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ANALYSIS OF COMMITTEE ON RACE RELATIONS  
AND IMMIGRATION

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## The selection of evidence and the avoidance of racialism: a critique of the Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration

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### Preface

*In the Parliamentary session 1971/72 a Select Committee of the House of Commons on Race Relations and Immigration examined police/immigrant relations.*

*The Chairman of the Committee was Mr. William Deedes, Conservative member for Ashford: his eleven colleagues, drawn from both sides of the House, were Mr. Guy Barnett, Mr. Sydney Bidwell, Mr. Arthur Bottomley, Mr. Norman Fowler, Mr. Barney Hayhoe, Mr. J. R. Kinsey, Mr. John Page, Sir George Sinclair, Mr. Tom Torney, Mr. John Wilkinson and Mr. William Wilson.*

*The Committee met between November 1971 and August 1972. Its Report was published in September 1972.*

*We reproduce here its final chapter 'Approach to a dilemma' and its list of recommendations.*

### APPROACH TO A DILEMMA

For many reasons relations between the police and the citizen are under stress. The causes are complex and not all of them directly concern this inquiry. Complaints against the police, as we have shown, cross the boundaries of race.

Throughout our inquiry we have tried to distinguish between tensions affecting the police and the whole community and tensions peculiar to the police and the coloured community. How far should the police observe this distinction? Their dilemma is plain. Ideally they are expected to treat all citizens alike. To what extent should they make allowance for the different expectations, culture and outlook of the coloured population when dealing with them? These questions did not (perhaps they could not) receive a direct answer when repeatedly posed by us in our inquiry. Accusations that the police discriminate against immigrants can shade by fine degrees into criticism that they do not make sufficient allowance for the difference in outlook. That could, in turn, expose them to charges of another kind.

That is one side of the coin. On the other side we do not doubt, on the evidence before us, that notwithstanding the loyal defence of senior officers—though some were prepared to be quite frank about it—there have been instances of policemen acting insensitively and officiously against immigrants. This is particularly true of young West Indians, whose conduct is sometimes calculated to make policemen 'lose their cool'. That impression needs to be expressed in measured terms. Extreme expressions have become part of the language of our times. It was outside our duty to investigate individual cases but some evidence before us made clear that charges of brutality and harassment often related not to recent events but to those of two years, three years or even longer ago. Memories of them linger and are damaging. That should not obscure the fact that a number of senior officers, while ready to admit that police conduct towards immigrants has not been without blemish, are showing increasing determination to remedy these faults and their will is gradually yielding results.

Past mistakes by the police are apt to grow to legendary proportions, even in areas with which they were unconnected. Over and over again it has been put to us that

It follows, so the argument runs, that the police must avoid conduct open to misconstruction when dealing with immigrants. But police actions are by their nature constantly open to misconstruction, by English, Welsh, Scots and Irish as well as by coloured immigrants. That argument cannot be pushed to the point which would require police to withhold action in respect of coloured immigrants which they would take against others.

The policeman's first duty is to keep the Queen's Peace. To achieve that he is not required to work to rule; because he is dealing with a wide range of individuals and situations he has considerable discretion. Wider knowledge of coloured immigrants, their culture, background, history and nature would enable policemen quite properly and fairly to use that discretion. Steps are being taken in training to remedy some of the gaps. We set great store by that. Ultimately the policeman's attitude to the immigrant will be governed not simply by his instructions but by his own knowledge. That is the real safeguard and it must be improved.

Such knowledge is conducive not only to better relations but also to the policeman's main tasks, the protection of the citizen and the detection of crime. It must surely follow that the rate of crime cleared up will be higher in a community in which the policeman is accepted, has friends among law-abiding citizens and wins their co-operation than in a community where he is regarded with mistrust and dislike. Evidence before us, and we have quoted some of it, establishes as much.

Given the knowledge, attitudes are in the last resort shaped by leadership. We found examples of good leadership among senior policemen and we applaud the contribution it has made to better relations. It cannot all be left to liaison officers appointed to the task, whatever their qualities or rank. Anxiety lest these appointments diminish the sense of responsibility for race relations among other ranks was not lost on us. It is a reasonable anxiety. Leaders set the tone, which is communicated very quickly throughout a body so closely knit as a police force. If the best examples of leadership in police and immigrant relations prevailed throughout forces in the United Kingdom, many of the difficulties we have dwelt upon would, within a reasonable space of time, diminish. In some places they could wither away.

## LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

### Crime rates

(1) The facts about immigrant crime rates should be brought firmly to the attention of all police officers (paragraph 243).

### Special difficulties

(2) Local authorities should be urged to make use of statutory powers to assist in the construction of licensed clubs and community facilities (paragraph 246).

(3) Pending possible changes in the licensing laws, present police policy of 'containment' of shebeens should be continued (paragraph 246).

(4) Lost or mutilated passports are too easily replaced. The issue of replacement passports should be discussed between the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Home Office and the High Commissions in London (paragraph 248).

(5) The police should get fuller and quicker information about persons overstaying their entitlement (paragraph 249).

(6) A requirement should be placed on relatives resident in this country to act as guarantors for persons coming for a restricted stay at their invitation, provided that an effective system of sanctions can be devised to prevent abuse (paragraph 249).

(7) The Home Office, the Department of Health and Social Security and the Department of Employment and Productivity, after consulting local authority and voluntary associations, should jointly sponsor a special inquiry in London and the provinces by a social unit to measure the size of the problem of homeless black youths and to recommend ways of dealing with it (paragraph 253).

### Militancy

### Community liaison

(10) Police and immigrant organisations should seek to encourage community liaison (paragraph 271).

(11) Chief Officers of police should realise the importance of appointing the right person to be a community liaison officer and then of making sure that the post is not allowed to become a dead end. Women have a special contribution to make in such appointments (paragraph 274).

(12) All senior police community liaison officers should have access to senior officers, including chief officers of police, when they want it (paragraph 275).

(13) Chief officers of police should consider to what extent they should appoint assistant community liaison officers of junior rank, including women, perhaps part-time, at subdivisions and stations (paragraph 276).

(14) Regular meetings of community liaison officers should be held, regionally and nationally (paragraph 277).

(15) The Community Relations Commission should review the establishment of community relations councils in relation to operational areas (paragraph 283).

### Work in schools

(16) The Home Office and the Department of Education and Science should hold discussions between themselves, and with appropriate bodies including the police, with a view to encouraging and expanding police work in schools and among teachers in training (paragraph 286).

### Training

(17) The Home Office should implement the views and recommendations of the Working Party on Police Training in Race Relations in local training and see that they are put into effect (paragraph 293).

(18) Not only should police officers be encouraged to apply for awards for visits to immigrants' countries of origin but statutory bodies should provide for this where the funds available from voluntary bodies are insufficient (paragraph 294).

(19) There should be exchanges for longer periods of police officers of lower ranks with those of appropriate countries (paragraph 294).

(20) A booklet should be issued to all police officers about the backgrounds of immigrant communities, the reasons why they came to this country, their cultures, religions and attitudes and an outline of the immigration laws (paragraph 295).

(21) There should be a greatly increased use of visual aids (paragraph 295).

(22) Training in race relations should be kept up to date for all policemen at all stages in their careers, not simply for the current intake of recruits (paragraph 296).

(23) Experiments with more flexible types of training should be continued and extended (paragraph 296).

### Recruitment

(24) The Home Office should study again the recruitment of coloured police officers to see what encouragement could be given (paragraph 306).

(25) Any recruiting campaign for special constables should include an appeal to coloured people (paragraph 307).

(26) Police forces outside London should pay attention to the benefits of recruiting coloured traffic wardens and the Home Office should take them into account in their study (paragraph 308).

