

THE ROAD TO NATIONAL SUICIDE

IMMIGRATION, THE PUBLIC INTEREST AND THE UNIFORM OF COLOR

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The following address is a speech given by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell, MP, to a meeting of the Stretford Young Conservatives at the Civic Theatre, Stretford, Manchester at 8pm, Friday, 21 January 1977.

Throughout the last twenty years, locally at first, then nationally, one political subject has been different from all the rest in the persistence with which it has endured and the profound and absorbing preoccupation which it has increasingly held for the public. This is all the more remarkable because of the sedulous determination with which this subject has been kept, as far as possible, out of parliamentary debate, and the use which has been made of every device—from legal penalty to trade union proscription—to prevent the open discussion and ventilation of it. No social or political penalty, no threat of private ostracism or public violence, has been spared against those who have nevertheless continued to describe what hundreds of thousands of their fellow citizens daily saw and experienced and to voice the fears for the future by which those fellow citizens were haunted. The efforts that were made during the 1930s to silence, ridicule, or denounce those who warned of the coming war with the fascist dictatorships and who called for the peril to be recognized and met before too late, provide but a pale and imperfect precedent.

In all this suppression more than one powerful motive can be seen at work. On the one hand there is the primitive but widespread superstition that if danger is not mentioned, it will go away, or even that it is created by being identified and can therefore be destroyed again by being left in silence. Akin to this is the natural resentment of ordinary people, but especially of politicians, at being forced to face an appalling prospect with no readily procurable happy ending. The custom of killing messengers who bring bad news is not confined to the kings and tyrants of antiquity or of fiction. On the other hand there are at work the dark motives of those who desire the catastrophic outcome which they foresee. All round the world in various forms the same formula for rending societies apart is being prepared and applied, by ignorance or design, and there are those who are determined to see to it that Britain shall no longer be able to escape. I marvel sometimes that people should be so innocently blind to this nihilism.

One of the ordinary weapons for the suppression of free speech and of frank expression of opinion is to allege that those who warn of a danger, be they right or wrong, actually desire that danger; that those who warn of war desire war; that those who warn of the materials of hatred and conflict being heaped up desire to see hatred and conflict come about. This is why Churchill was denounced as a warmonger. Because he did not fear to envisage and express the possibility and even probability of war, he could be accused of wanting it.

The fallacy is obvious; for the interest of those who desire calamity would obviously lie in keeping silent till it comes, instead of crying out for means and measures to avert it. But the fallacy is nonetheless dangerous for that.

Till now, however, there has been one essential bulwark against suppression of free speech and of open debate upon the nature and reality of the public danger to which I refer and upon the means to cope with it. That has been the necessity for those who aimed at suppression to prove evil intent on the part of their prospective victims. That condition was of vital importance; for it is inherently unlikely that any subject of public anxiety or apprehension can be discussed or debated without touching upon strong feelings, fears, antagonisms, emotions—indeed, that very probability is proportionate to the importance of the subject. If expression of opinion likely to have that effect is rendered criminal *per se*, irrespective of the intention of the speaker, then all free and open public discussion is rendered impossible, to the manifest endangering of the public interest; for the public interest depends upon the preservation of free speech.

It ought to be understood that, in the intention of the legal advisers of the Crown, this bulwark is now to be swept away. That was made clear by a recent exchange of published letters between the attorney general and myself regarding the effect of section 70 of the Race Relations Act, 1976. For a criminal offense under that section to be committed two conditions must be fulfilled. Speech or writing must be “threatening, abusive or insulting;” and it must also be speech or writing by which “having regard to all the circumstances, hatred is likely to be stirred up against any racial group in Great Britain.”

Now, I have never in a political speech used language which to my knowledge was in any natural sense of the words “threatening, abusive or insulting.” To the contrary, I have always regarded such language as self-defeating in public debate. However, the principal law officer of the Crown has asserted that in his view it was insulting to quote, as I did in a speech at Croydon last October, the expression “alien wedge,” which Viscount Radcliffe in a public address had applied to New Commonwealth immigrants, or to express the opinion that, in the foreseeable numbers and circumstances, the New Commonwealth immigrant and immigrant-descended population in our cities is not likely to be able to live and work in harmony with the rest of the population.

