much money as possible, this is understandable. This high labour turnover amongst immigrants did occasionally cause hostility amongst British workers, but when they settled down this usually dissipated.

Those who had found a suitable job were reluctant to lose it, and many seemed to think that obstinate denial of any guilt or wrongdoing was the best means to protect their employment. This often infuriated overlookers and fellow shop floor workers alike. The main problem with immigrants, claimed one Bradford textile worker, was ‘not owning up to mistakes’.¹⁸⁴ Nonetheless it was generally acknowledged that any dishonestly was driven by a fear of losing their employment, and that on the whole Asian workers could be relied upon to work hard and ‘get on with the job’. In the words of an experienced female supervisor at E J Smith’s Mill, ‘they didn’t want watching because they were lovely lads’.¹⁸⁵ Others were not as positive in their appraisals, claiming that ‘[Continental] Europeans were better than

¹⁸⁰ According to W. W. Daniel, ‘large appetites for overtime’ were a source of tension between white British and South Asian workers. Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in England*, 137.

¹⁸¹ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0008, interviewed 25th November 1983.

¹⁸² Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 115.

¹⁸³ Quoted in Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 12.

¹⁸⁴ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0008, interviewed 25th November 1983.

¹⁸⁵ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0001, interviewed 15th November 1983.

Asians’, but that there were ‘no bad relations with either’.¹⁸⁶ Some felt that second generation immigrants were more reliable than their parents, claiming that ‘lying’s not a problem with second generation’, but that ‘they’ve still got their values on marriage’. Furthermore in some firms football and cricket were played by the workers, and younger immigrants and British-born Asians in particular took a keen interest in football; activities such as these helped to further dissipate any racial tension and create the impression that they were ‘one of us’.¹⁸⁷ This again suggests the importance of ‘cultural’ factors in the formation of a ‘class’ identity in the workplace: whereas the younger generation often had Yorkshire accents, dressed differently to their parents and ate ‘English’ food, if they held ‘different’ values on marriage and family this could work against the perception of a common identity.¹⁸⁸

In the workplace at least it seems that competency, punctuality and reliability were enough to ensure relatively cordial relations. Overall the assessment of a white Bradfordian is reasonably accurate: ‘[There was] a lot of bitterness from some, but a lot of untrue rumours about immigrants taking jobs. There were generally good relations, a lot of exaggerations and some incidents, but you’ll always get that.’¹⁸⁹ Yet friendship and cooperation within work did not mean that conditions were the same outside the factory gates.¹⁹⁰ Jack Morris, foreman at Midland Motor Cylinder in Smethwick, claimed there was a ‘double standard for what a man thinks at work and at home. He may laugh and joke with the Indians in the foundry, and go home and tell people lurid stories about their toilet habits’, and this double standard seemed to apply in West Yorkshire as much as in the West Midlands.¹⁹¹ In fact the

¹⁸⁶ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0112, interviewed 21st May 1984.

¹⁸⁷ S. Allen et al., *Work, Race and Immigration* (Bradford: University of Bradford, 1977); Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, 115.

¹⁸⁸ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0008, interviewed 25th November 1983.

¹⁸⁹ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0012, interviewed 1st December 1983 and 1st June 1984.

¹⁹⁰ The American sociologist Clarence Senior claimed in 1956 that ‘West Indians experience friendship in work but not outside’. ‘American Sociological Society, Race Relations Section, September 8th 1956, “Race Relations and Labour Supply in Great Britain”’, LPA.

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 18.

The toilet habits of immigrants were often held up as an example of their ‘otherness’ and poor hygiene. *Race Today* in 1974 described how some Asian workers had threatened to strike in order to get mixed toilets – and were supported in this by some white workers. *Race Today* 6 (April 1974). Yet it seems this has been overstated, by both factory workers and subsequent academics. In textiles

commitment of South Asians to their work could even increase the disdain in which they were held by some.

Due to the almost exclusive use of Asian workers on night shifts and the intentional segregation of the work force by some employers, in many factories South Asian and British workers had little opportunity to interact, and this could have a notably negative impact on relations between the two. 'Ethnic work groups', in the words of Anwar, tended to 'isolate immigrant workers from their [white] colleagues who might not be aware of their problems'.¹⁹² Yet as more migrants moved into Yorkshire during the course of the 1960s, and took up an increasing variety of jobs, ethnic segregation was slowly undermined. In Halifax in the early 1970s, for example, immigrant and English workers were to be found working side-by-side in an increasing variety of jobs, and some of the older established families had started up their own businesses to cater to the general population, aside from the longer standing Asian-orientated businesses.¹⁹³ In the textile mills themselves, Asians began to gain promotion to oversee both British and immigrant workers; a supervisor at E J Smith's Bradford mill claimed to have trained and made many Asians overlookers, particularly in the late 1960s and early '70s.¹⁹⁴ In towns with relatively few immigrants, Asians and Britons tended to live in closer proximity, attend the same schools and mix in different occupations, this gave an impetus towards 'integration'; Panayi's description of Middlesbrough in the early 1960s is a good example of this.¹⁹⁵ In other areas where immigrants tended to be residentially segregated and concentrated in one or two specific industries, however, the workplace was an important centre of contact for different communities, and while

toilet conditions had been appalling for some time, and continued to be so after the arrival of immigrants. (Fevre's respondents claimed that they would never be used 'except in an emergency'. Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 38.) None of the firms in Cohen and Jenner's sample had seen fit to provide separate facilities for immigrant workers; both British and Asian had to endure the same poor conditions. See Cohen and Jenner, 'The Employment of Immigrants', 55-6.

¹⁹² Anwar, *Myth of Return*, 112.

¹⁹³ 'Information for the Migration Subcommittee of the International and Commonwealth Relations Committee on Arrangements Operating in Halifax Concerning Immigrants 1972', NCW 23-27 (National Council of Women), West Yorkshire Archive Service, Calderdale Library, Halifax (Halifax Archive).

¹⁹⁴ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0112, interviewed 21st May 1984.

¹⁹⁵ Panayi, 'Middlesbrough 1961: A British Race Riot of the 1960s?', 139-153.

this lasted through the 1970s, this contact was not to last forever. Speaking of the industrial slump of the 1980s, Sivanandan wrote that:

The white workers were able to move out to other jobs elsewhere, but racism and family ties (which was the only “network” available to them) pointed Bangladeshis and Pakistanis towards restaurant work and mini-cabbing – and the sense of solidarity and comradeship between white and Asian workers that had been engendered on the factory floor was lost.¹⁹⁶

In larger cities like Bradford, the decline of textiles and engineering, and the failure of new industries to emerge, brought with it a decline in *workplace* interaction and contact between South Asians and their children and white British workers.

One factor which served to work against the development of a ‘common identity’ amongst workers was the dress of many immigrants. One Asian respondent to the Halifax Oral Histories survey, who enjoyed a friendly and convivial relationship with her British colleagues, said they claimed she would have been ‘just like them’ if not for her clothes. They seemed bemused as to why this woman would continue to dress in a distinctive manner when she was ‘just like them’ in every other respect.¹⁹⁷

Similarly, food could be an important factor in racial divisions at work. Shelia Allen reported that many Pakistanis did not mix in factory canteens as English workers did not like the smell of Pakistani food and ridiculed the way they ate.¹⁹⁸ Similarly, a Bradford woman who enjoyed the company of her immigrant colleagues complained that ‘Asians used to bring tins in and ...urgh! You could smell the garlic’. Yet this same woman also complained about the stale yoghurt which her Hungarian friend would use to condition her hair; the different smells of her workmates she treated as individual complaints, and she did not associate smell with a particular race, as often happened outside of the workplace.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, as with clothing, food was an important factor which worked against the idea of a common identity. A textile manager told Ralph Fevre how he much preferred second generation immigrants to their parents, and stated proudly that for the younger

¹⁹⁶ A. Sivanandan, ‘Poverty is the New Black’, *Race and Class* 43 (2001): 1-5.

¹⁹⁷ Halifax Oral Histories collection.

¹⁹⁸ S. Allen et al., *Work, Race and Immigration*; Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, 115.

¹⁹⁹ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0117, interviewed 4th June 1984.

generation there was ‘none of this garlic nonsense, fish and chips and a tea cake for them’.²⁰⁰ When British Asians began to eat ‘British’ food, this greatly aided the construction of a common identity in the workplace.²⁰¹

As one might expect, religious issues could cause disruption in the workplace. One Bradford worker claimed that trouble arose from appointing Asian supervisors as higher caste Hindus would not take orders from Untouchables, Muslims could not be supervised by Hindus, and so on.²⁰² Of course this may just have been used as a justification for not promoting Asians in the first place, but whether religious tension occurred between immigrants, or whether white overlookers assumed it would, religion served to distance immigrants from British workers. It did not necessarily follow that religion caused overt conflict within the workplace; one employer told Fevre that apart from Ramadan, ‘when priests are interfering’, there were excellent relations between the different religious groups on his staff.²⁰³ Yet religious issues re-enforced the idea of ‘difference’, not to mention the inconvenience of combining religious observance with the intense, target driven work of textile manufacturing: fasting during Ramadan, in particular, was particularly difficult to maintain whilst working long hours in the mills.²⁰⁴

Language difficulties were another area of possible friction. An inability to communicate with colleagues naturally worked against fostering friendliness and conviviality. A Halifax woman, for example, claimed she had to have her children write down questions she had about her work, which she would then take in and show to her supervisor.²⁰⁵ Furthermore, inability to justify actions and explain oneself led to frustration and resentment on both sides. An article in *Race Today* in 1970 described the effects of workplace arguments due to language difficulties: ‘There is a despairing and unwilling silence. Mrs K. is stunned, but she’s unable to

²⁰⁰ Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 122.

²⁰¹ On the cultural significance of food see U. Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures* (Routledge: New York, 1997); E. Buettner, ‘Going for an Indian. South Asian Restaurants and the Limits of Multiculturalism in Britain’, *Journal of Modern History* 80 (2008): 865-901.

²⁰² Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0041, interviewed 1st February 1984.

²⁰³ Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 107.

²⁰⁴ Halifax Oral Histories, Respondent WYC:1338/14, interviewed 6th March 2006.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

justify herself in English'.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, amongst immigrant workers themselves, lack of English was exploited. A Bradford worker recalled that in his factory, one Asian man spoke a particular dialect which no one else understood, and this allowed fellow immigrant workers to take advantage of him.²⁰⁷

Language difficulties did not always undermine an immigrants' ability to do the job; in textiles for example, most things could be taught by sight.²⁰⁸ Indeed Fevre has claimed that employers were not too concerned about the language difficulties of many of their South Asian staff; they were considered 'just workers', and if they could do the job without knowledge of English, then so be it. In fact a lack of English was thought to prove beneficial by some in that it would prevent dissent and organisation.²⁰⁹ White workers were often resentful of 'special treatment' given to Asian workers to help them learn English: many felt that they should learn 'on their own time', and noted how European immigrants had not received any help, yet managed to learn English well enough.²¹⁰ While it may not have impaired work, language difficulties could and often did act against establishing camaraderie and a common identity. Tom Jupp and Susan Hodlin described in *Race Today* how language was vitally important for social contact in the factory: 'The ability and confidence to gossip and joke with a workmate is extremely important when the work is dull and monotonous.' They also noted that many immigrants possessed the 'wrong sort of English'; they were often able to discuss technical matters yet did not have the informal, local, class-specific vocabulary of their fellow workers, and thus were not considered 'one of them'.²¹¹ Issues such as this show the subtleties and complications and workplace relations; even if an immigrant did have 'good' English, this did not necessarily make for good race relations. Rather it was the ability to share jokes and understand the local dialects and accents which worked towards establishing a common identity.

²⁰⁶ T. Jupp and S. Hodlin, 'Language 1: Asians in the factory', *Race Today* 2 (April 1970): 124.

²⁰⁷ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0041, interviewed 1st February 1984.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ *Race Today* 2 (April 1970); Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 132.

²¹⁰ 'Asian immigration – slum clearance', 28D94/1, Bradford Archive; Fevre, *Cheap Labour and Racial Discrimination*, 108.

²¹¹ Jupp and Hodlin, 'Language 1: Asians in the factory', 124.

Another significant point to consider in terms of workplace relations between white British and South Asian immigrants is that many migrants believed that they would be welcomed in the UK, and good look forward to a high standard of living. Whereas in Britain the voucher system established by the Commonwealth Immigration Act was seen as a form of restriction, reflecting public unease about levels of immigration, in the subcontinent this was not necessarily the case. Stephen Barton has argued that ‘it essential to perceive that the issue of vouchers, especially in Category C, was seen in Sylhet not as a form of regulation but as direct encouragement on the part of the British government’.²¹² Indeed an Asian respondent in the Huddersfield Oral Histories collection recalled how he believed that his Category C voucher *entitled* him to a job, and a specific type of job at that: he had been a court stenographer in the Punjab and expected a similar role in England. However upon his arrival he was informed by friends that this was considered ‘women’s work’ in England and that he would only find work in the mills. Having had no experience of manual work in his life, this came as an unpleasant surprise.²¹³ Similarly, Bradford Council records reveal that many immigrant teachers who had gained entry with a Category B voucher were subsequently found unsuitable to teach in the city’s schools, and were unable to find work.²¹⁴ The high expectations that many immigrants had of life in Britain therefore left many unprepared for the hostility which some of them faced, and disillusionment and withdrawal from British society will have undermined inter-ethnic interactions.

Perhaps one of the largest grievances which left-leaning, working-class men and women held against Asian workers was that they seemed, or threatened, to reduce their own *status*, if not their financial position. As Paul Foot remarked in 1965, ‘the working people of Smethwick are no more or less friendly than their counterparts all over Britain. They are warm-hearted and generous people in the main – but suspicious, often savage, if anything threatens their hard-earned and still

²¹² S. Barton, *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford* (Leeds: University of Leeds, 1981), 51.

²¹³ Huddersfield Oral Histories, Respondent 320A, interviewed 12th August 1987.

²¹⁴ ‘Commonwealth Immigrants 1969-1971’, BBDD 1/7/T14923, Bradford Archive.

meagre “affluence”.’²¹⁵ South Asian immigrants seemed to present just such a threat, *not necessarily by undercutting wages*, but through brining down the status of their occupations and the quality of life in their communities. Witness the Bradford respondent who ‘deplored’ any racial enmity in the work place, but complained that immigrants ‘made people classed as workers of machines, as if everyone was capable of doing it’.²¹⁶ Dennis Brooks and Karamjit Singh described the ethnic breakdown of the labour force at a West Midlands foundry in the 1970s, noting that of the sixteen men on shotblasting and sandblasting (the most onerous and dangerous jobs in the foundry), twelve were Punjabis, one was Jamaican, one Italian, and two Englishmen.²¹⁷ One must wonder how these two Englishmen felt; it was known that they were engaged in the worst, most poorly paid job in the foundry, and their immigrant colleagues served as evidence of that. Similarly, Wendy Webster has recalled the surprise of West Indian women on seeing white Britons performing menial tasks; they realised that these white people were no better than them, and vice-versa.²¹⁸ During the days of empire many poor whites could rely on a sense of racial superiority to provide a limited amount of status; working side-by-side with New Commonwealth immigrants removed any last vestiges of racial superiority, and perhaps for many a more exclusive ‘class’ identity was a means to preserve this status.²¹⁹ Thus, while working alongside immigrant workers may have helped to foster a sense of solidarity and comradeship, finding yourself in the same position as those who only worked the least desirable jobs may have caused resentment. It yet further evidence of the complex and often contradictory nature of inter-ethnic workplace relations; familiarity may have brought a sense of comradeship and solidarity at the same time as creating hostility and resentment. While familiarity

²¹⁵ Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 24.

²¹⁶ Bradford Oral Histories, Respondent A. 0012, interviewed 1st December 1983 and 21st June 1984.

²¹⁷ D. Brooks and K. Singh, ‘Asian Brokers in British Foundries’, 96.

²¹⁸ Webster, *Imagining Home*, 42.

Also witness the confusion of the character Jalib in Tariq Mehmood’s novel *Hand on the Sun*: ‘When he had first seen beggars in England he had not believed that they were real goras...They were dirty. Jalib could not believe they were white.’ T. Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun* (London: Penguin, 1983), 20.

²¹⁹ R. Dyer, *White* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997).

would cause some white Britons to realise that Asians were fellow workers, it would cause others to harden their belief that they were ‘a class apart’.

Most of the immigrants of the early 1960s worked for most of their waking hours. They had, generally speaking, not moved to the UK for ‘a better life’, but rather to earn as much money as possible to send back home. This obsession with work, and the impression it created of immigrants as ‘just workers’, caused resentment amongst the white working-class. It brought home the recent past, when they themselves, or their parents and grandparents, had lived out similar lifestyles, and were considered to be ‘just workers’ by their social superiors. Although later protests, unionisation and strike action by immigrants helped to dispel the idea of South Asian workers as vulnerable, exploitable and passive (as discussed above),²²⁰ in the early 1960s this stereotype was prevalent, and perhaps facilitated by the fact that Pakistani workers, in the words of Barton, did not seek ‘affirmation of his self-esteem from the natives, but from his fellows’.²²¹ Significantly, the white working class did not see themselves as down trodden and oppressed,²²² yet at first they did see South Asian immigrants in this way. Badr Dahya has argued that while the bulk of Pakistani migrants were originally small landholders who ‘despised’ labour and labourers, they were happy to do such work in the UK because ‘the status of the labourer is not the one they associate with the labourer back home’.²²³ Indeed it was not, and the British working class wished it to remain that way.