### Communications

(27) All police forces in which it is appropriate should consider the award of special allowances to those becoming proficient in Asian languages (paragraph 312).

(28) All police forces whose members are likely to have contact with Asians should make provision for all their efforts to learn a few simple words of Hindi/Urdu (paragraph 312).

(29) All police forces should seek the co-operation of community relations councils and/or immigrant organisations in drawing up lists of official interpreters (paragraph 313).

(30) All police forces should immediately make widely available clear, concise pamphlets in English and Asian languages about the police role and functions (paragraph 314).

(31) Information about making complaints against the police and the rights of citizens on arrest or at a police station should be available in all appropriate languages (paragraph 315).

(32) The police should do more to make known the work they do to improve community relations (paragraph 318).

(33) Lists of names of persons who could be contacted on arrest should be drawn up in consultation with community relations councils and made available on request at police stations. But it should

## Complaints

(35) The Home Secretary should take urgent steps to introduce a lay element into inquiries into complaints against the police, possibly by setting up independent tribunals to consider appeals by complainants or police officers dissatisfied with police inquiries into complaints (paragraph 333).

(36) All police forces should adopt the practice of sending, where appropriate, a senior officer to discuss with a complainant the result of his complaint (paragraph 334).

From: *Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, Session 1971-72; Police/Immigrant Relations, Volume I, HC 471-I.* (Reproduced by permission of H.M.S.O.).

## I. Assumptions and methods

A Select Committee is a much used means whereby Parliament keeps policy, legislation and administration under review. Such Committees have a fairly broad remit as to method of enquiry and topics for discussion. Committees can and do range widely, consult whom they like and report and publish a wide variety of opinion.

Most recent Parliamentary Sessions have appointed a Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. Successive Committees have produced reports on Housing, the working of the rules and procedures surrounding immigration and the 'Problems of Coloured School-leavers'. Its Report on Police/Immigrant Relations is part of the continuing work of the Committee.

In this article we want to look critically at its methods and assumptions. We argue that despite the latitude and flexibility accorded such a Committee, and despite an apparent openness in its style, the Committee applied a narrow interpretive framework which served to neutralise or define as illegitimate statements or analyses which did not fit in with its own pre-conceived definition of 'what the problem was'. This view shaped the way its members approached the memoranda submitted to them, their conduct in the verbal exchanges, and the conclusions they eventually reached.

We argue that the Committee's working definitions were self-imposed and that, despite its members being drawn from both sides of the house and despite differences and disputes within the Committee, there occurred a narrowing of the interpretive framework and a Committee view or definition prevailed.

If we consider for a moment their approach to the question of evidence, our general point may become clearer. The Committee was prepared to consider a very wide range of evidence indeed, from many different kinds of organisations and individuals. Since it was almost inevitable, given existing controversy about the topic, that there would be contradictions and conflict between different views, there had to be some way of sifting the evidence, and of ultimately giving more credence to some evidence than the rest. We wish to suggest that the Committee used three 'tests'; they wished to know firstly whether the statements were *typical*; secondly whether they could be *substantiated*; and thirdly whether what was being said was in fact *relevant* to the issue. Further, we would argue that these tests not only determined the Committee's definition of what was 'good' or 'bad' evidence, but led them to deny that some statements or definitions were evidence at all because they moved outside the narrow definition of evidence embodied in the 'tests'.

Thus the Committee would often ask, in one way or another, whether such-and-such a feeling about the situation was typical of the group being represented. This may seem reasonable enough. In fact it begs the question of who exactly can be held to be able to offer a 'typical' experience of any group. Many MPs for example might hesitate to present the 'typical' experience of all his constituents in reference

what actually goes on in local beat situations as they would like to think. 'Typicality' then was a demand made only on those who sought to be critical of the police, or to portray police-immigrant relationships as in a state of crisis. The test was designed to bring only negative results.

A similar bias existed in the operation of the second demand of substantiation, which was again made only on those wishing to make adverse remarks on the situation. There was thus an implicit and sometimes explicit assumption by the committee that the situation was satisfactory, unless evidence to the contrary could be presented. They had powerfully aligned themselves with the forces of complacency and were not to be dissuaded from that allegiance.

'Relevance' was the severest test on the evidence. It is possible to argue that the Chairman's vigorous insistence that witnesses should not stray from the subject was an accurate interpretation of his brief: the Committee was not, after all, about the general experience of black people in Britain, but about their relationships with the police. This meant however denying the interpretive frameworks of those witnesses who wished to insist that such relationships could only be understood in a more general context of neighbourhood and community. This again worked against those wishing to voice criticisms of the police. Many of the black representatives found themselves unable to cope with the Committee's insistence on talking about a narrowly-defined problem of police-black relationships when their own experience and understanding of discrimination was of a much wider kind. The police, less concerned with such general issues and concerned solely with one problem from their point of view, were thus always at an advantage. Their evidence was invariably construed as relevant.

These demands — typicality, substantiation, and relevance — so apparently reasonable, were in practice subtle means of continuously activating the Committee's own pre-conceived definitions of the problem. In the guise of neutrality, they discriminated against definitions which did not meet their own pre-conceptions. They sought to eliminate 'bias' and in doing so, revealed their own. This revelation was not, to be sure, immediate or straightforward, in part because the whole process was subsumed under another powerful determinant of the Committee's conduct: the self-imposed world view shared without exception by the Committee's members. What seemed to the Committee a number of 'commonsense ways' of looking at the problem we shall call 'inferential structures'. These are a variety of seemingly 'natural' ways of seeing our society and, more importantly, problems within our society. They embody basic and often invisible assumptions about the nature of society. It is the operation of these 'inferential structures' which shaped the Committee's receptivity to certain sorts of evidence, and involved them in ignoring or re-constructing other sorts which did not fit with *their* definition of the situation. Our argument is that by suppressing other possible ways of defining the situation, they foreclosed the possibility of a deeper analysis in favour of one which fitted their pre-existing views.

In this article what we wish to do is briefly to indicate the sorts of 'inferential structures' which were used, then to look at how they worked in action in one particular evidence-taking session, and finally to consider an alternative definition which might more adequately have been drawn from the available evidence.

## II. Inferential structures

We can identify four main inferential structures employed by the Committee during their enquiry and influencing the tone and content of their Report and recommendations. The seeming 'innocence' and 'naturalness' of these structures derive from the fact that they are recurrently employed in the discussion of the whole spectrum

## 1. Balance

Firstly, there is the inferential structure of 'balance' or, more colloquially, the demand for 'give and take'. This takes the form of a demand for fairness for both sides, and results in a demand for both sides to find an 'acceptable compromise'. As a consequence, the possibility that one side is primarily a source of problems to the other group is excluded. In Birmingham, discussing with John Morgan, a solicitor, immigrants' grievances about the police complaints procedure, the Chairman sums up very well the approach of the whole Committee:

In the practical world in which we live we will have to *compromise* when we get a good solution. How are we going to make it better without putting up a position which the *police find unacceptable*? For example, an open public tribunal on every complaint against the police is probably, on *balance*, not on. (Vol. 3 ss.2087). (Our emphasis in italics).

This stress on balance, compromise and acceptability serves to limit the area open for discussion, to restrict the sorts of definitions which may be offered about that area, and the types of solutions which may be presented. It predefines the problem as one which is the result of faults on both sides, and solutions must therefore involve a degree of 'give and take' by both parties. It is an appeal which serves to prevent the possibility of deeper analysis; that is, an analysis which would penetrate beyond the implicit agreement on the status and definition of the 'practical world' which all 'rational' and 'reasonable', men are presumed to share. Consequently, those who undermine the Committee's predefinitions of the problem are necessarily not 'rational' or 'reasonable' and this legitimates their exclusion from the discussion. In Part III we shall consider one instance of how one major witness was excluded on these (and other) grounds.

