

**'STANDS SCOTLAND WHERE IT DID?'**  
**AN ESSAY IN ETHNICITY AND**  
**INTERNATIONALISM**

*Elinor Kelly*

Scotland stands on the brink of constitutional change which will transform its relations with the other countries of the United Kingdom. At the same time, the peace process in Northern Ireland has reached the point where one can contemplate an end to the years of sectarian strife and their impact in Scotland. There is no doubt that Scotland is readying itself for radical change and the closing months of 1998 will be recalled as memorable and invigorating. Debate about Scottish identity, Scottish institutions, and the complexities of Scottish history has been revitalised, drawing in many sections of communities, majority and minority.

What better moment could there be to pause and reflect on the meaning of these changes for the different communities living in Scotland and their international connections? After all, the relationship with Ireland is centuries old and the Scots are renowned for their emigrant communities in the former Dominions of Empire. The nineteenth century migration from Ireland was the precursor of migrations from Eastern Europe and Italy and twentieth century migrations from Africa and Asia. The ethnic map of Scotland is as complex as Scottish history, comprising indigenous minorities as well as more recently settled minorities. Living in Scotland, proud to be Scots, are communities identifiable by language, religion and cultural affiliation. If the aspirations of minorities are to be met, and the cultural diversity of Scotland is to be developed, then the new Scottish Parliament should be at the cutting edge of legislation, policies and practice which celebrate ethnicity and ensure that minorities are fully integrated into the political mainstream.

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### *An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

In this essay I reflect on the issues which were raised by participants in an important seminar which took place in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling in June 1998. The seminar was organised for the visit of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. This Commission was initiated by the Runnymede Trust, an independent research and policy agency which, over the past thirty years, has established a leading position in providing advice and assistance on 'race' issues to policy makers in education, employment, health, law, media, politics and welfare. Chaired by Sir John Burgh (formerly director general of the British Council and deputy chair of the Community Relations Commission), the Commission's terms of reference are to consider the political, social and cultural implications of the diversity of the British people into the twenty-first century, taking oral and written evidence throughout the United Kingdom.

In recent years, Runnymede Trust commissions have published impressive reports which have stirred significant debate. However, in common with most London-based organisations, they have failed to take Scotland into account leading to serious errors and misrepresentations in what should have been 'British' documents. Consequently, when the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain circulated details of their terms of reference and the questions which they intended to probe, they were immediately lobbied about whether they intended to give attention to the situation of Scotland. This lobbying was in part reaction to the persistent and misleading neglect of Scotland, but it was also anticipation of the processes of change. The visit by the Commissioners was a timely response in an era when radical change is in the air and there is renewed vigour and energy in lobbying about the constitutional agenda.

Seven members of the Commission paid visits to Edinburgh and Glasgow and worked overnight in Stirling. Submissions were organised with the assistance of Pauline Brown and led by eight conveners (Rowena Arshad, Farkhanda Chaudhry, Tessfu Gessesse, Gar-Ming Hui, Amu Lagotse, Namasiku Liandu, Alastair McIntosh, Daniel Onifade) who brought in another 42, mostly young, people from different communities across Scotland. The submissions were organised around the Black Community Development Project, the Chinese Youth Development Project, and the themes of Education, Law, People and Parliament, Religion, Work Opportunities, and Scottish Identity.

The Commissioners were briefed about Scottish education, law and religion; poverty, enterprise and the transformation of the economy; indigenous languages and cultures; new community languages and cultures; key principles in Scottish history and culture which ensured that union with England was resisted, until the overwhelming vote in favour of devolution in

### *Scottish Affairs*

1997. They heard detailed accounts of the complexities of Scottish history - ethnic rivalries over the centuries; the decline of indigenous languages and cultures; waves of invasion, emigration and immigration; the struggle to withstand the hegemony of rule by the English. They took part in debate about the complexities of the present - the movements for recognition of community languages and religions; sectarian and racist forms of discrimination and harassment; hopes and fears in relation to the new Parliament. Working for the future requires assessment of the present and understanding of the past.

Indeed, the seminar uncovered a wealth of experience and expertise on which to ponder. In this essay I reflect on key aspects of Scotland as a 'multi-ethnic' society in which minorities are acknowledged and supported. If Scotland is to become an inclusive society for the new century, then institutional change is essential, and I have selected the issues of language, religion and the justice system for close scrutiny.

