

## Editorial - Lessons of the riots

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Experience, said Oscar Wilde, is a matter of instinct about life. What people learn from experience is mainly determined by the theories they held before the experience occurred, and only slightly by the objective nature of the events which are interpreted as "the experience". Therefore all political strategies which rely upon masses of people radically changing their ideas because of a traumatic occurrence are romantic fantasies. Dramatic happenings can teach people only what they have already learned. For some theories, it is true, large events will constitute a "crucial experiment", causing some individuals to shift adherence from one theory to another. But on any single occasion this will not apply to more than one or two percent of the population in the same way.

The immediate responses of politicians and pundits to the wave of rioting and looting which rolled across Britain conveyed the dreamlike state of shock following upon bereavement. Wringing of hands and tearing of hair was the message, rather than any worked-out analysis. It is to be hoped that most people have now emerged from the daze. Yes, there are riots in Britain's cities. Yes, there are going to be more. Yes, the immigrant communities are not going to 'integrate' (lose their identity) within a few years or a couple of generations. Yes, "our" police sometimes beat people up and smash their property because they don't like their faces. Yes, given the right encouragement young thugs will attack the police, because if you are a young thug that is an intrinsically fulfilling past-time, and the police fight at something of a disadvantage, at least when there are media people around.

Within a few days all the lessons of the riots had been thoroughly learned. Those who had all along been saying that Thatcherite monetarism was destroying 'our industrial base' and that an enormous expansion of state spending was needed to provide jobs were taught by the riots that Thatcherite

monetarism was destroying "our industrial base" and that an enormous expansion of state spending was needed to provide jobs. Those who had all along been saying that racially heterogeneous populations must be riven by ceaseless strife, and that the only solution was to expel the dark-skinned immigrants from our shores were taught by the riots that racially heterogeneous populations must be riven by ceaseless strife, and that the only solution was to expel the dark-skinned immigrants from our shores. Instructive riots!

Others had been complaining for years that the inner cities were decaying, that discipline was insufficient at home and school, or that the racist police were harassing black youngsters. Coincidentally, these too learned from experience exactly what they had always proclaimed.

The great intellectual failing manifested in most of the conclusions about the riots was to seize upon a contributory cause and trumpet it abroad as the sole cause. Those who thought the riots were fundamentally racial had only to see evidence that race played *some* part to attribute the whole thing to race. Those who considered the riots Thatcher's fault had only to make a plausible case for some *link* between unemployment and rioting to conclude that the riots were "about" unemployment and therefore monetarism

### THE RIOTS AND UNEMPLOYMENT

It seems generally accepted that the riots had something to do with unemployment but on reflection, any connection is far from proven. There have been high levels of unemployment before, without riots, and not all the high-unemployment areas experienced riots on this occasion. Since mid-July unemployment has increased and rioting diminished. Not all those rioting were unemployed, and many of those that were are the sort that would have been unemployed if total unemployment had been a couple of million less. The great majority of unemployed have not rioted, and there is no reason to suppose them less implacably

hostile to the rioters than the great majority of people with jobs.

In the sixties there were ferocious clashes between mods and rockers, and sometimes between mods or rockers and police. Seaside towns were terrorised by mobs of rampaging youths. There was also the rapid growth of "soccer hooliganism". Unemployment was exceedingly low. Real wages were higher than they had ever been (though not, of course, as high as they are now) and the upward leap in living standards was most spectacular for young people. No one could claim that these riots had anything to do with unemployment. They were widely attributed to the consumer boom and its associated "over-full employment". Just suppose that in the sixties there had been three million unemployed. Isn't it a safe bet that all those now convinced that the eighties riots are due to unemployment would have been equally convinced that the sixties riots were due to unemployment?

When one turns to the conjectural links between unemployment and rioting, one is immediately in fairyland. Sheer hardship is out of the question: unemployed youth in Britain today are materially better off than most employed youth not so long ago. Boiling anger at the indignity of being denied a respected role in the social productive process? Most young able-bodied unemployed are unemployed because they have decided that the difference between supplementary benefit and available wages is not sufficient payment for the work offered. If someone can get £40 supplementary benefit, and has the chance of a job at £70 a week, before tax, the effective wage for that job is £30 - minus tax, bus fares and so forth. Add to that the fact that there are all sorts of little ways the £40 benefit can be augmented by tax-free sources of income. (Concentration on those cases where state benefits are actually higher than wages is somewhat beside the point. Any hand-outs of money will have some effect in raising unemployment - even fifty pence a week would raise unemployment slightly.)