It has been argued in this chapter that, in the West Yorkshire textile towns at least, the idea of immigrants undercutting wage levels and taking vacancies which otherwise would have filled by white Britons is inaccurate. Furthermore, the *perception* of this undercutting and competition was not the main cause of hostility towards immigrants. We have seen that complex economic, social and cultural factors could combine to create or undermine friction. Unionisation and workplace

²²⁰ Hiro, *Black British White British*, 168.

²²¹ Barton, *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford*, 59.

²²² In his seminal description of Salford life at the start of the twentieth century, Robert Roberts noted how Leftist speakers were usually ignored: ‘Most people passed by; a few stood to listen, but not for long: the problems of the “proletariat”, they felt, had little to do with them.’ R. Roberts, *The Classic Slum* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), 28. Perhaps the failure of the Labour Party to fully appreciate this partly explains their electoral shortcomings in this period.

²²³ Dahya, *Pakistanis in Britain: Transients or Settlers?*, 247.

interactions could further hostility, but increasingly through the 1960s and into the 1970s white and Asian workers, and their children in particular, came to have a 'common identity'. However, although work may have dominated the lives of the first migrants during the early 1960s, as dependents of immigrants arrived and as their British-born or raised children reached maturity, their lives outside of work, their interactions outside of the workplace, and the formation and fragmentation of communities became more significant. It is to these issues which we now turn.

Chapter 3: Community Fragmentation. Neighbourhoods, Housing, and the Welfare State.

It was ironical that the very things which the townspeople object to in the immigrants are precisely those aspects of the old communal working-class way of life that used to be considered so valuable – the sense of community, the system of mutual help, the sense of duty to kinfolk, and the extended family structure. In their often vengeful and punitive attitude towards the immigrants, it is as though the working class were confronted by a spectre of their own past, which they are anxious to banish.²²⁴

The previous chapter examined the idea of competition for work, shop floor relations with unions, and interactions and relationships within the workplace. For single male migrants at the start of the 1960s their work was of the utmost importance; they had travelled to the UK purely in order to work and earn money, and what free time they had was usually spent sleeping, eating, and preparing for another long shift in the mills.²²⁵ With the arrival of wives and children over the course of the 1960s the dynamics of the relationship between South Asian immigrants and the white working class shifted. Issues such as housing, education and welfare became increasingly important, and by the start of the 1970s the idea of ‘culture’ and ‘values’ became more prominent in the discourse surrounding race and immigration.²²⁶ This chapter is divided into two broad sections: the first is concerned with the idea of ‘competition’ between immigrants and working-class whites for state welfare provision in the fields of health and housing, and also the interaction between white and South Asian children in the education system. The second section looks to address the relationship between the two communities outside of work both

²²⁴ J. Seabrook, *City Close-Up* (London: Allen Lane, 1971), 44.

²²⁵ Witness the description of the father of Jalib in *Hand on the Sun*: ‘He never questioned his existence. He slept and worked. Since he had come to England he had never joked or played with his children. Like thousands of other workers from the Indian subcontinent, he had fitted into the mills of Bradford as though he had been destined for them.’ Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun*, 48. Not that this was exclusive to immigrants; white British respondents in the Bradford Oral Histories collection have spoke of how they were ‘destined’ for the mills. See, for example, Respondent A. 0008, interviewed 25th November 1983, Bradford Oral Histories.

²²⁶ See, for example, Gilroy, *There Ain’t No Black in the Union Jack*; Sivanandan, *Race, Class and the State* and *Catching History on the Wing: Race, Culture and Globalisation* (London: Pluto Press, 2008); N. Ali et al (eds.), *A Postcolonial People*.

in their neighbourhoods and in their leisure time, and examines the idea of a clash of ‘cultures’ or ‘values’. This chapter is not arranged chronologically, for the changes we are concerned with here cannot be pinned down to certain years, nor can specific events easily be identified as turning points. Nonetheless there are some clear changes that occurred as wives and dependents arrived to join the male migrants, and a generation of British-born or raised Asians developed in the 1970s. It is argued here that, both in terms of ‘welfare competition’ and in ‘culture’ clashes, any resentment and hostility to South Asians came not simply because of their ‘foreignness’, but rather because they were considered to be ‘low class’. As some South Asians and their British children adopted the class culture of West Yorkshire – in terms of accents, dress and leisure pursuits – and as South Asian food became a part of working-class culture, hostility lessened, although these changes were by no means uniform.

I

The arrival of South Asian men to work in the factories and foundries of the UK had elicited a complex range of responses from white, working-class Labour voters and trade union members, as discussed in the previous chapter. The arrival of the wives and dependents of these men throughout the 1960s would cause new issues and tensions to arise. The original immigration of cheap, male labour from the subcontinent was designed to offer a solution to a particular economic problem, but the arrival of non-working women and children who would still make use of the state welfare system changed the nature of the race and immigration debate, and government responses to it. The message of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act and the 1971 Immigration Act was, as Sivanandan argued several years later, quite explicit: ‘If you want a family life, go home’.²²⁷ Yet the idea of South Asian women and children overloading the welfare system and taking up resources which could otherwise have been offered to white Britons is inaccurate, and even the

²²⁷ Interview with Ambalavaner Sivanandan, *Searchlight* 54 (1979).

perception of this competition for state beneficence was not, in itself, the main cause of hostility towards the newcomers from the people of West Yorkshire.

As Ian Law has argued, many of the prevalent stereotypes related to South Asians and the welfare state are ill-founded. It is often assumed that Asian family networks take the place of the state in caring for elderly relatives, yet Law's research into the Sikh community in Leeds found that while eighty per cent of Sikh elders did not receive any kind of professional support, over half did not live with their families. Furthermore, only twenty-one of the fifty-eight Sikh elders questioned by Law made use of the local gurdwara and community centre, despite thirty-five professing strong religious beliefs.²²⁸ There was also considerable difference between various immigrant communities and their use of the welfare state. Law found that Indians knew 'where to come and what to ask for' while Chinese and Bangladeshis were unlikely to claim the benefits to which they were legitimately entitled. Bengali elders tended to look down on welfare claimants, and there was greater familial support amongst Muslim immigrants, who claimed that their religion did not 'let us let go of children at sixteen'.²²⁹ Naturally we should be wary of assuming that Law's findings apply to West Yorkshire generally during the period with which we are concerned here, given that his research was conducted in the early 1990s and focussed almost exclusively on the immigrant communities of Leeds. Yet it is an important reminder of the hazards of generalising about immigrant benefit claims, even within quite specific ethno-religious groups. Whilst it seems likely that the Pakistani Muslim community of West Yorkshire in the 1960s and 1970s had a relatively low level of dependence on the welfare state, we should not endorse the view of the Smethwick social worker, who told the *Sunday Times* in 1961 that Asians 'want nothing from us at all – except work'.²³⁰

The Moss Side Labour Party, looking to dispel myths about immigrant competition for state welfare services, claimed in a 1976 leaflet that there was £10 less per head spent on immigrants, as they were more likely to be of working age

²²⁸ Law, *Racism, Ethnicity and Social Policy*, 61, 126-9.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

Also see J. Lambert, *Crime, Police and Race Relations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 229 and 273.

²³⁰ Quoted in Gilroy, *There Ain't no Black in the Union Jack*, 102.

and less likely to claim benefits.²³¹ In terms of state housing, health provision, and National Assistance, they argued, South Asian immigrants were far less likely to look to the state for assistance. Indeed despite the range of social services aimed at helping immigrants that were established during this period, immigrant use of the welfare state appears limited: the Bradford Child Care Service, for example, was rarely used by immigrants.²³² The anti-racist organisations of the 1960s and 1970s went to great lengths and utilized a sizeable arsenal of facts and statistics to demonstrate the falsehood of immigrants taking up resources which would otherwise be used by the white working class, yet this somewhat missed the point.²³³ It was the supposedly poor health of immigrants rather than their use of the National Health Service, their supposed poor hygiene rather than their use of social services, and the poor state of their houses rather than their competition for housing, which caused resentment towards South Asian immigrants in West Yorkshire. The housing issue – of tremendous importance in the interaction between immigrants and the white working class - will be discussed below, but first an examination of the important issue of immigrant health and hygiene is required.

From the start of the 1960s educators and health workers had called for health checks and quarantine periods for immigrant children, amid concerns that the dependents of South Asian workers already in the UK brought with them tuberculosis and, more sensationally, leprosy.²³⁴ Yet it was the supposed ill health and unhygienic nature of immigrants that was resented, rather than concern that the NHS might become overburdened. In a letter to Batley Town clerk the head of the Yorkshire Campaign to Stop Immigration (YCSI), Jim Merrick, claimed that he wanted to ascertain the ‘true situation’ of the health problems of immigrants in

²³¹ ‘Don’t be fooled by the racials!’ , Moss Side Labour Party leaflet, December 1976, NAD Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

²³² ‘Reports on Child Services’, BBD1/7/T15401 – Commonwealth Immigrants, Bradford Archive.

²³³ See ‘Don’t be fooled by the racials!’ , Moss Side Labour Party leaflet; Letter from Joan E. Wicken to Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, 3rd September 1958, 35/8, LPA; ‘Circular to all Prospective Parliamentary Candidates, 19th September 1974, from H. R. Underhill’, NAD Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA; F. Brockway, ‘The Coloured Worker: What Are the Facts?’, *Searchlight* 1 (1965); Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in Britain*.

²³⁴ See, for example, the recommendations of Trevor Burgin, Educational Organiser of the Huddersfield Educational Guidance Council, to the Yorkshire Adult School Union in 1964. Minutes of the Yorkshire Women’s Council Meetings, 1960-1969, WYK/1497/1/4/2, Huddersfield Archives.

Batley and Huddersfield. Merrick claimed he was very concerned about the incidence of tuberculosis amongst immigrants and enquired as to the exact number of TB outbreaks, and any incidences of leprosy amongst immigrants. The Town Clerk replied that, as far as he was aware, there had been no outbreaks of TB in Batley, nor any cases of leprosy, which must have come as a great disappointment to Merrick.²³⁵

Nonetheless concerns about the poor health and hygiene of immigrants persisted throughout the 1960s and '70s; as late as 1980 the head teacher of St Paul's primary school in Bradford described the dental hygiene lessons given to immigrant children – something which is reminiscent of the health inspections of working-class children inaugurated by the Liberal government in the first decade of the twentieth century.²³⁶ Whilst earlier health scares surrounding South Asian immigrants had concentrated on venereal disease – of 707 new cases of gonorrhoea amongst males in Bradford in 1963, 279 involved Asian immigrants – the arrival of wives and dependents saw the VD rate plummet, whilst tuberculosis rose, probably as a result of the overcrowding of immigrant homes.²³⁷ It was this association of immigrant workers with sickness and poor hygiene that caused resentment; the YCSI pamphlet *Voices in the Wilderness* concentrates on disease, in addition to education, religion and 'cultural' issues, but makes no mention of the overburdening of welfare services. The association of immigrants with disease created the idea that they were 'low class', that they were not 'our people', and brought back memories of the association between the working class and disease and poor hygiene which the people of Yorkshire had hoped to forget.²³⁸

The issue of the burial of Muslim settlers is illuminating. The tenets of Islam required that the deceased be buried within twenty-four hours of death, facing Mecca, and, most contentiously, without a coffin. Councils such as Batley dealt with this in quite a professional manner: having read the statutes concerning burial they

²³⁵ 'Letter from Jim Merrick to Town Clerk, 17th August 1970', and 'Letter from Batley Town Clerk to Jim Merrick, 10th September 1970', County Council of West Riding of Yorkshire. Medical Division. Batley. KMT/Box 69 TB 865, Huddersfield Archive.

²³⁶ 'St. Paul's Church of England First School, Head Teacher's Report, Easter 1980', BDP 74/14/2/27, Bradford Archive.

²³⁷ J. Barr, 'Pakistanis in Bradford', *New Society*, 19th November 1964.

²³⁸ 'Voices in the Wilderness', October 1970, BBD1/7/T15401, Bradford Archive.

established that while it was a legal requirement for coffins to be made of wood, or a substance as durable as wood, it was not a requirement to be buried in a coffin. This caused consternation amongst grave diggers: the local representative of the National Association of Funeral Directors wrote to the council arguing that burial without a coffin be avoided for ‘aesthetic’ and ‘hygienic’ reasons, and that it would cause a great deal of upset for people who already owned graves in the cemetery.²³⁹ When a man named Ibrahim Mahon Kayst passed away in the middle of the night, and was buried the next day, Jim Merrick of the YCSI immediately wrote to the Town Hall. He demanded to know whether or not it was true that this man had been buried immediately after death, and in an unhygienic manner. The Town Clerk eventually responded to Merrick, assuring him that Mr Kayst had a ‘perfectly normal burial’, except without a coffin. That Merrick chose to highlight this issue – burial without a coffin – due to the possible hygiene and safety concerns, neatly demonstrates the nature of health and cleanliness as an issue affecting interaction between immigrants and the white working class in Yorkshire.²⁴⁰

As with health concerns, the issue of housing immigrant workers also had the potential to create a great deal of hostility and friction. The January 1976 edition of the anti-racist magazine *Searchlight* published a letter from a reader bemoaning the ignorance and prejudice of the general public where immigration and housing were concerned. The letter told of how the author had been sitting on a train opposite a ‘perfectly ordinary’ looking man reading a newspaper. As the stranger disembarked at a station, he left his newspaper behind. The correspondent was saddened to see that, over an article concerning refugees fleeing the civil war in Angola, the words ‘wakey, wakey, come to England you will get housed!’, had been scrawled.²⁴¹ Paul

²³⁹ ‘Letter from Clifford Ellis, National Association of Funeral Directors, Dewsbury, Wakefield and Districts Local Association, to Town Clerk, Batley, 24th March 1970’, Cemetery Administration KMT/Box 30 TB 903 (PCI), Huddersfield Archive.

²⁴⁰ ‘Letter from Jim Merrick to Town Clerk, Batley, 6th June 1970’ and ‘Letter from Town Clerk to Jim Merrick, 9th July 1970’, Cemetery Administration KMT/Box 30 TB 903 (PCI), Huddersfield Archive.

See also R. Bivins, “‘The English Disease’ or ‘Asian Rickets’: Medical Responses to Post-Colonial Immigration’, *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 81 (2007): 533-568 and “‘The people have no more love left for the Commonwealth’: Media, Migration and Identity in the 1961-2 British Smallpox Outbreak’. *Immigrants and Minorities* 25 (2008): 263-289.

²⁴¹ *Searchlight* January 1976.

Gilroy has recounted a similar tale, recalling that a Greater London Council anti-racist billboard, bearing the question: ‘Where would Mrs Thatcher have got to if she had been black?’ bore the graffitied retort: ‘To the front of the housing queue’.²⁴² The provision of council housing was a fiercely coveted resource, and the alleged preferential treatment of immigrants with regards to accessing council housing was therefore often a major source of resentment for the Labour-voting white working class.

Since the 1950s the Labour Party had been emphasising that housing shortages had existed for several decades, long before the arrival of Commonwealth immigrants, and that as more people were leaving the country than entering, immigration was not the cause of an increased demand for housing.²⁴³ Despite this, competition for houses was a key theme in criticisms of immigration and immigrants nationwide; in the West Riding of Yorkshire, however, these criticisms were more muted and housing was not as significant an issue. Unlike areas such as the West Midlands, in Bradford and smaller West Riding towns such as Halifax and Batley there simply was not an increased pressure on housing as a result of immigration, and in mid-1960s Bradford the average waiting time for a council house was only six months (compared with five years in Birmingham).²⁴⁴ A principal reason for this is that the region had experienced prolonged emigration to elsewhere in the country before and during this period, whereas the West Midlands and London had been growing substantially in population size throughout the twentieth century. In addition to the declining population, the local Corporations took a proactive approach to building social housing, with new houses built at the same rate of slum clearance.²⁴⁵

Significantly, Corporations in the West Riding did not give ‘special treatment’ to immigrant applications for council housing, or at least not in theory. A

²⁴² Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack*, 181.

²⁴³ Letter from Joan E. Wicken to Editor of the *Daily Mirror*, 3rd September 1958, 35/8, LPA.

²⁴⁴ Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 260.