#### **THE LANGUAGES OF SCOTLAND - HYBRIDITY IN LANGUAGE**

Should we view Scotland as a trilingual society? What debates arise from asking this question? Does this question cause a shift in our understanding of language issues as we adjust to the communities more recently settled from Africa and Asia? Does it perhaps alter our view of communities who have been here longer - the Irish, Italians, Poles? Would a trilingual Scotland develop more effective responses to linguistic minorities, within Scotland and elsewhere?

When James Kelman won the 1994 Booker prize for his novel **How Late It Was, How Late**, his achievement, and the support of his admirers, sank beneath the waves of criticism which excoriated him for the crudity and inaccessibility of his language. The tone of his critics was extreme, indicating not only discomfort at the demands he makes of his readers, but also disdain for the people about whom he writes. His critics did not pause to ask themselves why a writer famed as much for the erudition of his political essays as for his novels and short stories should choose to write in this way. Nor did they consider the possibility that his way of using language is understood and celebrated by a swathe of readers. Indeed, four years later, the University of Texas is demonstrating their appreciation of his artistry by inviting him to take up an academic post.

Intellectually, Kelman is well able to defend himself, as he demonstrated in a long interview in **The Guardian Weekend** in July 1998:

*An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

When people assert the right to cultural or linguistic freedom, they are accused of being ungracious, parochial, xenophobic or racist. One of the few remaining freedoms we have is the blank page. No one can prescribe how we should fill it. ... Your own culture is valid. My culture and my language have the right to exist, and no one has the authority to dismiss that right.

Kelman values literary culture which is pluralistic, inclusive of the voice, the vernacular, of ordinary people. He has been described as an 'ice-breaking ship' who went into uncharted waters encouraging other Scottish writers to follow in his wake. But, importantly, he also celebrates affinity with writers from the former colonies of Britain in Africa and the Caribbean whose work he considers to be equally 'subversive' of English:

They proved that what was sneered at as 'dialect', 'patois' or 'pidgin' could be a poetic, lyrical language expressive not only of vulgar realism or comedy but of inner truths and emotions - often with an ear to the rhythm, pace and pulse of the spoken word.

The rumpus about Kelman's Booker Prize is familiar to anyone who has followed the careers of the authors writing in another 'dialect' - that spoken by British people of Caribbean descent. Linton Kwesi Johnson, Caryl Phillips and Benjamin Zephaniah are only a few of the writers prominent in a stream of creativity developed within a community with roots in Africa and the Caribbean as well as Britain. They have been celebrated and excoriated in equal measure, especially when enlightened members of academe or the literary establishment nominate them for award. At issue is acceptance of the hybridity of English, a language which is developing as much through the challenge and demand of the vernacular of many peoples, as through the language of the literati, metropolitan in experience, but socially resistant.

English developed as a great world language because the courtiers, military, churchmen, traders and civil servants of Empire adapted and absorbed indigenous concepts and terms. There are several thousand words of foreign etymology from Africa, Asia and the Middle East in the Oxford English Dictionary. Indeed, the process of hybridity is essential if a language is to develop a wide range of expression and deep vocabulary, as can be understood by reflecting on the history of another language renowned for the range and depth of its vocabulary. Urdu is spoken, read and written by many Pakistanis and Indians, and understood by the people of both countries as the medium of Bollywood (the prolific Indian film industry), developed in ways analogous to English. It originated as a Turkic language of the 'urd' (camp); its basic syntax and verbal forms are indigenous to the northern area of the

### *Scottish Affairs*

subcontinent where Punjabi is spoken; its learned diction is drawn from Arabicized Persian; Persian constructions are mainly to be found in poetry; it is renowned for its harmonious musicality. William Shakespeare, the master of the eclectic artistry of English, would be fascinated.

Scots - the hybrid language which emerged out of the fusion of native languages with English - has been ignored, deemed relevant only insofar as it required correction as 'faulty English'. Scots was intended to endure the same fate as the other hybrid forms of English which were emerging from the British Empire. However, in common with the slaves who retained the music, rhythm, and form of their indigenous languages against the most inhuman odds, and whose 'patois' has now broken into the world literature of English in north America and the Caribbean, the Scottish people would not standardise. Whether one views it as a language, a dialect or a 'patois' the fact is that Scots is alive as a popular, expressive and distinctive mode of communication, which is celebrated in novel, poetry, film, comedy, drama and song. Scots is as much part of Scotland as Gaelic.

