

continued to scar our public life, declining in some cases, but sometimes reappearing in different forms. And the situation therefore is that we must continue the momentum. Drastic changes are needed – and how do we do this?

I think it was President Clinton who made a very powerful statement on the occasion of the one million man march in the US when he said that ‘Racism is black man’s burden, and white man’s problem’. In other words it is something which society cannot allow itself to be relaxed about. It is from the topmost people in society that the lead must continue to be provided and momentum constantly generated. And to provide that kind of momentum the Prime Minister, who is taking a lead, must be even more active in constantly hammering away at some of these issues. I was pleased too that the Queen in her Christmas Day broadcast talked about the celebration of diversity. But these kinds of messages will have to come again and again, so that there is a decisive shift in the public attitude.

(4) Finally, I think it’s not just a question of what the government does, because what the government does depends on the space available to it. I’m a little disappointed that so far as the ethnic minorities are concerned in the last 15–20 years we have not been able to throw up a very vigorous and powerful anti-racist

movement. There are all kinds of reasons for this, but in the absence of such a movement as there was in the 1960s and 1970s, two things tend to happen.

- There is no grassroots pressure on government.
- Without this pressure, government tends to be subject to right-wing pressures – the *Mail* will continue to dictate the agenda. Not that it has done so successfully with this government, but the danger is always there. To counter that danger you need a very powerful anti-racist movement. This is not for the government to do; it is up to us. And I hope that a conference like this can at least seriously give thought to why that kind of anti-racist movement has not sprung up. Not the old kind of anti-racist movement, but one that can arrive at a common minimum programme upon which different groups, in spite of their different requirements, can come together. Without that kind of anti-racist movement, we will not be able to generate political momentum, and the range of choices open to government will remain limited, and the space for manoeuvre constrained.

While we talk on the one hand about what the government could be doing, we should also be thinking about what we could be doing. □



## Question Time Panel Session

Immediately after Paul Elliott had completed his presentation, Jeremy Vine led 7 panel members onto the conference stage for a question and answer session in ‘Question Time’ format. The panel members he introduced were:

Fiona Mactaggart, MP  
 Dr Beverly Malone, General Secretary, Royal College of Nursing  
 Rita Patel, Director, Belgrave Baheno  
 Michelynn Lafleche, Director, Runnymede  
 Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary General, Muslim Council of Britain  
 Kieran Poynter, Senior Partner, Price Waterhouse Coopers  
 Derrick Anderson, CEO, Wolverhampton City Council



Panel speakers (pictured clockwise from the top left) are Beverly Malone and Derrick Anderson, Michelynn Lafleche and Kieran Poynter, Iqbal Sacranie with Rita Patel to his left

A lively debate was kept animated and on the move by Jeremy Vine, who chaired with a deft touch, involving all panellists in the discussions that followed questions submitted in advance of the session. A significant section of the debate was taken up with a discussion of the merits of faith schools, while other topics included integration, Britishness and the value of difference, positive discrimination and positive action, incitement to religious hatred, citizenship and social values, and what contributes to community cohesion. The debate can be read in full on our website [[www.runnymedetrust.org](http://www.runnymedetrust.org)].

Jeremy Vine, in the chair, is flanked by Fiona Mactaggart and Iqbal Sacranie

