



**The
Economist**

How should the UK deal with immigrants: integration, assimilation or alienation?

Speakers: Sir Bernard Crick

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NB

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Johnny Grimond: Thank you very much Paul Crake and thank you, our audience, for coming along this evening to hear the debate, I think rather than a lecture, on how should the United Kingdom deal with immigrants: integration, assimilation or alienation? As you have heard we have a distinguished panel to discuss this.

On my left is Sukhvinder Stubbs, next to me is Kenan Malik, Bernard Crick and Mohammed Aziz.

What we plan to do is to give each of them 5 to 10 minutes in which to make an initial exposition, and then we're going to throw the debate open to the floor and ask for questions from you and we will wind up the proceedings at 8 o'clock.

Now I'm not going to mess around any longer because we want to get cracking, and let me therefore start by introducing our first speaker who is going to be Kenan Malik and Kenan is a broadcaster, a writer, a lecturer and particularly a writer of books, I may say. He was born in India, brought up in Manchester, now lives in London. He is the author of several books, one of them "*The Meaning of Race*", the other, "*Man, Beast and Zombie*", but he writes also in many newspapers, *The Guardian*, *The Financial Times*, *The Sunday Times* etc.

He is also a regular presenter on radio, particularly of analysis on Radio 4, and he is suitably a Fellow of The Royal Society of Arts and he is very welcome here and we are very pleased to have him.

So without going into anything else, I will ask him to give us his 5 to 10 minutes.

Kenan Malik: Thanks Johnny. The debate about immigration has come to be a debate about the management of diversity and the received wisdom runs something like this: Britain used to be a homogenous nation, immigration has made us diverse almost to breaking point, immigrants want to assert their identity, this has led to the breakdown of a common culture and to the marginalisation of immigrants and their alienation from mainstream society.

I ought to agree with the idea, as has been around in a lot of these debates, that we should be concerned with what we might call, the erosion of common values, but I want to take issue with the idea that the cause of this erosion has been the greater diversity created by mass immigration.

There's a common confusion in debates such as this between the diversity of peoples and the diversity of values. On the one side many argue that the presence in society of a diversity of peoples precludes the possibility of common values, is the argument for multi-culturalism. On the other side, many suggest that such values are possible only within an ethnically homogenous society. This is a nostalgic, not necessarily racist, though often is, view of national identity. Not so much assimilation as you might say, Little England a view of values and immigration.

Both arguments, I want to suggest, are wrong. It is facile to suggest that society can run on diversity alone, but it's equally facile to try and pin the blame for the erosion on common values on immigrants. Certainly many people fear that the alienation of young Muslims, say, and fear also that Islamic values are incompatible with the values of liberal democracy. The political alienation is not simply confined to a handful of Muslims, the real problem is not so much that Muslims can't live by the values of liberal democracies, as David Blunkett might suggest, but that many Western nations have lost the sense of what those values are and the will to stand up for them.

Every society needs a common set of values to function properly, vision of what kind of society it is. Of course in every society values are contested and there are radically different visions of what an ideal society, an ideal Britain, if you like, would be.

Such conflict is not new and its not the product of immigration or the diversity caused by immigration, after all, was Britain any less diverse in the 1840's in the midst of the Chartist Rebellion, say, or in the 1920's during the general strike. In other words these kinds of conflicts between values and

different visions of society have always been with us.

And conflict between different value systems is part of a healthy democratic process. Its necessary, that conflict is necessary to mould the kind of, the character, the shape, the political shape, the cultural shape of the society that we want to live in.

What doesn't work, I want to argue, is a kind of laissez faire attitude to values whereby values are deemed to be (inconventurate?) and therefore a society is deemed simply in terms of its willingness to tolerate differences. And that is why multi-culturalism is a flawed concept.

I think in talking about multi-culturalism we need to make a distinction between multi-culturalism as lived experience and multi-culturalism as ideology.

As lived experience, multi-culturalism can be wonderful. Britain, for instance, like most Western nations is far less insular, far less homogenous, more vibrant, more cosmopolitan than it was half a century ago.