Having established the hybridity of English, its dependence on the vernacular of native peoples, and the analogies with Scots, what then of the relationship with Gaelic, a language indigenous to Scotland? Still spoken as mother tongue by 66,000 people today, Gaelic is the medium of education in 55 primary and 12 secondary schools, has daily radio broadcast hours, and is published as a column in **The Scotsman**. As Matt McIver, Chair of the Gaelic Broadcasting Committee, explained during the Commission seminar, there has been a renaissance in the language, started 20 years ago when it was decided to embark on continuous political lobbying and to give priority to representation of the language in the media. Financial provision to support Gaelic was made in the 1990 Broadcasting Act, and in the 1996 Broadcasting Act three hours peak viewing time on digital TV was allocated.

What would it mean for Scotland to declare itself to be trilingual? Alistair Moffat, in an essay in May in **The Herald**, described one incident in his experience of trilingualism. He was best man at a wedding, and felt constrained to speak in English, even though he finds Scots (as does Kelman) more expressive of emotion and the grandeur of his homeland, and loves Gaelic for its 'decorated literary fluency'. He described his inhibitions and 'awkwardness' about speaking Gaelic and about the particularity of the dialect of Scots he learned in his home. But, he goes on to say,

I've never felt that English fitted me very well. I write it much better than I speak it. ... I learned English first to deal with formal education and then with business. But it does not describe my experience well, particularly

*An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

my experience of Scotland. Adjectives feel borrowed from another place, but, of course, English is handy for refracting experience back to other people, and very handy for that on a world-wide scale. ... I believe the overwhelming majority of our people don't see Scots as a separate and distinct language from English. ... Combined with Gaelic, our national language should be projected as the best vehicle for carrying descriptions of Scotland, both geographically and culturally. If you want to understand more about your country, then embrace Scots and learn Gaelic.

What Moffat did not appreciate in this interesting essay was that his inhibitions and dilemmas are precisely those of other people who speak several languages. Ghanaians and Nigerians cannot express in English some of the deeper emotions which have been formed in their mother tongues, or relax easily in a language which has lost the distinctions between 'thou' and 'you'; Pakistanis feel constrained in poetic mode without the rhyming couplets of Urdu; many fumble, when teasing or angry, without the florid vocabulary of Punjabi. The English-speaking world has a stratum of meaning shared between speakers of several languages but which is indecipherable to the monolingual.

Where do attitudes to Gaelic and Scots intersect with other community languages? The largest immigrant community in Scotland is still the Irish. In twentieth-century history another significant stream of immigration was from Italy. More recently, the numbers of Punjabis - from India and Pakistani; Bengalis - from India and Bangladesh; Chinese - from Hong Kong and the New Territories; Africans - from Ghana, Nigeria, the Horn of Africa and Southern Africa; Arabs, Iranians and Kurds - from the Middle East have grown as a result of migration and flight from persecution. How should an enlightened Scotland respond to their language needs and aspirations?

From the history of Gaelic and its struggle for survival, we could gain insight into the artistic and creative impulses which are nurtured within indigenous languages and which can flourish during diaspora. Through respecting Scots as an enriching hybrid we can identify with the people who express themselves through other hybrid forms of English and with the struggles for liberation which underlie their 'hybridity'. And, most importantly, such understanding and respect could move us away from assimilationist attitudes of expecting, assuming, demanding, that languages in Scotland merge into some standardised common form. The indigenous could be sustained, but mutate. The hybrids could multiply and diverge.

If Scotland were to institutionalise itself as trilingual, we could engage with the wider world in radically different ways, more aware of the cultures which

### *Scottish Affairs*

live within the people who speak to us in English, but whose deepest spirituality and emotions lie elsewhere. We could have greater empathy with the people of the world who are living in Scotland - and elsewhere - but only if the languages of the more recent arrivals are included in the new awareness. We have to be alert to the possibility that trilingualism could become another layer of oppression for other language communities.

### **ISSUES OF RELIGION - THE FAITHS OF THE PEOPLE**

There has to be something remarkable about the country in which the Clydesdale Bank's current £10 notes have portraits of David Livingstone, the famous missionary and explorer, and Mary Slessor, the Dundee mill worker who became a Presbyterian Church missionary in Nigeria in the late nineteenth century. The banknotes symbolise complex and rich contradictions - reminding us not only of the extraordinary scale of Scots involvement in missionary activity throughout the British Empire and their dedicated pursuit of conversion, but also of the frequency with which Scots missionaries interpreted the Christian Bible in favour of the people who were most severely oppressed in the countries where they established their missions. Since the end of the Second World War, people from the former colonies have settled in Scotland. Buddhists, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs now live alongside African, Caribbean, Chinese and Scottish Christians.