The attorney general has further asserted that in his view race hatred against colored members of our community was likely to be stirred up by what I said. He added that he did not believe a court would find that this was my intention. However, when section 70 of the new Act comes into force, intention will become irrelevant. Thus it is clear that the attorney general believes the uttering or publishing of such speech or writing will thereafter be criminal, and that as attorney general he would expect to give his consent to prosecution of the speaker and of the media which report the speech.

The interpretation, which is given for this purpose to the notions of "insulting" and "stirring up hatred," is radically perverse and one-sided, and it goes to the root of the misconceptions which have hindered rational discussion and handling of this subject from the beginning. Let me illustrate them as follows. In his Christmas day sermon the Archbishop of Canterbury said this: "We can view the man with a colored face as a threat....But we can think of it very differently. That man with a different skin color from mine could be an enrichment to my life and that of my neighbors." Now, I am certain that nothing was further from His Grace's intention than to be insulting to the New Commonwealth immigrant and immigrant-descended population and were exactly the sort of words which stir up intense hatred.

I do not see how it can be other than deeply insulting to describe a Jew as that man with a different shaped nose from mine, or a Zambian as that man with a different sort of hair from mine, or a Chinese as that man with narrower eyes and a yellower pigment than mine. To reduce all the deep-seated differences between the various nations, societies, and tribes of mankind to some external physical attribute in this way is to commit the grossest indignity and disrespect to human nature itself. It is a literally inhuman point of view. What is worse, it is insufferable arrogance to suppose that an Iranian or a Bantu wants to be, or to be thought of, as an Englishman under the skin. On the contrary, with few exceptions, he has no idea or intention of any such thing; and quite right too.

The matter unfortunately does not end there. By talking about the consequences of two million New Commonwealth immigrants in England in terms of a single individual and thus ignoring all the facts and circumstances of the real situation, His Grace and those who speak as he does use the language most calculated to stir people to frenzy. To tell the indigenous inhabitants of Brixton or Southall or Leicester or Bradford or Birmingham or Wolverhampton, to tell the pensioners ending their days in streets of nightly terror unrecognizable as their former neighborhoods, to tell the people of towns and cities where whole districts have been transformed into enclaves of foreign lands, that "the man with a colored face could be an enrichment to my life and that of my neighbors" is to drive them beyond the limits of endurance. It is not so much that it is obvious twaddle. It is that it makes cruel mockery of the experience and fears of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of ordinary, decent men and women.

I repeat, I am sure that His Grace is as innocent of intending to cause evil as the attorney general believes a court would find myself to be; and I trust that, if the Archbishop should unfortunately use the same or similar language again after section 70 of the new Act is in force, the attorney general will refrain from authorizing prosecution. Nevertheless, the consequences of the Archbishop's words, whether the reason for them be actual ignorance of the facts or belief that good can come of ignoring the facts, is that people say to themselves: "if the Primate of all England understands no more than that about what has happened, is happening and is going to happen in our cities, then clearly we must look to leaders of a different sort."

The prevalent determination, of which the Archbishop's is a typical though eminent example, not to see or to admit that violence on a disastrous scale is virtually certain if the "alien wedges" – I use Lord Radcliffe's phrase again – in the metropolis and other major English cities and towns increase at the predictable rate, is due I am sure to a grave misconception. It is supposed that those who envisage such a prospect are accusing the immigrant and immigrant-descended population of having the desire and intention to bring this result about. One is thought to be attacking them for harboring aggressive and violent designs. Hence, very largely, the accusations of insult and of stirring up hatred by pointing out the dangers of the future and denying that those dangers can be averted by measures designed to promote what are called "good race relations."

This, I repeat, is a radical misunderstanding, and it is important that if possible it be removed. The truth is that both the indigenous and the immigrant population will alike be the victims, and the unintended victims, of forces created by the circumstances which we have allowed and continue to allow to develop and which we show no intention of ever endeavoring to reverse.

It is impossible to begin to understand the way in which these forces operate if the discussion is conducted, as race relations always are discussed, in terms of moral imperatives and the attitudes of individuals – like and dislike, good will and ill will. The behavior of men in the mass and in society is not the sum total of the behavior of individuals – any more than inflation is the sum total of voluntary individual increases of prices and wages.