The unemployed are behaving entirely rationally by being unemployed. Someone whose labour is worth no more than £70 a week would have to possess a peculiarly

high preference for money, compared with leisure, (or a rare intensity of moral conviction) to seek work under such circumstances. There is no point in denouncing the unemployed. Equally, it is myopic to deny that any expanding of the difference between supplementary benefit and wages (either by raising wages or cutting supplementary allowance) will reduce unemployment: the greater the expansion, the greater the reduction. And any shrinking of the difference (whether by lowered wages or increased benefits) will increase unemployment, the greater the shrinkage, the greater the increase.

For the most part, we must conclude that the unemployed are not boiling with anger at being unemployed, though some of them might be angry that the jobs available are not as good as they would like. If the 'indignity' was worth to them much more than a few pounds, they would pay the price of removing the indignity: getting a job.

Another amazing theory is that unemployed youngsters riot 'because there is nothing for them to do'. Any unemployed youngster on supplementary benefit in the UK today has the time and money to engage in any of hundreds of engrossing activities. He can go to night school to learn ceramics, archaeology or ballet, do voluntary work for a variety of charities and voluntary agencies, go to the library every day and read science fiction or westerns, join a Kung Fu, tennis or chess club, teach himself a musical instrument or a foreign language. The problem is not a shortage of things to do, but a lack of inclination to do them. A young person in Toxteth or Brixton certainly has grievances against the state. But it cannot be denied that he has easy access to hundreds of the fruits of an advanced civilisation, which he did nothing to create or deserve.

Stupid, vicious people often lead empty lives. But it is not the emptiness of their lives that makes them stupid and vicious. It is their stupidity and viciousness which makes their lives empty.

This is not to deny that there is any connection between the rise in unemployment and the riots, only to insist that any connection is far from self-evident,

and is likely to be a minor contributing cause rather than a complete explanation. One such minor strand could have been the widespread expectation that unemployment *would* lead to riots and the widespread judgement that this would be legitimate. Just as people cannot 'catch' a drug habit, as if it were an infectious disease, but have to work hard to learn how to perform it, so people do not riot without some commitment and determination. Manufacturing petrol bombs takes some foresight and planning, albeit of a rudimentary nature. Reactions to the troubles at Notting Hill and Bristol in recent years, as interpreted by social workers and priests, have prepared attitudes of mind which may have communicated themselves to some of their less refined clients.

Another possible link is that the unemployed have time on their hands, and energy to spare. Then, there are more subtle psychological influences. For the state to support a growing army of people who do nothing to support themselves, and who do not possess a background of self-cultivation or inner questing which would enable them to deal with their situation constructively, is bound to have unfortunate consequences in many individual cases. They take the opportunity for dole but are guiltily defensive. Their neighbours at work, including those who in their cups loquaciously denounce any slimming down of the welfare state resent the idleness they are paying for.

On the supposition that unemployment helps to cause riots, that would just be one more reason to reduce unemployment. The obvious way to do that is to stop paying people to be unemployed - abolish unemployment and supplementary benefits.

Failing that, any reduction in the amount of benefit would cause a reduction in the number unemployed, and during rapid inflation (which certainly means at least the next ten years) quite a sizeable reduction in real benefit could be accomplished simply by freezing nominal benefit, that is, the payment expressed in pounds and pence.

But what about stimulating the economy? In years to come, the task of reciting the truth is going to become tedious beyond words, but

we must grit our teeth and get on with it. It is nearly always possible, and it is possible in present circumstances, to boost production and reduce unemployment, by inflating the currency, or by inflating it at a faster rate than recent experience has led people to expect. But this effect is temporary, and is followed by a contraction of production and employment, unless an even bigger dose of inflation is given.

If the government always takes the road of bigger doses of inflation, eventually there will be hyperinflation - a situation like Germany in the 1920s, where everyone is desperate to get rid of money as soon as possible, where people have to be paid several times a day because prices rise so much every hour. Hyperinflation in a modern industrialised society, which is absolutely dependent for its survival upon the communications system of market prices, spells catastrophic collapse. It will make the recent riots look like a Cambridge seminar in economics.

We are a long way from hyperinflation, and it is unlikely that any European government would now take us so far, even one headed by Benn. But something far short of hyperinflation, just a stage or two worse than our present plight, what they already have in Israel and parts of South America, would be a very considerable further blow to the system of social co-operation. And viewed over a few years instead of months, it would not mean any less unemployment.

Inflation does not boost employment, even temporarily. It is the unexpected shift from stability to inflation, or from a lower to a higher rate of inflation, which gives production and employment a shot in the arm, followed by a hangover. If prices were to rise at 20 percent a year, and people had thoroughly adjusted to that, and come to expect it to prevail for many years ahead, production and employment would be no higher than with prices rising at zero percent per year, or failing continuously.