²⁴⁵ As argued by John Barr as early as 1964. See Barr, ‘Pakistanis in Bradford’. Low pressure on housing confirmed by oral testimonies (see, for example, Respondent A. 0089, interview date unknown, Oral History Collection, Bradford Archive); archival evidence (documents in folder NCW 23-27 (National Council of Women), West Yorkshire Archive Services, Calderdale Library, Halifax, and European Immigration 1965, LPA); and Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, 163.

letter from the Bradford City Housing and Estates Manager to the Town Clerk in 1970 asserted that ‘applications from immigrants [were] dealt with in the same way’ as applications from anyone else, according to the established points scheme. Priority was given to people displaced by slum clearance, then to those recommended for relocation by a Medical Officer, and then to those at the top of the waiting list.²⁴⁶ Similarly, although the West Riding towns housed a large number of Ugandan Asian refugees in the early 1970s, they stressed that there were definite limits to the number of Ugandans they could provide for, and were eventually forced to write to the Ugandan Resettlement Board explaining that they were unable to help any further.²⁴⁷

It is true that since South Asian immigrants usually occupied areas scheduled for slum clearance, often suffered from tuberculosis and pneumonia as a result of their poor housing, and residency restrictions only applied when one lived or worked outside of Bradford, these regulations could have accidentally worked in favour of immigrants. Yet in reality South Asian immigrants generally did not apply for council housing in the first place.²⁴⁸ A report from Halifax in 1965, for example, found that only one Pakistani lived on a Corporation housing estate and that none were on the waiting list for Corporation houses.²⁴⁹ The low pressure on social housing in West Yorkshire due to emigration and a robust house building strategy combined with the lack of Asian interest in council housing to ensure that it did not become a significantly contentious issue. The same cannot be said for other areas such as Birmingham and the West Midlands, where there was a great deal of competition for public housing,²⁵⁰ yet it is clear that we cannot understand hostility towards immigrants from the working class of West Yorkshire in these terms. The Bradford Shelter Housing and Renewal Experiment memorandum of 1970 described

²⁴⁶ Letter from City Housing and Estates Manager to Town Clerk, BBD1/7/T14923, Bradford Archive.

²⁴⁷ See ‘Correspondence from Town Clerk to Ugandan Resettlement Board’, Housing. Council Housing and Housing Estates. Lettings. Ugandan Asians. Halifax Archive.

²⁴⁸ See Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in England*, Chapter 11.

²⁴⁹ B. Hartley, ‘Area reports on Cities and Boroughs with Substantial Immigrant Settlements. Halifax, 1965.’ European Immigration 1965, LPA.

²⁵⁰ There were 30,000 on the housing waiting list in Birmingham in 1959. See Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 20.

the situation quite succinctly when they noted that Bradford had a population of 300,000 and a housing stock of 100,000, over fifty-two per cent of which was built before 1914. ‘The city’s critical housing problem’, they argued, ‘is one of *quality* rather than quantity’.²⁵¹

In the West Riding it was not competition from immigrants over housing which caused resentment, but rather the type and quality of housing which the immigrants occupied. In towns such as Bradford, Halifax and Huddersfield immigrants initially settled in areas scheduled for slum clearance – in this case literally taking the place of the old working class. They did not choose these areas out of preference for squalid living conditions – although this was ludicrously claimed and believed by many at the time²⁵² - but rather due to the unavailability of housing elsewhere on account of high rates and racial discrimination.²⁵³ Furthermore, some Asians who possessed a certain degree of capital, knowledge of English, and good connections were able to buy up slum property and control the settlement of their compatriots.²⁵⁴ Once Asian settlement had begun in certain areas it acted as a magnet for further settlers who were unwilling to live away from established Asian communities. This overconcentration in specific areas produced many problems for the local authorities, who pledged to combat it and pursued many schemes aimed at dispersing Asian settlement, largely without success.²⁵⁵ Similarly, Corporations made great efforts to ensure that Ugandan Asians who were resettled in their towns did not add to the over-concentration of Asians in particular areas, but were nearly always unsuccessful in this matter.²⁵⁶

²⁵¹ ‘Bradford Shelter Housing and Renewal Experiment (SHARE), Memorandum to the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, 3D84/3/26, Bradford Archive. Emphasis added.

²⁵² As discussed in Barr, ‘Pakistanis in Bradford’. For example: ‘1,000 Pakistani homes in Bradford are overcrowded’, *Yorkshire Evening Post* 13th July 1964; ‘Voices in the Wilderness’, October 1970, BBD1/7/T15401, Bradford Archive.

²⁵³ Daniel, *Racial Discrimination in Britain*.

²⁵⁴ In 1962, for example, a Mr Majid began buying up houses in Batley. ‘Letter from Oldfield and Newsome Estate Agents to Town Clerk, Batley, 26th January 1962’, Batley Borough Council Records, KMT/Box 91/1, Huddersfield Archive.

²⁵⁵ See discussion on over-concentration, and the problems in combating it, in BBD1/7/T14923, Bradford Archive; NCW 23-27 (National Council of Women), Halifax Archive.

²⁵⁶ BBD1/7/T16150 – Commonwealth Immigrants from 1st September 1971 to 31st December 1972, Bradford Archive.

The first South Asian immigrants into the area were single men who spent most of their working hours in the mills. They were not too concerned about their living conditions, and generally lived with several of their compatriots in the same house, often with several men in the same room.²⁵⁷ As Robert Miles and others have argued, constraints of time and money prevented immigrants from improving the quality of their accommodation, and this was not given high priority as many assumed that they would not be in the UK for a particularly long length of time.²⁵⁸ Their concern was to earn as much money as possible, to pay off their debts and send remittances back to their families in Pakistan. A Pakistani worker quoted by Badr Dahya probably spoke for many of his compatriots: 'Will the English people think better of me if I live in a modern house here? Better to build a *pukka* house in the village [in Pakistan] where there are people who matter.'²⁵⁹ Due to this attitude, and ignorance of the resources which might be available to them, very few Pakistanis sought improvement grants from the local authority.²⁶⁰ One might be forgiven for thinking that a lack of financial support from the state may have assuaged resentment towards immigrants, but on the contrary it was their apparent willingness to live in squalid conditions which was a genuine cause of resentment.

John Barr referred to an incident whereby the Bradford Corporation bought a Victorian house, split it into fifteen flatlets and installed all the latest modern appliances. Despite charging a very reasonable thirty shillings rent, they found themselves unable to fill this hostel. The Corporation could not understand why this should be, and this case – which was picked up by the local press – helped disseminate the idea that Pakistanis preferred to live in filth.²⁶¹ The Corporation found this hostel hard to fill because of immigrants' reluctance to move out of their established communities, and to spend any more than they had to on rent, but tales such as these confirmed the image already embedded in the minds of many Labour-voting working-class men and women: that Asians lived in squalor, in overcrowded

²⁵⁷ 'Asian immigration – slum clearance, 1968', 28D94/1, Bradford Archive.

²⁵⁸ Miles, *Racism and Migrant Labour*, 36.

²⁵⁹ Dahya, 'Pakistanis in Britain – Transients or Settlers?', 256.

²⁶⁰ BBD1/7/T15401 – Commonwealth Immigrants, Bradford Archive.

²⁶¹ Barr, 'Pakistanis in Bradford'; BBDD1/7/T9677 – Commonwealth Immigrants Advisory Council August 1962-August 1965, Bradford Archive.

slum communities where ill-health and disease were rife, in much the same way as their parents or grandparents had. Ghosts of the past which were considered vanquished reappeared with the arrival of South Asian immigrants, and this perpetuated resentment against them, rather than the perception or reality of competition for housing.²⁶²

For the first few years of the 1960s, Asian migrants and the white British population of the towns they settled in lived essentially segregated lives outside of the workplace. As the wives and children of the economic migrants began to arrive during the 1960s, the interactions between South Asians and the white British working class became somewhat more complicated. No area demonstrates this better than that of education. Whereas the original situation of single men working long hours in the factories and sleeping through most of their free time presented few problems for the state and - in West Yorkshire at least – no great hostility from the general public, the education of immigrant children was to pose new challenges. In 1966 the Plowden Committee on Primary Education reported that 7,000 Pakistani children and 24,000 Indian children were currently in British schools.²⁶³ These numbers would steadily increase throughout the decade: in Batley, for example, the percentage of births by mothers born outside of the UK increased from 5.8% in 1965 to 23.9% in 1969, in addition to many children arriving from the subcontinent; in Bradford there were 962 immigrant children in 1962 and 5,307 in 1969.²⁶⁴ By and large local authorities in the West Riding – which were of course familiar with high birth rates, despite their steady decline amongst the white working class since the War – coped well with the arrival of immigrant children.²⁶⁵ In Halifax, for example, the Education Department held reception classes for immigrant infants at two schools, before sending them on to regular neighbourhood schools, and there were

²⁶² As argued of early 1970s Blackburn by Jeremy Seabrook. See Seabrook, *City Close-Up*.

²⁶³ 'Race Relations Working Party, Race Relations', Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and Papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967, LPA.

²⁶⁴ Figures for Batley: 'Letter from Town Clerk to Jim Merrick, 10th September 1970', County Council of West Riding of Yorkshire. Medical Division. Batley. KMT/Box 69 TB 865, Huddersfield Archive.

Figures for Bradford: D.E.S. Education Survey 13, *The Education of Immigrants* (London: HMSO, 1971).

²⁶⁵ On the declining birth rate see Webster, *Imagining Home*, 120-129.

several ‘multi-racial’ play groups established.²⁶⁶ Even as the children of immigrants began to form the majority in some primary schools, it does not seem to have caused unworkable strain on the school system. In her Autumn Report of 1977, the Head Teacher of St. Paul’s Church of England First School noted that while it was ‘of some concern’ that immigrant children now constituted 71% of pupils, due to language difficulties and social problems, the staff had managed to cope simply by working longer hours.²⁶⁷ As far as primary schools were concerned, John Barr’s positive description was fairly accurate:

Already there is a high proportion of immigrant children (exceeding fifty per cent in one school, between forty-fifty per cent in three others) but, oddly perhaps, so far there have been few protests from English parents worried that their children’s progress will be held back by large numbers of non-English speakers, nor have there been any noticeable efforts by white parents to transfer their children to schools with fewer immigrants.²⁶⁸

It seems that ‘race’ and ‘religion’ were not particularly important issues in the primary schools of Bradford and the West Riding. Immigrants, of course, generally settled in the most deprived areas, and the main concern of the educators at the schools which served these areas tended to be the welfare of their pupils. In the reports of the Head Teacher of St. Paul’s incidents of racial or religious tension are notable by their absence; they are mainly concerned with problems of welfare for the children. Similarly the Bradford Educational Services Committee in 1970 stressed the need for teachers to spend more of their time on social and welfare work.²⁶⁹ In the primary schools at least it seems that their common socio-economic position meant that South Asian and white British children were considered as members of the same ‘class’, and ill-health, poor hygiene and poverty were issues which affected them all equally.²⁷⁰ This common identity was well conveyed in an article in the

²⁶⁶ ‘NCW23 – Information for the Migration Subcommittee of the International and Commonwealth Relations Committee on Arrangements Operating in Halifax Concerning Immigrants 1972’, NCW 23-27 (National Council of Women), Halifax Archive.

²⁶⁷ ‘St. Paul’s Church of England First School, Head Teacher’s Report, Autumn 1977’, BDP 74/14/2/7, Bradford Archive.

²⁶⁸ Barr, ‘Pakistanis in Bradford’.

²⁶⁹ ‘Educational Services Committee Minutes, 20th October 1970’, BBD1/7/T14268, Bradford Archive.

²⁷⁰ See the reports of the Head Teacher of St. Paul’s Church of England Primary School, BDP 74/14/2/7, Bradford Archives.

Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* of May 1973. Entitled ‘Community Harmony at city school’, the article described how the 300 pupils at Manningham Middle School comprised Pakistanis, Bengalis, Indians, Jamaicans, Ugandans, Chinese and Fijians. ‘But instead of creating problems, these children seem to enrich the life of the school. Religious education and morning assemblies could be a problem, but the children learn about each others religions’. In addition to Harvest Festivals, there were celebrations for Eid and Guru Nanak’s birthday. The Headmaster, a Mr J. O. Mahoney, hoped that ‘they may work out their differences at school instead of later on the factory floor or developing deep-rooted prejudices’. The article concluded that ‘folk, pop, West Indian and Asian singing went down very well with chapattis and cups of tea, which just about sums up Manningham Middle School and what it is trying to achieve’.²⁷¹

Until a certain age racial and religious tensions between school children seem absent, and there is little hostility towards immigrant children from educational staff. All the children came from disadvantaged backgrounds, and all the children – due to their very nature as small children – could be dirty and unhygienic, and so the usual complaints that immigrants were of a ‘lower class’ did not apply.²⁷² This allowed positive reporting such as the newspaper article quoted above. Yet as children grew older, the easy multi-culturalism of ‘chapattis and cups of tea’ became harder to maintain.²⁷³ The respondent in the Halifax Oral Histories collection who claimed that he enjoyed primary school only to be badly bullied by white children at senior school seems to reflect the experiences of many.²⁷⁴ Similarly accounts such as Tariq Mehmood’s semi-autobiographical novel *Hand on the Sun* describe the near constant inter-racial violence prevalent at his Bradford high school.

St Paul’s was located in Manningham, one of the poorest areas of the city and the main area of immigrant settlement. In her reports the Head Teacher notes that the white British children in her school often suffered from poverty, poor hygiene and poor nutrition.

²⁷¹ M. Burrow, ‘Community harmony at city school’, *Telegraph and Argus*, 16th May 1973.

²⁷² Head Teachers Reports, St. Paul’s Church of England Primary School, BDP 74/14/2/7, Bradford Archives.

²⁷³ For a discussion of how the ‘soft’ multi-culturalism of music and food disguises the more pertinent issues such as marriage, morality and religion, see S. Fish, ‘Boutique Multiculturalism’, *Critical Inquiry* 23 (Winter, 1997).

²⁷⁴ Respondent WYC:1338/1, Oral Histories Collection, Huddersfield Archive.

As Arun Kundnani has argued, in the school system white working-class children were increasingly ‘perceived as having no culture’, leading their parents to grow anxious about the presence of Asian children in classrooms and possible favouritism shown to them.²⁷⁵ During the 1970s, local authorities such as Bradford began to instigate the ‘bussing’ of immigrant children from areas of high Asian settlement and density to areas dominated by white Britons. This policy caused a great deal of stress for Asian youths, and often left them more exposed to physical violence and racist abuse, from fellow student and teachers alike. Through the 1970s, therefore, as a new generation of British Asians began to reach maturity, the mainstream education system increasingly became a site of confrontation between British Asian and white British youths.²⁷⁶

In addition to mainstream schools, special provision was made for teaching English to immigrant children, at specialised language colleges such as St. Jude’s and Barkerend Senior Immigration Centre in Bradford. The attendance registers of Barkerend reveal consistently high attendance across all age-groups, with several children in each class being present across entire semesters.²⁷⁷ With both language centres and mainstream schools, it seemed that South Asian children did, by and large, enter the state education system, yet the uniform education did not necessarily ameliorate a sense of ‘difference’ – as Mehmood’s novel reveals – nor did a British education present immigrant children with the opportunities their parents believed it would.

For immigrant parents it was very desirable for their children to receive a British education, as Marcus Thompson has argued.²⁷⁸ Yet from the beginning there were obstacles to education as the ‘assimilating’ or ‘integrating’ force many felt it would be. Very often Asian parents would not attend parents’ evenings, for example, as they would not understand the teachers.²⁷⁹ Since many parents were unable to understand what their children were taught at school, already issues of trust and

²⁷⁵ A. Kundnani, ‘From Oldham to Bradford: the violence of the violated’, *Race and Class* 43 (2001): 109.

²⁷⁶ Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun*.

²⁷⁷ ‘Barkerend Senior Immigration Centre Attendance Registers, 1969-1979’, 18D80, Bradford Archive.

²⁷⁸ M. Thompson, ‘The Second Generation – Punjabi or English?’, *New Community* 3 (1974): 246.

²⁷⁹ Discussed in Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, 123.

‘cultural’ control were raised. As the ‘myth of return’ receded and South Asian families acquired more of a sense of place and permanence within the UK, so did they increasingly question the nature of their children’s education. Similarly, the South Asian families coming to the UK from East Africa in the late 1960s and early ‘70s often had more confidence in dealing with schools authorities on account of their familiarity with the English language and with British bureaucracy (many having been employed as teachers or other public sector workers). Their heightened sense of religious identity from prior experience of living as an immigrant-descended community also worked towards a concern that elements of their ethno-religious identity would be retained by their children. By the late 1970s issues such as separate playgrounds and schools for girls, uniform concerns, and provision of appropriate food in schools were being voiced by Pakistani immigrants looking to take greater involvement in their children’s education than they had previously done.²⁸⁰ Local education authorities (LEAs) reacted to these concerns in different ways: Leicester LEA, for example, waived school uniforms for Muslim girls, whereas Halifax was prepared to concede single-sex playgroups and schools, and the provision of vegetarian food, but held firm over uniforms.²⁸¹ By 1972 permission had been given in Bradford for the Muslim Educational Trust to give religious instruction after school hours in senior schools²⁸², and towards the end of the time period which concerns us here, the Muslim Education Council began to press for state-subsidised separate education for Muslim children, and through the 1980s Muslim faith schools became an increasingly controversial issue.²⁸³ Just as South Asians were beginning to adopt the class habits and culture of the white working class, the concept of Islam as a ‘nation’ and Islamic revivalism sparked by events such as the Iranian Revolution and carried on through the Rushdie affair would work

²⁸⁰ See, for example, ‘Letter from Akber Ali Choudhry to John Garnett, Halifax CRC, 1st February 1977’, Box 1567, Folder: CMB/D11/2/27/46/2. Ugandan Asians Resettlement. Halifax Archive.