Those who advocate multi-culturalism as an ideology, however, are talking about something different. Social justice requires, they argue, not just that individuals are treated as political equals, but also that their cultural beliefs are treated as equally valid, that different cultural beliefs are a firm, recognised and indeed institutionalised in the public sphere. But equality of cultural identity is not only not the same as political equality; it also undermines the possibility of any such political equality. Some ideas, some visions, some political systems, some technologies are better than others, and some societies, some cultural forms are better than others. More just, more free, more enlightened and more conducive to human progress.

Now for most of the past 200 years this argument would have been seen as both unexceptional unless at the route of progressive politics. Today though, it's probably seen as Eurocentric, even racist to argue in this fashion, I've certainly been called both those things. Why? Because contemporary society finds it difficult to accept there are any such things as

universal values, values and needs that are shared by everyone regardless of their particular cultural upbringing, skin colour or ethnic background.

Interestingly though, historically, post-war immigrants to Britain, including Muslims, were concerned less with preserving their cultural identity and their cultural differences than in achieving political equality. I know because I was part of that generation in the 70's and 80's that fought for political equality. We weren't concerned with asserting our differences, we were concerned with being treated the same as everybody else in this country.

Certainly there was alienation and anger because of the degree of racism that we encountered, but the goal was always equal political rights.

Over the past two decades, however, increasingly minority groups have sought to assert their cultural differences. Why? Because they have been encouraged to do so by a society that celebrates the idea that different communities should pursue their own cultural values and beliefs, and interestingly it's the political elite, not immigrants to Britain, post-war immigrants to Britain, who have really been obsessed by the question of difference, initially because they wanted to preserve the racial purity of Britain, now because it wants to promote the idea of cultural diversity.

So if you go back to the 1950's, policy makers feared that, in the words of a Colonial Office Report, a large coloured community would weaken the concept of England or Britain and much of British immigration law, nationality law, policing and so on was based on that idea.

By the 1980's, however, we've come to a view that cultural difference was not a threat to national identity, but almost an affirmation of it, that Britain was defined by diversity and difference. The very notion of creating common values was abandoned, except at a most minimal level. Partly this was due to the recognition that the old British identity was routed in a Britain that had never

really existed, but mostly it resulted from a lack of political vision of what the new common culture might look like. Many of the public institutions in which that culture was traditionally invested, from the church to Parliament, from the monarchy to the BBC have lost their capacity to inspire trust, and nothing has come to replace them. Britishness therefore, has come to be defined simply as a toleration of difference.

Multi-culturalism, in other words, did not cause a fraying of a common set of values, but is itself the product of such frayed values. Its, if you like, the official response to the identity crisis within Western society, an attempt to provide a positive sheen to that crisis, re-presenting them, re-presenting the lack of common identity as a new kind of cultural pluralism and the fragmentation of communities as a enriching kind of diversity. And that's why it's easy but pointless blaming immigrants for the erosion of common values.

Values have been frayed because outsiders have come in but because Western society no longer know what they stand for. The problem is not ethnic minorities are alienated from a concept of Britishness, but there's no source of Britishness from which anyone, black or white, indigenous or immigrant can draw inspiration.

Political alienation, as I said, it's not confined to Muslims or to immigrants, there is widespread disillusionment of the political process and distrust of official institutions. Over the past two decades we have abandoned ideologically based politics for the politics of identity, and the result has been the fragmentation of society's different groups assert their particular identities, and the creation of a well of resentment within many white working class communities who feel left out.

Shared values and common identities can't be imposed from above. They're not something you tick on a box, you know, at a immigration ceremony, but a ((?)) sort of process of political dialogue and struggle, a process whereby different values are put to the test and a collective language of citizenship emerges. As I've said, you cannot have a

common sense of values without having conflict. Conflict is the basis from which common values emerge, and the trouble is we've become too worried, too unwilling to think about conflict as a necessary part of the political process, a necessary part of social development.

The narrowing of the political sphere in this way, I think in recent years, has made the process of creating common values that much harder to pursue, so instead of engaging in a political struggle to establish common values, people, black and white, indigenous and immigrant choose to route themselves in particular identities and to assert their differences, so even racism has become a form of identity. The British National Party claims that other races aren't inferior or superior, just different. It wants to assert its identity, British identity, white identity, white culture whatever that may be and racism has become another plot on the multi-cultural map, if you like.