## 2. Majority-minority

The distinction between those who share the Committee's definition of the 'practical world' and those who stand outside also forms one of the elements of the second inferential structure — that of the distinction between 'the majority' and 'minorities' amongst the immigrants. This poses the problem, again at a particular level, in terms that numerically the problem is one of isolated incidents suffered by a minority of individuals, or more subtly that ill-feeling has been generated by a minority of ill-intentioned immigrants, exploiting to their own advantage these isolated incidents.

Thus in considering the immigrant population the Committee distinguishes the 'great majority' who are characterised by their 'common sense', which has been effective in minimising the attempts by 'militants' to 'exaggerate and aggravate incidents or situations, real or imagined, to the detriment of race relations' (Vol. 1, ss. 257).

This seemingly innocent distinction can be seen in its true effectiveness if one considers the implications of the Committee's views of 'balance', and the 'practical world'. For in this light, those possessing 'commonsense', are those who share the Committee's definition of what the 'practical world' looks like, and who are willing to take the view 'on balance'. They are also those who have not the power, articulacy or willingness actively to *oppose* it. Those who challenge the Committee's definition of the situation are treated at best as unhelpful or impractical, or at worst as actively working to the detriment of race relations, and so can legitimately be barred from the debate of reasonable and rational men.

The majority-minority inferential structure is a crucial one, for it allows alternative definitions of the situation to be devalued as the work of those who 'for personal or ulterior motives' attempt to play on the 'distrust or ignorance' of others who are taken in by them (see Vol. 1, ss. 257). Thus it is possible for Mr. Bidwell to make

Of course if it is unjustifiable in *real* terms, then there must be other causes for its existence — the ignorance and distrust of the majority which is heightened by the agitational work of an unrepresentative and highly vocal minority. On the other hand, had the Committee considered the possibility that the hostility might be justified (which is of course, exactly where they should have started) their investigation might have taken very different lines. Fortunately, the minority of extremists and agitators are on hand to explain away the problem. (This agitating minority/gullible innocent majority dichotomy is, of course, a very common way of explaining away problems and not simply a way with M.P.s and Select Committees.) This effectively binds the majority (in this case, of immigrants) to the 'consensual', agreed image of our society as defined 'for all practical purposes' by the Committee. For if the problem lies mainly with a few militants, then the solution is simply to educate the 'great majority of immigrants' to rid them of their (unfounded) distrust and ignorance. The thought was rarely far from the Committee's mind, as with Mr. Bidwell's attempt to find ways of 'encouraging' better views of the police amongst immigrants:

Have you any thoughts on how coloured people, and coloured young people especially, can be encouraged to believe that it pays to be friendly with the police? (Vol. 2 ss.480).

The majority-minority structure is, however, not restricted in application solely to the immigrant community and their militants. The Committee accepts that there are among policemen a number of individuals who do not fully match up to the Police Force's high standards. Familiarly, there are a few 'rotten apples' in every barrel. The idea of balance is again apparent for, as Mr. Bidwell emphasises, we cannot expect perfection *from either side*:

We know it as a fact of life that not all immigrants are of impeccable behaviour, and not all policemen are of impeccable behaviour . . .

The verbal structure of *we know it as a fact of life* serves to naturalise and legitimate this reduction of a social problem to the level of a few aberrant individuals (How could anyone disagree . . . ?), and consequently what we must do is, 'naturally', to strive to minimise the effect of these 'rotten apples' on both sides to prevent the majority being influenced by the minority. The real shortcoming of this inferential structure is that it prevents an analysis of the sources of racial prejudice at a social level by reducing the problem from the outset to a number of individual ones. So that, for example, an incident caused by one 'bad' policeman may be magnified by one 'bad' immigrant militant and therefore become a source of tension throughout the community. Because of this reduction it becomes impossible for the Committee to recognise the possibility of there being social and organisational sources of tension between the police and immigrant groups, and to deny from the outset that 'blanket hostility' towards the police might have some real social basis.

## 3. Conventionalisation

The third inferential structure which we wish to consider is what we have called 'conventionalisation'. By this we mean the implication made by members of the Committee that there is really nothing distinctive or special about the complaints made by immigrant groups about the police, but that they are part of a natural tendency for all groups to complain of victimisation.

Thus Mr. Fowler can claim, in a discussion about resentment amongst young coloured people towards police harassment:

You talk about young coloured people. Many young white people would make very similar charges against the police. (Vol. 3 ss.2528).

This acts to devalue the distinctive *racial* element in the complaints being considered, and reduces them to a level where, as we all know, people (and especially young

coloured people carry, in themselves, the permanent potential cue for discriminatory practices. Accordingly colour is not an incidental factor in relations with the police; it is a central crucial factor in the way those relations take place.

A second quotation illustrating this process of conventionalisation sees Mr. Wilson approaching complaints of police discrimination from a slightly different angle (though to the same effect), and it also serves to exemplify our earlier point about the interlocking nature of inferential structures:

Would you also agree with me that there are policemen who have phobias *about all sorts of things*? In your experience you must have known of the policeman whom they dare not put in the centre of a town, they have put him on the outskirts because he loses his temper. Are you going to judge the police by the *isolated odd one or two*? (Vol. 2 ss.746). (Our emphasis in italics).

Here the problem of discriminatory behaviour by the police is reduced by two mechanisms: firstly, that it is just the 'odd one or two' policemen who have 'phobias', in this case about coloured people (reduction one: minority/psychological problem); and secondly, that colour is only one of 'all sorts of things' about which policemen have phobias (reduction two: conventionalisation), and there is consequently nothing 'special' about racial discrimination by the police.

#### 4. Superficialism

The final inferential structure to which we would draw attention is that of 'superficialism', by which we mean that the Committee's analysis never penetrated the surface appearance of the problem. The Committee appeared not to see that their definition of the problem was merely in terms of the visible symptoms or manifestations of something whose deeper roots they would not reach. They could never reach those roots because their analysis was foreclosed at the superficial level by the operation of the inferential structures and predefinitions we have just considered, and their conclusions and recommendations were prescribed by those structures. Crucially the Committee's level of analysis sticks at the definition of the problem as one of 'communication'— of ignorance, misconception, exaggeration and distortion on both sides. So the extensive evidence of complaints of police harassment and brutality presented to the Committee get scant treatment when it comes to recommendations. There is no recognition that this may be a *real* problem or that specific action needs to be taken to prevent it. Instead there are recommendations of the sort that 'community and youth leaders should do more to counter distortion and exaggeration'. (Recommendation 9)

The effect of the operation of the Committee's inferential structures serves to make the problem and the evidence about it amenable to *their* own definition of that problem. Generally, they exemplify a *reductionist* way of proceeding which acts to reduce a complex and difficult set of problems to a much simpler and infinitely more acceptable and manageable form — that of communications. Time and again, as we have seen within the other inferential structures, they return to stress this aspect, and among the recommendations, those termed 'communications' comprise the largest section.

The Committee's Report opens with a very clear statement of the Committee's view of possibilities for action:

We believe that difficulties in relationships can best be overcome by discussion and expression of views in places where the problems arise. (Vol. 1 ss. 17).

Any view of the problem in terms of the basic structures and organisation of our society is ruled out. Instead there are 'difficulties in relationship' to be resolved by discussion.

We have come to see communications as crucial. In the widest sense they are at the root of the problem and the starting point of solutions of police/immigrant relations. (Vol. 1, ss. 307).