²⁸¹ ‘Halifax Chief Environmental Health Officer to Chief Administrative Officer, 31st January 1977’, Box 1567, Folder: CMB/D11/2/27/46/2. Ugandan Asians Resettlement. Halifax Archive. On Leicester see Hiro, *Black British, White British*, 153.

²⁸² BBD1/7/T16150 – Commonwealth Immigrants 1st September 1971 to 31st December 1972. Bradford Archive.

²⁸³ S. Tomlinson, ‘Political Dilemmas in Multi-Racial Education’, in Z. Layton-Henry and P. Rich (eds.), *Race, Government and Politics in Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1986), 192.

to separate British Asians from their white compatriots, but this goes beyond the time period under analysis.²⁸⁴

II

Stephen Barton has suggested that migrants are not so much part of two worlds, but rather between them.²⁸⁵ This certainly seems typical of early South Asian immigrants and their children in West Yorkshire, and was still an accurate description of many in 1980. Describing Pakistani immigrants in Britain, Badr Dahya argued that ‘it can now be said that the migrants are gradually adopting the norms of the social class in which they happen to be identified’. Dahya noted that Pakistani shopkeepers had adapted to sell alcohol and non-*halal* meat, and saw no inconsistency in selling alcohol and *halal* meat in the same shop, nor of being a *hajji* (one who had made the *hajj* pilgrimage to Mecca) and selling alcohol.²⁸⁶ Clearly this was not true of all immigrants, and nor did this ‘adaptation’ always lessen hostility towards the newcomers, but over the time period 1960-80 immigrants, and more pointedly their children, began to decisively enter one world: not necessarily that of ‘Britain’, but of the specific world of their particular West Riding town.

It is important to note, as Avtar Brah has, that whilst the Asian middle-class often had a great deal of contact and interaction with its white British counterpart, contact between the Asian and white working class outside of work was, at first, usually minimal.²⁸⁷ Whilst many early settlers from the subcontinent were forced to interact with local people and work mates due to the lack of fellow Asians, as the 1960s wore on and Asian communities were built, this need lessened.²⁸⁸ In towns such as Bradford and Halifax Asians soon established ‘their own’ shops, cafes,

²⁸⁴ On ‘Islamic nationalism’ see T. Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993); for the significance of this idea to the formation of Pakistan and Pakistani identity see A. Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman: Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

²⁸⁵ Barton, *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford*, 63.

²⁸⁶ Dahya, ‘Pakistanis in Britain: Transients or Settlers?’, 272.

²⁸⁷ Brah, ‘The “Asian” in Britain’, 43.

²⁸⁸ V. Khan, ‘South Asian women in South London’, in S. Wallman (ed.), *Ethnicity at Work* (London: Macmillan, 1979), 119.

restaurants and social clubs, as distinct from those owned and patronised by ‘whites’.²⁸⁹ Similarly, the P.E.P. report of 1966 found that while West Indians had more unpleasant experiences owing to their higher expectations on arrival and their desire to participate in a British pattern of life, many Pakistani immigrants organised their lives so that they had a minimum exposure to situations that could result in discrimination.²⁹⁰ This was generally not a trait continued by their children; they had been born or raised in Britain, and were not content to shy away from racism and hostility.²⁹¹ (There is perhaps a parallel here with the social and cultural changes amongst the white working class in the post-war period: Sivanandan has spoken of how the children of immigrants often refused to do the ‘shit work’ that their parents had done, yet he seemed to consider this refusal as exclusive to black or Asian youths.²⁹² Many young white working class Britons were similarly unwilling to take poorly paid, tedious jobs (thus opening opportunities for immigrant workers), and resented their parents subservient and ‘cop-doffing’ acceptance of the social hierarchy.)²⁹³ Nevertheless the withdrawal and segregation of some South Asians did not necessarily lesson antipathy towards them; as the inaugural edition of *Searchlight* argued, New Commonwealth immigrants were visibly different, and their presence – albeit segregated - became seen as a symptom of the woes facing the working class.²⁹⁴

One of the most important social changes underway in this period came from the breakup of old working-class communities through slum clearance and the creation of new housing estates.²⁹⁵ Old border lines of identity and community were

²⁸⁹ ‘B. Hartley, ‘Area reports on Cities and Boroughs with Substantial Immigrant Settlements. Halifax, 1965’, European Immigration 1965, LPA.

²⁹⁰ ‘Racial discrimination in England: A P.E.P. Report’, Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and Papers, 6th April – 22nd June, LPA.

²⁹¹ Witness the exasperated Headmaster in *Hand on the Sun*: ‘Why can’t you be like your parents?...Look how your parents work’. Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun*, 31.

²⁹² A. Sivanandan, *Communities of Resistance: Writings on Black Struggles for Socialism* (London: Verso, 1990), 83.

²⁹³ Mungham and Pearson, *Working-Class Youth Culture* and S. Hall and T. Jefferson (eds.), *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain* (London: HarperCollins, 1976).

²⁹⁴ *Searchlight* 1 Spring 1965.

²⁹⁵ There is a vast literature on the physical, social and cultural changes attendant to slum clearance, dispersal, and the growth of new housing estates. See, for example: R. Colls, ‘When we lived in communities: working-class culture and its critics’ in R. Colls and R. Rodger

redrawn, and just as before, new neighbourhoods (and families within those neighbourhoods) acquired reputations and a place on the spectrum of respectability. Whilst this upheaval continued, large numbers of New Commonwealth immigrants entered the UK, and set up communities alongside or within both established and newly-created white British neighbourhoods. The reception of immigrants within these neighbourhoods varied according to the extent of segregation and with time. Where white British and South Asians lived separately, as in large areas of Bradford and the West Riding generally, it was easier to stigmatise whole communities of immigrants with undesirable characteristics, although this of course applied to white working-class communities as well.²⁹⁶ Nor did familiarity necessarily work to undermine stereotypes: in her work on letters of support sent to Enoch Powell, Amy Whipple noted that ‘numerous working-class supporters articulated their frustration at being “whites” who lived and worked among “blacks” as evidence of their socioeconomic subordination and powerlessness’.²⁹⁷ As occasionally in the workplace, having to live alongside Asian immigrants was often seen as a threat to status, and it was their supposedly dirty habits and un-cleanliness more than religion,

(eds.), *Cities of Ideas* (London: Ashgate Publishing, 2004): 283-308; M. Clapson, ‘The Suburban Aspiration in England Since 1919’, *Contemporary British History* 14 (1999): 151-174; *Suburban Century: Social Change and Urban Growth in England and the USA* (London: Berg, 2003); ‘Working-Class Women’s Experiences of Moving to New Housing Estates in England Since 1919’, *Twentieth Century British History* 10 (1999): 345-365; M. Daunton, *A Property Owning Democracy? Housing in Britain* (London: Faber and Faber, 1987); D.S. Ryan, *The ideal home through the twentieth century* (London: Hazar, 1997); B. Jones, ‘Slum Clearance, Privatization and Residualization: the Practices and Politics of Council Housing in Mid-Twentieth Century Britain’, *Twentieth Century British History* 21 (2010): 510-539; D. Hardy, *From New Towns to Green Politics: Campaigning for Town and Country Planning 1946-1990* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1991); P. Mandler, “‘New Towns for Old’: The Fate of the Town Centre”, in B. Conekin et al (eds.), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain, 1945-1964* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1999); L. Esher, *A Broken Wave: The Rebuilding of England 1940-1980* (London: Allen Lane, 1980); M. Glendinning & S. Muthesius, *Tower Block: Modern Public Housing in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

²⁹⁶ See, for example, respondent A. 0008 in Bradford Oral Histories collection, who had a good relationship with Asian workers but decried the ‘local fellows’ of the Tyersal housing estate as ‘devils’.

²⁹⁷ Whipple, ‘Revisiting the “Rivers of Blood”’, 719-20.

dress, language or ethnicity which was most objected to. These people were considered ‘low class’ and so it was an indignity to have to live alongside them.²⁹⁸

In order to break down barriers of ‘cultural difference’, particularly amongst Asian women, several local authorities organised schemes of visitations. In Halifax the Union of Catholic Mothers, for example, organised social events and visits for South Asian women, who were considered confined to their homes and in need of social interaction, advice and help.²⁹⁹ Also in Halifax, a local Justice of the Peace ran a ladies visiting scheme, although apparently it was difficult to find English ladies willing to volunteer.³⁰⁰ Of course these were reminiscent of visitation schemes arranged by the well-meaning middle class before the Second World War, and aimed at the poor, slum-dwelling working-class housewife. The people who organised these programmes felt that, once again, there was a community living in slum conditions, with little knowledge of healthcare and poor levels of hygiene, which needed their help, assistance and friendship. The working class too felt that there was such a community once again in existence, and deeply resented the memories it raised.³⁰¹

These views were not prevalent everywhere, however: a respondent to the Bradford Oral Histories collection recalls how ethnic resentment was absent from his neighbourhood, aside from ‘a few problem families’. Similarly, Robin Ward’s case study into slum clearance on Moss Side revealed the solidarity of the community – irrespective of ethnicity, religion or social status – in opposition to the Town Hall’s dispersal programme. Ward attributed this to the presence of a common enemy and the shared housing concern, but I would argue that as South Asians took

²⁹⁸ Wendy Webster has cited Clifford Hill’s interviews of 34 white women married to black men in 1964. Hill found that: ‘Most of the wives said they were made to feel “low class” because of their association with a coloured man.’ Webster, *Imagining Home*, 50.

²⁹⁹ D. Prosser, ‘The Absorption of Immigrants – Part II. A brief survey of the work of some Roman Catholic organisations in Britain.’ Supplement to Institute of Race Relations Newsletter, January 1965. In *European Immigration 1965*, LPA.

³⁰⁰ NCW 23-27 (National Council of Women), Halifax Archive.

³⁰¹ Shelia Allen cites Dr Kenneth Little’s 1947 study of Cardiff’s Butetown, where black immigrants were associated with the lowest class, and resented for this. Allen, *New Minorities, Old Conflicts*, 132.

up the ‘class’ features of the white working class they became more understandable; they became increasingly ‘one of us’.³⁰²

It was particularly difficult for South Asian immigrants to enter the British class system, to become ‘one of us’, because of the cultural specificity of class in the West Riding. Whilst it is true to say that during this period the cultural ‘homogeneity’ of white British people continued to increase, the identity of a white, working-class Yorkshire man or woman remained sharp and distinct. In a 2003 article praising Canadian multi-culturalism, Will Kymlicka noted that immigrants had no problem with becoming Canadian citizens as ‘being Canadian is not an exclusive identity’.³⁰³ In the West Riding in the 1960s and 1970s, however, as elsewhere in the country, identities tended to be quite exclusive: you were either one of us, or you were not. At first South Asian immigrants were usually placed in the latter category, and, as we have seen, they were often decried as an unpleasant remainder of what the white working-class used to be. A London-based professional white sociologist researching race relations in the town would still be firmly in the second category, as would a visiting Asian dignitary or sportsman, but for different reasons to the Pakistani mill workers, and with different implications for the manner in which they were regarded and treated. Living, working, or going to school alongside white Britons did not necessarily make you ‘one of them’; we will now examine how ‘cultural interactions’ between the two groups affected their separate identities.

‘The Asians’, argued Ambalavaner Sivanandan, ‘with their different cultures and customs and language and dress, their extended families and sense of community, and their peculiar preference to stay with their own kind, were a society apart...a parallel society’.³⁰⁴ Around the world, often the first point of contact between immigrant groups and the local population is food. It is the most acceptable face of ‘multi-culturalism’; the aspect of newcomers least objectionable to

³⁰² R. Ward, ‘Where race didn’t divide: Some reflections on slum clearance in Moss Side’, in R. Miles and A. Phizacklea (eds.), *Racism and Political Action* (London: Routledge, 1979).

³⁰³ W. Kymlicka, ‘Immigration, Citizenship, Multiculturalism: Exploring the Links’, *Political Quarterly* (2003): 197.

³⁰⁴ Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 115.

suspicious and prejudiced host communities.³⁰⁵ In this respect South Asians in Britain were, at first at least, somewhat of an exception to the rule. Concerning the original South Asian restaurants established in the 1960s, Elizabeth Buettner has argued that ‘rarely, if ever, did an English customer cross the threshold. For whites living in cities with high rates of immigration, Asian food was not what they consumed themselves; rather, it served as a key indicator of the newcomers’ presence and cultural distinctiveness’.³⁰⁶ During a meeting of the Huddersfield Commonwealth Immigration Advisory Committee, a Mr Dadhiwala explained that he was ‘aware of the difficulties which had arisen with regard to smells from their type of cooking, but these smells arose from their normal cooking practices’. He also claimed that although he understood objections with regards to the keeping of poultry in domestic residences, this was a practice that would not change any time soon.³⁰⁷ This incident again demonstrates the typical complaints concerning Pakistani immigrants: smell, dirt, and poor hygiene. By the 1970s however this relationship had begun to change: for many young working-class men ‘going for a curry’ became a ‘social ritual’ and Asian restaurants proudly advertised their ‘fully licensed’ status.³⁰⁸

As Buettner and Uma Narayan have argued, the ‘South Asian’ cuisine on offer in these restaurants bore little resemblance to food consumed on the subcontinent, and it was more a case of the working class enjoying an acceptable hybrid than embracing South Asian culture. Yet it was the creation of this ‘hybrid culture’ in areas of immigrant settlement across the UK that broke down polarised identities and created new ones; similarly, when Pakistani workers bought their foremen pints in the pub and gifts at Christmas, this did not necessarily signify their

³⁰⁵ Howard Aldrich and Roger Waldinger noted how Greek immigrants in the US became prominent in restaurants in the early twentieth century, despite having originated in fishing villages and rural areas and having little expertise in cuisine. See H. Aldrich and R. Waldinger, ‘Ethnicity and Entrepreneurship’, *Annual Review of Sociology* 16 (1990): 123.

³⁰⁶ Buettner, ‘Going for an Indian’, 875.

³⁰⁷ Commonwealth Immigration Liaison Committee meeting 7th June 1969. KMT/Box 29 TB 748. Huddersfield Archive.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 878. In *Hand on the Sun*, the protagonist Jalib discusses ‘gangs of drunken white youths who wished to conclude their Friday night’s boozing with a spate of “Paki-bashing”’. It is significant that by 1981 white youths would often conclude their Friday night’s boozing with a curry or a kebab. Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun*, 66.

enthusiasm for English pub culture or adoption of Christmas as a religious holiday, but rather an attempt to build good relations with their supervisors.³⁰⁹ These cultural interactions and fledgling identities were not of the subcontinent or of the UK; neither British nor Asian, but specific to location and circumstance.

By the 1970s the situation of the early 1960s – single, male migrants working undesirable jobs for low pay at the time of near full employment – had changed remarkably. Despite the original sense of ‘difference’ and the hostility resulting from it, many of the unemployed young Asian school leavers in the 1970s – educated in British schools, with many of the ‘class’ habits and culture of West Yorkshire, and in the same perilous financial position and many other young Yorkshire men and women - were seen as ‘one of us’. The 1st April edition of the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* carried a story about Talib Hussain, one of the many unemployed young men in Bradford. He was described as wandering the town with a friend in a fruitless search for work, occasionally stopping into coffee houses to ‘drown their sorrows’.³¹⁰ The article makes it clear that it is incidental that the subject is a Pakistani youth; the article is concerned with youth unemployment, and Talib was just like anyone else. This article reflects the changing image held of South Asians by many Bradfordians: gone were the Indians of imperial imagery, as were the images of the slum-dwelling hordes who lived to work; increasingly Asians and British Asians were just like any other unemployed or hard up worker.

Given that the first South Asian immigrants to the UK, particularly in Bradford, tended to be economic migrants who spent most of their waking hours at work, at first there was little social interaction between white and immigrant workers outside of the workplace. Indeed, Dilip Hiro has noted that colour bars at dance halls and clubs had a lesser effect on Asian men, because they were less likely to frequent

³⁰⁹ U. Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures* (Routledge: New York, 1997); for the way in which Pakistani workers utilized ‘British’ means - such as buying pints in pubs and presents at Christmas – to further their own ends, see D. Brooks and K. Singh, ‘Pivots and Presents: Asian Brokers in British Foundries’, in S. Wallman (ed.), *Ethnicity at Work*, (London: Macmillan, 1979): 93-114.