So focusing on immigrants and asking the question, do we want integration or assimilation avoids the real issue, and the real question is, why have common values frayed, and how might they be re-forged.

Johnny Grimond: Thank you very much Kenan Malik. Now we're going to continue with Sukhvinder Stubbs.

Sukhvinder is the Chief Executive of the Barrow Cadbury Trust, which is a grant making foundation which seeks to encourage a just, equal, peaceful and democratic society, with which I think no one can take exception.

Sukhvinder was also, until recently, involved on the Board of Advantage West Midlands, which is the regional development agency of the West Midlands. She had to give that up because she has now taken over as the non-executive Director of Severn Trent Water.

She is a member of the Government's better regulation task force, she chairs their Follow-Up Group and she is also involved with Young Enterprise, which is an

organisation she chairs, and she is a Trustee of Demos.

She writes a weekly column in a magazine, *Regeneration*, and earlier this year, I understand, she was awarded the Woman of the Year designation by the DTI sponsored Asian Jewell Awards.

So she is eminently well qualified to continue this debate, and I ask you to take it over Sukhvinder.

Sukhvinder Stubbs: I confess it was last year so I'm nobody now.

I was very intrigued by the terms of this debate. It suggested to me, the way the question was posed, that there might possibly be one clear strategy for immigration. The truth, however, is that we treat immigrants in different ways according to our perceptions of why they've come here and where they've come from. So for the purpose of this discussion we can assume there are three types of immigrant.

There are immigrants to whom we usually refer to as migrants because they come from relatively prosperous countries with cultures not too dissimilar to white, Christian Brits. Such migrants assimilate voluntarily, with ease; they may already have family and friends here or can easily meld into an ex-pat community. Either way, their wealth enables them to purchase enough of the conveniences of life to buy into the globally homogenised habits of the relatively privileged, and certainly they don't need to worry about fitting it and, for us, there's very little concern about how we adjust to them.

There are also immigrants, and these are people that are economic migrants. People from developing countries who come to Britain, perhaps because of colonial interactions in the past and who want to improve circumstances for themselves and their families and in the process contribute to British life.

We go to great pains to consider how we should integrate them. There are issues with religion as many migrants adhere to their respective faiths as much out of a sense of preserving cultural identity as for spiritual

reasons, and in a secular society such as the UK, this can lead to marginalisation and mutual suspicion and invitations to fit in can actually be seen as conditional on forfeiting your own cultural identity.

Even amongst agnostic liberals, a contempt for those who adhere to religious belief can play its part in ostracizing certain immigrant communities. But it's not merely on religious grounds but on economic grounds too that these immigrants are considered beyond the pale. It's feared that these people who have not yet contributed to the Welfare State might benefit from it, yet no one questions the rights of white families in Britain who have not worked for generations, their right to the same benefits.

The third group are the asylum seekers. They are not merely alienated, they are hounded, criminalised and incarcerated for months in detention centres, and this is not just the adults, the children too. Presumed guilty from the outset, they are not allowed to work, have no access to welfare and in effect are left destitute. Those finally given refugee status and right to remain are then subject to rigorous efforts to integrate them. A sort of compulsory enthusiasm for being British citizens though who and how determines what Britishness constitutes is still open to question.

Our current policy for immigrants is preferential, unfair, racially predisposed and completely undermines efforts to build more cohesive communities. People from certain countries, Australia, United States, they are offered privileges denied to others. Skilled workers have priority over unskilled, and those seeking refuge are often criminalised and illegally detained.

Indeed British migration officers have actually gone as far as travelling to Prague airport to stop Roma people coming to the UK. These sorts of disparities undermine the concept of Britain as a fair and socially just society, and can only breed bitterness and disillusion in those who naïvely believe this to be the case.

It concerns me that no one seems to mind that we have come to this stage in our immigration policies. Hyperbolic rhetoric from the tabloids is allowed to propel public attitudes and sustain small minded prejudice.

Rather than counter all this Rotweiller barking, Mr Blair publicly chimes in, only last week, asserting that more should be removed from the country than those who enter for asylum.