How has Scotland been responding to the presence of the 'new' faiths within our midst? In the Commission seminar, several strands were raised for debate by participants. They stated their appreciation of freedom from state persecution as religious minorities. The Jews, in particular, value their sense of security in Scotland, as compared with elsewhere in Europe, and some areas of England. All regret the lack of protection from religious bigotry and harassment in Race Relations legislation and feel that they experience institutional discrimination - for example, the frequent refusal to allow leave from work for the Holy Days in the Jewish Calendar, the non-recognition of Chinese ministers as celebrants in marriage services.

Each religious community experiences distinctive forms of discrimination. For instance, the Hindus find themselves 'being crudely exoticised'. The media sensationalise stories such as the figure of Ghanesh drinking milk in a London temple; and there is still too much of a tendency towards 'chicken tikka, saris and samosas'. Hinduism is viewed as some kind of mysterious intellectualism, not on the same plane as everyday life, not 'normal'. There is an obsession with polytheism which is viewed as being 'pagan', inspiring art, but 'messier' than other religions. There seems to be a contrast between the

### *An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

respectful attitudes to Graeco-Roman and Egyptian polytheism, which are 'politically okay crowd pullers' in the Museums, and disrespect for the polytheism of Hinduism. Why is this? Attention was also drawn to the eagerness of the media to highlight friction between religious groups, such as Hindus and Muslims in India, and the high profile given to the destruction of the Babri Mosque and the Ayodhya Temple, without reference to centuries of peaceful coexistence.

A key dilemma for all religious minorities was summarised by the Muslim participants:

We are being forced by the system to make a choice, either integrate into this society and therefore compromise ourselves, our cultures and our beliefs, and by doing so lose our identity; or separatism, whereby we create our own institutions and educational systems which are more focused towards our needs.

This dilemma was expressed by many during the Commission seminar, along with frustration about the burden of developing their infrastructures, independent of state support. The ability of the different religious minorities to develop such an infrastructure varies greatly. As the single most numerous minority, the Muslims have more opportunity than others. There are now more than 40,000 Muslims in Scotland and they have organised an impressive network of mosques, (at the latest count, 30 across Scotland), burial facilities and madrassahs (mosque-based classes of religious instruction which run after school hours during the week and during weekends), community centres and groups. This infrastructure is essential for any Muslim community living as a minority seeking to participate fully as citizens in the mainstream of life in a non-Muslim society while practising their religion. Nonetheless, their sense of well-being in Britain is being undermined by the reluctance of central and local government to grant them, or other religious minorities, full rights, especially in education.

Facilities for pupils to pray in school are few and far between, even during the holy month of Ramadhan. While each school is required to provide religious education which includes all world faiths, parents report that some of this teaching is inaccurate. But, most significantly, the legal right to religious instruction, as opposed to education, in school, is the privilege of only one denomination - the Catholics. The children of all other faiths must receive their instruction after school hours (in the evenings and at weekends) in classes supported by communities among whom there are disproportionate numbers of people impoverished as the result of industrial decline and unemployment. Quite apart from the weight of financial responsibility which

### *Scottish Affairs*

the communities bear as they sustain their educational rights through voluntary effort, there is an enduring sense of injustice because the children are suffering through deprivation of play and leisure time and their parents are criticised by teachers for the burden they place on the children.

Schools are exhorted to respect the different beliefs of pupils, teachers and parents and to consult with the school board and parents in determining the pattern and frequency of religious observance. However, the inequity between the Catholic sector where religious observance is intended to deepen the faith of the pupils and the non-denominational sector where the emphasis is on expressing their spiritual needs and aspirations is marked. The arrangements for religious observance and instruction for Catholics (within and outwith the denominational schools) are far closer to what many religious minority parents would hope to achieve as a seamless, integrated experience for their daughters and sons.

By their robust defence of their rights as the largest religious minority in Scotland, Muslims have taken pole position in campaigns for change and, as a result, they are often viewed with suspicion, especially by the politicians and the press, who create a considerable problem. If Muslims ask for state funding for a school (or for other facilities), they are accused of 'further fragmentation'. If they ask for a facility which is already allowed to another religious minority - in this case, Catholics - the West of Scotland sectarian issue is brought into the frame and held against them. If they claim their rights as a 'religious' minority, they are told that they are not Muslim, they are Asian and black. If they insist on being respected as Muslims, they are suspected of being 'fundamentalists'. Such a situation is manifestly unjust.

