Publish and be damned?

by Peter Evans
with a Foreword by E. J. B. Rose

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Foreword

No-one who has had anything to do with journalism will underestimate the difficulties an editor faces when handling stories about race or coloured immigration. Equally, when mistakes are made, whether of commission or omission, anyone who knows about newspapers will beware of imputing malice or attributing other motives when, so often, it is merely a question of the judgement of a sub-editor working under pressure. But if a newspaper systematically takes a certain line, in giving prominence and sensational treatment to news stories which may excite fear or prejudice against a coloured minority, then there will be good reasons to suspect that this treatment is the deliberate policy of the paper.

Such papers are the exception in this country: most conscientious editors know the dangers and find it difficult to get the balance right. The selection of news and the priority given to one story as against another is a matter of taste and judgement, as a comparison of newspapers will generally show. The same story will be treated very variously by different editors: Mr Peter Evans compares this variety to the effect on light passing through a prism – the same story takes on different colours in different newspapers.

But not always: newspapers can be manipulated by politicians, especially when the story has a populist appeal. Mr Evans' valuable study shows how easily this can be done in his detailed examination of how the Press responded when the Hawley Report was leaked to Mr Enoch Powell and he revealed its contents in the House of Commons. Mr Powell has become adept at this kind of thing since he first captured the Press in October 1967 with the scare story of a tidal wave of Kenyan Asians which was about to flood this country.

All that summer there had been news items about Pakistanis being smuggled ashore before dawn in the Kentish marshes: on the eve of the Conservative Party Conference Mr Powell went down to the invasion beaches to deliver his speech at Deal. The next day the papers were full of his forebodings, both in the news columns and leader pages, and he stole the limelight from his own Party which had declined to put this matter on the agenda. The Press responded to a sustained campaign which stampeded the Labour Government into disowning the pledges given to Asian citizens of the UK and Commonwealth.

The other story which Mr Evans examines shows how newspapers fall into temptation without being pushed. It is the story of the two Asian families from Malawi which were housed by the local authority in a Gatwick hotel. This fox
was put up by one paper which devoted most of its front page to it: the next day most of the Press was in full cry and went on hunting for a week. Would they have done so if the fox had been a white family and not a family of coloured refugees? Apparently not, because the local authority shortly afterwards housed at least one white family in a similar predicament in another local hotel and there was not even a murmur in the national Press, although some Fleet Street reporters knew what was happening.

Politicians are sensitive when they are attacked by the Press but they have the power to hit back and, when in office, can and do threaten reprisals. Minorities are at least as sensitive when they are attacked, but they have no voice and no means of defence. These minorities are now part of the fabric of this society and prejudiced attacks upon them delay their integration and inflict wounds on society itself. Some politicians seem indifferent to this effect of their populism but the Press and broadcasting services cannot ignore it.

This is not to argue for the suppression of news which may bring members of a minority community into disrepute. There is, at present, a mounting campaign within the National Union of Journalists to oblige their members (through a code of conduct) not to originate in their newspapers any matter which is ‘designed to encourage discrimination on grounds of race, colour, creed, gender or sexual orientation’. Any breach of the code would lead to censure.

This prohibition may at first sight look unexceptionable and appear to go no further than the constraints imposed by the law, but this is certainly not so if, as seems the case, the prohibition covers news reporting. It might plausibly be argued that simply reporting black crime encourages discrimination by reinforcing prejudicial stereotypes; and from there it is not a great step to assert that anything detrimental to the image of an ethnic minority, or of women or homosexuals should be suppressed. A moment’s reflection shows that this will not do. However idealistic the motives behind the campaign, it is totally misguided, for this kind of censorship by journalists is quite inconsistent with freedom of the Press: it is the thin end of a very dangerous wedge which could be driven between an editor and his reporting staff. It is the job of a reporter to report; the responsibility for the way stories are played must lie with the editor and with those to whom he delegates his responsibility. Specialist knowledge and advice will no doubt be needed, but any journalist with conscientious scruples is free to object to the way his story is treated; he is also free to criticise editorial policy.

Quite apart from the threat to Press freedom, there should be no question of suppression or of sweeping these things under the rug. It would be very harmful to race relations if the public were to feel that things were being hidden from them: it is by playing on this suspicion that Mr Powell has scored some of his greatest populist successes. But editors and chief sub-editors have a responsibility to see that they do not excite passions and that the treatment of news in this field is not sensational.

Mr Evans’ study shows how tragic the consequences can be when passions are inflamed: four young men were killed in three separate incidents within a space of three weeks. This is the first time that anything of the kind, of this appalling magnitude, has occurred since post-war coloured immigration began. There are many examples from other countries of Press campaigns triggering communal outbreaks which led to the slaughter of members of minority communities. In most cases the responsibility began with demagogic politicians but it was shared by an irresponsible Press.

Mr Evans shows how the national Press in Britain over a period of six weeks collectively and quite unwittingly contributed to a climate in which it was possible for racial violence on an unprecedented scale to erupt in this country.

E. J. B. Rose

Director, International Press Institute, 1951-62
Director, Survey of Race Relations, 1963-69
Editorial Director, Westminster Press, 1970-74
Coverage of race relations and immigration presents newspapers with an enormous professional challenge: how to ensure that genuinely differing viewpoints can be expressed and reflected in such an emotive field without helping to incite the sort of conflict seen this summer.

No properly self-critical newspaper can believe it has found a completely satisfactory answer. There are no easy answers to be had.

Analysis of the way in which newspapers covered race relations in the first half of 1976 is worth study, and this booklet is intended as a contribution towards that. No good journalist can escape the responsibility for what he or she does and what results from it. Yet the press must remain free. That is the testing dilemma which journalists face.

The way in which some of the events of 1976 have been covered has provoked criticism. The contents of this booklet are intended to speak largely for themselves.

It is not always understood that there is merit in the way in which different newspapers look at the same facts from different angles, just as light is broken by a prism into its constituent colours. Properly done, that variety of coverage can contribute positively to public knowledge by enabling a searching and sceptical examination of facts and opinion. Negative censorship is no answer to Britain's race relations problems. Hiding facts about them, or even putting a gloss on them, will not make them go away. A healthy democracy depends upon the availability of facts and the clash of opinions about them. It remains the job of the journalist to transmit viewpoints of which personally he or she may not always approve. A refusal to transmit them would imply a lack of confidence that they can be refuted. Falsehoods fester if they are not dragged into the open and answered.

There is, however, a crucial difference between the portrayal of facts from differing viewpoints, so that people can make up their minds about them, and the distortion of them for purposes of political propaganda. The former approach at least admits the possibility of alternatives. The latter would suppress them because they inconveniently conflict with pre-conceived ideas.