A remarkable speech was made exactly a year ago by the Labor Member for Norwood, John Fraser, in which he pointed to what he called "segregation, not legal or enforced or even well-defined or precise, but segregation nevertheless" as a state of affairs which "ought to send a shudder down our spines," and he added that "once it happens, the process is well nigh irreversible." This is an accurate description of the result of a steady and foreseeable increase in a population, or populations, which are not only seen and felt by the rest among whom they live to be distinct and different but which, more importantly, are themselves strongly predisposed to maintain and reinforce that distinctness and difference.

Where I part company with Mr. Fraser is that he identified what he called “discrimination” and “deprivation” as the causes of segregation and regarded measures for reducing and preventing discrimination and deprivation as calculated to prevent segregation. The opposite is the case. It is segregation that is the cause, and not the result, of discrimination and deprivation; and measures aimed at reducing discrimination and deprivation only increase segregation and enhance its destructive potential.

In understanding this matter, the beginning of wisdom is to grasp the law that in human societies power is never left unclaimed and unused. It does not blow about, like wastepaper on the streets, ownerless and inert. Men’s nature is not only, as Thucydides long ago asserted, to exert power where they have it; men cannot help themselves from exerting power where they have it, whether they want to or not. The colored population of over two million in England, a population which grows at the rate of nearly 100,000 a year while the remainder diminishes, a population which is predominantly concentrated in the central areas of the metropolis and other key urban and industrial centers of England, does possess—simply by reason of segregation and differentiation—a power which would not accrue to a mere random sample of two million persons similarly located but not perceived or perceiving themselves as distinct from the rest.

The potential power derived from this basic and, as it were, physical cause is enhanced by the special circumstances attending upon the New Commonwealth immigration which brought it about. The publicly expressed attitude of the indigenous population towards the colored population is one of apology and self-accusation, denoted, amongst other things, by the passing of ever severer laws for the protection of the minority in circumstances where protection is not intended to be available, and would in practice not be available, for members of the majority who were similarly disadvantaged. The plain effect is, and is understood by both minority and majority to be, to endow the members of a distinctive and growing minority with privilege, and to communicate to them the dangerous conviction that the guilty and apologetic behavior of the majority derives at least in part from fear. This effect is enormously heightened when seen as part of the contemporary worldwide and systematic movement to use color to exploit and foment internal and international conflicts. The result is that the indigenous population perceives its own predicament as that of part of a world minority, which is under verbal and sometimes physical pressure and attack.

Once the position of strength and privilege, natural and psychological, which I have described is created, it is bound to be used as a means to extend that strength and privilege further. In this the situation of a minority which possesses full political rights but yet regards itself and its interests as distinct from, and possibly antagonistic to, those of the host society, is especially favorable. In the narrowly balanced politics of Britain, political support can be auctioned to the highest bidder in return for further privileges and concessions; for the requisite precedents and grievances will always be available and in the

context—uniquely—privilege enjoys vocal public approval. I think I cannot be the only one to have noticed that if four percent of the population had four percent representation in the House of Commons it would already contain twenty-five colored MPs, or to have wondered how soon measures will be proposed to ensure that the present disproportion is rectified. It is the business of the leaders of distinct and separate populations to see that the power which they possess is used to benefit those for whom they speak. Leaders who fail to do so, or to do so fast enough, find themselves outflanked and superseded by those who are less squeamish. The Gresham's law of extremism, that the more extreme drives out the less extreme, is one of the basic rules of political mechanics which operate in this field: it is a corollary of the general principle that no political power exists without being used.

Both the general law and its Gresham's corollary point, in contemporary circumstances, towards the resort to physical violence, in the form of firearms or high explosive, as being so probable as to be predicted with virtual certainty. The experience of the last decade and more, all round the world, shows that acts of violence, however apparently irrational or inappropriate their targets, precipitate a frenzied search on the part of the society attacked to discover and remedy more and more grievances, real or imaginary, among those from whom the violence is supposed to emanate or on whose behalf it is supposed to be exercised. Those commanding a position of political leverage would then be superhuman if they could refrain from pointing to the acts of terrorism and, while condemning them, declaring that further and faster concessions and grants of privilege are the only means to avoid such acts being repeated on a rising scale. We know that those who thus argue will always find a ready hearing. This is what produces the gearing effect of terrorism in the contemporary world, yielding huge results from acts of violence perpetrated by minimal numbers. It is not, I repeat again and again, that the mass of a particular population are violently or criminally disposed. Far from it; that population soon becomes itself the prisoner of the violence and machinations of an infinitely small minority among it. Just a few thugs, a few shots, a few bombs at the right place and time—and that is enough for disproportionate consequences to follow.