³¹⁰ *Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, 1st April 1976. It is perhaps revealing that the term ‘drown their sorrows’ – indelibly associated with drinking alcohol – is applied to two Pakistanis, for whom refusal to drink alcohol was a sign of their difference. Even though they are drinking coffee, the message is clear: apart from the substance they imbibe, they are no different from you or I.

them.³¹¹ Whereas colour bars became a particularly important issue for West Indians and prompted most of the prosecutions under the Race Relations Act of 1965, South Asians seemed happy to distance themselves from white British Bradfordians, both socially and residentially. This would change during the period 1960-1980, but not as fast as the dynamics of racism; not long after they were prevented from socialising with British whites, they were criticised for their reluctance to do so. Already in the 1960s the work-centred lifestyles of many Asian immigrants was criticised by many white workers. White shop keepers, for example, took issue with the long opening hours of their Asian competitors, which they felt gave them unfair advantage.³¹² It was not just that white workers felt that the apparent readiness of Asians to work longer hours presented an economic threat, but it seemed unrespectable to be so obviously preoccupied with work. The long hours and curtailed leisure time of Asian workers reminded the British working class of a recent past, and this is reflected in the racist language of the time.³¹³ However, as they were reunited with their wives and children, and as those children aged, South Asians began to enjoy more leisure time, and prejudice surrounding this ‘work obsession’ dissipated, yet Asian use of ‘British’ leisure pursuits did not necessarily create a perception of a common cultural community.

Culturally, however, there was increased interaction between ‘British’ and ‘Asian’ during the 1970s. An article in the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* from 1st April 1976 advertised an upcoming Asian Song Competition, with the judging panel including the Lord Mayor, May Thornton. The competition was won by the Leeds-based L. Krishna, who played music that was, according to the paper, ‘almost completely Western in style’.³¹⁴ During the 1970s South Asian immigrants and their children increasingly took up the leisure pursuits of their white working-class neighbours in terms of sports, music, television and films. Often this was simply a change in taste without a change in the medium: A Halifax woman described how

³¹¹ Hiro, *Black British, White British*, 118.

³¹² ‘Shop Act nudge for Asians’, Bradford *Telegraph and Argus*, 13th April 1976. Local traders had grown angry with the long hours worked by their Asian competitors, which they felt gave them unfair advantage. The a council leaflet explaining the restriction of opening hours under the Shops Act was translated into three languages and distributed amongst immigrant traders.

³¹³ In contrast to West Indians, who were usually cast as work-shy scroungers.

³¹⁴ Bradford *Telegraph and Argus*, 1st April 1976 and 7th April 1976.

she had lost interest in the grand sagas of the Mumbai film industry and now preferred Hollywood epics such as *Ben Hur*. Similarly her husband preferred watching the American-style professional wrestlers, rather than the traditional Pakistani fighters.³¹⁵ The Pakistani cafes and clubs in Bradford in which single men spent most of their leisure time featured blaring juke boxes and posters of lingerie models on the walls, whilst at home many Pakistani women enjoyed *Coronation Street*.³¹⁶ Whilst traditional Punjabi sports remained important they lost popularity to football, and across the country dozens of Asian soccer teams had been established by the start of the 1970s.³¹⁷

Yet this adoption of the leisure pursuits of the British did not necessarily reflect ‘assimilation’ or ‘integration’; the immigrants and their children may have ‘bought into’ some of the class culture of the white working class, but there remained a great deal of social segregation. In Halifax, for example, Pakistanis would frequent pubs in the immigrant area, but very rarely in the centre of town, creating their own ‘town centre’ away from the middle of Halifax.³¹⁸ In the Huddersfield Oral Histories collection one man who was born in Jullundur and moved to Britain in 1938 recalled his first positive impressions of the UK: As a young man he used to go to pubs and socialise with Britons of his own age, who had a seemingly endless interest in both India and Indians.³¹⁹ It seems reasonable to assume that many well-educated young Indians such as the respondent had similar experiences in Britain before, and immediately after, the Second World War. Exotic and unfamiliar, they will have excited interest but not necessarily any widespread resentment. As large numbers of unskilled economic migrants arrived from the

³¹⁵ Respondent, WYC: 1338/14, Oral Histories Collection, Halifax Archive. Again there is a parallel here to the supposed ‘Americanisation’ of the working class during the inter-war years. See J. Carey, *The Intellectuals and the Masses* (London: Faber and Faber, 1992); C. Waters, ‘The Americanisation of the Masses: Cultural Criticism, The National Heritage and Working-Class culture in the 1930s’, *Social History Curators Group* 17 (1989-90): 22-26.

³¹⁶ As described by John Barr in ‘Pakistanis in Bradford’. Also see Hiro, *Black British, White British*, 156. Discussing an overzealous police raid, the teenage protagonist of *Hand on the Sun* exclaims: ‘You’d think it was *Starsky and Hutch*. So many pigs to catch a bloody mouse like our Maqsood.’ Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun*, 40.

³¹⁷ Thompson, ‘The Second Generation – Punjabi or English?’, 247-8; D. Burdsey, ‘Football’, in *A Postcolonial People*, 108-9; Respondent 311A, Oral Histories Collection, Halifax Archive.

³¹⁸ ‘B. Hartley, ‘Area reports on Cities and Boroughs with Substantial Immigrant Settlements. Halifax, 1965’, European Immigration 1965, LPA.

³¹⁹ Respondent 306A, Oral Histories Collection, Huddersfield Archive.

subcontinent, this picture began to change, but the change was not always uniform. In their mid-1960s investigation in Sparkbrook, John Rex and Robert Moore described how every pub ‘had one or two Pakistani regulars’, and that the smaller the number of Pakistanis the more they seemed to socialise with the West Indian and white clientele.³²⁰ The same transformation happened in towns such as Bradford, Halifax, and Huddersfield: initial numbers of South Asians prompted interest, the first economic migrants would socialise and integrate with white workers, but as large numbers arrived resentment and hostility increased and immigrants withdraw more into their communities.

One issue which was particularly prominent in distancing newcomers from the established British working class was that of religion. It has been argued that the immigration of large numbers of South Asians to Britain bucked the trend towards secularisation and irreligiosity in British society.³²¹ Yet at first this was by no means apparent, and initial migrants often used the change of environment to lapse in their religious observance. Parminder Bhachu has argued that the arrival of East African Sikhs resulted in a return to orthodoxy amongst the British Sikh community, many of whom had started to forsake turbans and trim their hair and beards, and Panikos Panayi has noted that small groups of relatively isolated Muslim men, such as those living in Middlesbrough at the start of the 1960s, would marry British women, drink alcohol, and often adopt the lifestyles of the local community.³²² Nonetheless, in contrast to other immigrant groups such as Irish Catholics, the desire to escape religious conformity was not a prominent cause of emigration, and in areas where Asian communities were established religion generally remained a very important part of the lives of migrants. In early 1960s Halifax, for example, a collection was

³²⁰ Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 128.

³²¹ Barton, *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford*, 67.

On ‘secularisation’ in British society see, for example, J. Cox, *The English churches in a secular society: Lambeth 1870-1930* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); J. Harris, *Private lives, public spirit: a social history of Britain 1870-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); H. McLeod, *Religion and Society in England, 1850-1914* (London: Macmillan, 1996); C. G. Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001); S. Williams, *Religious belief and popular culture in Southwark, c1880-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); J. Wolfe, *God and Greater Britain: Religion and National Life in Britain and Ireland 1843-1945* (London: Routledge, 1994).

³²² Bhachu, *Twice Migrants*; Panayi, ‘Middlesbrough: A British Race Riot of the 1960s?’.

made to support the purchase of a mosque in Rhodes Street, and £400 was raised in two nights, with some individuals giving as much as £30; considering how little money most immigrants had to spare, this suggests that religion remained very much an important part of their lives, even amongst communities of single men.³²³ Given the religious commitment displayed by most immigrants, it is perhaps no surprise that ‘religion’ proved to be a source of antagonism between South Asians and the white working class. As Tariq Modood has argued:

While proponents of the concept of “black” recognise how class is interrelated with race, they overlook how cultural differences can also disadvantage and be the basis of discrimination, e.g., in employment on the grounds of one’s dress, dietary habits, or desire to take leave from work on one’s holy days rather than those prescribed by the custom and practice of the majority community.³²⁴

Commitment to religious observance amongst the South Asian Diaspora varied across different ethno-religious groups and different locations in the UK. Many were willing to compromise on issues when religious observance seemed to clash with local cultures, however a direct threat, insult or confrontation would often harden attitudes. Avtar Brah, for example, has noted that while Sikh men in the late 1950s would often take off their turbans when looking for work, a 1959 workplace ban on turbans was interpreted as a threat to religious identity, and many refused to obey the order.³²⁵ Similarly for many Pakistanis in West Yorkshire, the fear that their children were ‘losing’ some of their ethno-religious culture prompted reactions against this.

As the ‘secularisation’ and loss of religiosity amongst the British population generally continued during the 1960s and 1970s, many Christian churches fell out of use.³²⁶ Due to reasons of economy and the fact that churches were already especially adapted to large numbers of worshippers, many mosques were established in these churches, with smaller sites in houses in residential areas. Generally it was a policy

³²³ B. Hartley, ‘Area reports on Cities and Boroughs with Substantial Immigrant Settlements. Halifax, 1965.’ European Immigration 1965, LPA.

³²⁴ Modood, ‘Political Blackness and British Asians’, 864.

³²⁵ Brah, ‘The “Asian” in Britain’, 38.

³²⁶ Conveyed in Mehmood’s *Hand on the Sun*: ‘Jalib looked across at the increasing mass of white children who were getting together at the top end of the hill, in the shadow of their derelict, redundant church.’ Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun*, 28.

with which local authorities had no problem: the Bradford Town Clerk advised D.G. Ward, the Redundant Churches Secretary, that he could see ‘no adverse effect’ in selling redundant churches to Muslims.³²⁷ However this tended to cause resentment amongst the white working class – irrespective of their religiosity – as it seemed that the Muslim immigrants were physically taking their place.³²⁸

Local authorities made attempts to break down this hostility over religious matters; in West Yorkshire programmes were initiated to educate white Britons in the religions of the subcontinent, particularly Islam. In Halifax, for example, demonstrations of both ‘English and Muslim slaughtering methods’ were held at a local slaughterhouse, owing to ‘concern about Muslim slaughtering methods’, whilst in Bradford schoolchildren would often sing Christian hymns followed by Muslim prayers in assemblies.³²⁹ Nevertheless throughout the 1960s and 1970s religious issues became ever more contentious: the main complaints of Pakistanis in Huddersfield in 1969 concerned delayed circumcision in hospitals, the content of school meals and religious instruction in schools.³³⁰ The frustration and ignorance surrounding religion, and the limits of social and cultural integration, is aptly conveyed by an editorial in the *Bradford Telegraph and Argus* from April 1976. Describing the World of Islam Festival - which was opened by the Queen in London that month – the article praises the opportunity for the public to ‘understand a religion and a way of life which we have often neglected and dismissed as outlandish’. For nearly twenty years Bradford had been a principal centre of Pakistani Muslim immigration, was home to several mosques, and Muslims formed a sizeable minority of the city’s population, yet this editorial conveys the impression of Islam as an obscure, foreign, exotic cult. Surely rather than attending the festival in London, non-Muslim Bradfordians would have done better to strike up a conversation with

³²⁷ ‘Letter from Town Clerk to D. G. Ward, Redundant Church Secretary, 28th June 1971’, BBD1/7/T15401 – Commonwealth Immigrants, Bradford Archive.

³²⁸ See N. Nasser, ‘Metropolitan Borderlands’, in *A Postcolonial People*.

³²⁹ NCW 23-27 (National Council of Women), Halifax Archive; Bradford Diocesan Education Committee Annual Visit, 7th May 1971, BDP 74/14/2/7, Bradford Archive.

³³⁰ Commonwealth Immigrant Liaison Committee, KMT/Box 29 TB 748, Huddersfield Archive.

one of the thousands of Muslims living alongside them. That the editor of the *Telegraph and Argus* thought this unlikely is perhaps telling.³³¹

Trevor Burgin, Educational Organiser of the Huddersfield Educational Guidance Council, highlighted differences between Islam and Christianity by describing the importance of kinship to Islam, ‘embracing as it does attitudes towards family life’.³³² Burgin’s idea of the importance of family to Muslims reflected the views of many white Britons of the time, from social workers and academics to manual workers; they seemed oblivious to the fact that Christianity embraced the same values and that it was social change, rather than religious doctrine, which led to the decline in the importance of familial ties. Similarly the Head Teacher of St. Paul’s primary school in Bradford lamented the fact that she lived in ‘a society where the family unit counts for little’ but claimed that ‘if the Asians do have large families, at least they are cared for’.³³³ Furthermore, the high birth rate amongst immigrants was criticised by health officials, who claimed that the ‘British attitude on such questions’ needed to be explained to immigrants.³³⁴ That high birth rates were, until recently, very much a ‘British attitude’ – Wendy Webster has described how post-war culture emphasised the importance of having many children, although this changed in time to be unfavourably compared to immigrant attitudes³³⁵ – did not seem apparent to these health officials, nor to many of their contemporaries in education and social work. The birth rates and familial attitudes of immigrants did not differ remarkably from the those of the white working class a generation or so earlier, but as with so much else, this reminder of the recent past, which seemed contrary to prevailing social attitudes, was resented.³³⁶

³³¹ Bradford *Telegraph and Argus*, 9th April 1976.

³³² Yorkshire Adult School Union, Minutes of Yorkshire Women’s Council Meetings, 1960-1969, WYK/1497/1/4/2, Huddersfield Archive.

³³³ St. Paul’s Church of England First School, Head Teacher’s Report, Christmas 1979 and Summer 1979, BDP 74/14/2/7, Bradford Archive.

³³⁴ BBD 1/7/T14923, Bradford Archive.

³³⁵ Webster, *Imagining Home*.

³³⁶ There is certainly something recognisable about Virinder S. Kalra’s description of a ‘resurgent nationalism in British society that has little time for anyone who does not fit in with its post-religious liberal individualism’. V. S. Kalra, ‘Policing Diversity’, in *A Postcolonial People*, 243.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the poor health of volunteers for the Boer War, allied with a sense of national decline vis-à-vis Germany and the United States, produced renewed public interest in the health, morals and mores of the working class. 'By the end of the nineteenth century', wrote Alison Shaw, 'anxieties about biological fitness and, by implication, public health, dominated these debates', and led to increased state interference in the welfare of citizens in the form of early twentieth century welfare reforms and the 1906 Incest Act.³³⁷ Many of these concerns, and the discourse used to voice them, were resurrected during the 1960s and 1970s, but this time the object of criticism was immigrants, as opposed to the white working class. Shaw has noted that consanguineous marriage within Pakistani communities is not merely a cultural preference, and has been increasing in the decades since the first immigration of Pakistani Muslims to Britain. Cousin marriage, Shaw argued, is less frequent in Pakistan than in Britain, and there has been a definite increase amongst the younger generation in West Yorkshire.³³⁸ The focus of cousin marriage has been to pair one's child with someone of equal social standing, whilst fulfilling social obligations; younger children are far less likely to marry a cousin, as parents look to fulfil their obligation with their first child.³³⁹ In this respect cousin marriage amongst Pakistani Muslims is more analogous to the marriage patterns of European aristocracy than the behaviour of the white working class at the start of the twentieth century, yet it was seen as reminiscent of the latter and as a trait exclusive to South Asians (even though consanguineous marriage is prohibited for Hindus and Sikhs). In addition to cousin marriage, Pakistani Muslims were condemned for arranged marriages generally, and for constraining the rights and freedoms of their wives and children. Ironically, 'liberal' behaviour from a child from likely to result in a 'shotgun' arranged marriage, and the same was true of the Sikh community.³⁴⁰ Cousin marriages and arranged marriages show how even as stereotypes concerning dirt and poor hygiene fell away, negative ideas surrounding gender issues remained, and caused hostility.

³³⁷ Shaw, 'Kinship, cultural preference and immigration', 320.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, 315-9.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 323 and 331.

³⁴⁰ C. Ballard, 'Arranged Marriages in the British Context', *New Community* 6 (1977): 186.

As with family values, gender issues served to distance South Asian immigrants from their white working class neighbours. There was a prevalent impression that Asian women were confined to the home, ignorant about much of the world around them and restricted from leading lives independent of their husbands. Naturally, the position of women in South Asian communities varied tremendously across regions, cultures, and time periods. East African Asian women, for example, did tend to work outside the home, in addition to generally being more familiar with English, whereas for Pakistani Muslim women in the West Riding this was quite unusual.³⁴¹ Indeed, a woman in the Halifax Oral Testimonies collection noted how the Asian community used to ‘tease’ her for working.³⁴² Yet it would be false to say that the position of women depended on the ‘religiosity’ of a particular community: one respondent to Rex and Moore’s study in Birmingham claimed that Islam always adapted to circumstances, and saw no contradiction between his faith and his consumption of alcohol, yet his wife remained in purdah and very rarely left the house.³⁴³

Barnor Hesse and Siddiq Sayyid have criticised much commentary on inter-generational relations of South Asians as:

Routine-ised narratives, which cite the movement from first to second generation, are represented as containing self-evident explanations. Often portrayed with the certainty of biological processes, the generational movement of immigrants are depicted as analogous to a life cycle in which tadpoles eventually turn into frogs.³⁴⁴

Similarly, Catherine Ballard argued as early as 1977 that there is an over-emphasis on intergenerational conflict within the Asian community and a pervasive idea that if it were not for their parents, the second generation would seamlessly assimilate into British society.³⁴⁵ Certainly it seems that both in the time period with which we are concerned and today, there is an over concentration on intergenerational tension within immigrant communities and an assumption that it is much less so amongst the white working class.