Race relations are a dynamic and evolving phenomenon, not static. Facts about them cannot be fitted into a mould. The sterile, closed mind is an enemy of understanding. Journalists, above all people, should not be seduced into defending no-go areas of the mind from inconvenient, conflicting evidence.
But assessment of that evidence depends upon an appreciation of the background to it and the guise in which it is presented. Only by making that assessment can journalists understand whether they are being manipulated and for what ends. That attempt at manipulation may not invalidate the facts or be a sufficient reason for excluding them. But at least the facts can then be placed into a proper perspective, that can contribute to understanding of them.

Racial peace and justice in Britain depend upon the creation of understanding. The journalist has a responsibility to create understanding. The journalist cannot escape part of the responsibility for justice and racial peace.

My thanks are due to Clare Demuth, of the Runnymede Trust. The headlines listed in the booklet and summaries of events they portray are the result of her diligent research. The appendices are provided by the Runnymede Trust.

Peter Evans, 1976

Home Affairs Correspondent at The Times

Publish and be damned?

The following story describes events which reached a climax in June 1976, and illustrates how Mr Enoch Powell, with the aid of Government secrecy, cleverly manipulated the press, helping temporarily at least to destroy racial peace.

Powell Seduces Press
By 1975, race relations had ceased to command the attention they once did. Even Mr Powell seemed to have exhausted the subject. David Stephen, then Director of the Runnymede Trust, said of Mr Powell’s speech in Croydon on 27 February 1975, that it was the first he had devoted to race relations since he became United Ulster Unionist MP for South Down – ‘indeed since his largely unreported speech in Birmingham on 30 November 1973’.

‘Organisations and individuals concerned with race relations had assumed that Mr Powell was no longer interested in the subject of race relations, but he has returned to the subject in spite of, and in addition to, his involvement in the affairs of Northern Ireland.’

Stephen commented: ‘This is an omnibus Powell speech, reiterating all the old arguments – the statistics conspiracy, the inevitability of strife and violence, and the need for repatriation as the final solution’.

Mr Powell had also told his Croydon audience: ‘One cannot but grudgingly admire the success with which those in authority, political and official, and the “best people” of all parties and of none, have succeeded in burying out of sight the greatest problem overhanging the future of Britain, a problem infinitely more grave and intractable than energy or inflation or balance of payments or any of the other ephemera that fill the media and reverberate month after month in public debate’.

In a significant phrase, he said: ‘To have succeeded in putting the extinguisher upon this subject represents a “cover-up” job not easily to be paralleled.’

It was a cunning challenge, phrased with all the Powell art of circumlocution. He knows very well that newspapers do not like to be victims of “cover-up jobs”; they regard themselves as being fearless in disclosure and exposure.

Clearly, Mr Powell was in need of something new if the world was to heed him. The forthcoming debate on the Race Relations Bill would provide it.

Some newspapers suspected that trouble might lie ahead. On 12 September, the Daily Mail, noting that ‘Enoch Powell does not erupt on race with quite the same impact as he used to’, added: ‘The national debate over race, though
continuing to simmer, looked like going off the boil. Now the Government has chosen to switch on the heat again’. The Mail questioned the wisdom of introducing stronger and more sweeping powers against discrimination.

And under a heading ‘THE TIME-BOMB OF RACE’, The Observer two days later accurately predicted: ‘Some of the immediate reactions to the new White Paper on Racial Discrimination’ (the precursor to the Bill) ‘show that the battle to get a new Race Relations Act on the statute books is likely to run into the emotional agitation associated with Powellism’.

While The Observer, in keeping with its liberal traditions, was concerned about the welfare of the disadvantaged in the inner cities and the dangers that this posed, immigration was the issue that would be exploited by the right wing of the Conservative Party and subsequently by Mr Powell and the National Front.

The Press Succumbs

Though there were perfunctory attempts to get a debate going about it, the issue did not take off until a speech by Mr Powell in January 1976, about a year after he spoke of a ‘cover-up’.

In November, Mr Ian Gilmour, then Shadow Home Secretary, had received a written answer to his Parliamentary Question which revealed the net figure of New Commonwealth immigration to be 85,000 in 1973, not 17,000. ‘There had been a ‘clerical error’. But Mr Gilmour’s discovery was not trumpeted.

This gave Mr Powell the chance he had been waiting for. His speech was well leaked in advance to ensure maximum publicity. Before he gave it, there were preliminary stories such as the one in The Sunday Times saying: ‘Labour MPs were criticising Enoch Powell’s plan to return to the immigration issue in a speech tomorrow . . . Mr Powell . . . is expected to tell an audience at Egham, Surrey, that it was significant that this error had no attention given to it in Parliament by the media’.

Which, being interpreted, meant that not only had Mr Powell scooped the media, but the media were part of the ‘cover-up’ – a challenge calculated to put them on their mettle, eager to prove otherwise.

‘Powell back to the attack’, said The Guardian. The Daily Telegraph gave the speech in full, but the perceptive, single-column news story by David Harris, of the political staff, beginning on page 1, was muted: ‘Mr Enoch Powell last night attempted to bring the immigration issue back into the centre of political controversy’.

The word ‘attempted’ does not give Mr Powell the accolade of success. The implication was that the issue still remained outside the centre of political controversy; an ‘inner’, perhaps, but not yet a ‘bull’s-eye’. Mr Harris’s third paragraph should also be noted: ‘In his well-heralded speech to the Egham Rotary Club, the Ulster Unionist MP for South Down made the most of an admission by Mr Jenkins, the Home Secretary, last November over a ‘clerical error’ due to double-counting of embarkations at London Airport’.

We had to wait until paragraph 8 of Mr Harris’s story to hear that ‘other Tory back-benchers believe he is right in suggesting that the immigration question is being brushed under the carpet . . .’ The previous paragraph had read: ‘Some Conservative MPs see the speech as being a resort by Mr Powell to his well-tried formula for keeping in the public eye . . .’

This reaction did not please Peter Simple elsewhere in the Telegraph. Under the heading of ‘QUESTIONS OF MOTIVE’ on page 10, he wrote: ‘When Mr Enoch Powell, taking as his text a particularly outrageous “error” by the Home Office in its estimate of the number of immigrants from the New Commonwealth now coming into this country, returns to this neglected subject, he is at once accused of using it to serve his own advancement . . .’

While general press reaction was to condemn the Home Office for what The Guardian called a ‘cock-up’, The Times leading article said: ‘As a generator of political heat, race is not for the time being the force that it was. The arrival of the Uganda Asians in 1972 took place without nearly as much controversy as there might have been, and neither of the two general elections of 1974 saw any significant revival of the issue. But it is clear that hostilities remain, and that the economic crisis may tend to sharpen them, as competition for jobs and homes becomes harsher. It may be a portent that Mr Enoch Powell returned to the subject of immigration last night’.