### III. The Committee at work

In this section we will illustrate the tests of typicality, substantiation and relevance and the four inferential structures in action at one of the sessions where the Committee took evidence. We have chosen for detailed analysis the oral examination of Dr. D. Prem, Chairman, Standing Conference of Asian Organisations in the United Kingdom; Mr. Clifford Lynch, Public Relations Officer, West Indian Standing Conference (W.I.S.C.); and Mr. J. S. Sandhu, President, Supreme Council of Sikhs in the U.K. The examination is reported verbatim on pages 68-86 in Volume 2 of the Committee's Report. (Mr. Sandhu did not submit a memorandum and consequently was not questioned to the same degree as the other two witnesses; thus we have dealt very little with his contribution).

We have had to concentrate on one session; by so doing we are open to criticism that what happened in one session is unlikely to typify the Committee's conduct. We would not suggest that the session was in any way typical but would justify our choice for the following reasons:—

(a) This was one of the first of the Committee's sessions and the first at which they heard from 'Immigrant Organisations'. Thus it was something of a stage-setter where attributes and methods were keyed for subsequent sessions.

(b) The examination displays a very marked contrast in the attitudes of the Committee members to the two main witnesses and their written memoranda.

(c) The tension and acerbity of some of the exchanges, particularly in relation to Mr. Lynch's evidence, finds the 'inferential structures' becoming less latent and implicit and more manifest and explicit.

We would also stress that we are concerned with the Committee's method. We are not endorsing Mr. Lynch's evidence nor decrying that of Dr. Prem. We would say that both memoranda are important documents as evidence which merit equally respectful scrutiny. The difference in their treatments provides clues about the true nature of the Committee's enquiry.

#### The memoranda: contents and reception

Before moving to consider the oral interchanges, we need first to summarise briefly, the content of the two memoranda. Mr. Lynch's memorandum talked of the 'belated interest' of Parliament in the problem; of 'fear' of the police among a 'sizeable proportion' of immigrants; of police partiality on 'matters of race'; of the 'systematic brutalisation of black people' by the police; of this 'brutalisation' being 'a commonplace occurrence which very often involves blackmail, drug-planting, trumped-up charges and physical assaults'; of the systematic, institutionalised nature of racialism of which the police are but a part; of having 'no ideal solution to the serious state of race relations as it exists between police and immigrants'; of the system's 'inability to resolve the monstrosity of racialism which it created in the first place'; of the possibility of violence if 'urgent action is not taken'; and—finally, of the onus for solutions residing 'almost exclusively in the hands of the police'. In short, it was a piece that was strongly worded, keenly felt, relentlessly uncompromising and undauntingly indicting; a piece that was critical at *every* level — from the police, through the Government, to the system itself.

Dr. Prem, by contrast, talked of racial discrimination 'in many areas of public life', which was 'reflected in the attitudes of certain members of the police but also of the 'force as a whole' acting 'with restraint, goodwill and in many cases with practical assistance and valuable advice'; of the 'non-acceptance of the immigrants' by society driving them into 'isolation' and some consequent (unwarranted) 'animosity' by them towards the police, but also of relations with police 'on the whole' being 'cordial'; of the difficulties experienced by the Asian community with the police being generally 'the same as experienced by the general public' (though of 'matters of arrest and interrogation' being 'other matters'), but also of solutions in terms of better Asian representation on official bodies, courses in Asian language and culture

These memoranda, with their differing rhetorics, styles and contents, led, directly, to their very different reception and treatment during the oral examination. Regarding the differential reception of the memoranda, at a very early stage in the proceedings, the chairman refers to Dr. Prem's 'admirable memorandum' whilst Mr. Bottomley, on the first occasion he enters the debate, says: '... Yours is a very thoughtful and well-prepared paper and I was impressed by its contents...' Later Mr. Bidwell confirms this opinion of the memorandum: 'We have had a very good paper from Dr. Prem.' The reception of Mr. Lynch's memorandum is very different. Mr. Bottomley urges Mr. Lynch to look at Dr. Prem's memorandum to see if he cannot 'make suggestions as to how we can bring about better race relations?' and continues: 'this (the Asian memorandum) would make a much more useful paper than the one you have presented to us this afternoon'. Whilst Mr. Bidwell, towards the end of the session is similarly critical: 'I find it a great weakness in your document that you do not give evidence.'

This differing reception of the two memoranda is matched by a differing treatment throughout the session. The first question Mr. Lynch is asked, for example, is: 'Why do you think that relations between the police and West Indians seem to be so much worse than relations between the police and Asians?' This contrasts strongly with the first questions to Mr. Prem which are entirely *clarificatory*: 'Do I take it . . . that these general relationships (police-immigrant) differ from one city to another?' and 'Would I be unfair in saying that on the whole that assessment gives a fairly encouraging account?' The substance of Dr. Prem's memorandum is *accepted*, unquestioningly. The chairman merely wants to know whether he 'reads' it correctly. The substance of Mr. Lynch's memorandum is, tacitly, under question from the outset. And if he cannot explain 'satisfactorily' why West Indian-police relations are 'so much worse' than Asian-police relations then his evidence that they are also falls into question.

Having asked Mr. Lynch to account for his evidence, the chairman then moves on to ask him for the 'evidence' for his evidence. He asks, for example, whether Mr. Lynch can say 'how many' police have been reported for misconduct either to the Race Relations Board or to the police themselves and, later for the 'evidence' for the 'intensification' of 'nigger-hunting' by the police that Mr. Lynch had referred to in his memorandum. Dr. Prem, however, is not asked to substantiate his evidence that relations are 'cordial'; he is merely asked, as we have seen, to confirm that they are.

Another difference in treatment accorded the two gentlemen and their memoranda relates to the questioning by Mr. Bottomley of the democratic validity of Mr. Lynch's position as spokesman for the W.I.S.C. Specifically, Mr. Bottomley asks whether Mr. Lynch was elected to present the W.I.S.C.'s case to the Select Committee. The same question was not asked of Dr. Prem or Mr. Sandhu.

#### Differing language and terms of reference

Later, on the question of language, Mr. Lynch is 'attacked' by three different Committee members: by Mr. Bottomley who, referring to Mr. Lynch's statement about the 'frightening evidence' produced in court during the trial of two police officers for the murder of David Oluwale in Leeds, 'not being an isolated case', talked of this being 'a very serious statement to make'; by Sir George Sinclair who angrily 'attacked' him for using 'inflammatory statements that get everything out of balance' when he had, in reply to an earlier question, talked of a 'large proportion of the police today who are exposed to this society, which is a permissive society' and who were, therefore, at risk as far as malpractice was concerned (the vigour of the attack did force Mr. Lynch to withdraw the word 'large'); and by Mr. Hayhoe, who, towards the end of the session, talked of Mr. Lynch's 'very extreme' and 'unhelpful' language — a language which 'could not be justified' in view of Mr. Lynch's lack of supporting evidence. The tone and form of these replies to Mr. Lynch contrast strongly with Mr. Bottomley's much gentler reply to Dr. Prem concerning

We should add here, although we are primarily concerned with the contrasting treatment of Dr. Prem and Mr. Lynch, that the Committee's concern over Mr. Lynch's language contrasts even more strongly with their *complete lack of concern* over the language of their own fellow committee members. When Mr. Kinsey posed the following question to Mr. Lynch *nobody* (apart from Mr. Lynch) expressed any concern at all:

We have heard of political thugs. Political thugs work, and there is no doubt about it, on an arm of your people, Black Power. Do you agree they are political thugs?

It is hard to imagine, given that this committee was set up to investigate one aspect of race relations, anything more inquisitorially 'inflammatory', 'serious', 'extreme', or 'unhelpful', than this simplistic equation of 'Black Power' with political thuggery.

There are other examples we could cite of the contrasting treatment of the witnesses: how can we account for the difference? In Dr. Prem's memorandum and discussion there is nothing that challenged the Committee's prior assumptions and expectations, whereas Mr. Lynch provided a challenge to the whole basis of the Committee's definition of the problem. And so a means had to be found to defend that prior definition and the Committee found that their best defence was to attack. The reader of the interchange will find the Committee attempting to malign, accuse and denigrate by argument, quibble and counter challenge. We cannot report the struggle in full but we can explore salient moments which show how the Committee managed to keep their definition intact.