Will the inequity between Catholics, Muslims and pupils of other faiths be resolved in the new Scotland? Will religious minorities continue to be refused their rights in education for fear of the sectarianism? Will provision for Muslims be grafted onto the existing denominational arrangements? Will the sectarian nettle be grasped and radical changes be made in statutory arrangements for the school curriculum and support for supplementary schools? Will politicians acknowledge that one way to reduce denominationalism and its dark shadow - sectarianism - would be to bring religious instruction into specific periods, thus permitting the secularising of the rest of the week? How will Scotland respond to the proposal for its first Muslim school, in the premises formerly occupied by Bellahouston Academy in Glasgow?

Allowing Muslims, and other religious minorities, respect, dignity and understanding does not require agreement or conformity to their principles.

### *An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

Nor does it mean that Pandora's Box has been opened. On the contrary, it opens dialogue and discovery. The overwhelming majority of world faith believers in Scotland are utterly and resolutely opposed to the forces of totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and even theocracy, which are as threatening to their livelihoods and freedom of thought as they are to any other people who seek to live in freedom and peace.

The faiths of the people are a cultural reality in Scotland, they cannot be willed away. If the issues raised by religious minorities are bypassed today, they will have to be confronted at a later date. It is unlikely that a postponement will increase ability to face the problem in the future, and a delay may in fact impede progress as a whole. The rights of religious minorities need to be addressed.

No discussion of religion in Scotland is complete without reference to Ireland and the politics of sectarianism. We do not yet know whether the 1998 peace agreements between Protestant Unionists and Catholic Republicans are going to hold and become a definitive break with the past. The questions to pose are whether a peace settlement in Northern Ireland will lead to a decline in sectarianism, and whether it will increase the possibility of Scotland moving towards institutionalising itself as a 'multi-faith society', developing a distinctively Scottish way in which religious minorities of all faiths can be integrated, socially and politically. We have a long way to go, as we realised when the convener of the submission on religion could not find a speaker willing to talk to the seminar about Catholic-Protestant sectarianism.

### **JUSTICE FOR ALL?**

The single aspect of Scottish society which has more influence than any other in assuring minorities of their security in their chosen country is the justice system. In the session relating to Law, the Commissioners were briefed about the distinctiveness of the Scottish system, and its potential for effective response to minority concerns. Sadly, they were also briefed about its failure to acknowledge the need for change. The summary of key information is daunting.

There is no systematic ethnic monitoring of crime or court cases. There are no policies or procedures relating to language and the use of interpreters. There are no forums in which the judiciary consult on a regular basis with minority communities. There is only one law centre dealing specifically with minority casework and both its lawyers are white. Scotland has the same legislation and procedures relating to immigration and asylum as the rest of

### *Scottish Affairs*

the United Kingdom, but a much smaller pool of legal practitioners who are familiar with relevant law and procedures. Many applicants for asylum are not represented at appeals, and in Scotland the requirement to employ a solicitor is tighter, and so volunteers from community agencies cannot substitute. There are no black or Asian sheriffs or judges, and only a small number of lawyers, and there very few black and Asian police officers. The Scottish Children's Reporters Administration carries out no ethnic monitoring of panel members or cases. Since 1989 all police forces have been required to publish data on racial incidents. Some have made positive moves towards the responsiveness which is required if Scottish communities are to live in peace. However, on this issue the police have been left to their own devices; the lawyers, children's panels and courts have not kept pace.

Interestingly, Scotland has a supportive heritage in relations between police and community. The rate of the reporting of crime is consistently higher in Scotland than in England and Wales, and the commitment to community policing is more robust, causing the police to take a leading role in inter-agency forums and to undertake some interesting initiatives. In the seminar, we were told about the Kirkcaldy pilot project against crime through youth sport, the Dunfermline liaison with Koreans towards the Hyundai Development, and the Fife Domestic Violence Unit. In relation to racial incidents, the newly installed computerised recording should increase monitoring capacity, by including the ethnic status of all persons - victims, defenders and witnesses.

Nonetheless, the process of change has been erratic, subject to the will of senior officers, some of whom have been remarkably slow to respond to even the most urgent of signs and signals. In the history of Scottish policing of minority communities, there have been key moments which, it was feared, could indicate the downturn experienced in English cities, where police and community relations have become soured by some notorious cases of police neglect and abuse.