The present rising unemployment in Britain is partly due to the fall in real wages by comparison with real doles. Part of the cause is therefore the government's determination to maintain (or almost maintain) the real

value of state benefits, even whilst the real incomes of many of the people producing those benefits are falling steeply. Unemployment could be reduced by slashing the welfare state, but it could also be reduced by deregulating and denationalising on a substantial scale, something towards which this government shows no inclination. Production would be stimulated soundly and permanently by such measures.

Those who shriek about further "reflation" or "expansion", that is, a greatly increased rate at which the government increases the stock of money, thereby reducing the buying power of each pound and penny, are demanding a few months reduced unemployment, followed by much greater unemployment. The Healey-Howe policy is already highly inflationary. Those who have got themselves into the state of mind where they can view present monetary policies as "tight", or can regard five percent as mild and harmless, should be viewed in the same light as someone who insists that a bottle of whisky a day is "social drinking". The "expansionists", including those economists who signed the anti-monetarist letter, and who will go into the history books along with the hundreds of wretched "scientists" who signed a letter a hundred years ago saying there was no conflict between science and Genesis, are taking great gulps of meths and still calling for more booze.

Insofar as unemployment is due to the monetary policies of recent British governments - it would be misleading to single out one politician from amidst the dismal inflationist crew. But if we *had* to single out one politician of recent years, more responsible than any other for the present three million unemployed, it could be none other than Edward Heath.

The end of serious unemployment and a prodigious surge of prosperity for all could be achieved with a couple of years by a handful of simple and modest measures. First, abolition or significant reduction of supplementary allowances, unemployment benefits and family income supplements. Second, immediate return to the free and voluntary sector of all or most state industries. This could be done, for example, as it was done with many state industries in

British Columbia, by putting them all into a holding company and giving everyone a share (or, to ease the pains of adjustment, giving especially large shareholdings to the unemployed). Failing that, nationalised industries should be simply deprived of their privileges and subsidies. They should be told that (a) within a couple of years they will have to pay their way by producing and selling, with no possibility of subsidy from the taxpayers, and (b) that they have no monopolies. All those provisions by which people are fined and jailed for opening up businesses delivering letters, mining coal or running trains, will be struck out. These two measures would automatically and rapidly snuff out state ownership of industry. Third, abolition of rent control and the freehold of every council house given at once and without strings to its occupants. Fourth, the adoption of unilateral free trade, with no duties or limitations on imports from any country in the world. Fifth, abolition of all state licensing of professions and businesses. These measures are at present politically impossible. It is part of the function of the Libertarian Alliance to ensure that they become politically possible in forty years' time, instead of eighty years' time. We observe and comment upon current political developments, but any influence we can have upon current developments is no more than a welcome bonus. We exist primarily to help create a movement of opinion which will determine developments decades hence, as Marxism, Fabianism and Keynesianism have determined recent developments.

## **THE RIOTS AND RACE**

The major rival to the theory that unemployment has caused the riots is the theory that race has caused the riots. Up and down the country, thousands of people have said. 'So Enoch was right'. In a radio debate immediately after the first few riots, the only coherent argument amid a chorus of hypnagogic rambling was that of Martin Webster: these troubles inevitably arise because of the alien presence; races can never mix harmoniously; the only solution is to expel the immigrants and the immigrant-descended.

This contention is intelligible and widely embraced. What is required is to examine it,

to see whether it is likely to be true or false. All that the other participants in the radio debate could do was complain that Webster had been permitted to be heard. Of course he should be heard. None of them tried to answer his argument. It and he are too disgusting to talk about. But the question of whether an argument or its proponent are loathsome has no bearing on the altogether separate question of whether the argument is valid or the conclusions true. Indeed, an invariable resort to explosions of fury when confronted with a series of factual propositions must raise suspicions that the exploder, if he would desist from exploding, might be tempted to accept the propositions. "Tempted" is the appropriate word. Racism has become the scarlet sin of an enthusiastic religious cult, bent on purifying mind and soul.

We should note the obvious fact that the rioters have been white as well as black, and some areas with heavy black or Asian populations experienced no riots. This has been observed with evident relief, and BBC news announcers have conscientiously referred to "black and white youths" (Why not simply "youths", if race is irrelevant?). Powell has seemed uncertain as to whether his prophecies are coming to pass or not. In one radio interview, Powell emphasised that the areas of rioting were not coincident with the areas of highest unemployment. The interviewer asked whether this meant they were race riots. In a heavily histrionic tone of mock horror, Powell replied: "You introduced that subject. I said nothing about race." The fact remains that rioting has been just as much or little associated with racial minorities as with unemployment. This does not demonstrate that race, any more than unemployment, had nothing to do with the riots, but it should caution us against jumping to conclusions.