³⁴¹ Bhachu, *Twice Migrants*.

³⁴² ‘Voices from the Past’, WYC:1338/14, Halifax Archive.

³⁴³ Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 123.

³⁴⁴ B. Hesse and S. Sayyid, ‘The Postcolonial Political and the Immigrant Imaginary’, in *A Postcolonial People*, 22.

³⁴⁵ Ballard, ‘Arranged marriages in the British context’, 182.

British born or British raised Asians helped to bury some old stereotypes which had worked against the establishment of a common 'class' identity, yet as concerns surrounding health, hygiene, living conditions and dress faded, so new concerns surrounding religion and gender issues arose. Once again, the idea of British Asians as incestuous, religiously superstitious and 'backward' in their treatment of women and children is reminiscent of the accusations levelled at the working class during the first decades of the twentieth century. Although by 1980 white British and Asian British had many class characteristics in common, certain aspects still led them to be considered 'a class apart'.

Chapter 4: ‘Ethnic’ Politics or ‘Class’ Politics? Motivations and Implications of the Political Allegiances of South Asian Immigrants.

We have seen how, in the textile towns of West Yorkshire, neither the reality nor the perception of immigrant competition for jobs, welfare or housing was the main cause of resentment towards the newcomers. It has been argued that it was the perception of South Asians as being ‘low class’, modern representations of the derided working-class stereotypes of the past, which evoked the greatest hostility. In addition we have seen how the adoption of certain elements of the ‘culture’ of the white working class of West Yorkshire, in terms of food, accent, dress and leisure habits, worked to undermine this friction, and create the image that the incomers were, after all, ‘our people’. In this final chapter the political allegiance of South Asians in Yorkshire shall be examined. The first section of this chapter will examine the extent to which the immigrants looked to separate ‘ethnic’ or religious political movements, and argues that in Yorkshire ethnic politics did not take off, and immigrants voted for and stood as candidates for the mainstream established parties. Between 1960 and 1980, at least, it was invariably the Labour Party which secured immigrant support. The second section looks at the factors and motivations behind immigrant loyalty towards the Labour Party, and the implications of this for how they were perceived by Labour-voting white British men and women. This chapter argues that immigrant support for Labour in one of its ‘heartland’ areas was another significant factor in building a shared sense of identity between immigrants and the white British in the textile towns of West Yorkshire.

Although the majority of Asian immigrants into West Yorkshire during the 1960s came from rural, agricultural backgrounds, this was not true of everyone. A woman interviewed in the Halifax library oral history collection recalled how her privileged position in Pakistan – her father was the director of a large company – left her unprepared for the sparseness of her small house and the rigours of work in a factory.³⁴⁶ Similarly, as many of the immigrants from East Africa were small

³⁴⁶ ‘Voices from the Past: Gulzaine Mir’, interviewed 6th March 2006, WYC:1338/14, Halifax Archive.

business owners or civil servants, by the 1970s the socio-economic background of the Asian community in West Yorkshire was not as homogenous as it had once been.³⁴⁷ Thus while there were very few South Asians in Britain with a background in industry, much less experience of trade unions and labour politics, there was also an increasingly stratified society, and many prominent individuals and religious leaders who had a claim to community influence. Furthermore, the release of government funding for 'community groups' encouraged prominent immigrants to compete with one another for the right to 'speak for' their community. Often amongst the Asian population this role was taken by religious leaders, yet their 'leadership' was not left uncontested and secular organisations and leaders also emerged.³⁴⁸ For example, amongst Bradford's Bengali Muslims, the ethnic – rather than religious - based Bangladesh People's Association, formed in 1972, enjoyed a great deal of support, and more people attended its 1979 leadership election than did Eid prayers that year.³⁴⁹ Yet by 1981 groups which were seen as 'too close' to the government or the police were likely to lose their authority, as a new generation of British born or raised South Asians challenged their legitimacy.³⁵⁰

Given the level of indifference or outright hostility displayed towards immigrants by the mainstream political parties at both a national and local level, it is perhaps surprising that separate immigrant parties were not more successful. Although the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) did establish branches in the UK, it did not attract a great deal of support, and it on the rare occasions that it did field candidates in elections it would often withdraw them if a mainstream party fielded an Asian candidate. For example, in the Rochdale council elections the PPP chose a Mr P. Qureshy to contest Central and Falange Ward, but after a request from Dr Syed, the Liberal candidate, they withdrew, lest they split the Pakistani vote.³⁵¹ Similarly, as argued in Chapter 2, there was little support for separate, ethnic based, trade unions, and the Pakistani Workers' Association and the Indian Workers'

³⁴⁷ See Chapter 2: 'At Work' of the present thesis.

³⁴⁸ P. Werbner, *Imagined Diasporas among Manchester Muslims* (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press, 2002).

³⁴⁹ Barton, *The Bengali Muslims of Bradford*, 68.

³⁵⁰ S. Burtlet and H. Reid, 'A Gendered Uprising: Political Representation and Minority Ethnic Communities', *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21 (1998): 279; Mehmood, *Hand on the Sun*.

³⁵¹ Anwar, *The Myth of Return*, 146.

Association both encouraged members to join established unions in their trades. Between the different groups which took the name 'Indian Workers' Association' considerable ideological differences developed. For example, while one IWA believed it should act as an 'ethnic' or national organisation, and represent all Indians irrespective of class, the Marxist-influenced IWA (GB) saw itself as the representative of the Indian 'working class' only, and believed that the interests of poor Indian manual workers were incompatible with the interests of wealthy Indian immigrants.³⁵²

John Rex has argued that due to the presence of well formed 'class identities' in the UK, black immigrants found it difficult to form ethnic politics (as they had done in the United States), and needed to gain acceptance by the white working class in order to get representation.³⁵³ While there is some truth in this argument it should be borne in mind that immigrants were not considered part of the 'working class' purely by nature of their socio-economic position, and did not, by and large, see themselves as part of a united 'working class' which had to stand together to improve their lives. Probably a more significant factor working against the creation of 'ethnic politics' was the amount of friction and hostility between different immigrant groups due to different cultural and socio-economic realities.³⁵⁴ Allied to this was the fact that the labour movement and the trade unions in particular, called for a 'race blind' approach to politics. Even when the Left realised the problems of treating immigrants as part of a unified 'working class', there was still hostility to the idea of accepting that immigrants had special interests which differed from those of white workers: Sydney Jeffers has noted how in the 1980s, 'black sections' were absent from some constituency Labour parties; in Liverpool because the Militant movement refused to accept the importance of 'race' or any identity aside from 'class' identity, and in Bradford due to the myriad ethno-religious divides and the

³⁵² S. Josephides, 'Organisational splits and political ideology in the Indian Workers Associations', in P. Werbner and M. Anwar (eds.), *Black and Ethnic Leaderships* (London: Routledge, 1991), 261; Sivanandan, *A Different Hunger*, 8. For the different IWAs see D. John, *Indian Workers' Associations in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), and Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class*, 395-410.

³⁵³ Quoted in A. Phizacklea and R. Miles, *Labour and Racism* (London: Routledge, 1980), 31-2.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 181-3. See also Modood, 'Political Blackness and British Asians', and Werbner and Anwar (eds.), *Black and Ethnic Leaderships*.

contestation of what it meant to be ‘black’.³⁵⁵ Yet the break-up of the Campaign against Racial Discrimination (C.A.R.D.)³⁵⁶ and the failure of immigrant parties to attract widespread support led many white liberals and black intellectuals to move away from black groups and towards the Labour Party, which had started to recognise the special position of immigrants and, as we shall see, began to enact measures and policies designed to win immigrant support during the 1970s. In West Yorkshire this trend was probably accelerated by Pakistan leaving the Commonwealth in March 1972; henceforth, if Pakistanis living in Britain wished to have voting rights, they would have to obtain British citizenship. In other words they had to make a choice, and commit their future to one country or the other, and one community – that of the West Yorkshire textile towns – or to the rural Pakistani communities which they came from.³⁵⁷

Nor did immigrants merely pay lip service to the Labour movement. It has been argued elsewhere that immigrant workers enjoyed a great deal of community support during strikes, in much the same way as mine workers. In fact Asian unionists could be just as militant and committed to the cause of white Britons with a long family history of unionism. In the 1974 *Race Today* investigation into immigrant-dominated factories across the country, all the workers interviewed spoke of ‘the crisis’, and the importance of the miners’ strike succeeding in.³⁵⁸ This would seem to support Trevor Carter’s claim that the miners’ strikes and other industrial unrests during the 1970s awakened a level of solidarity amongst miners and black immigrants.³⁵⁹

This is not to say that immigrants and their British born or raised children found the Labour to be their natural home; far from it. As Cashmore had argued, ‘black militancy... would not have had the backing it did but for the growing

³⁵⁵ Jeffers, ‘Black Sections in the Labour Party’, 71 and 82.

³⁵⁶ The Campaign Against Racial Discrimination was established after calls from Martin Luther King, visiting the UK in 1964, for a British civil rights movement similar to that of the United States. Prominent members included Anthony Lester and C.L.R. James; it disbanded in 1967.

³⁵⁷ BBD1/7/T16150 - Commonwealth Immigrants from 1st September 1971 to 31st December 1972, Bradford Archive

³⁵⁸ *Race Today* 6 (April 1974).

³⁵⁹ Quoted in Cashmore, *United Kingdom?*, 4. See also J. Eade, ‘The Political Construction of Class and Community: Bangladeshi Political Leadership in Tower Hamlets, East London’, in Werbner and Anwar (eds.), *Black and Ethnic Leaderships* (London: Routledge, 1991): 84-112.

disillusion with the Labour Party's policies on immigration control and, therefore, racism'.³⁶⁰ By the 1970s there were many political movements which looked to build upon racial, ethnic or religious loyalties; it was, in the words of a Bradford-based Socialist Workers' Party activist, 'a very competitive environment for the radical left'.³⁶¹ Yet in Bradford and other West Yorkshire textile towns it is clear that despite immigrant organisations of both the secular and religious variety attracting support, an 'ethnic politics' did not develop, and South Asian candidates and votes went to the mainstream, established, political parties. Even where Asian immigrants and white British were segregated socially and culturally, they did tend to vote for the same political parties. We now need to examine which party they voted for, why they voted in this manner, and the implications of this electoral loyalty.

In May 1970 an editorial in the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* spoke of the importance of 'immigrant' politics:

The call by the Coloured People's Union and the Pakistan Association to immigrant workers to boycott this week's municipal elections is saddening...However the disenchantment of some immigrants with existing parties is easy to understand...Much more conscious effort must be made by all the parties in Bradford to treat immigrant affairs more seriously. If they do not they will find that they are storing up trouble for the future...Councillor Jim Merrick's leaflet...is frankly disgraceful.³⁶²

We have seen in the first chapter how the Labour Party, wary as it was of immigration becoming an electoral liability, moved towards a restrictionist stance in the early 1960s. This did not prevent Labour politicians – or politicians of other hues, for that matter - from actively courting immigrant votes in areas such as Bradford. An article in the Bradford *Telegraph and Argus* from May 1960 reported a speech by Malcolm Clegg, a prospective Liberal candidate in Batley: 'These people are human', said Clegg, 'and this is not an election gimmick – it is an honest attempt to reach them, and to show them that I am interested in them and their problems'.³⁶³

³⁶⁰ Cashmore, *United Kingdom?*, 16.

³⁶¹ Interview with Barry Pavier, Bradford, 14th June 2011.

³⁶² 'Right to Vote', Editorial, *Telegraph and Argus* 5th May 1970.

³⁶³ 'Seeks vote of Pakistanis', *Telegraph and Argus*, 11th May 1960.

That Clegg felt the need to remind non-immigrant Bradfordians that the new arrivals ‘were human’ serves as a reminder of how socially and culturally segregated the two groups were at this time, and the level of suspicion and ignorance held towards the Pakistanis. Yet despite the national pressure towards restriction which led to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, local Bradford politicians clearly calculated that it was worth actively pursuing the immigrant vote. A year after Clegg’s speech the *Telegraph and Argus* ran an article revealing Conservative outrage at a Labour leaflet, distributed in the immigrant areas of the Exchange Ward of the city, which stated plainly that the Tories ‘don’t want you here’, and that South Asians would do well to put their trust in the Labour Party.³⁶⁴ Labour at a local level was emphasising the dichotomy that Labour at a national level was looking to undermine: Labour are the party of immigrants; the Tories are the party of restriction.

In 1956, J. W. Raisin, Labour’s London District Organiser, had warned that any increase in support from immigrants that might be gained from actively courting their vote would not counter-balance the loss of support among whites, but in the immigrant dominated districts of West Yorkshire in the 1960s, it was calculated that it was worth the risk.³⁶⁵ At a nationwide level, it was decided in 1963 that the British Overseas Socialist Fellowship should concentrate its activities on improving the relations between Commonwealth immigrants and the party; it was important that the immigrants saw Labour as their natural home, even though, as we have seen, white British Labour voters felt the party existed to represent *their* particular interests, not the interests of all manual workers.³⁶⁶ We know now, of course, that it was highly unfair for Labour to portray themselves as the supporters of immigrants and the Conservatives as their enemy, given that they would not only renew the Commonwealth Immigration Act upon returning to power in 1964, but tighten it further through the 1965 White Paper.³⁶⁷ Yet it was rather easy to present this image

³⁶⁴ ‘Storm over Labour leaflet. “Aims to terrorise coloureds” – Tories’, *Telegraph and Argus*, 9th May 1961.

³⁶⁵ ‘Report by J.W. Raisin, London District Organiser of the Labour Party, to Morgan Phillips, Party Secretary’, LPA.

³⁶⁶ ‘British Overseas Fellowship Report on Race Relations to the N.E.C.’, Race Relations Working Group: Minutes and Papers, 6th April – 22nd June 1967’, LPA.

³⁶⁷ The 1965 White Paper reduced the number of Category A and B vouchers to 8,500, and abolished the C Category vouchers altogether.

in the early 1960s: the Tories had, after all, introduced restriction, and many high profile Labour figures were outspoken against restriction. These included Hugh Gaitskell, Denis Healey and, most prominently, Fenner Brockway.³⁶⁸

Despite Labour's very public further restriction of immigration through the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act, which was introduced following the Kenyan Asians crisis, the party still held that it was the defender of immigrant rights. An internal focus group noted that 'at the height of the Kenyan Asian clamour the then Minister of Labour, Ray Gunter, announced a number of changes in the Commonwealth Immigrants Act which have, to date, gone virtually unnoticed in Britain'. These included allowing desirable individuals to gain entry irrespective of time spent on the waiting list and allowing non-British students to stay in the UK after graduation.³⁶⁹ It is interesting that the language of this report seems to *lament* the fact that these changes have 'gone virtually unnoticed', whereas reports concerning the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968 devoted attention on how to minimise public hostility towards the legislation.³⁷⁰ Despite its restrictionist stance, the Labour Party still felt that it was the natural home of immigrants, and given the risks that the party had taken to introduce anti-discrimination legislation, there were grounds for these sentiments.

Amy Whipple was therefore right to argue that despite the 1968 Act, Labour at the end of the 1960s and start of the '70s was still perceived as 'immigrant friendly' by many.³⁷¹ Yet it was increasingly difficult for local Labour activists to persuade South Asians that their vote should naturally go to the Labour candidate. In the words of Muhammad Anwar, 'the blanket statement that Asians always vote Labour was not fully applicable in 1974, as it perhaps had been in 1964'.³⁷² This was well demonstrated in the Rochdale by-election of 1972. Previously South Asian

³⁶⁸ Brockway had been a staunch defender of an open immigration policy and the rights of immigrants from the time of the *Empire Windrush* up until his death in 1988, both in Parliament and in the press. An interviewee in the Huddersfield Oral Histories collection recalls how grateful he was to Brockway for his consistent and high profile defence of immigrants. See Respondent 306A, interviewed 24th June 1987, Huddersfield Archive.

³⁶⁹ 'Study Group on Immigration Minutes, 12th September 1968', Study Group on Immigration 1968, LPA.

³⁷⁰ See Chapter 1 of the present thesis.

³⁷¹ Whipple, 'Revisiting the "Rivers of Blood"', 727.

³⁷² Anwar, 'Asian Participation in the 1974 Autumn Election', 379.

votes had been key to returning a Labour candidate in this Lancastrian mill town (the Labour incumbent Jack McCann had passed away, prompting the by-election), and the party could have been forgiven for assuming it would be ‘business as usual’ in 1972.³⁷³ Yet while the Liberal candidate Cyril Smith was a local man who openly condemned the candidature of Jim Merrick of the British Campaign to Stop Immigration, and had been holding meetings with Pakistani groups for some time before the election was called, Labour put forward a relatively unknown candidate, Lawrence Cunliffe. In addition, the party had been outspoken in its support for India in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war, and did not denounce Merrick with the vigour of Smith.³⁷⁴ While all three mainstream parties held meetings in the local Pakistani cinema, addressed workers on night shifts, and published election leaflets in Urdu, only Smith and the liberals seemed to adopt policies and attitudes which would specifically benefit the Asians, rather than assuming their interests were the same as the white British constituents. As a result Smith won with a majority of just under 5,000 votes.³⁷⁵ Labour had a clear warning: no longer could it expect to benefit from Pakistani votes without offering some kind of reciprocation.