And against this backdrop of political respectability, far right think tanks like migration watch prosper, while the worthy NGOs tinker around the edges, their demands becoming ever more diminutive and diminished.

Years ago, I was among those campaigning for EU-wide policies on asylum rights. Since then our expectations have eroded to the point where we are content if we can just get legal aid or basic welfare for an asylum seeker.

There seems to me to be a dearth of clear thinking and radicalism on this issue, and it's been refreshing therefore, to come across the work of the 'No One is Illegal Group', a body led by Steve Cohen from Greater Manchester Immigration Aid Unit. They argue that immigration controls can never be equitably constructed by defining who can enter the country, they necessarily exclude others. Controls are set as a deterrent to future migrants but end up punishing those currently in the system. Consequently they call for the abolition of all migration controls and the demolition of detention centres. They fight every deportation order on the grounds that there is no such thing as illegal immigration.

Many will, I'm sure, dismiss such a campaign as ludicrously idealistic, dangerously naïve. We've become so accustomed to immigration control that we take its necessity for granted, but its worth remembering that there were no immigration controls in this country before 1905, and in fact the regime has only strictly been applied since the 60's, 1962. And this is comparable in other European countries as well.

In Italy for example, there were no controls until 1998, that's just about 6 years ago. While we accept and indeed welcome the free movement of goods and capital, free movement of people is denied, yet it's quite natural for people to want to move to better themselves or flee danger. What right do we have to decide who should or should not be eligible?

I'm not ashamed to say that my father came into this country in 1963 with a C class voucher and £50 in his pocket. He has raised four children, who include a consultant paediatrician, a lawyer and a retail manager, and between them they've contributed far more into the British economy than taken out.

The circumstances that my father faced in the 60's and 70's need not be any different to those facing economic migrants entering the country now, and more significantly it simply isn't feasible to separate attitudes towards immigrants now than from those about settled communities in this country.

Headlines about waves of immigrants and fears of being swamped by foreigners are not much different now than they were in the 60's, and it is enough to make you wonder if we really were welcome in this country.

I'd like to just go back to the idea of no controls and open borders. Frankly it's hard to substantiate these fears. I've actually looked through the *Economist* articles and very quickly I'll just mention some of the research findings there. There's one research by Barry Chiswick from the University of Illinois who talks about how the economics and migration asserted themselves after the Second World War and basically the costs of travel fell steeply and that allowed people to travel and Europe became a destination for immigrants. But this research actually points out that not everyone can afford to migrate. It's essential for income in developing countries to achieve a certain threshold to actually make migration feasible but not pointless.

There's another study by the ILO, which estimates that about 1.5 million people

emigrate each year permanently and a further 1 million seek temporary asylum abroad. These sorts of numbers are miniscule compared to the overall populations of receiving countries.

A further study by a Mr William Cline on trade and income distribution showed that immigration is the weakest force in lowering the wages of indigenous, unskilled workers and skilled workers. He looked at a study of 125,000 people arriving in Miami in 1980 from the Cuban quarter Marial. This was a 7% increase in the labour force instantaneously in Miami, and the research shows that wages and employment were virtually unaffected by this.

So let's not forget that immigrants are consumers as well as producers, they create jobs as well as take them and without doubt, immigrants stimulate the growth of capital.

So I'm arguing for a much more pragmatic and a less emotional response to this debate. As much as I despise the French stance against the veil, it does seem to me that they have a degree of honesty and clarity between the public and the private space, which the British have so far failed to achieve. Brits profess a propensity towards fairness and social justice, which is hard to substantiate when it comes to foreigners of a certain sort.

I think that I'll leave it at that for the moment.

Johnny Grimond: Thank you very much Sukhvinder and thank you for keeping to your allotted 10 minutes.

Now we're going to move on with Mohammed Aziz now.

Let me just tell you a little bit about Mohammed Aziz. He was the founding Chief Executive of the Forum Against Islamophobia & Racism (FAIR) and also of its sister organisation, The British Muslim Research Centre (BMRC). He is now the Director of FaithWise Consultancy Limited and a Commissioner at the Commission for Racial Equality. He is also a member of the Taskforce & Steering Group for the Commission for Equality & Human Rights.