The proponents of the Powell-Webster thesis are not entirely refuted by the fact that these riots have not been overtly racial in character. They claim that we are at the beginning of a process which will lead to polarisation on lines of skin colour. The key to their position is that racial heterogeneity must always lead to strife. What is the truth of the matter?

There is now plenty of historical experience to go on. The problem lies in determining exactly what Powell and Webster are claiming. If they are claiming that different races cannot live intermingled without ceaseless bitter fighting, interminable "civil war", then they are certainly wrong. There are numerous cases to refute them, from Hong Kong to San Francisco, Kuala Lumpur to Rio de Janeiro.

If, on the other hand, they mean that so long as identifiable racial groups live side by side there will be some undercurrent of rivalry and mutual mistrust, some occasional tensions, the odd pub brawl sparked off by an insulting word, a few "race riots" involving a minute proportion of the "races" concerned, every fifty years or so, then their position seems irrefutable.

But it is also not very remarkable, and does not suggest any drastic preventive measures. Any division of individuals into groups with which they identify readily will *always* engender *some* mutual distrust and dislike. History does not supply any exceptions to that rule, and it would be ludicrous to expect any.

There have been some ferocious examples of racial strife in the twentieth century. But there have been some terrible examples of class war, such as Stalin's attack on the kulaks, some horrific instances of religious strife, such as the partitioning of India. Yet people of different races, religions, social classes and languages generally manage to live together amicably enough, though never without some misunderstandings to be smoothed over. Racial troubles in Detroit or Miami are reported round the world, and have been an important ingredient of Powell's message, but all over North America people of different racial communities are co-operating effectively every day. It is as silly to form a picture of American race relations on the basis of a few violent incidents as it would be to form a picture of relations between Roman Catholics and Protestants in Britain from violent incidents in Ulster or Glasgow. In race, as in religion and social class (All history is the history of class collaboration) peace and co-operation are the rule, hostility

and violence the comparatively rare exceptions.

There is a fundamental factual misconception about black-white relations in the United States which has cast its shadow over discussion of race relations in Britain. Negroes have been in North America almost as long as whites, and (in terms of lines of descent) longer than most: prior to the flood of European immigration from the mid-nineteenth century on, a quarter of the US population were slaves. Surely, the British reason, if black and white cannot get along by now, they will never get along. If race riots occur a century after the freeing of the slaves, doesn't this suggest an intractability, perhaps even permanence, in the animosity between racially different communities?

The answer is simply that, for all that it matters culturally, American blacks are very recent immigrants. They are immigrants from the rural South to the urban North, and most recently the urban west and south. This colossal movement of people began substantially during the First World War, when three quarters of a million blacks moved from the rural South to the urban North within four years. Today the majority of American blacks have lived in cities for two generations or less. The shift from rural South to urban North was culturally a greater leap than that of West Indians moving to Britain in the 1950s. The closest thing to it in British experience is the influx of Irish in the nineteenth century, which led to disturbances comparable to the American sixties 'race riots'. But the black migration was larger, as well as being a greater cultural disorientation. The Irish came from a recently shattered tribalism, given a new pride and cohesion by the Church. The African slaves' tribalism has been pulverised by a peculiarly repressive and (so to speak) totalitarian system of slavery, followed by continuing peonage and frequent terror, with no more nutritious ideology than the scraps they could scavenge from the ignorant and backward Southern whites. Until the Second World War the American South as a whole was, in modern parlance, an underdeveloped 'neo-colony.' (After all, it resulted from the defeat of one of the earliest 'national liberation struggles'.)

American experience does not suggest that there is any great long-term Difficulty in reconciling communities of different skin colour. It corroborates the fact that full transition from subject status in a tyrannical agrarian society to comparative freedom in an industrial and commercial society is nearly always appallingly traumatic, and is rarely accomplished by any group in less than three or four generations.

The 'lesson of America' for British race relations is just the opposite to that which is usually assumed. A study of the incomes, wealth, education and social acceptance of American blacks shows a remarkable success story. Both black militants and anti-black ideologues who for different reasons claim that blacks have been unable to advance within the 'white power structure' or adapt to civilisation, stand squarely refuted by the evidence.

But are there not cases of racial antagonism being prolonged for centuries? Is it not possible that 'we may have imported' such a legacy of continuing violence? In all cases where inter-community violence continues for centuries, or flares up after centuries of dormancy, at least one of two factors is at work: competing national claims, or political persecution of one group, especially by means of employment privileges.

What keeps things boiling in Ulster and Sri Lanka is not the mere coexistence of different communities, but opposing national claims. For centuries, Islamic people warmly tolerated Jews, as contrasted with the terrible persecution of Jews characteristic of Christendom. What changed all that was the appearance of incompatible nationalist claims because of the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, determined to expand its political supremacy over a large territory inhabited by non-Jews.