We would draw attention to, firstly, the role of the chairman in a Committee such as this. Several times during the session the chairman 'emerged' to rescue the discussion from wider societal issues and bring it back to 'police-immigrant' relations.

Replying to Dr. Prem, for example, he says: 'We all accept what you say, of course, this is part of community relations, but we are dealing specifically with the police . . .'. Later, in reply to Mr. Lynch, he reminds him of this constraint: 'You appreciate the specialised character of this inquiry?' And further on, when Mr. Lynch talks of the need to change the 'system', the chairman again has to remind him of this: 'I do not want to go too wide'. It is difficult, I know, to confine this to certain limits, but I think we want to try and keep our questions and answers within the police framework.'

Given that Mr. Lynch has already talked of racialism being systematic and of police being but a part of the system, the refusal by the Committee to consider the wider societal context severely limits Mr. Lynch's possible (realistic) contribution. The chairman, then, is responsible for seeing that the 'external constraints' — the need to 'bracket' off 'police-immigrant' relations from wider societal issues — are not forgotten. He is, also responsible for seeing that the Committee's own 'self-imposed' constraints of 'practicality' and 'relevance' are remembered. For example, just after Sir George Sinclair, Mr. Kinsey, Mr. Bottomley and Mr. Torney have had a particularly energetic bout of questioning with Mr. Lynch, and the situation is in danger of getting out of hand, the chairman intervenes with the following question on recruiting: 'Would you talk about recruiting in general? We have got to cover the subject'. The debate has been 'wrenched back', partly to defuse and 'cool out' the combatants and partly to return to areas the committee are pledged to cover: areas that are 'practical' and 'manageable': 'realistic' areas.

But what is particularly interesting in the ensuing 'debate' on the recruitment of immigrants into the force is the persistence of the Committee in pursuing the question. At one point, for example, Mr. Kinsey begins to move slightly off the subject by talking of the 'language difficulty' but Mr. Hayhoe turns the subject back 'on course' with his intervention: 'Could I pursue this question of getting a wider spread of people into the police force?' And this in spite of the evidence presented: the evidence that immigrants do not want to join the force (being either 'shy', in the case of Asians, or because 'they think it is a sort of racialist club', in the case of

fundamental fact about police-immigrant relations — the mutual antagonism — is *not* what becomes the central focus in order to get to the 'root' of the problem, i.e. the reasons for the antagonism. For the committee the 'real' problems are how to attract immigrant school leavers into the force; how can the immigrant organisations convince their members to make the force their career; and how to deal with language barriers. It is *these* sorts of questions that become the central focus of the committee's examination, questions which deal not with the problem itself, i.e. the antagonism, but with one of its surface manifestations, i.e. the under-representation of immigrants in the police force. Whenever Mr. Lynch attempts to make police 'hostility' the central focus of the discussion he is dragged back into the 'practical', 'manageable' world of recruitment with a very pragmatic question. For example, at one point the chairman mildly rebukes him by saying that his evidence 'is not exactly a recruiting poster for joining the British police'. Mr. Lynch replies that his purpose in coming had not been this, but 'to put the views of the Conference *and to be quite frank*'. (Our italics). But the chairman refused to be drawn into Mr. Lynch's too unpleasantly 'frank' world and instead steers him back into his, the chairman's, liberal-pragmatic world with a question about whether the W.I.S.C. 'would back the appeal to join the police force.'

### Prejudging the Issues

There are other passages which illustrate the way the Committee manages the level of discussion. At one point the chairman asks Dr. Prem whether he feels that 'increased exchanges ought to take place between immigrant organisations and the police about these incidents' (alleged cases of police malpractice) and whether the police should 'move nearer to you or should the organisations also move a little closer to the police.' The essence of Dr. Prem's reply is that 'they should both move'. He is not questioned further.

Mr. Lynch is then asked for his answer. Though he accepts the idea of discussing 'exchanges', he qualifies his answer by saying that his organisation was the first 'immigrant organisation to have a close liaison with the police over a number of years and this did not come to much'. The chairman re-questions Mr. Lynch; 'Why not, do you think?' Mr. Lynch replies that 'There seems to be a divorce between the officers that come to our committee as the representatives of the main body of police and the police force as a whole', but that they 'are always open to these suggestions' since 'the need for understanding is absolute'. The chairman then asks Mr. Sandhu the same question. He replies that 'the (immigrant) organisations have an equal responsibility to make a response' but that 'the police have got to make the prime move'. He is not questioned further. This section, though brief, is revealing. The essence of the chairman's questions is: should there be more 'give and take' by both sides?, (i.e. more compromise). The essence of Dr. Prem's and Mr. Sandhu's reply is: yes. Mr. Lynch, however, says: yes, to the *principle* of discussion but he also points out that, in *practice*, this has not worked. The essential difference between his reply and that of the others is that he does *not* accept that more 'give and take' is the answer: he challenges the notion of 'give and take'. Since he challenges the notion he is required to *justify* his challenge. (Dr. Prem and Mr. Sandhu were not required to justify their *acceptance* of the notion.) In short, Mr. Lynch's notion that it has not worked in the past is itself challenged by the chairman. In order to *defend* his contention he must supply an adequate explanation for it. The Committee's belief in 'give and take' could only be sustained by mounting an offensive to undermine Mr. Lynch's counter-belief.

Elsewhere this attempt to undermine Mr. Lynch's position is even more aggressively mounted, as the following intervention by Sir George Sinclair illustrates in the continuous attempt by the Committee to keep themselves on the offensive and Mr. Lynch on the defensive: 'We are trying to see, in the end, what *constructive* steps should be taken and not *destructive* and *alienating* steps that *can be taken*, by the leaders of the communities that have arrived recently.' (Our italics). This sent-

The language is revealing: the committee's approach is 'constructive', whereas Mr. Lynch, by implication, is the author of 'destructive and alienating' steps. As a judgement upon evidence considered after the evidence has been weighed, it might be acceptable. But at the outset of an enquiry and during an evidence collecting session it is surely illegitimate. However, if we see that the purpose of the exchange is to challenge and denigrate, not to explore and elucidate, then it is highly effective to label your own approach 'constructive' and your opponent's approach 'destructive'. We can see here the commitment of the Committee to the nature and solution of the problem resting in 'communications'; and also paradoxically the committee failing to communicate. The whole element of the truth or otherwise in Mr. Lynch's evidence is ignored: the 'constructive' illusion is preferable to the 'destructive' truth.

This aggressive and challenging line of questioning was sustained. At one point, Mr. Bottomley can be found asking Mr. Lynch whether:

(you) might consider getting the police on your side instead of isolating them, because although once or twice you are able to cite a case where some police officer has obviously not done the right thing, the majority of them are like you and me.

Later Mr. Torney makes the same point again in the form of a question to Mr. Lynch:

I would say they are very isolated cases of policemen who are not doing their job correctly whether it be to coloured people or to white people. Would you not think so?

Both questions are examples of how the committee prejudged the very thing they were supposed to investigate. The questioners appear to have already made up their minds that police malpractice is 'isolated', a 'minority' phenomenon. There is little sign of them enquiring whether this is the case. Both questions also make clear the questioner's views, so that any reply except assent entails Mr. Lynch countering and arguing against the Committee members' expressed definition of the problem.