- In 1989 Axmed Sheekh was killed on an Edinburgh city centre street. Axmed was a Somali refugee who had moved to Scotland because he thought it would be safer than England. He was killed by men who did not know him at all. Why did they pick on him? Fury and despair spread into street protest when the local police would not acknowledge that there was a racial motivation for his death.
- In 1993, a man and five youths in Dundee were charged with various offences following a campaign of racial abuse and harassment which had

*An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

caused terror among the Asian community in the Hilltown area. None of the charges mentioned racial motivation.

- In 1994, a leading justice of the peace complained that cases are being brought to court without sheriffs being informed that the alleged offences may be racially motivated.

If people are to feel confident about reporting racial incidents, they have to see a purpose and an end result. If the police record racial motivation, is it acknowledged in court? We do not know, because while the police are required to publish statistics of racial incidents, there is no such requirement of the courts. In such an environment, it is not surprising that people are reluctant to report incidents. Community groups and Racial Equality Councils across Scotland repeatedly press the point that most racial harassment remains unrecorded. All too often, low levels of abuse become sustained campaigns which can drive the victims, and their neighbours, beyond endurance. In November 1996, Paul Lavery was supported by a petition from 50 local residents of Ruchazie after he fired a gun at men who had been tormenting his family with racial abuse for weeks on end.

In 1991, Fife Regional Council commissioned a survey of Asian and black residents. They found that 72% had been victims of racist incidents, but only one in four had reported incidents to the police. The rest were too frightened, anxious about how long the police would take to come, or believed that it would do no good anyway. One of the Asians in the Fife survey said:

It won't ever stop until people who aren't racially abused start taking notice and realise that there is a very large and serious problem. People who are racially abused nearly always don't report it, because nothing gets done. We are treated like third class citizens and made to take a back seat while the bullies and loud mouths get the law on their side.

The police statistics reveal that every year some of the most frightening incidents occur in suburbs and rural areas where the victims are isolated from the communities which could give them support. In Orkney, there is still a sense of deep shock that the first victim of murder on the island for many years was Shamsudden Mahmood, a Bangladeshi waiter, in 1994. His killer has not been found. In 1995, parents of pupils in Dunoon Grammar School formed a group - Parents Against Racism - in order to force action against racist abuse. In 1997, in the Black Isle, the children of English incomers were attacked and Nazi swastikas daubed in bus shelters. Also in 1997, Guyana-born Michael Jagroop and his Scottish wife Harriet fled Portknockie after a year's sustained campaign of racial abuse and attack by gangs of youths and

### *Scottish Affairs*

men. The Jagroops claim that they were abandoned to their fate. Too late, the community expressed shame and regret.

Racial incidents also occur in sport. There have been numerous instances of racist abuse shouted from the stands of the big clubs during football matches. Recently club managers and football supporters have combined forces to oppose racist abuse; as a consequence, behaviour has improved. But, in November last year, two men were jailed for shouting racist abuse during an under-21 cup final match between Yoker and Campsie, and then kicking a young black footballer unconscious. At last, on this occasion, the racial motivation was made explicit, even though the accused and their lawyers insisted throughout that the assault was not 'racist'.

How have the police responded to their role in the front line of the justice system? As the only public service required to collect and publish details of 'racial incidents', gradually the impact of this form of ethnic monitoring is being felt. In 1997, the Chief Constable of Strathclyde Police took note of the fact that there was serious under-reporting of racial incidents in his area. How else could he explain the fact that Lothian and Borders police with a population of 830,000 reported 288 racial incidents in March 1996, whereas Strathclyde police with a population of 2,250,000 reported only 230? He decided to relaunch the Race Relations policy and to change the method of recording. Immediately, the statistics started to climb. Indeed, by January 1998, there had been a 61% increase in the number of racial incidents. This change was important for Scotland. It meant that the police service responsible for more than half our population had recognised the need for change. It meant that more people were willing to report the racial incidents which are making their life a misery.

Another indicator of the need for change was the fact that individual members of the public and individual officers were starting to lodge formal complaints about racial harassment by police officers, particularly in relation to Strathclyde Police, the largest police force outside London. In 1995, Mohammed Aamer Anwar, after he did not receive a satisfactory response to his allegation of racist assault by a police officer, won a civil action in the course of which the sheriff made disparaging comments about the police handling of his complaints. In 1995, Police Constable Lawrence Ramadas retired on medical grounds after two years of sick leave following incidents of racial abuse at the hands of a senior officer. He pursued his case through industrial tribunal but was unable to achieve any redress until, in August 1998, the current Chief Constable offered him an apology and reinstatement.