It is hardly likely that non-Irish immigrants to Britain will ever lay claim to a part of British territory and demand separate national status. The immigrants are a mixed bunch: all that they have to unite them is that they are British. They are not concentrated in one area, and the tendency of a market economy is to disperse them even more. (Similarly, the dynamism of the American

economy probably averted any serious black separatist movement).

As regards the other factor, political persecution, matters are not quite so clear. The great threat, in the long term, to peaceful race relations in Britain is the present attitude that immigrants are entitled, not merely to be treated equally by the law, but to some particular level of wealth, income, education or employment.

The best way to treat immigrants is to leave them alone. Nobody should try, by the coercive methods of politics, to ensure that they "Integrate" or keep separate, that they improve their economic position or fail to do so, that they are represented in various professions or not.

But won't the immigrants then be hampered by racist discrimination? Perhaps they will, but they are not entitled to be free of racist discrimination. It is an elementary aspect of liberty that we are free to discriminate against our fellows on any grounds that take our fancy, including racism, sexism, ageism or classism. Racism may be considered immoral but there is nothing unjust about it. Everyone should be free to associate with whomever they like - and that means they should be free to boycott, shun or blacklist whoever they like.

It is widely believed that obstacles to the advancement of immigrants stem mainly from discrimination, that the solution is to "fight racism" politically and evangelistically. Often the mere fact that certain kinds of immigrants do worse than other groups by certain kinds of standards is considered proof that discrimination against the immigrants has been effective.

A recent case was the report of the Rampton Committee (or rather, the Swann Committee) which blamed the poor average scholastic performance of West Indians in Britain on discrimination by schoolteachers. At the beginning of its deliberations, the Rampton Committee noted that, whereas West Indians did worse than Anglo-Saxons, Asians did better. They began to discuss the influence of the family structures and home attitudes upon the formation of individual personal traits conducive to academic success. But

those responsible for pressing this argument were manipulated out, and Rampton himself abruptly dismissed. Effective racist discrimination by teachers was whistled out of the air. It was invented because it was needed, not because any research had corroborated it. Why do Asians do better than whites? Because teachers discriminate in their favour, against whites? The surviving committee members must have known that they were sweeping a truth under the carpet and perpetrating an untruth. They lied because it was politically convenient for them to do so.

The irony is that their dishonesty is also patronisingly and dangerously racist. For what could be more revealing of a refusal to grant someone full human status than a determination that, whatever he does or fails to do, he will not be held responsible? And what could be more menacing to the future of community relations than to keep on telling one group that all its failings are due to others, and it need do nothing to improve its prospects, except wait for the surrounding society to reform itself?

Immigrant groups nearly always, receive considerable hostility. It is abundantly clear from numerous historical examples that, provided there is no politically enforced discrimination, and the immigrants obtain roughly equal treatment by the law, informal prejudice and dislike manifested in voluntary discrimination have very little effect upon the progress of different groups. In the nineteenth century, Irish and Jews migrated in large numbers to Britain and the United States. Although the Jews, on average, arrived later and were equally poor on arrival, and equally disliked, they soon overtook the Irish in education, income, wealth and social standing. In America there was a simultaneous migration of Chinese, mainly into California. The Anti-Chinese hysteria was at least as great as the anti-Irish agitation, and was actually translated into discriminatory laws. Yet the equally poor, and culturally more alien, Chinese also overtook the Irish within two or three generations. Many other instances could be cited. (Look at Sowell's *Race and Economics*). In societies with a heritage of Liberalism, the major determining factor in the relative fortunes of immigrant groups is

always the immigrant groups themselves, their aspirations, values and habits.

An interesting line of research would be to investigate the performances of different West Indian children according to the island of their family origin. The island cultures differ notably in the sorts of personalities they tend to favour, or at least, this is commonly believed by West Indians and does seem plausible on the face of it. If it turned out that children of families from some islands did significantly better at school than children of families from other islands, perhaps even better than Whites, this would scotch the theory of discrimination by schoolteachers and tend to go against any genetic theory. The research project is there, waiting to be carried out, but there does not seem to be much concern with finding out facts, in view of the ridiculous dogma that the performance of various ethnic groups is primarily determined by discrimination. Perhaps the NUT could now be persuaded to support such research.

Several West Indians have recently established private schools for West Indian children, with a more stringent discipline than prevails in state schools. The founders of these schools have evidently come to the conclusion advanced by Antonio Gramsci in his *Prison Notebooks*: that where schooling is lax, exploratory and concerned with self-expression, this must result in de facto discrimination in favour of those pupils who absorb the necessary educational values from the home.