He is a Trustee and/or Board Member of several NGOs, among them, the European

Network Against Racism (ENAR), and he too is most welcome. And, I think, Mohammed, if I'm right, you're going to give us something of a case study rather than a general exposition. Anyway I leave it to Mohammed Aziz.

Mohammed Aziz: Thanks Johnny. My contribution is going to be a slightly narrow one, in that it's going to contribute to the general discussion tonight with very particular reference, as has already been mentioned, to the British Muslim community or British Muslims. Kenan touched on this very briefly and I'm going to explore this area in slightly more detail.

I think it would be helpful to do this to give some clarity and concrete meaning to the general analysis, propositions and ideas that are being put forward. But I think also that British Muslims provide particular challenges today with regards to the core of our discussion tonight.

I also wish to distinguish between settled migrant communities and newly arrived communities, particularly with reference to British Muslims, and focus, essentially, on the settled migrant communities—communities that have been here for a while.

Additionally, I suggest that assimilation and alienation are not real options for discussion, and therefore, I suggest that, for my presentation at least, I focus on integration.

This then allows me to propose my own topic for discussion tonight! The real question for me is: how should we seek to integrate British Muslims?

As a starting point, and only as that, I suggest a four pronged approach.

The first limb of the approach is to accept that Islam and Muslims are 'integrate-able'. It has often been said that they are not integrate-able. I suggest that they are integrate-able, and this is on three grounds:

1) Islam is an Abrahamic faith and is from the same family of religions as Judaism and Christianity. It originates from not so many

million miles from where Judaism and Christianity originated. Whilst early followers of both Christianity and Judaism may have been at the receiving end of discrimination, harassment and persecution, ultimately they were accepted in Europe. Jews and Catholics have been treated with much suspicion throughout the history of Britain; however, Jews and Catholics are very much an integrated part and fibre of our society today. This being the case for its cousin religions, and the fact that there is nothing in Islam, from what I can see, that is not already in Christianity or Judaism, would suggest that Islam and Muslims can also find a home in Europe. So my first ground or proposition is that if it is possible to integrate Christianity and Judaism it should be possible to integrate Islam.

2) The central values and objectives of Islam are compatible with British and European values. It has often been said that they are not; my assertion is that they are. The key values of Islam: protection of life, intellect, faith, family and property, in that order, and the objectives of the Shari'ah, Islamic law, listed as three: individual development, social justice and community development, again, in that order, suggest that they are not only compatible but at the heart of British and European values, certainly as we see them in key human rights instruments like the European Convention of Human Rights.

3) There is a requirement within Islam to develop the outer form of Islam within the context of time and space. Islam, ultimately, provides universal principles that are to be applied to specific times, situations, geography, peoples—and this has resulted in not just one Islam, but many islams with a small 'i', eg, Middle Eastern Islam, Asian Islam and African Islam. A powerful example of how Islam has taken local colours is what the Muslim bride wears on her wedding day. In India, for example, she wears red, taken from the local Hindu traditions; in Malaysia she may wear pink, again taken from local traditions; in Turkey she wears white, taken from local and bordering Christian traditions; and in certain parts of Africa she wears blue, again, taken from local customs. It is always a Muslim

wedding but in very different colours. This is just one illustration of how Islam can and should, in my view, take local forms. There could be such a thing as British Islam.

The second limb of the approach is to accept that integration will be difficult, if not impossible, without challenging, over and beyond biological racism, prejudice, hate crimes and discrimination faced by Muslims in Britain, which has been labelled Islamophobia and which manifests in at least four forms:

1) Islamophobic harassment and violence. Analysis of the British Crime Survey suggests that Muslim communities are more likely to be at the receiving end of harassment and violence than any other ethnic or religious community, and more likely to fear harassment and violence than others. This is not surprising, at least in some parts of the country, when you consider the focus of the far right organisations and their activities, and yet there is still no protection against incitement to religious hatred.

2) Islamophobic discrimination, direct and indirect. It is still possible in this country for a shop or a restaurant to say: 'No dogs and no Muslim customers please'. Luckily, this does not happen often, but there are many areas of life where Muslims can be, and often are, perfectly legally, discriminated against, for example, in housing, health, education, consumer activities, leisure activities, etc.