By the 1970s the support of South Asian immigrants at the polls depended upon the attitude taken by parties and candidates towards them; no longer could Labour expect ‘something for nothing’, collecting immigrant votes whilst legislating against further immigration. In his investigations into the 1972 Rochdale by-election and the 1974 general election, Anwar concluded that Labour (and other parties, for that matter) could only expect support in exchange for policies and attitudes which benefited them: ‘It was evident that for some groups of Asians, such as Pakistanis, who had lost confidence in Labour, the policies and assurances given during the campaign helped Labour to regain some of their confidence.’³⁷⁶ It seems that Labour’s increasingly staunch stand against the National Front in particular – Roy Hattersley refused to take part in a BBC programme during the 1974 election due to the presence of a NF candidate – began to once again win many South Asian voters

³⁷³ ‘Loyalty of Asian voters crucial for Labour’, *The Guardian*, 24th October 1972.

³⁷⁴ M. Anwar, ‘Pakistani Participation in the 1972 Rochdale By-election’, *New Community* 2 (1973): 420.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 421.

³⁷⁶ Anwar, ‘Asian Participation in the 1974 Autumn Election’, 379.

over to Labour en masse.³⁷⁷ Certainly the shock of politically organised racism in the form of the B.C.S.I. and the National Front served to unite South Asians, and it also provided the Labour Party and another leftist organisations with a clear enemy, against which it could provide a united front: despite their support for restrictionist immigration policies, they could offer vociferous opposition to the NF without appearing hypocritical, and without alienating any of its white supporters.³⁷⁸ In fact, the spectre of ‘fascism’ raised by the NF was used as a rallying call for trade unionists and Labour supporters.

A Labour Party political broadcast which aired on 14th September 1976 opened with shot of Oswald Mosley in the East End in 1936 and NF activists Bradford in 1976.³⁷⁹ A party circular of that time noted that: ‘Candidates should have in mind that National Front candidates almost always stand in seats where there are more immigrant votes to be lost to Labour than Labour votes to be gained by the National Front, so candidates should beware of appearing to make any concessions to NF arguments.’³⁸⁰ The Member of Parliament for Huddersfield, J.P.W. Mallalieu, recounted an incident from the campaign trail for the February election. He had heard a National Front candidate say on his loud speaker that ‘all blacks should be sent home’, and while only he and two Pakistani men heard this, he retaliated on his loudspeaker that ‘the National Front were evil men’. Afterwards he ‘felt slightly ashamed for losing my temper’, but noted that ‘it seemed to please the two Pakistanis’.³⁸¹ This is in stark contrast to the actions taken by the Conservatives, who did not condemn the Front with the same consistency or vigour as Labour; indeed, after the 1976 ‘Battle of Bradford’, during which anti-racist Leftists and immigrants clashed with the National Front and the police, a Conservative councillor

³⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 379.

³⁷⁸ Anwar, ‘Pakistani Participation in the 1972 Rochdale By-election’, 422; ‘Act now or racialism will grow’, *Rochdale Observer*, 18th November 1972.

³⁷⁹ Party Political Broadcast on behalf of the Labour Party, aired 21.00 on BBC1 and 2, 14th September 1976.

³⁸⁰ ‘Circular to all Prospective Parliamentary Candidates from H. R. Underhill, 19th September 1974’, Reports to Reg Underhill, National Agent of the Labour Party, on National Front activities, N.A.D. Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

³⁸¹ ‘Letter to Reg Underhill from J.P.W. Mallalieu, 19th November 1974’, Reports to Reg Underhill, National Agent of the Labour Party, on National Front activities, N.A.D. Papers on Racism and the National Front, LPA.

criticised the anti-Front protestors, without mentioning the provocation made by a far-Right group marching through an immigrant area. It was incidents such as this that made it easier for Labour and other leftist groups to brand the party as anti-immigrant.³⁸²

In their study of Sparkbrook, Rex and Moore wrote that ‘those Irish who are interested in politics are more likely to join the Labour Party which, as has been pointed out, is sufficiently Irish for them to feel entirely at home’.³⁸³ Similarly, in West Yorkshire in the late 1970s, the Labour Party was attempting to look as ‘Pakistani’ as possible, fielding Asian candidates, meeting in Pakistani community centres, publishing letters in Urdu and Punjabi, and arranging speeches by prominent Pakistani Labour politicians from elsewhere in the country. Labour certainly did put its faith in Asian candidates, with Saleem Khan becoming Vice-Chairman of the Bradford North Labour Party,³⁸⁴ and Labour councillor Mohammed Ajeeb appointed as the city’s first Asian Lord Mayor in 1984.³⁸⁵

John Rex and Robert Moore argued that of Irish immigrants in Sparkbrook, ‘those who identified with the Labour Party were [those] who had become assimilated to the class and political system of English society’.³⁸⁶ I would argue that was also true with South Asians in the West Riding textile towns, but with the cause and effect reversed; it was their ‘falling into line’ with the political allegiances of their white colleagues and neighbours which helped create a sense that they were ‘folk like us’. In Labour heartlands such as Yorkshire, voting Labour was as much an expression of one’s culture as the way one spoke, the food one ate, and the manner in which one spent one’s free time. The respondents interviewed for the Bradford Oral Histories collection speak of how they were ‘Labour men’,³⁸⁷ ‘very much of the Left with a family background in leftist politics’,³⁸⁸ and ‘a Socialist by

³⁸² *Telegraph and Argus* 27th April 1976.

³⁸³ Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 154.

³⁸⁴ S. Bentley, ‘Saleem Khan: A tribute’, *Race Today* 2 (April 1970).

³⁸⁵ Dahya, ‘Pakistanis in Britain: Transients or Settlers?’, 263.

³⁸⁶ Rex and Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict*, 196.

³⁸⁷ Bradford Oral Histories Collection, Respondent 0008, interviewed 25th November 1983, Bradford Archive.

³⁸⁸ Bradford Oral Histories Collection, Respondent 0012, interviewed 1st December and 21st June 1984.

conviction, not by reading books about it'.³⁸⁹ Their political allegiances were very rarely arrived at after a consultation of party manifestos; rather these allegiances came naturally to them. This is not to say that they voted Labour because they held a particular socio-economic position, but that voting Labour, being a 'Labour man', was a part of their culture. Of course the South Asian immigrants into Yorkshire did not have this culture, and their reasons for voting Labour, at least by the 1970s, were more pragmatic, as we have seen. Yet the fact that immigrant political loyalties were with Labour, that they too were 'Labour men', was significant in persuading the white working-class that they were 'folk like them'.

³⁸⁹ Bradford Oral Histories Collection, Respondent 0089, interviewed 15th May 1984.

Conclusion

There are some problems with the methodology used in this thesis, and some limitations to the conclusions which can be drawn. Firstly, in terms of the use of oral testimonies, there are problems concerning accuracy and reliability. It is difficult enough to accurately recall events which took place several decades ago; to reliably recall how one felt about certain issues is even more difficult, and peoples' assertions through oral testimony are often refracted according to subsequent events and the circumstances of the interview.³⁹⁰ It is recognised here that an individual interviewed in the 1980s, by an Asian interviewer, as was often the case, may not offer a reliable account of their sentiments concerning Asian workers in the 1960s. For these reasons, oral testimonies have generally been used here to support arguments based upon alternative evidence; they can offer us an insight into life in communities and on the factory floor, but their limitations as sources of reliable historical evidence have been recognised.

One of the main difficulties concerning this thesis is that of typicality. We know that some Labour-voting trade unionists were decidedly friendly towards immigrants, and welcomed them as fellow workers; on the other hand, some were virulently hostile towards Asians and remained so throughout this period. We know that some South Asian immigrants enjoyed cordial relations with the white working class, both in and outside of the workplace, and we know that some Pakistanis frequented pubs and mixed with white British. However there were many for whom hostility and resentment were a part of everyday life. It is safe to assume that the experience of the majority of people lay somewhere in between these two extremes; determining precisely where is one of the more intractable tasks facing historians, all the more so given that those with the more extreme views tend to leave the most

³⁹⁰ For discussions of the problems and possibilities of oral history see: P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); E. Tonkin, *Narrating our Pasts: The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition* (London: Penguin, 1965); A. Confino, 'Collective Memory and Cultural History', *American Historical Review* 102 (1997): 1386-1403; J.K. Olick and J. Robbins, 'Social Memory Studies: From "Collective Memory" to the Historical Sociology of Mnemonic Practices', *Annual Review of Sociology* 24 (1998): 105-140.

evidence. Claire Young has argued that while young males tend to exist at the periphery of ethnic identities, they are often held up as representative, and much the same can often be said about those with the most staunchly anti-immigrant views or those who have suffered greatly from discrimination and racially motivated violence; their views or experiences, despite their extremity, are held up as representative of the norm.³⁹¹

On a similar note, it is appreciated that South Asian immigrants themselves would not necessarily agree with the accounts given here of interactions in, say, the workplace or education. They might argue, and with some justification, that the extent of hostility, verbal abuse and physical violence directed towards them during the period 1960-1981 is not adequately conveyed by this thesis. Yet this thesis has not been concerned with South Asian immigration in and of itself, but rather with the reactions to this migration. What was considered unfair and intolerant behaviour by some was considered a fair and reasoned response by others; the aim here has not been to describe hostility towards Asian immigrants, but rather to analyse the extent of this hostility, the causes behind it, and its significance for our understanding of concepts such as 'class', 'race', and 'identity'.

There are some issues which have perhaps not been given as much attention as they warrant. The issue of religion, for example, and the extent to which Islam requires a withdrawal from secular society and a different 'way of life', have not been dealt with in-depth, partly because it goes beyond the remit of this thesis, and partly due to restraints of space and time. Similarly, gender issues - particularly important when considering Pakistani Muslims and white working class culture - have not been dealt with systematically. Again, this is somewhat due to constraints of time and space, but also due to the primary focus on *reactions* of the white working-class Left, rather than the South Asian community itself.

Finally, whilst this thesis has looked to concentrate on 'the white working class Left', this is an extremely broad term with highly permeable borders. Generally speaking, Bradford and other West Riding textile towns returned Labour Members

³⁹¹ C. Alexander, '(Dis) Entangling the "Asian Gang"', in B. Hesse (ed.), *Un/settled Multiculturalisms* (London: Zed Books, 2000), 124.

of Parliament during this period, whilst municipal results fluctuated, with local authorities being controlled by different parties at different times. There has been a focus on trade unionists and oral history respondents who described themselves as 'Labour men' or 'of the Left', yet it is recognised that neither consistently voting for the Labour Party nor trade union membership necessarily signifies 'Leftist' political tendencies.

Many historians and sociologists who have discussed immigration during this period have failed to fully appreciate the homogeneity and local specificities of British society and culture. Indeed, whilst many have rightly emphasised the heterogeneity of specific immigrant groups and undermined certain 'ethnic' stereotypes, others have failed to do this where the British white working class is concerned. Thus, while Avtar Brah noted that British immigration officials did not think to ask about gay or lesbian relationships, for they assumed Asians did not have them, scholars such as Randall Hansen, who argue that the British working class is fundamentally conservative, give the impression that no white British men or women were homosexuals, or used recreational drugs, or were in favour of the abolition of capital punishment.³⁹² For Hansen, the 'liberal' reforms of Roy Jenkins were fundamentally out of step with the 'social conservatism of middle- and working-class England', and that it was only when James Callaghan replaced Jenkins as Home Secretary that Labour returned, 'at last', to the values of 'the working and lower middle-class voters to whom the government owed its office'. In this respect, the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act was the 'culmination of this process' of illiberalism.³⁹³

Clearly, there is some value to Hansen's arguments, although it is significant that only the Kenyan Asians issue generated enough public furor to affect government policy. Hansen is mistaken in imagining a solid, coherent, conservative (or 'anti-liberal') mass group of society upon which educated liberal elites forced unpopular policies; rather, certain issues were objected to by certain people at specific times, with varying degrees of intensity. As Joanna Bourke has rightly

³⁹² Brah, 'The "Asian" in Britain', 50.

³⁹³ Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968', 809-811.

noted, ‘an individual’s consciousness of nationality is always in flux. What it means to be “British”, “English”, “Cockney”, or “Welsh” depends on whether it is peace or war time, whether the discussion is taking place in a pub or at home, and whether the individual is black or white, male or female, rich or poor, young or old’.³⁹⁴ As with nationality, ‘political consciousness’ or ‘ideology’ is often in flux and dependent on circumstances. For example, in 1968 many London dock workers marched in support of Enoch Powell, after he had been forced from the Shadow Cabinet in the aftermath of his ‘Rivers of Blood’ speech. It is easy to point to this and other strikes in support of Powell as an indicator of the fundamentally conservative nature of the British working class, yet many of the same union members who marched for Powell were active in the Pentonville riots of 1972. Indeed, at the same time as ‘racialist’ sentiment intensified around the Kenyan Asian crisis and Powell’s speech, the trade union movement itself was undergoing a great deal of change. Older, more conservative shop stewards and union leaders were increasingly replaced by younger, more radical, and more relevant unionists, for whom the anti-racist internationalism of the far-left was a central tenet.³⁹⁵ Thus, one cannot speak of a ‘working-class conservatism’, as though the ‘working class’ one an organic, homogenous whole; cultures, ideologies and beliefs differed considerably across regions and communities, and fluctuated with time.

In a 1989 review of the first ten years of Margaret Thatcher’s Premiership, James Douglas argued that white ‘Socialism has always been international, both in its communist and its social democratic forms’.³⁹⁶ I would strongly disagree with this assertion. ‘Socialism’ or ‘Labourism’ in the United Kingdom was always a very British phenomenon. As E. Ellis Cashmore rightly observed, the British working class manifested ‘an insular interest in itself – as “British”, that is, not as “working-class”’,³⁹⁷ but this is still too general a statement: ‘working-class’ identity was always locally based, and the Labour movement itself, in addition to being ‘very British’, was very specific to the areas it represented. Clement Atlee, the first Labour

³⁹⁴ Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain*, 171.

³⁹⁵ Interview with Barry Pavier, Bradford, 14th June 2011

³⁹⁶ J. Douglas, ‘The Changing Tide – Some Recent Studies of Thatcherism’, *British Journal of Political Science* 19 (1989): 402.

³⁹⁷ Cashmore, *United Kingdom?*, 76.

Prime Minister to govern with a Parliamentary majority, campaigned as ‘Major Attlee’, and put a great deal of emphasis on his experience as an army officer fighting for Britain in the First World War, and Attlee’s socialism owed very little to Marx, and a great deal to his experiences both as a British soldier and as a Labour activist in Stepney, East London.³⁹⁸ Indeed, not only was the Labour Party as very British social democratic movement, it was very much a local phenomenon, with its support built on ethno-religious blocks, as in the East End of London or the West Coast of Scotland, specific industries and trade unions, as in the mining regions, and Methodism and the temperance movement, as in parts of East Lancashire. Similarly, Hansen wrote that in 1968, ‘after indulging a year of Roy Jenkins’ social liberalism, the party...returned to its roots’.³⁹⁹ Yet the Labour party grew from trade unions, disaffected Liberals, Fabian intellectuals, and local Labour parties all with values specific to their local circumstance; one cannot, as Hansen does, site the roots of the Labour Party with a specific ideology. We have seen in this thesis how one’s job and income did not by itself allow entry into a ‘class’, and how Labour voters at the start of this period felt the Party should look after ‘its own people’, which decidedly did not include the immigrants who shared their socio-economic position. Yet by the end of this period the local nature of Labourism allowed immigrants to enter the movement and have it adapt to their presence; it allowed them to be thought of as ‘one of us’.

In the concluding remarks to *John Bull’s Island*, Colin Holmes argued that ‘hostility was [not] always easily dissolved into categories such as “economic” or “cultural”, and that is true to say of the situation in West Yorkshire. Plainly, we should not discount economic factors altogether. Whilst immigrant under-cutting of wage levels and job security and pressure on housing resources may not have been the reality in the textile towns – as perhaps it was in the West Midlands – this is not to say that *no one* lost their job, or was unable to secure housing, or saw their wage level fall due to the presence of South Asian migrants. (Although it bears repeating once again that most of the time an Asian was never hired where white labour could

³⁹⁸ See Howell, *Attlee*.

³⁹⁹ Hansen, ‘The Kenyan Asians’, 813.

be found, there was no great pressure on social housing in West Yorkshire and conditions in the mills did improve during this period.) Furthermore, one cannot discount the importance of the *perception* of immigrant competition as a cause of hostility, even though, in West Yorkshire as elsewhere in the country, the language used against immigrants tended to describe their bad habits and poor hygiene more than their competition for jobs and social resources.⁴⁰⁰

Whilst any conclusions which can be drawn from this thesis are limited to the geographical areas and industries with which it is concerned, it is reasonable to assume that the secondary importance of economic factors in generating hostility towards immigrants has been the case elsewhere in the country. After all, if we no longer hold economic factors as determining social and cultural identity, should we not question the extent to which they generate hostility towards immigrants? If we no longer assume that people vote as a ‘class’, why should we assume that they respond to immigration as a ‘class’? Nor does an analysis which gives primacy to economic and social factors explain why people object to immigrants *in particular*, non-white immigrants specifically, and to different ‘ethnic’ groups in different ways. The logic behind resentment towards immigrants cannot be reduced to ‘we are poor because the blacks are here’.⁴⁰¹ Clearly, any ‘straightforward’ analysis which has hostility towards immigrants following naturally from a – real or perceived – threat to jobs and living standards does not hold up to scrutiny.