Only a few newspapers challenged the main premise of the Powell argument. The basis of his calculations is the net balance figure, derived from numbers of people entering and leaving Britain – not those who come here officially to settle. It is a sophisticated argument for readers of the popular press, and such nuances are rarely gone into. Without them, stories about Mr Powell come across powerfully because he knows how to lace his speeches with suitable quotes, a great art.

It was left to Mr David Lane MP to ask, in a letter to The Sunday Telegraph, ‘Why has Mr Powell, who obviously reads Hansard, delayed his attack on the Home Office till now?’ The error had come to light in a Parliamentary answer early in November.

Mary Dines, formerly the Director of the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants, expressed surprise in a letter to The Guardian that it had given so much space to the speech. (On 6 January 1976, a double-column news story, news feature across five columns, plus leading article.) But on 10 January The Economist said: ‘Mr Powell’s speech might have attracted less notice had he not been able to exploit the ‘clerical error’ made by the Home Office’.

Shock, Horror and Dismay

Controversy then began to hot up. Race relations came increasingly into the news and public consciousness. Stories about the Tory Party’s plans to form an
Anglo-Asian group, protests about the BBC's 'Open Door' programme showing anti-immigrant propaganda, Mr Powell's attempts to keep the pot boiling, and the gradual emergence of the National Front into the news with space in the press given to 'race brawls' led to the first peak of news coverage in May.

On 8 May, newspapers reported Mr Relf being sent to jail for refusing to take down a sign advertising a house for sale only to an English family. On 9 May, The Observer told how the National Front won 9,399 votes - seven per cent of the total - in district council elections. (The previous year, the figure was 1,364.)

News about race relations was beginning to gather a momentum all of its own. For those who do not understand the way in which newspapers work, there may seem to be a conspiracy to play up an issue. But news feeds on itself. The utterances of politicians and others help to create a 'reverberation', with new stories and speeches adding to it in increasingly close succession, so that before the noise of one dies away, it is followed by the impact of another until the details merge together in a mounting clamour that excites the senses and can sometimes drown the still small voice of reason.

Mr Powell is aware of the phenomenon. As we have already noted, he used the word 'reverberation' in his speech of 25 February 1975, contrasting the 'cover-up' of the subject of immigration with emphasis given to the problem of 'energy or inflation or balance of payments or any of the other ephemera that fill the media and reverberate month after month in public debate'.

The phenomenon does not happen only with race relations. Aliens guard dogs are a good example: every so often, newspapers are filled with stories, comment and letters about them. It is not that Albertian guard dogs bite more children only when the press writes about this happening. Clearly such a notion is absurd. It is rather that, when a small story appears from a free-lance reporter, other reporters realise that the alien guard dog has become news and are alert to instances of attack. They find what they look for. They send in stories. And newspapers, contrary to the impression implied by their very name, often do not want what is new, so much as what is familiar, because it rings a bell with the reader and fits the stereotype he already has. Imagine the reaction at the breakfast table of the Bloggins family. 'Eh Mabel, there's another one of these aliens. You can't trust them, you know.'

The process is aided by the eagerness of newspapers to be incessant, inspired by what is known as the spirit of competition. If a 'good story' is carried in the first edition of one newspaper, then others try to follow it up the same night. This means getting it and writing it in a hurry, which good reporters pride themselves on being able to do, sometimes, if they are practised, dictating straight over a telephone to a copy-taker, without writing the story out first. Firing from the hip in this way demands quick judgement, a reliance on crude news instincts. If it is not possible to follow up the story the same night, there is enormous pressure to do so the next day.

More than they care to admit, journalists are creatures of the herd instinct: the lobby system shows that. It is reasonable to speculate how much the existence of a national news agency contributes towards 'reverberation' by circulating the same story to all newspapers. It is sometimes easier to play safe than stand outside the crowd. It is not unknown for a journalist to be asked, when space is tight, if an exclusive story can be held over, as no-one else will have it.
Those pressures contributed to the way in which the first major story surveyed here was covered.

On 29 March, two homeless families, comprising 13 individuals, who were United Kingdom passport holders allowed entry into the United Kingdom under the special voucher scheme, were accommodated by West Sussex County Council at a four-star hotel at a cost of £600 a week for a period of about six weeks, in the absence of any other suitable accommodation. *The Sun* which initially covered the story on 4 May under the front-page headline ‘SCANDAL OF £600-A-WEEK IMMIGRANTS’ continued to give it extensive coverage for a period of nine days. Below is the coverage given to this particular story by the national papers on 5 May. All of it was on either the back or one of the inside pages, and those headlines which were originally in capitals are given in capitals.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5 May</th>
<th>Press coverage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Express</td>
<td>More Asians on the way to join four-star migrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Mail</td>
<td>Four-star provocation (editorial)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Mirror</td>
<td>Row grows over four-star immigrants</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>We want more money, say £600-a-week Asians</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>After that £600-a-week hotel... NOW IT'S THE WORKHOUSE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>Migrants 'here just for the welfare handouts'</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>The sour suites of Sussex (editorial)</td>
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The second debateable notion was that social welfare departments are inept. Coverage of a succession of mistakes has cast social workers, like alsatian dogs, in a bad light. The third notion is that Britain is up against it, so any sponging on the state is undermining the country's fight against economic ruin: far easier for a newspaper to hit out at a sponger than try to explain the complications of inflation. The fourth issue is the straight political one: whether too much state aid, given automatically, is sapping the vitality of the nation and ruining the spirit of self-reliance and free enterprise.

The headlines fitted those assumptions, particularly those of immigrants living off the state. 'WE WANT MORE MONEY, SAY THE £600-A-WEEK ASIANS,' said the *Daily Mail*. The *Daily Express* had 'MORE ASIANS ON THE WAY TO JOIN 4-STAR MIGRANTS' and 'THE PASSPORT TO PLENTY'. Such headlines not only appeal to the reader's belief that he is being 'conned' by migrants but also presage further invasion.

Well, seek and ye shall find. As the stories about alsatian guard dogs show, journalists are good at doing that and the arrival of East African Asians expelled from Malawi provided welcome raw material.