3) Institutional Islamophobia and entrenched disadvantage. This is something which is not felt either by the perpetrator or the victim at the time that it takes place, but becomes obvious when you look at long-term trends. For example, more than half of Muslims live in the ten most deprived wards in the country; unemployment is five times more likely in some Muslim communities than the national average—those that are in employment are in dead end jobs in catering and taxi driving; 80% of Muslim households live on incomes below the national average; the poorest levels of educational achievement are in the Muslim communities—only 25% achieve five GCSEs A-C as compared to the national average of

50%; and Muslims are one and a half times more likely to suffer from ill health as compared to the rest of the country.

4) Islamophobic meta-narratives. This is where meta-narrators in our society, senior politicians, media people, faith leaders, etc., narrate stories about British society with reference to ‘the other’, and thereby lead to prejudice and discrimination against certain communities. Certainly, this happens with the Muslims in Britain.

Tackling these manifestations of Islamophobia will require both legal and policy initiatives, but tackling them is critical to the integration agenda.

The third limb of the approach is to accept that even if British Muslims and their religion are a short-term problem, they are part of the long-term solution in Britain—again, on at least four grounds:

1) The resources within Islam. Take just one example: the Islamic concept of belonging and citizenship. The Islamic concept of belonging and citizenship is threefold. The first is a concern for the global village. The Islamic teaching is that the Prophet Mohammed was a mercy unto mankind and so should Muslims be. The second is a concern for the Muslim Ummah, the nation of Muslims. The Islamic teaching is that he is not of the Muslim nation who is not concerned about its welfare. And the third is a concern for the immediate society. The Islamic teaching is that he is not a Muslim who has his fill, while his neighbour goes hungry. Critical in Islam is the balance between to be struck between these three limbs of belongingness and citizenship. I would assert that British Muslims have lost that balance. But I suggest that that balance suggested by Islam, if adopted by British Muslims, would provide an enriching and healthy input into the discussion and practice of citizenship in wider British society.

2) The role of British Muslims in the war against terrorism. One could suggest that if an atrocity was to take place in the UK, it is more than likely that it would take place in one of the major cities. 80% of British Muslims live in those 5 major cities and their conurbations. One

could argue that if an atrocity was to take place, between 10-30% of those who may be affected will be Muslims. The war against terrorism is a concern for Muslims as it is for any other British person, and yet it is not seen as such. Muslims as a group are still seen as possible perpetrators; not as people who can contribute to fighting this terrorism. My argument is that Muslims are likely to be disproportionately affected by such terrorism and they can play an enormous role to help to fight it.

3) The demographic profile of British Muslims. The demographic profile of Britain is that we have an ageing population—certainly, over the next 50 years, we will have a much larger ageing population as compared to the working population. The demographic profile of British Muslims is exactly the opposite, and likely to remain so for some time. British Muslims will constitute a significant portion of the future consumers, employees, employers and tax payers. They have a great contribution to make to the economy, to politics and to society at large in the Britain of tomorrow, if we can provide them with the space and skills to do so.

4) Muslims in this country come from literally every part of the world, speaking virtually every language in the world. They have contacts worldwide. This provides an incredible potential for British brands and the creation of markets for Britain, but it also provides huge potential for good diplomacy and world security—and this should not be underestimated.

My argument is that if we value, and show that we value, the enormous contributions Muslims can make to the future of Britain, then this will provide a huge boost to the cause of integrating British Muslims.

The final limb of the four pronged approach is to accept that the question of integrating British Muslims needs to be seen in the broader context of redefining a new national identity with shared values that reflects British society today. Who are we as a nation? Who is included in this nation and who is excluded? What do we collectively

stand for? We may develop this more later, in the Q&A and discussion session, as I am well out of time now.

Johnny Grimond: Thank you very much Mohammed. Now we move on to our last panellist who has come from Scotland, from bonny Scotland down to enlighten us tonight about the problems of multi-culturalism in Britain or in the United Kingdom.