As for the hypothesis that some of the variability in attainment of different groups is due to genetic differences, this interesting and entirely legitimate scientific issue does not have the automatic political consequences many people assume. For example, The National Front have made something of the arguments of Jensen and Eysenck, as they apply to differences between white and black, but if Jensen and Eysenck make a case that whites are inherently brighter, on average, than blacks, they equally make a case that Chinese, Japanese and Eskimos are inherently brighter, on average, than whites. If the National Front were interested in raising the UK average IQ, they have just missed a

golden opportunity; they ought to have been campaigning for full rights of entry to Britain of the British subjects in the colony of Hong Kong. If raising the national IQ were actually the aim, racial category would be an inefficient instrument, in view of the substantial overlap between the performance of all groups. An IQ test on entry to Britain would make more sense, though it would unfortunately deny the National Front the pleasure of fraternal contacts with some of their visiting co-thinkers from abroad.

Even if it were definitely established that no part of the differences between the average attainments of racial groups was due to heredity, this does not mean that it would be practicable or morally acceptable to bring all groups to the same average social position. We are not certain exactly which habits and instilled dispositions are conducive to various kinds of achievement, and if we were, we would probably find that valuable traits have some association with unattractive traits, and some negative traits result from distinctive community practices proudly clung to. Now would it be proposed to work upon the family patterns, religious beliefs and thinking habits of the Irish community so that it members thought and felt like Jews?

And what would be the point? Much discussion takes for granted that if one racial community is heavily represented in low-income jobs, that is something unfortunate which requires treatment. It is sometimes considered unfair, but fairness applies to individuals, not groups, and groups may be created by all sorts of classifications. If all races were evenly balanced in all jobs, would it still be unfair to low-income people, taken as a group, that they had low incomes? Are the members of a racial group in a low-income job supposed to get some sort of satisfaction out of the fact that other members of their group are in high-income jobs?

When people migrate they judge that it will benefit them. In cases of sustained migration they are presumably correct in their judgement, or reports of the first migrants would discourage further migration. The society into which the migrants move benefits the migrants, and the migrants

benefit the wider society of which they now become a part. The society does not owe anything further to the immigrants. The immigrants do not owe anything further to the rest of Society.

Immigrants move to those positions where their specific endowments of talents and skills can be most effectively employed. Immigrant groups always specialise heavily, and continue to specialise somewhat for generations after arrival. There is nothing sinister about that, nothing which requires anyone to do anything. It is only this specialisation which makes the immigration worthwhile. Attempting forcibly to distribute the immigrants evenly among all income groups or social positions is an injustice to those non-immigrant individuals who have to make way for less competent immigrants - an injustice which is liable to generate an ugly backlash. It is also dubious in its effects upon the self-respect and capacity for self-help of the immigrants. And it is bound to go along with state immigration control, which is wholly unjust and aggressive.

The best thing the government can do to encourage inter-community harmony is nothing. As soon as it is announced that the government intends to fight "discrimination", to see that no groups are "disadvantaged", and especially if it becomes clear that any expression of discontent is to be taken as proof of a justified grievance which the state is obliged to put right, there are pickings to be had, sinecure profits for entrepreneurs in the militancy market. "Community leaders" spring up, wide boys who would probably come very low in any secret ballot of the communities they are supposed to lead, whose language frequently lapses into the jargonistic tics of the Trotskyist sects, whose message is a shrewd balance of carrot and stick. (in essence: social justice and the avoidance of a holocaust require revolutionary transformation of the entire social structure, by next Tuesday week at the very latest, but since you ask, I shall be delighted to appear on your TV discussion, accept a visiting lectureship in community relations, and sit on your race relations advisory board).

Government meddling in race relations, as in any other field, automatically conjures up

organised interest groups who see the prospect of gain from privileges which only the state can confer. The government appears to be placating various groups, and may temporarily be doing so, but it is thereby confirming and enhancing the assumption that the way to get somewhere is by organising into a gang with the capacity to make trouble.

One strand in the tangle of motivations which lead people to support government schemes to enforce racial equality is a remnant of the old ideal of 'Integration' which actually meant, to many people, total assimilation. In the fifties, this was considered by most 'progressives' the optimum consummation. In the sixties they switched over to various degrees of encouragement and patronage for "black power", that is, black racism.

What both these apparently opposite positions reveal is a failure to accept that separate racial communities are a permanent feature of the landscape. They are different and will remain different. The 'melting pot' is a myth or at least, it melts a lot more slowly than some people used to imagine. An enormous amount of confusion prevails in discussions of race, with the word 'integration' being used at one moment for "getting along without fighting" and in the same conversation, being used to mean complete assimilation. We often hear people complaining about the status of minorities in terms that would make sense only if it was desired to eliminate all differences between the minorities and the rest of society, and the same people praising the distinctive culture and values of the minorities. All this plays into the hands of mystical nationalists like Powell, to whom an ethnically heterogeneous population is intrinsically undesirable.