It was on 16 May that the 61 Goan United Kingdom passport holders who had been expelled from Malawi arrived at Gatwick Airport.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>17 May</th>
<th>Front Page Headline</th>
<th>Back Page/Inside Story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Express</td>
<td>'Asian flood' warning as more fly in from Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Mirror</td>
<td>THE KICKE-D OUT ASIANS FLY TO BRITAIN</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>THREAT OF NEW ASIAN EXPULSIONS Whitehall tries to stem influx</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>Expelled Asians fly in from Malawi</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morning Star</td>
<td>Mass expulsion of Malawi Asians fear</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Sun</td>
<td>ASIANS FLY OUT OF 'NEW UGANDA'</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Times</td>
<td>No general expulsion of Malawi Asians likely</td>
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On the same day that these headlines appeared, 17 May, the Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Mr Laird, said in Parliament that there was no evidence of a large-scale expulsion. This was confirmed
by the Prime Minister on 18 May. Despite these assurances several newspapers foresaw an Asian invasion on the scale of Amin's expulsions from Uganda. 'ASIANS FLY OUT OF NEW UGANDA' said The Sun on 13 May. The next day the Daily Express commented 'Asian influx will swamp us', and for two days the voice of Labour politician Robert Mellish was used to reinforce this view: 'Mellish cries: ENOUGH! Immigrant burden can't go on, he says, as MPs hit out at 'Asian Flood' threat'. On 22 May two foreign students were murdered in North London. On 23 May the National Front staged a demonstration at Heathrow Airport against the arrival of 40 more Asians from Malawi. Actually, fewer Goan refugees than expected flew in. But this confirmation of the Government's statement came too late to dispel the effects of the original press reaction to the expulsions, typical of which were the headlines for 17 May.

To appreciate The Times contribution, it must be remembered that a competition is said to have been held on the newspaper in the 1930s for the dullest headline and won by 'SMALL EARTHQUAKE IN CHILE, NOT MANY DEAD'. On 17 May, The Times was able to say: 'NO GENERAL EXPULSION OF MALAWI ASIANS LIKELY'. This was no momentary aberration. On 24 May, The Times added: 'FEWER GOAN REFUGEES THAN EXPECTED FLY IN'. Only a small earthquake, after all.*

For Mr Powell, however, things were reverberating. Moreover, the pattern of 1968 was repeating itself with an immigration story about Asians from East Africa echoing noisily around the Race Relations Bill. In part, this was due to the emphasis given to immigration by the Conservative leadership, as a means of keeping the Party united (though Tories were also able to find ammunition in the paucity of Government aid for the inner city).

To show how well Mr Powell learnt the lessons of 1968, it is worth recalling the sequence of events then and comparing them with those of 1976:

1967

19 October Mr Powell makes a speech in Deal, warning that loopholes in the law will allow a flood of immigrants from East Africa to pour into Britain.

1968

February Commonwealth Immigrants Bill introduced to control entry of UK passport holders from Kenya. Mr Powell makes speech at Walsall forecasting that by the year 2000 Britain is likely to be menaced by a problem 'similar in magnitude to that of the US now'.

*Editor's Note: On 16 May, 90 people were expected and 61 arrived. On 23 May, 80 or more were expected but only 48 arrived. [UKIAS Report on Asian UK Passport Holders in Malawi by Mrs Marian Bulhari (1976).] The same Report estimated that the total number of Asians in Malawi holding UK passports waiting to come to the UK in June 1976, whose arrival could be expected over the following 18 months, was no more than 6,000 people, of whom Asians of Goan extraction were only a small minority.

1 March Commonwealth Immigrants Bill becomes law.

9 April Race Relations Bill introduced.

10 April Mr Powell in Birmingham speech says: 'As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood'.

16 November Mr Powell refers to reaction to his Birmingham speech and speaks of his forbearance: 'Through all this I have kept silent...sooner or later I was duty bound to take up the theme again'.

26 November Race Relations Bill becomes law.

1976

5 January Mr Powell in a speech to Egham Rotary Club reveals an error in the Home Office immigration statistics, and says of the increase in the net balance figures: 'This new feature has altered the nature of the whole debate again...Dramatically, it has switched once more to an eminent and immediate theme, "a current and continuous intake, which is all the time exacerbating the problems and dangers of the future"'.

2 February Race Relations Bill introduced.

4 March Race Relations Bill second reading.

14 April Mr Powell addressing a Police Federation seminar in Cambridge says that mugging is a racial crime.

5 May The Times reports that a Government Green Paper on the revision of the citizenship law will be published in the near future. The Daily Telegraph discloses a secret Foreign Office memorandum on immigration.

24 May Mr Powell speaking in a House of Commons debate on the changing demographic character of Britain reveals the existence of a Foreign Office report on the number of dependants awaiting entry to the United Kingdom from the Indian sub-continent and speaks of the increase of violence in the inner city, which will lead to a position he claims, 'in which – I shall dare to say it compared to those areas, Belfast today will seem an enviable place'.

8 July Race Relations Bill third reading.
In 1968, Mr Powell disclosed a comment to Ann Scott-James in the Daily Mail that he knew very well how to play the game of the popular press: 'And you should know that the best way of getting listened to is to humanise your theme by talking about an individual'. (Daily Mail, 11 July 1968.) Compare that with a memo to staff of the Daily Express by a former editor, Arthur Christiansen: 'Always, always, always tell the news through the people'. (Quoted in Enoch Powell on Immigration by B. Smithe and P. Fiddick, Sphere Books, 1969.)

Poor but honest?
In 1976, Mr Powell was helping the press (in dire financial straits) to live by disclosure. His disclosure in January about a 'cover-up' of a Whitehall mistake was followed by his scoop about the Hawley report - something The Daily Telegraph had previously got wind of. Indeed, the Telegraph said: 'When this newspaper revealed the existence of a secret Foreign Office report on this matter on 5 May, the Foreign Office said that our story was 'absolutely without foundation'. That was untrue'.

The coverage given to the report was predictably immense, and bore only a cursory relationship to the matters discussed in the House of Commons debate on 24 May on the changing demographic character of Britzin, in which Mr Powell first made his revelations.

The debate was opened by Mr Jonathan Aitken, who spoke about the outflow of young people emigrating overseas and the continuing inflow of immigrants from the New Commonwealth. Other speakers included Mr Robert Mellish, Mr Alexander Lyon, Mr Roy Jenkins the Home Secretary, and the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Mr Whitelaw. Mr Powell spoke on immigration from the Indian sub-continent and quoted from a confidential Foreign Office report by Mr D. F. Hawley which suggested that an infinite number of Asian dependants were awaiting entry to the United Kingdom. Mr Powell went on to deplore the increasing scale of violence in our cities. Mr Lyon spoke at length on immigration statistics and said that Britain had a legal and moral obligation to admit the wives and children of those already here and that in his opinion they numbered about 100,000. The Home Secretary attacked Mr Powell's attempts to equate the immigration problem with the growth of violence and crime and with a situation comparable to Belfast, as 'a gross exaggeration'. Despite the fact that out of a total of 72 columns of Hansard, Mr Powell's speech covered only seven, it received almost exclusive newspaper coverage for the next two days.