This attempt to get Mr. Lynch to admit that police malpractice was isolated was taken one stage further by Mr. Wilson. Talking as a lifelong defence lawyer, he said:

... The Irish have said to me, 'the police have got it in for the Irish', taxi-drivers have said, 'the police have got it in for taxi-drivers', they have got it in for bus-drivers, and to crown the lot, when I represented a policeman it was said, 'If you are a policeman, the police have got it in for you'. What I want to know — I know the answer myself, because, I see this situation probably better even than you three, because I am with them when they are being interrogated and along the line — is this: would you suggest to the committee that the examples of discrimination that you have put forward, which all three of you say relate only to individual policemen, that that behaviour by the police has not got its counterpart in relation to the white population like the Irish, the taxi-drivers or the bus-drivers? This is really the crux of the thing...

Let us examine this a bit more closely. In the first place he is saying that even if the police are occasionally guilty of malpractice, because lots of people complain about it, it is unlikely that racial discrimination is the cause of the incidents. This equation of the experience of racial minorities with other groups of various kinds would appear to contradict the voluminous literature which demonstrates that there is rather a special set of problems that attach to the experience of being coloured in a predominantly white society. But Mr. Wilson seems to want to go further and say that since many groups complain, the problem is not unique to 'immigrants' and, since not unique, not really a problem at all!

Now what can we say about the passage that states, 'What I want to know — I know the answer myself...'? Does this not illustrate how a Committee member is seeking confirmation, applying a 'test' to what is being said rather than allowing the witness's own definition to emerge for consideration. It is just this element of



Interestingly, and significantly, the treatment of Dr. Prem's reply to this question is rather different to that given by Mr. Lynch. Dr. Prem's reply is in two parts: the first part is in broad agreement with Mr. Wilson's premise, i.e. many immigrants, being sensitive over colour, are likely to mistake 'normal' police activity for discrimination, whilst the second part stresses the 'special' nature of colour discrimination which is the 'worst type' of discrimination. However, since he has substantially agreed with Mr. Wilson, and since the first part of his answer nullifies the second, there is no need for the Committee to come back to him — his answer can be 'placed' into their preconceptions (about 'colour-sensitive' immigrants, etc. . . .). And they do not come back to him. Mr. Lynch characteristically challenges the whole premise of Mr. Wilson's question and *insists* that racial discrimination, because of the visibility of colour, is a *unique* form of discrimination, and that to view it any other way is an over-simplification. Because of this 'challenge', two Committee members attempt to pick him up on specific points: the chairman by challenging Mr. Lynch's statement that the Irish are indistinguishable from the rest of the population (!) and therefore not a special target for discrimination and Mr. Bidwell, in a quotation already used, by calling for 'evidence' and ending, quite ironically in view of all that has just preceded it, with the statement: 'We must know the facts.'

Later in the discussion, we find a similar procedure being adopted in response to a complaint raised by Mr. Lynch. The complaint relates to police interruptions of wedding celebrations. Mr. Wilson answers that he has never heard of police entering wedding premises before though he has heard of police entering premises where it is suspected that liquor is being sold illegally. He then asks Mr. Lynch to clarify the position for him. Mr. Lynch replies by citing a specific example of police raiding a wedding reception in Brixton without a warrant, arresting a number of people and confiscating the liquor after alleging it was being sold. Although this case was dismissed, Mr. Lynch insists that it was not an isolated occurrence: 'this was repeated many times in the past'. At this point Mr. Hayhoe intervenes and says that experiences like those Mr. Lynch has outlined have happened to many, 'even to people like those sitting around this table perhaps in their younger days' when having a rowdy party. What Mr. Hayhoe does is to forget the specific matter of wedding interruptions and diffuses the complaint into a more general one about 'rowdy parties'. In so doing he strips off the uniqueness and particularity of a significant event and reduces it to one that is familiar routine and essentially unproblematic because it is a category in relation to which police interruption is justifiable. The Committee once again have failed to listen but have managed to fit the evidence into their preconceived definitions of problems, incidents, difficulties and solutions.

#### Summing up

In this lengthy consideration of just one session we have attempted to illustrate the framework for evidence taking which we outlined in the first two sections. We have illustrated how Mr. Lynch's evidence was constantly, aggressively and relentlessly questioned and denigrated, in marked contrast to the polite treatment afforded Dr. Prem. We have illustrated how the chairman acted in the interests of 'relevancy' and 'pragmatism' — to keep the debate within 'clearly defined rails', and we have seen the four inferential structures at work: 'balance' — in the interchanges concerning the need for *both* the police and immigrants to 'move' towards each other; 'majorities-minorities' — in the interchanges where the Committee 'insisted' that examples of police malpractice were 'isolated cases'; 'superficialism' — in the interchanges where the Committee doggedly pursued the question of recruitment; 'conventionalisation' — in the interchanges where Committee members attempted to rob the immigrant experience of discrimination of its special character in order to render it familiar, ordinary and unproblematic. Finally, we have seen how some Committee members had already made up their mind about the situation; they

had they been more concerned to *listen* to the experience of *others* in order to arrive at the reality of *the situation confronting immigrants and the police* and less concerned 'to place' what they heard within *their* (necessarily limited) experience of other's experiences — a *very* different set of conclusions might have been reached.

#### IV. Race relations and policing: another view

In the first two parts of this paper we have argued that the Select Committee defined the problem they had for study in a way that was not open, judicial or impartial but bound by certain constraints; some of these inhered in the form and style of Parliamentary Select Committee procedure; others derived from the ideological means — that we have termed 'inferential structures' — the members brought to their Enquiry.

In the third part we have tried to demonstrate how these constraints applied to an actual occasion at which the Committee took evidence. In a very clear way the Committee processed the written and verbal 'evidence' to check it against their own definition of the problem. They 'managed' evidence and witnesses to justify their terms for the enquiry.

What were their terms? Although the published Report gives a fair overview of the various opinions put to them, the Committee were wanting to diagnose 'faults' or 'weaknesses' which were causing 'deterioration' in an otherwise 'sound and healthy' situation. So the Committee stress the low crime-rate among 'immigrants', are concerned to differentiate between Asian and West Indian, between young and old, between areas and cities, and to applaud measures involving Community Liaison Officers, Community Relations Councils, community leaders] achieving better communication, dialogue and relations; for by such measures the *real* problems, the Committee supposes, will both reveal themselves and find a means of solution. A few 'bad' immigrants — young, black militant, homeless, deprived — a few 'bad' policemen — untutored, undisciplined, prejudiced, vicious; and a tendency for black people and policemen to exaggerate: these appear to be the major constituents of the present problem as far as the Committee is concerned.

The view never really comes across that race relations and racialism are a severe problem. The Committee did not explore how policing works to sustain inequality and deprivation and to maintain minorities as identifiable out-groups. It could not consider that, this being so, when a black minority group complains about police practice, the complaint is about their experience as the minority group and in that experience police relations cannot be separated out from the general context of being black in a white society.

Somewhat paradoxically for a Committee on Race Relations and Immigration studying police/immigrant relations, we find they avoided looking hard and critically at race relations and immigration as a context and experience needed to understand the 'problem'; nor did they look hard and critically at policing, as a context and experience, also necessary for an understanding of the problem.

In this section of the paper we want to offer a view of race relations and a view of policing which was closed-off from the view of the Select Committee. We would suggest that such views are a more relevant starting point or terms for an enquiry into police/immigrant relations.

##### (a) On race relations

First of all we would insist that any examination of police/immigrant relations must be discussed in terms that make explicit the wider context of race relations across the whole society; in neighbourhood, factory and school; not only in interpersonal, black-white contact situations but also as institutionalised (and rigidified) settings in which the dynamics of race relations are acted out. This is not simply a question

It is a depressing reflection of the continuing incapacity of governmental and social control agencies to define the situation in terms of racialism, that we feel it necessary to recount some of its basic features here. There is a substantial and growing literature which has penetrated those areas of the publishing and bookselling industry to make it readily available to the widest audience.