## **THE RIOTS AND THE POLICE**

It is characteristic of nationalised industries that they are inefficient, and that when they have failed their customers they abuse them. The slogan of every state industry is that the customer is always wrong. Why should we expect the nationalised police to be any different?

Furthermore all state industries must be freed to some extent. from the discipline of profit and loss. What is most striking about them is not so much that they do badly (though they always do badly) but that they lose their way. Their eyes are coated with the cataracts of bureaucracy. In order to cope with their blindness, state functionaries devise the fiction that there is some ascertainable public need for a homogenous service, defined by rules and enforced by inspection. This fiction is notably at work in nationalised schooling, health care, letter delivery and social security.

In all this, the police run absolutely true to form. They are inefficient, arrogant, unaccountable, arbitrary, privileged, and increasingly sections of the police are riddled with corruption. In short, they are a nationalised industry.

George Bernard Shaw used to say that doctors went out of their way to spread ill-health, because this meant more business for doctors. As a description of a medical profession, especially a voluntary system of medicine such as Shaw knew, that is quite silly. But it springs to mind in the case of the police. The worse they do their job, the more money they get. The more unsafe the streets, the more we must "support" the self same individuals we have been paying to keep the streets safe.

One of the most unfortunate aspects of public responses to the riots was how many of them essentially divided into two camps, those who found excuses for the rioters and those who said: "we must give the police unconditional backing; what magnificent chaps they are". Emboldened by this wooden-head "support", the police in Brixton went on a rampage of destructive vandalism in the homes of innocent people (an organised riot, if you please). This left even the habitually most loquacious defenders of "law and order" speechless. No one suggested those responsible should be prosecuted and imprisoned.

All state industries lack 'accountability' and must always do so. Socialists sometimes demand 'accountability' from private concerns, especially multinational companies. But a private corporation, so

long as it is subject to the same law as everyone else as regards theft or aggressive violence, is completely accountable in every way that is just and socially desirable. It goes out of business straight away if it cannot maintain the voluntary support of its customers. It buys what it needs at mutually agreed prices from its suppliers, including its suppliers of labour. If it invades anyone's rights, it is compelled to pay damages.

A state industry is freed from this accountability, and instead made accountable to Parliament. But it is impossible for a single organ to exercise the same subtle, complex yet forceful control over an enterprise as can be exercised by the market, even if that organ could somehow accurately represent "the people".

We should "support the police" only in the sense that we should support anyone trying to prevent attacks upon innocent individuals. To the extent that the police do that, we support them in the same way that we support any individual or group performing the same function. But in certain quarters "support for the police" has come to mean blind approval of everything they do. The rioters are aggressors, pillaging and burning the property of people who have done them no harm. (The looting of private property was not confined to shops and pubs. during one Brixton disturbance a woman was raped.) It is entirely justified to deal with these aggressors more severely than the police have so far been able to do - but it is justified for anyone who happens to be around, for example, the owners of that property or persons hired by them, to suppress aggression in the same way. None of this gives the police carte blanche for incompetence, or entitles them to commit acts of aggression on their own account.

At bottom, the only justification for a police force is delegated self-defence. But most current press discussion seems to treat the police, either as the embodiment of the law, or as a legitimate political interest group whose feathers must not be ruffled. In traditional liberal and democratic theory, the police are not 'the law'. They are as much under the law as anyone else. It is in the self-interest of a monopoly police to erode this traditional view and replace it with a sort of

Hobbesian contract, whereby we see the police as the only force capable of keeping order, and therefore tolerate all their failures and foibles.

It is in the interest of any professional group, if the rest of society lets it, to present itself as the sole practitioner of its specialised tasks. It is understandable that the police might feel they have some expert knowledge entitling them to give advice to the public, but typically their spokesman arrogantly lecture the public on how to behave. All of a sudden, everyone seems to accept that it was a terrible mistake to abandon the old concept of "the bobby on the beat". But the police chiefs responsible for that avowed disastrous error are going to keep their jobs. The same applies to those who missed numerous opportunities to be a bit more diligent and systematic in their attempts to catch the Yorkshire Ripper, which could have saved several lives.

Over the years, repeated complaints about the police's inability to secure convictions have been employed as justification for a steady erosion of the rights of individuals against the police. In any dispute between the police and a private citizen, the police possess formidable advantages. Any complaint against the police can be investigated always and only by ... the police. *The Observer* (6th September) gave an account of the case of Richard Bunning, who was beaten unconscious with a police truncheon, entirely unprovoked, in the sight of two reputable witnesses. Over two years after lodging a complaint, Mr. Bunning received from the Director of Public Prosecutions the reply that there was insufficient evidence for a prosecution. All the evidence given to the DPP was presented by the police, and the DPP did not divulge any clue as to the alleged insufficiency of the evidence.