Sir Bernard Crick is the Professor Emeritus of Birkbeck College, London also a Fellow of University College London. He has more honorary degrees by several than I have ordinary degrees, he has written umpteen books of which perhaps the best known are “*In Defence of Politics*”, “*George Orwell: A Life*”, that’s to say a biography, essays on citizenship and crossing borders, but many others too. He is a long standing commentator, analyst and scholar of British politics and indeed editor of *Political Quarterly*.

What makes his presence here particularly pertinent tonight is that in 1997, he was made by the Home Secretary, David Blunkett, Chairman of an advisory group whose report led to citizenship becoming a new compulsory subject in the national curriculum, and from 1998 to 2001 he was Advisor on citizenship to the Department of Education.

More recently he has headed an independent group called, Living in the United Kingdom, whose aim is to advise the Home Secretary on a new programme of language and useful knowledge for all immigrants seeking British citizenship.

So we are very fortunate to have him with us tonight. Thank you.

Sir Bernard Crick: Well that’s a pretty damning introduction to some to a rather strange debate in which the people we are really debating with, well one or two of you might crop up in discussion, but don’t appear to be on the platform. I find a slight unreality in the composition of the platform, and let me say publicly that as a student of politics I feel very, very sorry for Michael Howard, that he made his big ploy yesterday and got completely blotted out by the press from, I thought, a rather

sentimental view of one individual and their family not thinking in the public interest, but only thinking in the interests, as perhaps we all would, of a child. That was rather bad luck on Howard yesterday. I think he will probably come back to that theme, and that’s what we are really debating.

So I find it perhaps rather strange as a Vice President of the British Humanists, that’s another battle honour, to find myself more in agreement with Mohammed Aziz than I do with Kenan Malik and let me give two reasons for this.

Yes, yes Kenan, I terribly much share with you the view that there has been a sort of desertion in Britain, a consumer society and all that of our old radical, political values, but I don’t think those values compose the whole of life. I will just give you a very interesting example of that.

Perhaps, as you want to stress, that values will unite us all, perhaps you, almost alone, are reading British poetry, British novels or occasionally hearing British folk song. I only hear Scottish, English, Welsh and Irish of all those, and also I think you have a very big bone to pick with FIFA that they allow us alone in the world to field four national teams. After all we would conquer the world if we didn’t.

No, there is something, I sometimes get a bit fed up with the lack of historical depths of some of my Asian friends, that they don’t seem to have heard of the Act of Union, and that Scotland, although there was a devil of a row about devolution, in which I was enthusiastically involved, yet the rhetoric of the Scots that “We’ll lose our sense of identity if we don’t have a Parliament” was absolute balls. They had kept their sense of identity because it was so strongly embedded in the culture, and yet the majority of Scots were unionists in the sense that they wished for Parliamentary institutions and the kind of principles and manners and behaviour associated with the Parliamentary tradition, they wished to be part of that.

So I do think, I mean even before the wind rush, even before the post-war

movements from India and Pakistan, the United Kingdom was a kingdom of different nations in which, even though sometimes the English rather missed the point, you know, the Irish problem and the Irish always say “Well its an English problem” and dead right they are in one sense, the kind of English that cannot distinguish between Englishness and Britishness.

I see Britishness as extremely important, extremely strong, but much narrower, Malik, than you seem to think. I think indeed it is political values; it needs a symbol of unity so God bless the Queen and unfortunately her heirs in perpetuity, as the oath has to continue. I believe that in the new legislation there was a wish to get rid of the oath, but the Palace and, what’s the man’s name, the leader of my party, I’m Labour still, very still at the moment, but still, they weren’t having that, so a pledge had to be added for citizenship, which actually mentions democracy, if I’m right. Oh yes, that was something.

But we’ve been a multi-cultural state for a very long time, in good and bad senses. I came back as a young man from the States in 56 and I hadn’t got the prospect of an academic job, I was trying to earn an honest penny through journalism, one day a week on the *Economist* writing for *American Journal* so when I heard on the 7 o’clock news that there was rioting in Nottingham, I said to my then Welsh wife, “I’m going down to see that and I think the *Reporter Magazine* will be interested”, and she came running down the stairs in Hampstead after me and said, “You’re bloody well not taking the car”. So I took my bicycle and I was privileged to hear and to witness the amazement of the West Indians as the teddy boys hurled at them the foulest insult they could possibly think, they screamed ‘black Irish’, and the West Indians were deeply puzzled. They didn’t realise the profound, historical sense of the teds, they probably caught it from their fathers who had been competing at the bottom of the labour market with the Irish.