Whether we look to the academic sources — from Political and Economic Planning to the Survey of Race Relations in Britain — or to such authors as Augustine John, Bernard Coard, Dilip Hiro or Vince Hines, there is surely by now enough evidence — both 'objective' data and 'subjective' experience — to indicate that in the main structures or markets of this society — work, housing, education — black people are subjected to discrimination of such unrelenting tenacity that it is justified to describe English society as supporting a system of *institutionalised racialism*. Racialism is not an accident or byproduct of cultural differences or even, as the more sophisticated liberal approach would suggest, the result of competition for scarce resources in inner-ring areas. It is now built into the structural systems and cultural networks of society.

To trace the roots of this racialism, it is necessary to look to Britain's history of colonial subjugation and her economic exploitation of colonised territories. A doctrine of racial superiority justified and stabilised that system. Both the economic exploitation and the doctrine remain alive and well today. The doctrine, we would argue, persists as one of the dominant cultural assumptions binding members of society together. (Anyone doubting this might watch the BBC1 series that started in January 1974 called 'It 'Aint Half Hot, Mum'.)

The persistence of this superiority complex and the way it pervades the everyday world of ordinary people does not depend on the instruments of a subtle social science for proof. The evidence for it is surely there in our daily lives and conversations in pub, street and meeting hall. White people tend to have a deeply ingrained dislike and distrust of black people.

For those 'first generation immigrants' from West Indies, India and Pakistan who come here in search of a higher standard of living and who had some confidence in arriving to what was seen as the 'mother country', frequently at the direct invitation of employers, the common aspect of racialism was only slowly recognised. The cumulative shock of recognition was all the greater.

On arrival they had found the crucial markets closed to them except for the dirtiest, most boring and worst paid sectors of the job market; the decaying inner and middle rings of the city's housing market; schools for their children where both buildings (in age) and staff (in experience) were second-rate. In all aspects they found themselves in areas whence the aspiring white working class had fled.

For some the solution was to grin and bear it; for others the response was to adopt an ideal of ultra-respectability; others, again, reverted to religious convictions in which the pain of this world was borne to earn rewards in the next. For all there was a great deal to do to make a home and a working base for a family despite the closure of the markets by discrimination, prejudice and the institutions which protect the interests of the majority.

Asian groups as a whole fared better than others; with a rather different historical experience of colonialism they were able to pull on a long-established strategy of 'cultural introversion'. By attempting to protect and perpetrate their own religious traditions, financial networks, family patterns and languages they could partially 'immunise' themselves against structural and cultural discrimination emanating from white society, though this may not be as completely successful as is sometimes supposed.

For a significant minority the most logical explanation was a political one. The more white-dominated society designated blackness as a negative sign, the more

The experience of black people then was common, the reactions various. But we would hold it an accurate generalisation that black people have become increasingly conscious of white people's definition of them in racial terms.

To be treated solely on the basis of the colour of your skin may not be any more than an irritant in personal terms: a joke on television, an overheard conversation on the bus, a provocative remark passed by a neighbour. But in more institutional situations racialism is less easily ignored, especially when almost invariably a white individual or group holds power over black people. Discrimination, then, is more active, less avoidable, because it is wielding power. The employment exchange, the council housing application section, the police station are not in such a context the place a black person goes to receive help, make an enquiry about benefits, seek to establish his or her rightful citizenship. They are rather the places where racialism is institutionalised, where resources are allocated on a discriminatory basis, where the black person, in short, comes to expect rudeness, obstructive tactics, even abuse — all the mechanisms of racial prejudice.

It may be objected that this picture is too crude — that the very different characteristics of the several immigrant groupings and the specific details of local situations (e.g. the tactics of divisional police headquarters) means that there is not a consistent picture of racial relationships across the society. There is undoubtedly some truth in this and we have already noted the distinctive defensive mechanisms of Asian groups which have resulted in partial 'cultural immunity'. Nevertheless we would insist that in the long run such self-protective strategies will be less and less able to hold their own against the forces of institutionalised racialism. The overall trend is, we believe, that black groups in English society will find it increasingly difficult to ignore or avoid the knowledge that they are being systematically rejected by the main body of white opinion and white authority. There will still be a range of responses to that knowledge: the religious 'solution' for example is likely to be more frequently resorted to. But in the long run it seems to us that 'race relations' at all levels are more likely to deteriorate than improve.

For us, then, the recently burgeoning problems of West Indian youth or, more correctly, young black British do not constitute a temporary or extreme local situation. They are, rather, a prototype of the future pattern of race relations in this country. It is thus not surprising that it is with this group that police relationships are so potentially and actually explosive.

The young black experiences with greater range and intensity the discrimination by white society and has few resources — material, psychological and cultural — with which to combat them. He is unlikely, for example, to maintain a mythical or real relationship with the West Indies especially if born in or brought to England at a very young age. (It may be thought that the Asian situation is different: but, will second generation immigrants continue to find trips 'home' as relevant as their fathers do?) In a secular society religion will be under constant pressure although it may still be a solution for some. The black family, already left fragmented by the historical experience of geographical, cultural and economic instability, may become even less of a cultural resource for a scattered, mobile and culturally uprooted black population. Any clear cut notion of black group identity is as yet only partially available; indeed it may be that the future lives of many young black British will depend crucially on the development of black neighbourhood politics and culture — though here as elsewhere our assessment would be that white society is unlikely to allow space or resources for such development.

In the event the response of black British youth has often — though by no means always — been one of explicit deviance. The refusal for instance to do the kinds of low-paid manual jobs reluctantly accepted by first-generation immigrants is an act of total rejection of the values of white society and of the white-defined black man's role in it. In such a situation forms of petty crime may be both instrumental

youths 'hanging about' on the street corner may run counter to white definitions of what the situation ought to be — that they should be, like everyone else, at work. The fact that because they are black they cannot be at work 'like anyone else' — that they have no access to the minimal mobility and security of the white working class — is conveniently ignored. The young black on the corner because of poor housing, minimal education and severely limited job opportunities has thus already been the victim of institutionalised racialism; now in being defined as potentially criminal, disrupter, violent, he faces a second-level of institutionalised racialism.

It is *only* in such a context that the 'problem' of police-black relations may be properly understood. We do not deny the particular complexities of the policeman's role, and we discuss some of them below. What we have been insisting is that, whether police and black people meet in individual or group everyday situations or in special consultative meetings of representatives, their behaviour towards each other is not within their own immediate control. For many black people the policeman is not a figure of respect or authority, a helpful if hard-pressed arbitrator and enforcer of social order. He is rather the last powerful link in the chain of institutionalised racialism in which the black person may feel helplessly and angrily shackled.

#### (b) On Policing.

Policing is on the increase. An increasing amount of legislation finds the police acting more offensively as agents of social control for the organising political authority. A prime example of this relevant to the present subject is legislation about immigration control. The scope for police activity in this sphere has radically altered and has set apart as distinctive relations between recent immigrants and the police. Only black people carry a visible mark of their immigrant status. As broader urban processes sift out and polarise 'good' and 'bad' areas, so the problems of control and stability increase and the police have a more difficult and more pervasive task to maintain order. A current popular explanation of the disorder is in racial terms and in recent years racial slur and insult has gained, not diminished, in stridency. So in this context we would argue that relations between a policeman and a black person are of a different quality because of the status conferred on the black person by white society. Furthermore the nature and level of police involvement in the inner city areas that are now multiracial areas is markedly different from the police involvement in secure and stable middle-class areas which provide an ideal-type for much public discussion and definition of police work.

So for the black person, the policeman in uniform stands as a symbol of authority which has a different meaning and significance because of the social context of the relationship.