25 May
Front Page Headline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Daily Express</th>
<th>Back Page/Inside Story</th>
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<tr>
<td>IMMIGRANT RACKET ROW</td>
<td>Powell storm</td>
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<td>Lyon slams Whitehall's race 'myth'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Mail</td>
<td>When the counting has to stop</td>
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<tr>
<td>IMMIGRANTS – HOW BRITAIN IS DECEIVED</td>
<td>(editorial)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hysteria, says fired Minister</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>A web of deceit</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The vast queue of people all planning to surge into Britain</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Mirror</td>
<td>Powell SHOCKER</td>
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<tr>
<td>Another race war warning by Enoch</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>FOREIGN OFFICE REPORT</td>
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<tr>
<td>POWELL IN RACE LEAK STORM</td>
<td>EXPOSES ASIAN MIGRANT RACKET</td>
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<td>STRIKING A MIGRANT BALANCE</td>
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<td>POWELL WARNS MPS: RACIAL CONFLICT COULD</td>
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<td>MAKE BELFAST AN ENViable PLACE</td>
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<td>Financial Times</td>
<td>Race explosion will make Ulster</td>
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<td>enviable - Powell</td>
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<td>Row centres on leak document</td>
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<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>'Industry' set up in illegal immigration</td>
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<td>'Guns soon' in new Powell race</td>
<td>Migrant smuggling 'a massive racket'</td>
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<tr>
<td>assault</td>
<td>More leave UK than arrive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morning Star</td>
<td>Fantasies on race yet loose in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Commons debate</td>
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<td>The Sun</td>
<td>Powell'S WARNING</td>
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Powell leaks secret Foreign Office report that caused split in the Government

IMMIGRANT RACKET ROW

Jacqueline's role... as J

POWELL IN RACE LEAK STORM

Report challenges migrant forecast

‘Guns soon’ in new Powell race assault

Secret Foreign Office report discloses immigration rackets

"Incentive for entry clearly stems from stories told by relatives about higher living standards to be enjoyed:"
On Sunday, 6 June, the day that the Sunday Telegraph reported ‘how Blackburn came to the brink of race violence’, the young Asians in Southall, shocked by the killing of Gurdip Singh Chagger, besieged the police station.

It was late in the evening of Friday, 4 June that Gurdip Singh Chagger was stabbed to death in Southall. Angry demonstrations by the local Asian community followed and their leaders appealed to the Government to speak out in support of the minority communities. The effect was to calm the growing fears and anger of the Asian community and to bring to the front pages of the national press reports of that racial violence which Mr Enoch Powell had predicted 10 days earlier. The News of the World headline of 6 June read ‘ENOCH LASHED IN RACE MURDER STORM’ and the Evening Standard on 7 June heralded on its front page a new development, ‘VIGILANTES TO SHIELD ASIANS’. The other headlines of 7 June were as follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>7 June</th>
<th>Front Page Headline</th>
<th>Back Page/Inside Story</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Daily Express</td>
<td>MIGRANTS MARCH ON POLICE STATION</td>
<td>Calm the fears (editorial)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Mail</td>
<td>RACIAL RIOT IS QUELLED</td>
<td>The lesson of Southall (editorial)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daily Mirror</td>
<td>RAMPAGE OF VENGEANCE Asians fury after knifing</td>
<td>The Asian mutiny (editorial)</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Daily Telegraph</td>
<td>Police besieged by Asians after clashes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Financial Times</td>
<td>Asian demo at police station</td>
<td>Concern grows at race unrest</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Guardian</td>
<td>Southall flash-point</td>
<td>A time for calm in Southall (editorial)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Morning Star</td>
<td>ANGRY ASIANS ASK PM: WILL YOU ACT?</td>
<td>MP's challenge to Powell</td>
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The combination of stories about the £600-a-week migrants and Malawi Asians scare and now the Hawley report left the strong impression that Britain was being taken over by swarms of Asians, who were not only ‘conning’ their way into Britain illegally, but once they got here, were ‘conning’ a lash living off the state. Racial harmony had by now been dorned by the dissonance of the increasing reverberations. Mr Powell’s speech on 25 May in which he predicted racial violence, had followed a story in The Sunday Times on 23 May that the double knife killing of two coloured students in North-East London had set off fears of racial violence. Bernard Levin commented in The Times of 27 May: ‘Common sense and experience here combine to suggest strongly that in his projection of murder and destruction he is, in fact, whatever his intentions, making it more likely to happen’. There followed stories of assaults on Asians, including stone throwing and the molesting of women, attacks on shops and the desecration of Mosques. These attacks were noted with increasing concern as the days went by.

On 26 May the TUC General Council issued a statement condemning Mr Powell’s speech as inflammatory and totally irresponsible. Statements from the Standing Conference of Pakistani Organisations (31 May), the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (1 June), the Pakistani Embassy (2 June) and the Indian Workers’ Association expressed concern over the growing number of attacks on Asians and called on the government to take a firm stand in defending the rights of immigrants. Although the TUC’s statement was widely reported, the statements of other organisations did not receive very much attention outside the Morning Star, and the press continued to concentrate its attention on the accuracy of Powell’s forecast and the numbers of people awaiting entry to Britain from the Indian sub-continent. The Daily Telegraph gave space almost daily to the controversy.* On 27 May a front-page headline read ‘MIGRANTS’ QUEUE IS UNENDING’, and on 3 June, while The Times had ‘EMBASSY CONCERNED AT INTENSE PRESSURE ON ASIANS IN BRITAIN’ The Daily Telegraph headline was ‘CURBS FEAR BRINGS PAKISTANI RUSH TO ENTER BRITAIN’.

*Editor’s Note: See, by contrast, the coverage of the Runnymede investigation into immigration procedures in the sub-continent dealt with in Appendix A.
7 June
Front Page Headline (continued)  Back Page/Inside Story

The Sun
POLICE HQ IN ASIAN SIEGE
Force of 250 face a riot over knife murder

The Times
Asians clash with police in protest over killing

The Daily Mail said of the majority of Asians in Southall and their leaders that they did not want violence. ‘They do want justice. And as decent law-abiding British citizens – as most of them are – they are entitled to get it.’ Headed ‘A PEACEFUL PEOPLE’, the Daily Express leading article on 8 June said: ‘Britain has assimilated at least 1,500,000 Asians and blacks – the population of Leeds and Glasgow combined – in less than 20 years. The wonder has been not the degree of bloody confrontation, but the lack of it’. The Prime Minister, Mr Callaghan, speaking in Parliament on 9 June echoed this statement, when he said, ‘We urge everyone not to destroy our reputation as a tolerant, cohesive and unified society’.