### *An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

This intervention could not have been more timely. Only a few weeks before, the shocking revelations in the public enquiry about the Metropolitan Police response to the street murder of Stephen Lawrence reached a crescendo. Stephen, a black schoolboy, was murdered in 1993, in front of his friend, while waiting for a bus. Since then his family have fought to establish the guilt of his killers, and have been seriously impeded by the attitudes and actions of the police. Extremely serious problems of professional neglect, racist culture and collusion were shown to have penetrated to all levels of the service, from basic grade officers through to the most senior. The damage done was so great that the Police Commissioner was forced to issue an unprecedented and humiliating apology to Stephen's family. The public inquiry into the case continues later this year, when the panel will visit other parts of England to carry out further investigations.

It was therefore a tense moment in Scotland when the case of Lawrence Ramadas came to a head at the same time as the full scale of the Metropolitan police scandal was filling the headlines. It seemed as if police-community relations in Scotland could be contaminated by the Lawrence case and severely damaged by the impending failure of Strathclyde police to take firm action against Ramadas's antagonists. By his action, the Strathclyde Chief Constable demonstrated that it is possible for people in strategic positions in the justice system to break the mould, to go against the tide of what seminar participants described as the 'culture of inertia and complacency'. Only time will tell whether PC Ramadas and his colleagues will be able to recover the ground which has been lost. But at least they are being given a rare opportunity to break with the past and to set an agenda for the future.

When will other minority ethnic members of the justice system be given equivalent opportunities? When will other parties to the justice system come alongside the police? When will the Scottish Office demonstrate any urgency and require the Scottish legal authorities to change their ways?

### **REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE**

It was an uncomfortable fact, often repeated during the seminar, that Scotland lacks the ethnic imagination which celebrates diversity, and is falling behind in institutional arrangements which secure minorities within civic society. Time and again, participants complained that the Scottish Office, which should be taking a lead, does not take minorities into account, does not require systematic ethnic monitoring and has not developed ethnic-sensitive policies. Moreover Scottish councils (and their departments of education, housing, social work) ignore problems until they become crises; voluntary

### *Scottish Affairs*

organisations respond to numbers not needs; business, commerce and the professions avoid minority issues. Minorities, and particularly the newcomers from Africa and Asia, are marginalised, politically, socially and economically. The economy is weighted in discriminatory ways which restrict opportunities and confine the new minorities to the self-employed sector. Disproportionate poverty is experienced and yet most forms of community infrastructure have been developed alone, without state support.

This year, the Race Equality Sub Committee of Edinburgh City Council carried out a consultative exercise in its own departments and with local communities through its Equality Forums in order to draft a submission to the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain. They stated that community responses painted a picture of considerable difficulty: 'The experience of racism and the anger and alienation felt by respondents because of its effects run through all responses. ... Black and other ethnic minority groups are under-represented within the bodies which support the democratic process'. The end result is that the everyday experience of minorities is not heard, their contribution to Scottish economic, social and cultural life is ignored, racial harassment is tolerated, individuals and communities feel isolated and exposed, there are no black 'high-flyers' and there are very few publicly funded black-led initiatives. The fear is that in spite of living in Scotland, and wanting to be Scots, black and minority ethnic people will not be included in the society which will be shaped by the new Parliament.

Historically, such fears are justified. In spite of the early start created by Kainti Dass Saggarr who served as councillor in Dundee between 1936 and 1954, there have been very few Scottish black and Asian councillors elected. In the Strathclyde area, for instance, which includes more than half Scotland's population, there were no black or Asian councillors until 1970, then only one - Bashir Maan - until between 1984 and 1992, when there were two - Neelam Bakshi and Mushtaq Ahmed. When, in 1995, six Asian councillors were elected in Glasgow and Lanark, and, in 1997, a Pakistani was elected to the Westminster Parliament (as the first black or Asian MP in Scotland and the first Muslim MP in Britain) there was perceptible relief that we were starting to move forward.