Differentiation by color, where it exists, is an enormously important factor in this context, effective in a number of ways which all operate in the same direction. It is, first, a permanent and involuntary uniform, which performs all and more of the functions of a uniform in warfare, distinguishing one side from the other, friend from foe, and making it possible to see at a glance what is happening, where to render assistance, and where to attack. This is why those who have sought to organize the domination of a majority by a minority have commonly, where possible, used insignia and means of mutual recognition to increase the potency of small numbers.

Moreover, the uniform of color, because it is involuntary and irremovable, becomes an irresistible force for dominating and disciplining those who wear it. They are literally marked people, expected to rally to whatever is designated

as their cause and treated as manifest traitors if they fail to do so. When one has witnessed how the invisible uniform of religion enables the IRA to exert over the mass of peaceful and law-abiding Roman Catholic citizens in Northern Ireland a terror and compulsion far severer than that under which their Protestant fellow citizens live, one can form some idea of the consolidating potential of the visible uniform of color. Finally, color polarizes, and reinforces differentiation and segregation, because the individual, however much, as an individual, he may become, and wish to become, assimilated to the host population, is firmly identified, and thus eventually obliged to identify himself, with the minority to which he belongs. Color is a recruiting sergeant, and a recruiting sergeant for officer material.

I have been describing the forces which, with a kind of mechanical inevitability, invest the New Commonwealth immigrant and immigrant-descended population in England with the sort of power which cannot in the nature of things remain unexerted; but one crucial factor has not yet been mentioned. The consequences of New Commonwealth immigration are not static, they are dynamic. The resultant population is not a fixed element of the total, bearing a proportion to the whole not destined to increase, and representing therefore a phenomenon which, despite all the attendant difficulties of highly differentiated and segregated enclaves, might eventually, by a kind of collective force of habit, become a stable feature of the England of the future. This is probably the mistaken picture still in the minds of many people, including a correspondent who in a letter to me after my last speech on this subject wrote, "After all, what's so terrible about a few race riots?"

What we do know is that upon any conceivable assumptions, short of wholly new policy initiatives, the New Commonwealth immigrant and immigrant-descended population will continue to grow not only absolutely but proportionately until far into the next century. This is implicit in the age-structure of that population, apart from any other causes whatsoever. Thus of the two differentiated populations, one will be advancing and the other retracting, both numerically and territorially. The significance of this fact is again enhanced by the pattern of distribution. The picture is not that of a province or corner of the country occupied by a distinct and growing population, though that would be perilous enough. It is of the occupation, more and more intense, of key areas – and, it may be added, of key functions – in the heartlands of the Kingdom. The process is one of which both populations will continuously and increasingly be conscious. It is this fact which, added to all the rest, points to the prospect of eventual conflict upon a scale which cannot adequately be described by any lesser term than civil war.

Thus by our own past actions of commission and omission we have set in motion the processes which will lead to a result equally catastrophic for both the host and the immigrant-descended populations and equally unwilling by both, who will be the prisoners and the victims of their situation. I defy anyone

to suggest that to trace those processes and to envisage this prospect is to "insult" either population, unless it be an insult to assume that they will act and react as human societies observably do and always have. But still the question may be asked: "So be; but why do you not, forseeing this, keep silence? What is gained by speech?" To this I answer that even if I thought the outcome could by no contrivance be avoided, it would still be one's instinct and one's duty to speak: we cry out to warn our fellow beings of impending catastrophe, whether or not we calculate that they can still escape. The instinct is a healthy instinct, and the duty is a rational duty; for who knows what efforts men are capable of when necessity stares them in the face? Nor have I ever doubted that, once the nature and scale of the consequences were recognized, the common interest of all in averting them could make possible measures hitherto dismissed as impracticable or unthinkable. They would indeed be heroic measures, measures which radically altered the prospective pattern of our future population; but they would be measures based on and operating with human nature as it is, not measures which purport to manipulate and alter human nature by laws, bureaucracy, and propaganda. Such as they are, they will never come, or they will come too late, if a prohibition is placed upon rational and temperate free speech and a premium upon self-deception and willful blindness.