However, the press, in its news reports even if not in its editorials, continued to emphasise the divisive rather than the cohesive elements in society. On 10 June following the publication of the annual report of the Metropolitan Commissioner, Sir Robert Mark, the Daily Mail headline read ‘POLICE AND HOSTILE BLACKS – BY SIR ROBERT’, and the Daily Mirror entitled its close-up on racial tension in Britain with the words ‘FACE TO FACE WITH HATRED’. It was only after the weekend of the 11-12 June when a white youth was killed and three Asian youths injured while marches against immigration and unemployment were being held in the East End that the mood of the headlines began to change. The Daily Mail’s headline on this event read, ‘RACIALIST? NOT THIS BOY – KNIFED YOUTH HAD COLOURED FRIENDS’. The racialist speeches made by, among others, Mr Kingsley Read received scant attention and were reported only in the context of their possible prosecution under ‘the incitement to racial hatred clause’ of the Race Relations Act 1965. And when on 14 May the Archbishop of Canterbury condemned racist demonstrations and spoke on the need for racial harmony, his speech received the following extensive coverage:

15 June
Front Page Headline  Back Page/Inside Story

Daily Express
Race hate condemned

Daily Mail
Race and religion (editorial)
Welcome black families – Coggan

Daily Mirror
RACE-ROW BOSS SHUTS FACTORY
RACIALISTS HIT BY MP

The Daily Telegraph
‘RACIALISTS A DISGRACE’

The Guardian
Primate condemns racist marches
Race speech to be sent to Attorney-General

Morning Star
Prosecute Read, MP demands in Commons

The Sun
Coggan raps race demo ‘disgrace’
ENÓCH FACES MASS EAST END DEMO

The Times
Race board demands action over speech
Impact of cuts on immigrant areas
National Front speech and problem of racism
A bad period for race relations

Sober second thoughts
The year 1976 was the first in which racial tension passed like an electric current throughout the country, or at least to those places where the mass of non-white people live. Previous outbursts of trouble have been largely limited to different areas at different times. The change means that, as Britain as a whole has been sensitised, national newspaper editors are now in the position that local editors have long occupied in racially sensitive areas. As Lord Devlin said in Race and the Press (a Runnymede Trust publication), calling for self-restraint, “The only safe rule for every editor is to send the brass right out of the orchestra and play it
on the strings'. The jargon of newspapermen, however, generally owes much more to the percussion department, reflecting the pressures of competition under which they work: 'punchy intro'; 'strong story'; 'headline'; 'set it in bold'. People do not discuss. They 'row' and 'fury erupts'. They are not perturbed. They suffer 'terror' and 'shock' because of 'horror'. Immigrants do not arrive. They 'invade'. On suitable issues there is also a tendency to write in terms of emotive, personal conflict because drama is interesting. But if coverage of race relations resembles that of a football match, with heroes, villains, 'knocking' stories, and appeals to tribal emotion, conflict on the terraces can be expected.

Liberals and the left would like the press to talk with one sweet voice on the subject of immigration and race relations. But there is a variety of opinion which needs to be reflected.

Coverage by the right and left is illustrated by the following comparison of headlines from The Daily Telegraph and Morning Star.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morning Star</th>
<th>The Daily Telegraph</th>
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<tr>
<td>5 May</td>
<td>Migrants 'here just for: the welfare handouts'</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 May</td>
<td>INVASION OF ASIANS FORCES BOROUGH TO CALL FOR HELP</td>
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<td>18 May</td>
<td>COMMONS ROW OVER ASIANS (front page) Mellow cries 'Enough' on Asian influx (page 10)</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 May</td>
<td>POWELL IN RACE LEAK STORM Report challenges migrant forecast FOREIGN OFFICE REPORT EXPOSES ASIAN MIGRANT RACKET</td>
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<td>26 May</td>
<td>A LOT OF TRUTH IN LEAK REPORT SAYS BOTTOMLEY</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Morning Star</th>
<th>The Daily Telegraph</th>
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<tr>
<td>27 May</td>
<td>Unite against the racists, says TUC UNENDING (front page) Illegal migrants fly in on £1,000 package deal (page 2)</td>
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<td>28 May</td>
<td>The 'twisted and tortured mind' of Enoch Powell</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 June</td>
<td>CURBS FEAR BRINGS PAKISTANI RUSH TO ENTER BRITAIN</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 June</td>
<td>ANGRY ASIANS ASK PM WILL YOU ACT?</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 June</td>
<td>'Fight racism' appeal gets big response Police chief rounds on black youth YOUNG BLACKS AGAINST POLICE SAYS MARK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 June</td>
<td>UPROAR OVER RACIST OUTBURST (front page) HUMANITY UNITED GIVES RACISTS THEIR ANSWER Ban racist marches (editorial) YOUTHS ARE QUESTIONED ON STABBING (front page) YOUTH IN RACE ROW KILLED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 June</td>
<td>Racists disgrace the nation – Archbishop 'RACIALISTS A DISGRACE'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 June</td>
<td>NEW STATISTICS PROVE 'ILLEGAL IMMIGRANT FLOOD' IS A TRICKLE MIGRANT INFLUX UP BY 9,000</td>
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John Stuart Mill, who was MP for Westminster a century ago, talked about the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion. 'If the opinion is right they (the people) are deprived of an opportunity of exchanging an error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error.'

Nor is he frightened of extreme views. 'Strange it is,' he says, 'that man should admit the validity of arguments for free discussion, but object to their
being pushed to an extreme, not seeing that unless reasons are good for an extreme case, they are not good for any case'. Mill also added: 'Even opinions lose their immunity when the circumstances in which they are expressed are such as to constitute their expression as a possible instigation to some mischievous act. An opinion that corn-dealers are starvers of the poor or that private property is robbery ought to be unmolested when simply circulated through the press, but may justly incur punishment when delivered orally to an excited mob assembled before the house of a corn-dealer or when handled about the same mob in the form of a placard'.

Although newspapers tend to have broadly a common diet of news, each provides it with its own particular flavour or 'angle' as it is known in the trade, calculated to appeal to its own particular readership. Newspapers know, or think they know, what their readers want. Readers may also buy newspapers to confirm their own prejudices. If this is true, then coverage of stories about race relations raises awkward questions.