The Select Committee did not meet many ordinary working policemen nor did they get much in discussion or evidence about what sort of exchanges and relationships are involved in everyday policing. The Committee mostly heard from some senior officers much accustomed to the kind of public show demanded by a Committee hearing and from special community relations policemen. The operational adage the Committee and senior police officers heard was to the effect that the policemen are ordinary people with the prejudices of ordinary people; most know by training and experience that to do their job they must and can suppress their ordinary prejudices and exercise the duties of a law enforcement officer. One or two who cannot have had to be disciplined, but management knows how to control this to prevent the problem getting out of hand.

The policeman is an ordinary person but one of whom somewhat extraordinary tasks are expected. Like any group of ordinary working white citizens, policemen will lace their conversations and jokes with racial material and a phraseology and a

The policeman is not cushioned by distance or a well-defined set of liberal values which instruct caution and sensitivity. The policeman must act and react (very quickly as a rule) in the new multiracial work of modern Britain — where racial slur and insult are common, where a convenient and popular explanation of all variety of social evils, real or imagined, is to blame it on the 'immigrants', and where everyday conversation is laced with reference to 'wogs', 'nig-nogs' and 'coons'.

The everyday arts of policework call much more for a rough-and-tumble in manner and style. This is precisely why it is impossible for a policeman to leave his prejudices behind and 'simply' enforce the law. A more critical look at policework as it is practised in the multiracial area could suggest how and why, in the given race relations context sketched out above, police-immigrant relations are far more problematical than is suggested by the Select Committee and how many of the conflicts and allegations, the brutality and its denials, need to be seen not as exceptional cases by 'bad' individuals causing a deterioration, but as arising from working policemen who believe themselves to be doing good work in a difficult situation.

An essential task of police work, in this analysis, is to confront members of an underprivileged stratum or class and to keep them in their place. The police are agents of 'white power' with a stake in maintaining the insecure, deprived, low status and 'out-group' character of a black minority. Racialism as an institutionalised force has that function and police work as an institutionalised activity will be found to share that function. If that is what 'deterioration' is about, then it is quite a different sort of problem from that being considered by the Committee.

Neighbourhood police work in a multiracial area involves policemen in incidents where a simple 'law enforcement' perspective is particularly unhelpful and where the policeman is adviser, trouble-shooter and mediator and is seeking to prevent a breach of the peace that may involve an arrest. It is work that few policemen are trained for, which is unpopular and which if done badly will provoke breaches of the peace and arrests. It is customary for many policemen to avoid involvement although that can often mean that they appear not to care and so provoke resentment and anger.

The point is that local neighbourhood police work involves a constant interplay between private attitudes and professional practice and it is naive to suppose that the policeman as practitioner can hive off his social attitudes as he puts his uniform on. He needs his social attitudes to establish meaningful working relations with his colleagues and segments of his neighbourhood clientele. In a racist world he has many attitudes, colleagues and neighbourhood contacts which sustain a racist definition of the situation; he has few attitudes, colleagues or contacts which provide a basis for a working relationship with black people.

Apart from this sort of 'in the community' work, the work of uniformed policemen, there is another side to police work. This is the work of special squads — vice squads, drug squads, patrol groups — and of the C.I.D. Much of this is plain-clothes police work dependent on informers and infiltration, where questions must be asked, where persons are held on suspicion. Part of police work involves raiding clubs and houses, and doing-over places where suspects or stolen goods may be concealed. Although there are niceties of procedure relating to warrants and methods of questioning the pressure and the milieu of the work, with shady characters and dubious activities, is such that it is frequently worth a policeman's while to take a few risks and short cuts. There are ample police powers of an *ex post facto* nature to put a legal gloss on extralegal if not actually illegal practices. This is the other side to police work. It is the side where most can go wrong and from which many complaints can arise.

Then one also needs to recognise that there is a great deal in ordinary everyday

bumping and shoving: the police use a usefully descriptive phrase — 'putting the hand down the collar' — for the more common 'taking into custody'. It is a process that may well be accompanied by verbal abuse or overbearingness. For the policeman has to control the situation, keep the upper hand, he is taught by experience and example a certain roughness in manner. It is a crude and basic psychology that suggests how the threat of more violence and an overbearing manner are effective ways to control men who may be angry, confused, or the worse for drink. So a suspect will be stumbled up and down stairs, banged and barged about, shouted at maybe, deliberately kept unsettled and uneasy, all in the interests of a certain submission and demoralisation that is expected of guilty suspects in an arrest situation. The context is actually and potentially full of violence.

A critical look at everyday police work, at who are policemen and how they are organised and managed for the variety of tasks and activities which comprise policing, would suggest that violence and its control are far more problematical than is suggested by a 'rotten-apples' explanation. The discretion which runs through police work renders complaints and discussions of qualitative aspects far more difficult than is implied by assumptions that policemen can leave their citizen-attitudes behind and act impartially. For working policemen discrimination and racialism are facts of everyday life of a far greater seriousness than is suggested by the Select Committee. Most contacts between police and immigrants are not translated into special difficulties for a Community Relations Officer to handle but are treated as ordinary events, subject to the harsher, tougher everyday world of policemen doing their job.

The race relations context we have tried to describe is far more serious, bitter and conflictual as an experience than is suggested by the Select Committee. Put the two together — the everyday world of the policeman and the everyday world of the black person — and there is a mixture which cannot be reduced to incidents of special difficulty nor to solutions in terms of improved communications.

## V. Conclusions

A Select Committee is expected to make constructive and useful suggestions which, carrying the *imprimatur* of Parliament, can be commended to relevant branches of government for their consideration in terms of policy and practice. This is a reasonable demand about a Committee's *recommendations*; it should not define and limit the kind of *analysis* it makes. It is not necessarily the case that a wide analysis would inhibit 'realistic' recommendations. Thus it would be possible to examine the nature of social deprivation in some of our large cities, admit the complexity of the interaction between, say, housing and employment markets and cultural factors, and still come up with viable recommendations for innovation, perhaps within the terms of an urban aid programme.

So it is not enough to say that this Committee's shortcomings are attributable to the very nature and functions of the Select Committee as an institution. Neither can it be said that the Committee's specific brief necessitated the approach they adopted. The topic of race relations is large and complex and it seemed reasonable for the main committee to suggest a number of topics to be considered in turn: police, employment, education, housing, and so on. But this technical necessity again cannot be an excuse for myopia. It would surely have been possible to separate out each topic for consideration temporarily, yet to have borne in mind that in real life these aspects of race relations are not separate areas of experience but rather a series of interlocking processes which taken together form the total framework of race relations.

The concern to keep within self-imposed prior definitions of the problem prevented the Committee from exploring these interlocking elements. It did not — could not, given the members' inferential structures — consider the possibility that 'good' policing (as defined by policemen) might be detrimental to 'good' race relations.

It might have led to recommendations about the organisation, training and management of police forces becoming more open. It might have suggested how policies of positive discrimination in employment, schooling and housing could be affected. It might have suggested a police role in the enforcement of stronger anti-discrimination laws. It might have suggested a need for reorganised legal aid and court representation systems. It might have considered ways of funding and staffing local experiments to have policemen work in alternative ways in the multiracial inner city.

There are few signs that the Committee ever thought about such matters. Yet in the evidence they heard, we have argued, there is that definition of the situation, description of the problem and kind of analysis which would lead to realistic and possible recommendations. It is a definition and analysis which explains more satisfactorily than the Committee's own line of thought why the police problem looms so large for those who have to experience life in racialist Britain in the 1970s.

The Select Committee, however, sifted from the evidence what they wanted to hear rather than what they were told. The Committee chose to provide a reassuring definition of the situation which endorsed and justified current practices. In so doing the Committee displayed the ability to control the terms on which matters of race relations and immigration were to be presented to a wider audience. That ability to sift and choose, to control the terms and conceal the harsh reality of racialism is, of course, a prime example of the institutionalised nature of racialism in Britain today.