Public pressure is now mounting for complaints against the police to be investigated by some independent force. (There has been since 1977, an independent Police Complaints Board, which "monitors" allegations but has no real power). Given the current climate of opinion, it seems likely that the independent force will be a tax-funded government department. But there is

an alternative, which is perfectly feasible and would be considerably more efficient: permit anyone with a complaint against the police (or rather, specific police officers on specific occasions) to nominate anyone as their own independent investigating force.

Although anyone could be nominated, the complainant would be wise to pick a competent investigator. Private enquiry agencies, insurance companies, law centres and others would probably offer their services competitively, and entirely new firms would be formed for the purpose. Naturally, the investigating body (which might in some cases be directed by the complainant) must have powers to examine the police's records, to question the police, and to enter police premises on production of a warrant, exactly corresponding to the police's powers to do this to non-police members of the public.

The independent investigating forces could have a far wider field for their talents: they could compete with the police in "solving crimes". It should always be open to the victim of a crime to choose some other agency to pursue the aggressor, and to keep the police out of it. The same applies to keeping order on the streets, though here some difficulties are raised by the unfortunate fact that the streets are state-owned.

In a free market, some streets would be owned by nearby residents, some by shopkeepers and some by specialised street companies. Different streets would have different rules of conduct, just as different hotels do. Some streets would employ their own patrolmen; others would hire patrols from firms offering that service. If a patrol company hired men who made a habit of invariably approaching dark-skinned individuals with a stream of foul-mouthed abuse, that fact would become known, and in most circumstances would result in monetary losses to the owner of that street, and dismissal of said patrolmen. If the patrolmen were in the habit of greeting dark-skinned individuals by beating them about the head with truncheons, the patrolmen would be just as liable to prosecution as any non-uninformed thug who did the same thing. The former case would be one of extreme

impoliteness to customers or guests; the latter one of assault. Neither would be an occasion for any mystique of "taking a firm stand for law and order", by refusing to scrutinise the disorderly and unlawful behaviour of uniformed predators.

## **THE RIOTS AS RECREATION**

If there was anything approaching a political issue in the riots, it was police harassment. Yet there can be little doubt that the major motive of the riots was recreational. The rioters rioted because they liked smashing windows, they liked breaking heads, they liked throwing petrol bombs at the police, they liked the added bonus of walking away with valuables.

It may seem that there is some contradiction in allowing that people with those propensities can be influenced by any social or political issue, but that is to misunderstand the nature of riots. The Bolshevik newspapers, including the most influential of them the *Socialist Worker*, have been thrown into a delirium of self-congratulatory delight. They think that the riots are splendid, progressive, harbingers of revolution. Some of these revolutionary hard men have heard somewhere that history is important for revolutionaries; when anything occurs they dig out their historical scrap-books and compile a grocery list of precedents. So it has been with the riots: they have reassured us that riots have a long and honourable genealogy.

It is true that history is studded with riots, but they were nearly always quite futile, and sometimes harmful to the cause they seemed to endorse. Rioters have about the same relation to revolution as the low-class comic characters have to the plot of a Shakespeare play. They are noisy diversions, which occasionally by coincidence become entangled in the action proper, but which generally punctuate the course of history without seriously modifying it.

In 1688, there were riots in London. The property of Roman Catholics was looted and destroyed. The King was toppled, but that happened independently of the riots. When James was brought back to London, after being caught slinking away, the street mob,

many of which had been rioting the day before, cheered him in welcome. But it made no difference. The solid, non-rioting citizens of England were set on revolution.

There is always a section of the population with the propensity to riot. Social issues may tip the balance, and give them an excuse. Similarly, it is an error to believe that the riots were 'orchestrated'. There are always little groups who see themselves at the head of the rising masses. The Bolsheviks encouraged the riots, and in some cases participated, but they were bandwagon jumpers, not masterminds.

The Bolshevik "left" see the riots as revolution in embryo. The authoritarian "right" see the riots as presaging the collapse of society. They are each wildly mistaken. Society in Britain today is nowhere near revolution or collapse.

The actual consequences of the riots are less exciting, and slightly sad. Shop-keepers will move out of the inner city areas, and those remaining will increase their prices. They will have to pay, not only for steel shutters, and the like, but for private protection. An old age pensioner will have to walk another half-mile to get provisions, and will find them priced higher, and the shop assistants more surly. That, and thousands of little instances like it, is the achievement of the riots.