Schizoid behaviour
Perhaps newspapers themselves have begun to seek some of the answers. The opinion columns sometimes played down the news that was elsewhere being played up. It was as if certain newspapers were suffering from schizophrenia: dissociation between what they thought they saw and their cooler reasoning about it. Or perhaps the news departments were stuck in an old-fashioned groove. The writer of a 16th-century London pamphlet said: 'Both not the world see that you beastly brutes the Belgians, or rather drunken drones and faint-hearted Flemings, and you fraudulent father-Frenchmen... have... placed yourself here in a most fertile soil, under a most gracious and merciful prince, who hath been contented to the great prejudice of her natural subjects, to suffer you to live here, in better ease and more freedom than her own people?'

A restrained Daily Express opinion column said on 10 May: 'There is bound to be some dismay at the news that a further 25,000 Asian immigrants will be heading for Britain in the next few years'. (Note only 'some' dismay.) 'These are British passport holders in East Africa who are coming under increasing pressure in Malawi and Kenya to make way for Africans. Yet in a very real sense Africa's loss is our gain. For in the main, these people are not layabouts looking for a cushy billet, but hard working, ambitious and efficient traders.' Opinion added: 'Only when it is made clear to the British public that the newcomers will contribute much to the country's hard-pressed resources and not be a drain on them, will views change and the murmurs of dismay be stilled'. The 'disgraceful incident' of putting immigrants up in a four-star hotel must not be repeated, the Express said. Meanwhile on the front page of the Express the same day a dismayed sounding headline was murmuring gently: '£1,000 PROBLEM OF A REFUGEE: REFUSED WELFARE - BUT I'LL SETTLE FOR A COUNCIL HOUSE'. The story, no doubt helping to make it clear that the newcomers would contribute much to the country's hard-pressed resources, said:

'Just off the plane from Malawi...
Soma Shekar Maroli, with his wife, their four children and £1,000 in his pocket. The Marolis are here to stay after being given three days to get out of the country by the Malawi authorities.
And at Gatwick Airport yesterday Mr Maroli knew the question to ask.
'How do I get in touch with the British welfare? I have been told that they can help me.'
But Mr Maroli will have to fend for himself - the officials at Gatwick knew about his £1,000 nest-egg.
And on 18 May, the Daily Mail commented of the Malawi Asians: 'We believe the new arrivals will fit in just as well - as long as insensitive officialdom does not give them an undeserved bad name'.

Insensitive who?
On 6 May the Daily Mail had a cartoon showing an exhausted, perspiring white porter lying on the floor in a suite of the 'Hotel Cornucopia' clutching a heavy bag with a 'Malawi' label, his hand out to a family of Asians surrounded

The Mail’s comment on 18 May read: ‘The Malawi Asians are unlikely to be a burden to the State here. They are traders and businessmen, like the previous waves of persecuted races, the Huguenots and the Jews, who have contributed so much to Britain’. *

The Sun, which broke the original story about the Asians being put up in the hotels, also proclaimed its dedication to racial harmony by ‘speaking its mind’ on 12 May as boldly as ever: ‘Since the day of its birth more than six years ago, The Sun has stood uncompromisingly for racial harmony in Britain. For fair treatment for all regardless of race, colour or creed. That remains our policy’. By now the newspapers were under attack, dog eating dog, without liking the taste very much. Polly Toynbee wrote in The Observer of 9 May: ‘The British Press can pride itself on one of its more successful campaigns – it has managed to chase 13 wretched and bewildered Asians from a four-star hotel into a former workhouse’. The Economist commented: ‘Mr Adam Suleman, Mr Abdul Sacranie and their families have been billed as exploiters. In fact they are victims of local authority insensitivity and the sensationalism of the popular media’.

The Future Perfect?

Modern, multi-racial Britain demands more sensitive treatment. Use of more black and Asian journalists would help. Some of the coverage during the last 12 months has angered, dismayed and alienated people in the minority communities, giving them a sense of insecurity that will take years to overcome. The tolerance of native whites has been strained.

The nature of society, from which journalists obtain their news and about which they write and on which they depend for advertising and sales, is ever changing. By 1980, one in four or more entrants to schools of the Inner London Education Authority will be non-white children and the same will be true of one in five entrants in the Greater London area and West Midlands. All are potential newspaper readers. It should be possible to write about such people without straining native white tolerance, which is greater than is sometimes supposed. Most white people surveyed by Marplan for The Sun thought non-whites to be as pleasant, law-abiding, honest and hard-working as whites or more so. But there were strong fears that there would be racial violence and riots in the next few years.

It is in this context that one must view Mr Powell’s manipulation of newspapers. Most people surveyed felt his efforts would make things worse rather than better. This supports evidence of a Gallup Poll that after Mr Powell’s 1968

*Editor’s Note: Newspapers often show a split personality in their handling of ‘race’ and immigration in their news and editorial columns. For a striking example, see Appendix B.
Appendix A

The Daily Telegraph, the Hawley Report and the Runnymede Trust (a note by the Runnymede Trust)

On 25 May under the headline, ‘FOREIGN OFFICE REPORT EXPOSES ASIAN MIGRANT RACKET’, the Daily Telegraph quoted extensively from the Hawley Report. The following day it produced supporting evidence from the 1970 session of the Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration and quoted its former vice-chairman, Mr Arthur Bottomley, as saying, ‘There is a lot of truth in this report’. The Editor’s comment that day went further and stated categorically, ‘What Mr Hawley says in the report which Mr Powell quoted in the House of Commons is true. Not only is it true, but the facts have been known to the authorities for years. No doubt there will be attempts to discredit both the report and the author. We must assume that the race relations industry will move into top gear’. To ensure that at least this last assumption would prove correct, the Editor invited comment from the Runnymede Trust. In response to this request, the Director, Mr Tom Rees sent - by hand, since the invitation was couched in pressing terms - a letter to the paper criticising the Hawley Report and citing evidence from the preliminary findings of the Trust’s own investigations into the practices of immigration control in Pakistan. Instead of publishing the letter immediately, the Telegraph delayed publication for five days and simultaneously launched a full-scale editorial attack. Under the heading ‘MR HAWLEY UNANSWERED’, the Editor commented, ‘Mr Tom Rees, Director of the Runnymede Trust, invites us to reject more or less completely the findings of Mr Hawley’s contentious report to the Foreign Office on immigration from the Indian sub-continent. In doing so, he is also inviting us to reject a mass of corroborative evidence from other sources - to discredit, for instance, the findings of a Parliamentary Select Committee and the results of the on-the-spot investigations recently made by our correspondent, Mr David Loshak’.

Yet the Select Committee’s evidence was six years old, and Mr Loshak’s investigation into the ‘travel agents’ of Sylhet consisted mainly of spicy stories of the sinister doings of ‘fixers’ who, working ‘in the dingy backrooms of the agents’ shops’, would for a price provide false documentation, such as ‘certificates of birth for babies that were never born and certificates of death for men who are still walking the streets’.