Paul Gilroy has argued that identities such as ‘Geordie’, ‘Brummie’, and ‘Scouser’ are better suited as vehicles for advancing socialist ideals than ‘fellow Britons’ or ‘fellow citizens’, and in this he was quite right. The white working class in the textile towns of West Yorkshire did not necessarily appreciate South Asian immigrants as ‘fellow Britons’, ‘fellow citizens’, or ‘fellow workers’ (at least not in the Marxist, internationalist sense), but increasingly over the period 1960-1981 they did begin to view them as ‘Bradfordians’, ‘Yorkshiremen’, ‘fellow mill workers’, ‘union men’, and ‘Labour men’. It was these specific, localised identities that were transformed and reconstituted by the arrival of South Asian immigrants. Stuart Hall

⁴⁰⁰ See Mark Abrams’ report in the Appendix.

⁴⁰¹ S. Hall, ‘From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence’, *History Workshop Journal* 48 (1999): 193.

has claimed that ‘what is called “the British way of life” is really a euphemism for the stabilised pattern of differences and inequalities which has come to be accepted as the natural order of things in Britain.’ The influx of immigrants did not radically change this ‘way of life’, but rather created new and reaffirmed old differences and inequalities, which soon again came to be accepted as the ‘natural order of things’.⁴⁰²

In the conclusion to his book *Ethnicity and Nationalism in Post-Imperial Britain*, Harry Goulbourne wrote that ‘the new pluralism further assumes that it is possible for groups to live peacefully together without having anything in common, and the simplest of exchange relations regulated solely by the free market’. While this assessment may have been true of West Yorkshire in 1960, it is not an accurate description of the area in 1981. By 1981 the white working class and South Asian immigrants and their descendents may have had a great deal that separated them; namely religion, ‘ethnicity’, and, often, area of residence, yet increasingly they held aspects of their lives in common; they way they spoke, their taste in food, the way they dressed, the occupations which they worked in, their education, the way they spend their leisure time, and their political allegiances. These local similarities may not have translated to a national level, but local identities and cultures rarely do; there is little, for example to connect a white Bradfordian millworker and an Old Etonian stockbroker. Michael Banton and Robert Miles have discussed the idea of race as a ‘hard boundary’ which makes it very difficult for people to leave or join ‘racial’ groups;⁴⁰³ yet ‘class’ membership is far more flexible than this – you cannot gain membership to a class by entering a specific job, but rather by adopting the culture of that class, in terms of accent, dress, leisure pursuits, food, and politics. While significant cultural differences between the various inhabitants of the West Yorkshire mill towns remained, and religion and the decline of the old industries would increasingly undermine common identities in the years after 1981, South Asians and their descendents were increasingly seen as ‘one of us’; they were no longer considered ‘a class apart’.

⁴⁰² Ibid., 192.

⁴⁰³ Miles, *Racism and Migrant Labour*, 41.

Appendix

'Public Opinion and Immigration', by Dr Mark Abrams, Study Group on Immigration, January 1967, Study Group on Immigration: Minutes and Papers: 6th June 1968 – 14th May 1969, Labour Party Archives, People's History Museum, Salford, Greater Manchester. Reproduced with permission.

ConfidentialLabour PartyRe.407/January, 1969.Study Group on Immigration.PUBLIC OPINION AND IMMIGRATIONby Dr. Mark Abrams.

Over the past twelve months both the major public opinion polling organisations (National Opinion Polls and Gallup) have from time to time asked questions about attitudes on immigration and immigration control, and in addition there have been ad hoc enquiries by other organisations. This paper sets out their findings and then attempts to summarise them.*

1. N.O.P.

March '68 In 1968 the first relevant survey was carried out in March after the introduction of the Immigration Bill limiting the entry of African Asiatics with British passports. The survey reported a more than 5 to 1 response in favour of the Bill; among Labour supporters the proportion was more than 6 to 1.

Q. "Do you think the Government was right or wrong to introduce the new immigration bill?"

	<u>All</u>	<u>Cons.</u>	<u>Lab.</u>	<u>Lib.</u>
	%	%	%	%
Right	79	78	81	73
Wrong	15	16	13	20
D.K.	6	6	6	7
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

The same survey asked respondents who should be given priority - coloured immigrants with British passports or white alien immigrants. In the total sample a small but clear preference was expressed for white aliens, but this was due entirely to the anti-coloured views of working class respondents and of middle aged and elderly people.

Q. "Supposing it was a question of letting in either coloured immigrants with British passports or white immigrants without British passports, who do you think should be let in first?"

	<u>All</u>	<u>Middle</u>	<u>Working</u>	<u>21-34</u>	<u>35-54</u>	<u>55 &</u>
	%	class	class	%	%	over
	%	%	%	%	%	%
White Aliens	44	38	47	39	44	48
Coloured with passports	37	41	35	46	40	30
D.K.	19	21	18	15	16	22
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

The answers to another question in the same survey indicates that two-fifths of the electorate would not only discriminate against coloured immigrants but would go further and put a total ban on them. This attitude is most marked among working class electors; almost two-thirds of middle class respondents do not support such a total ban.

/Some

* It should be remembered that N.O.P. and Gallup material is copyright.

2.

Q. "Some people think there should be a total ban on all coloured immigration. Do you agree or disagree?"

	<u>All</u>	<u>Middle class</u>	<u>Working class</u>
	%	%	%
Agree	39	33	43
Disagree	56	62	52
D.K.	5	5	5
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

April '68 Six weeks later, and following Enoch Powell's Birmingham speech and dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet, N.O.P. carried out a special survey on immigration. The sample was almost unanimous in believing that there should be a drastic cut in further immigration; this held true for all sections of the electorate. (The question did not distinguish between white and coloured immigration.)

Q. "Do you agree or disagree that there should be a drastic reduction on further immigration?"

	%
Agree	93
Disagree	5
D.K.	2
	<u>100</u>

Anticipating an issue later aired by Mr. Powell the same survey also dealt with aided repatriation; almost two-thirds of the sample said this should be encouraged.

Q. "Do you think the immigrants already in Britain should be encouraged by Government grants to return home?"

	%
Should be	64
Should not	31
D.K.	5
	<u>100</u>

These results were very similar to those obtained from a similar question in the March survey (59%, 34%, and 7% respectively).

May '68 The May survey again did not distinguish between white and coloured immigration, but by linking Enoch Powell's name with the issue it is probable that most people answered the questions in terms of coloured immigration. (By the same token they probably led some Labour Party supporters in the sample to give more tolerant answers than they would have done if his name had been omitted.)

Two-thirds of the sample said they agreed with his views on immigration. (They were not asked to say what they thought his views were, but we know from a survey carried out later by Research Services that most people have a reasonably accurate understanding of his views on immigration (i.e. reduce drastically the number allowed to enter the country).)

/On

3.

Q. "On the whole, do you agree or disagree with the views on immigration expressed by Mr. Enoch Powell?"

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Cons.</u> %	<u>Lab.</u> %	<u>Middle class</u> %	<u>Working class</u> %
Agree	67	75	58	66	67
Disagree	19	13	29	21	18
D.K.	14	12	13	13	15
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

For the first time in the N.O.P. series respondents were also questioned specifically about the entry of dependants of coloured immigrants already settled here. Only half the sample said they should be allowed in; the proportion was appreciably lower among working class respondents and among those aged 55 or more.

Q. "Do you think the families of the coloured immigrants who are here should or should not be allowed to come to Britain?"

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Cons.</u> %	<u>Lab.</u> %	<u>21-34</u> %	<u>35-54</u> %	<u>55 & over</u> %	<u>Middle class</u> %	<u>Working class</u> %
Should	50	49	52	60	50	42	58	44
Should not	43	44	40	34	42	50	34	49
D.K.	7	7	8	6	8	8	8	7
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

The survey repeated the question on whether coloured immigrants already here should be encouraged to return home, and the results were almost unchanged: 63 per cent said they should be encouraged, 29 per cent that they should not, and 8 per cent were undecided. Of those favouring voluntary repatriation, two-thirds approved of Government financial aid for this.

Oct'68

The October survey repeated the earlier question (March) about the imposition of a complete ban on all coloured immigration, and again two-fifths of the sample favoured such a policy, and slightly over half disapproved. This time, however, Labour supporters were more tolerant than Conservatives.

Q. "Would you please tell me whether you agree or disagree with the idea that there should be a complete ban on coloured immigration?"

	<u>All</u> %	<u>Cons.</u> %	<u>Lab.</u> %
Agree	42	46	37
Disagree	54	50	59
D.K.	4	4	4
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

Dec'68

The final 1968 survey (carried out after Enoch Powell's Eastbourne speech) dealt again with the issue of banning immigrants. The question was in a different form from that used in the October survey. In spite of this change, however, it looks as if the proportion of the sample prepared to ban all coloured immigrants has gone up substantially - from 42 per cent in October to 64 per cent (51 per cent plus 13 per cent) in December. Intolerance scores were slightly higher among Conservatives, working class people, and the elderly.

/Do

4.

Q. "Do you think there should be a ban on immigration? (If Yes) Do you think all immigrants should be banned, or only coloured immigrants?"

	All	Cons.	Lab.	Middle	Working	21-34	35-54	55 & over
	%	%	%	class	class	%	%	%
No ban	27	23	29	31	24	31	28	23
Ban black & white	51	55	49	46	54	53	57	45
Ban black only	13	15	14	13	14	10	9	21
D.K.	<u>9</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>11</u>
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

2. Gallup

March'68 In 1968 the first occasion on which the Gallup Poll asked about immigration was early March - at the time of the Immigration Bill. Nearly three-quarters of the sample approved of the Government's action.

Q. "Do you approve or disapprove of the measures the Government are taking in controlling immigration from Commonwealth countries?"

Approve	72
Disapprove	21
D.K.	<u>7</u>
	100

April'68 In early April the approach was different and dealt with the strictness of the controls on the number of immigrants. (The question did not differentiate between white and coloured immigrants). Nearly two-thirds said that the numerical controls were not strict enough.

Q. "Do you think that the controls on the number of immigrants are too strict, not strict enough, or about right?"

Too strict	4
About right	26
Not strict enough	63
D.K.	<u>7</u>
	100

Another Gallup poll later in April showed that 74 per cent of the sample 'agreed with what Mr. Powell had said in this (Birmingham) speech', and that 83 per cent thought that 'the controls on the number of immigrants coming into this country are not strict enough'.

In the same late April survey a question was asked about the entry of dependents; a majority were against them being allowed into the country.

Q. "Do you think that the dependents and relatives of coloured immigrants already here should or should not be allowed into this country?"

Should	32
Should not	56
D.K.	<u>12</u>
	100

/Gallup

5

Nov'68

Gallup did not return to the immigration issue until late November when it did a repeat of most of the questions asked earlier in the year; the latest survey showed practically no change in popular attitudes - a substantial majority agreed with Enoch Powell, considered the numerical controls on immigrants to be not strict enough, and opposed the entry of dependents.

Q. "In general do you agree or disagree with Mr. Powell on the question of coloured immigrants?"

	%
Agree	58
Disagree	26
D.K.	<u>16</u>
	<u>100</u>

Q. "Do you think that the controls on the number of immigrants coming into this country are too strict, not strict enough, or about right?"

	%
Too strict	1
About right	13
Not strict enough	79
D.K.	<u>7</u>
	<u>100</u>

Q. "Do you think that the dependents and relatives of coloured immigrants already here should or should not be allowed into this country?"

	%
Should	28
Should not	55
D.K.	<u>17</u>
	<u>100</u>

Other Surveys

Dec'68 (Research Services)

At the end of the year Research Services carried out a survey which covered all sections of the present electorate except those who had voted Conservative at the 1966 General Election - i.e. it was restricted to those one would expect to hold more tolerant attitudes on the question of immigration. In fact, the results were almost identical with those expressed by the total population questioned by N.O.P. and Gallup. Three-quarters of the R.S. sample thought that present immigration controls were not strict enough; within this sample, however, there were two minor deviations worth mentioning: the majority view was held by less than two-thirds of those who had received some full-time schooling beyond the minimum school-leaving age; on the other hand, the majority view was expressed by 80 per cent of those who had voted Labour in 1966 but had defected by December 1968.

Q. "What do you think of the Government's policy on immigration control? Has it been too strict, about right, or not strict enough?"

	<u>All</u>	<u>Terminal education</u>	<u>Labour in</u>	<u>Labour in 1966</u>	<u>Others</u>
		<u>15 or</u>	<u>16 or</u>	<u>1966 &</u>	
		<u>less</u>	<u>more</u>	<u>1968</u>	
	%	%	%	%	%
Too strict	4	3	7	5	3
About right	17	15	26	19	12
Not strict enough	75	78	65	74	80
D.K.	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>5</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

/In

6

In the same survey respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed with Enoch Powell's views on immigration control. For the whole sample, 60 per cent said they agreed and 24 per cent disagreed; again, agreement with Mr. Powell was greatest among those who had least education and among those who had stopped supporting the Labour Party since 1966.

Q. "What do you think of Mr. Enoch Powell's views on this subject?"

	<u>All</u>	<u>Terminal Education</u>		<u>Labour in</u>	<u>Labour in 1966</u>	<u>Others</u>
		<u>15 or less</u>	<u>16 or</u>	<u>1966 &</u>	<u>but not now</u>	
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>more</u>	<u>1968</u>		<u>%</u>
			<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	
Agree strongly	6	26	27	22	30	27
Agree	4	35	29	26	41	34
Disagree	7	16	18	25	12	14
Disagree strongly	7	5	17	9	5	7
D.K.	<u>16</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>18</u>
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>

R.S.'67 One other survey carried out by Research Services is worth mentioning here because it throws some light on the attitudes of those who feel that coloured immigrants should be treated differently from other immigrants. This was carried out among the white population in five English boroughs which already contain relatively large proportions of coloured residents - Lambeth, Ealing, Bradford, Nottingham, Wolverhampton. The survey was primarily concerned with race prejudice but contained one immigration question. It ran: "Do you think coloured people should be let into Britain to settle on the same basis as other people from abroad, or should there be special regulations for coloured people?" The main interest of this question arises not from the replies (52 per cent said special regulations for coloured immigration, 43 per cent same regulations, 5 per cent don't know), nor from the sectional differences (the desire to discriminate was lower among people aged under 45, middle class people, trade unionists, Labour supporters, those who worked with coloured people, those with some higher education etc.), but in the replies given by the would-be discriminators in answer to the question: "Why do you think there should be special regulations for coloured immigrants?" From this section of the white population there came three categories of response:

- (a) Those referring to alleged undesirable characteristics of coloured immigrants; 83 per cent gave such replies and claimed mainly that coloured immigrants, unlike others, created slums and that they brought diseases into the country.
- (b) Those referring to types of special regulations which should apply to coloured immigrants; 59 per cent gave such answers and the most frequent demand was that before entry they should produce proof that they had a job to go to.
- (c) Those referring to the special impact of coloured immigrants on the supply of scarce social resources; Only 38 per cent of the discriminators gave such replies and usually they talked about the strain on schools, hospitals, and housing.

Summary

1. Approximately 80 per cent of white adults approve of restrictions on the number of coloured immigrants allowed into the country. Almost 40 per cent feel there should, in fact, be a complete ban on all coloured immigration, and at least 75 per cent say that the present restrictions on numbers are not strict enough.

7.

2. About half of all white adults say that the dependents of coloured people already here should not be allowed to enter Britain.
3. Those who favour further restrictions on coloured immigration justify their position mainly on the grounds that they compete for jobs, housing and the strain they put on the social services.
4. While these attitudes are common to all sections of the white population they are most marked in the working class, among the middle-aged and elderly, those with minimal educational background, and (probably) those who have ceased to support the Labour Party since 1966.

Abbreviations

ANL	Anti-Nazi League
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
AUEW	Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
BCSI	British Campaign to Stop Immigration
CPGB	Communist Party of Great Britain
ILP	Independent Labour Party
IWA	Indian Workers' Association
LEA	Local Education Authority
LPA	Labour Party Archives
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
NEC	National Executive Committee (of the Labour Party)
NF	National Front
NHS	National Health Service
NMEC	National Muslim Educational Council
NUDBTW	National Union of Dyers Bleachers and Textile Workers
NUM	National Union of Miners
PWA	Pakistani Workers' Association
SWP	Socialist Workers' Party
TB	Tuberculosis
TGWU	Transport and General Workers Union
TUC	Trade Unions Congress
UMO	Union of Muslim Organisations
VD	Venereal Disease
YCSI	Yorkshire Campaign to Stop Immigration

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