What outcome is likely in the election next year? The political parties have approved their lists of candidates and are waiting for constituencies to decide which they will select. It was a chastening experience to telephone each of the party head offices for information about the current situation. Only one office (the Liberal Democrats) was able or willing to give details of the minority ethnic candidates on their approved lists; the Conservative party office would give no information at all until constituencies have decided; the Scottish

### *An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

National Party would post out the list of approved candidates so that I could scan it 'for relevant names'; the Labour Party office did not have the relevant information, but thought that there might be one potential candidate. If this is the state of affairs in the four political parties, what chance is there of change in the immediate future?

In their response to the Scottish Office consultation on the Scottish Parliament, the Scottish Inter Faith Consultative Group recommended another approach. They started with the point that 'a shift in consciousness is needed within government to acknowledge that Scotland is a multifaith society and that Christianity is only part of the spectrum of religious beliefs. It is vital that the multi-faith nature of Scottish society be accepted from the start and that recognition of this be more than lip service as it is at the moment'. They have two main recommendations. The first is that there should be a parliamentary committee for religious affairs which would extend the present form of national consultations which take place with Church leaders to representatives of all faiths. The second is that a Minister for Religious Affairs should be appointed.

In the summer 1998 issue of **Scottish Affairs**, Wilson McLeod argues the case for a language policy for the Parliament, acknowledging that English should remain the main working language, but pointing out the growing disparity between Scotland and Wales, where the Welsh language is gaining official momentum. Wilson feels that there are signs of weakening in the assumption that English remain the exclusive official language and that a more diverse approach, inclusive especially of Gaelic, may be on the horizon. After all, the Labour administration was the first to appoint a Minister for Gaelic.

Too little, too late? Straws in the wind? Is Scotland moving towards a distinctive mode of political culture which will be outward-looking and welcoming rather than introverted and sectarian? Or will the new communities be left out in the cold?

### **ETHNIC DISCOURSE AND IMAGINATION**

One of the most invigorating aspects of the Commission seminar was the discourse between minorities - immigrant and indigenous, black and white. When a Gaelic speaker talked about the network of Gaelic medium schools, and the lobbying which persuaded a Conservative government to take the 1996 Broadcasting Act through the Westminster Parliament, close attention was paid by speakers of other community languages - Chinese, Punjabi, Urdu.

### *Scottish Affairs*

When young Jews spoke about feeling at ease in their lives in Scotland, their experience was contrasted with that of young Muslims who experience harassment and discrimination. Scottish Africans recognised the statement of a Hindu who spoke about feeling invisible because his community is overlooked, but ashamed of the way his religion is treated by the media as exotic paganism and associated with right-wing fanaticism in India. Chinese Scots described 'hidden' discriminations in education and employment which were the experience of many other participants.

All participants listened with respect to the views of the Traveller, who came to the seminar with her son and his friend. As she pointed out, Travellers first took to the road in Scotland at the time of the Clearances. As a Traveller, she has known discrimination all her life, from not being accepted as a child, when her family suffered arson attacks and an uncle was burnt to death in his caravan, official sites refusing to take people in and the repeal of the 1968 Caravan Sites Act. Travellers are angry; the problems of living as Travellers are so great that some want to move away from travelling in order to achieve education for their children, others to improve access to medical care. Even when settled and at school, there is humiliation to be endured, as her children have found. However, her son has decided to stand up for himself and to take positive action - organising a Rave Against Racism to educate teenagers. Her youngest son has been spat at, called 'darky, nigger, wog'. Ruby has taught him to be positive about who he is. She has also worked hard with his schools to get them to recognise what was happening, and to acknowledge their responsibilities for his environment.

Throughout the Commission seminar, the most frequent complaint of the young people, in particular, was 'They will not listen to us' - 'they' being teachers, and other people in authority. The two-day forum which we created was unique in the experience of most people who took part. And yet, these young people are not unique. There are thousands of Scottish pupils and college students who are garnering experience of crossing cultures on a daily basis. Why are their voices not heard and why are their communities not represented in Scottish society? One of the most important ways to learn is to listen.

In the closing session of the seminar, school and college pupils stated that they were proud to be Scottish: 'I want to be Scots not English. I want to be Scottish and British, but not if people assume that being British means being English. Too often people talk about England, when they mean Britain and they forget Scotland'. But they also asked a number of pointed questions: 'Why should it be a problem to be Scottish, born in England, of French

*An Essay in Ethnicity and Internationalism*

nationality and part Indian? Or to have an African father, be from the North-east of England, although born in Scotland?'

How would you answer their questions? What would you put in place in order to secure their future as internationalist Scots in a multi-ethnic Scotland? How late it is, how late to be asking these questions.

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