The letter from the Director of the Runnymede Trust to the Daily Telegraph, published on 8 June, mentioned that the Runnymede Trust had commissioned an investigation under the direction of Mr M. Akram (Community Relations Officer for Strathclyde and author of a previous report on immigration procedures in the sub-continent, published by Runnymede in 1974 under the title: ‘Where Do You Keep Your String Beds?’). The investigation, which covered 58 unsuccessful appeals against refusals of entry certificates in Pakistan, and surveyed current entry certificate procedures in Islamabad, Karachi, Delhi and Dacca, was carried out by Mr Akram and Mrs J. Elliot (a community worker from Huddersfield) over a space of three months and a preliminary report of their findings was published by the Runnymede Trust in mid-August 1976 under the title ‘Firm But Unfair’.

It might be thought that, given the controversy which had arisen over Mr Hawley’s report and the Telegraph’s coverage of the story, the Telegraph would have devoted some space to a detailed, though no doubt critical, scrutiny of the preliminary report of Mr Akram’s and Mrs Elliot’s findings. This was not, however, to be. The Telegraph was not prepared to wait for the publication of the report, but instead, on 29 July, disclosed some of the findings of the Runnymede Trust investigations. In a short, single-column story under the heading ‘FEW CASES OF BOGUS MIGRANTS’, Mr Amit Roy wrote that the Trust believed the proportion of bogus dependents seeking entry to Britain was comparatively small, that Mr Mohammed Akram and Mrs Jan Elliot had investigated 58 appeals against refusals to grant certificates which had been rejected by the British authorities as fraudulent, and had discovered by visiting the applicants in their home villages that 55 of these were of genuine dependants. In their view there had been a grave miscarriage of justice.

The basis for these findings was surely as relevant to the fair appraisal of the practices of immigration control and their evasion as those of Mr Loshak, of the Select Committee and even those of Mr Hawley, which he himself admitted were ‘somewhat impressionistic’. After all, as the report subsequently revealed, the two researchers had spent three months in the sub-continent, had travelled from village to village painstakingly researching individual cases, and (in Mr Akram’s case) were actually able to converse in the language of the unsuccessful applicants – altogether a rather more careful exercise than the one undertaken by Mr Hawley, to which Mr Powell and the Telegraph had attached such significance. However when the Trust published the report in mid-August 1976, the Telegraph gave it no coverage and did not send a reporter to the Press conference at which it was released. Its sense of news-value was clearly not shared by the BBC, who gave it peak-time television and radio news coverage, or by the Times or Guardian, both of which devoted several columns to the story. The moral of this case is perhaps that commitment to the notion that the facts are sacred is no guarantee that they will in the event be accorded much honour.

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Appendix B

The 1962 Smallpox Outbreak and the British Press

That newspapers can speak with two voices is nothing new in the treatment of stories on race and immigration. A particularly striking example is given by Eric Butterworth in an article ‘The 1962 Smallpox Outbreak and the British Press’ (Race, April 1966, Vol. VIII, No. 4).

A Pakistani girl aged nine arrived in Bradford from Karachi on 16 December 1961. A week later she was admitted to hospital and died a week later of smallpox, which was not diagnosed at the time or at the post-mortem. She had been vaccinated in Karachi. Her case gave rise to 13 indigenous cases of smallpox of whom six died, including the pathologist who had conducted the post-mortem. The first death occurred on 10 January. The outbreak was officially declared to be over on 11 February.

The outbreak occurred midway between the Second and Third Readings of the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill and was seized on by supporters of the Bill both in Parliament and in the national and local Press. On Sunday 14 January it became a front-page main news story in several national newspapers. For the first time prominence was given to the racial connection. For example, the headline in The People read: ‘SMALLPOX STORM: KEEP OUT PAKISTANIS’ CALL BY MPs AS THOUSANDS OF BRITONS QUEUE AT CLINICS’.

There was a great contrast between the policies of the local Bradford evening paper The Telegraph and Argus and the morning paper The Yorkshire Post, owned by the Yorkshire Conservative Newspaper Association and published in Leeds. The Telegraph and Argus, read by 90 per cent of Bradford households, treated the outbreak with restraint, anxious not to spread unnecessary alarm or to create racial prejudice. The Yorkshire Post, which sold 10,000 copies in Bradford, consistently used its news columns in a way that was likely to excite prejudice and fear.

Thus on 15 January they went further than the Sunday Press with the headline of their main news story reading ‘PAKISTANIS BLAMED IN SMALLPOX CITY’ and a sub-heading ‘ANGER IN BRADFORD’. Their reporters’ stories spoke of unease and anger and stated ‘there was open evidence that the public as a whole was blaming the Pakistani population’. They added, for good measure, that ‘there had been no physical incidents involving whites and coloureds up to last night’. In the same issue there were two other news stories prejudicial to Pakistanis.

Despite an angry rejoinder by the Bradford paper which said the reports were a distortion of opinion in Bradford, The Yorkshire Post continued to publish alarmist stories, stating, for example, that forged vaccination certificates could be bought in Pakistan. There were repeated references to violence. And yet on 15 January there was a balanced editorial and on 19 January there was another restrained analysis which concluded that Pakistanis as a whole could not be blamed, and the few hooligans who were reported to be using violence against Pakistanis ‘must be given to understand that they have not even the tacit support of the decent majority’. Butterworth comments: ‘Could this decent majority of the nineteenth be identified with the public as a whole which, on the fifteenth, was said to be blaming the Pakistanis?’

The Yorkshire Post printed a letter from the local branch of a trade union giving the terms of a resolution which expressed ‘disgust’ at the Post’s treatment of the smallpox story and suggesting that the paper’s motive was connected with its advocacy of the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill. The editor replied that the leading articles had said there was no case for stopping immigration as a result of the smallpox; in the news columns, he added, the Post ‘gives the news as it is, not as we should like it to be’. Butterworth, however, seems to show that in its selection and treatment of the news not only of the smallpox outbreak but of other items connected with immigrants the paper was influenced by its advocacy of the Bill. He concludes that the Post often spoke with two voices: in its news treatment (stressing the aspect of violence with headlines that continually referred to Pakistanis) ‘it appeared to give circulation to the kind of happening and opinions which were likely to raise tension and were being condemned in its editorials ... The Post was thus able to combine a sense of being with the angels on its editorial page with a considerable pre-occupation with the devils on its news pages’.
The Runnymede Trust was established in 1968 as a charity concerned with the collection and dissemination of information and the promotion of public education on immigration and race relations. Former Directors have been Mr. Dipak Nandy (1968-73) and Mr. David Stephen (1973-75).

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