Now the Irish are rather interesting in this debate, they are almost as interesting as the Jews and the Scots, because they have kept a

distinctiveness, a very definite distinctiveness and yet they are, in a political sense, fully assimilated and in a sense I think, Kenan, if you don’t push values too far, they share most of the civic values, they certainly do, that we would wish to see. But I’m afraid I can’t share, on grounds of political reality I think, Sukhvinder’s brave case for open migration, even the Americans had to stop it in the 1900’s and they had all that land to fill. I don’t think it’s politically on, and I’m not sure that unlimited numbers is possible in a country of this size. I will say this boldly, I think one is being over emotional, but still why do we need immigrants, because we need them to work, because we are an ageing population, because industry is short, both of some skilled jobs, look in the hospitals, the abominable ignorance of my Indian Ophthalmologist, he’s very skilled, but I had to tell him that Scotland had a Parliament, you know, I mean I don’t think that should be really. Still he’s a very nice man.

Would the supermarkets run, I sometimes wish they wouldn’t, but would the supermarkets run if it wasn’t for the night time stackers, would the hotel industry work if it wasn’t for, oh yes, at the bottom of the labour market and lots of indigenous Brit whites wont take these jobs, but these jobs are needed, alright it should be higher wages and all that, the industry gets away with a lot, but still we desperately need.

Now what controls are there? Well, my old student, he’s a strange one, tough and tender Blunkett. He wouldn’t have set up the Committee you talked about if that wasn’t the tender Blunkett, who thinks that if we need people in this country we should do more for them.

I’m going to write to Michael Howard, it’s a bit of a risk, but at the end of his speech yesterday, he said, “It is important that people who make their home here learn the language of our nation. Of course people may choose to carry on speaking their family tongue at home that must be a matter for them. They do need to learn English properly too. David Davies and Tim Collins will soon announce a package of measures to help immigrants learn

English”. Thank you for the mention of the report. They don’t read very much and probably the House of Commons Library hasn’t yet told his people that Lady Scotland announced the Government’s endorsement of it back in February, except they haven’t found enough money yet, so I’m not very happy, but still there will be such a programme. Mr Howard spoke out without even realising that was there.

But what constitutes managed migration? Blunkett made a speech at Chatham House in November, and he was asked a question by the *Times* reporter, “What limits do you see on migration?” and he said sort of rather irritably, “As I’ve already said”, i.e. weren’t you listening? “Work permits are given when firms apply for them and when it is adjudged that the firms cannot find labour elsewhere”. So the next day, the *Times*, admittedly only on page 2, it’s not as bad as the *Mail*, they had the headline, ‘Blunkett sees no limits on migration’, and this was repeated yesterday twice in Howard’s speech. What he was saying was that work permits, legal work permits are employment driven. The Government doesn’t issue them and then wait for people to apply, that would be a quota system. No, no, no. No Des Brown yesterday was going it strong about the need for a flexible labour market, now that’s good economist talk, so I hope the *Economist* looks that up and as a socialist whose moved along a bit, I do see the sense of that. That was what ultimately led to change in South Africa was a need for a free labour market, and that’s why the big firms settled and didn’t fight.

So this is employment driven. Admittedly British employers, may I say in this place particularly, are not always very bold or public in saying that they need it because some of their shareholders share the prejudices of some of our popular newspapers, but I still hope Mr Howard is running a considerable political risk in playing this particular card, because the people, perhaps a silent majority, if I may make such a strange joke about British business, are the ones who are pushing for migration.

But try telling Scots, Welsh and Irish in England that integration must mean

assimilation or must mean sharing all values in common. I see Britishness as an overarching framework of political values and a legal framework, but not as a homogenous common culture. The debates on immigrant numbers, I think, have obscured the need to consider, do we do enough to help those we need, and I think the answer is quite plainly, no. But nonetheless there is a confusion in the debate between legal workers who are, at the moment, slightly less than refugees and refugees are after all, strictly speaking in law, successful asylum seekers and both the *Guardian* newspaper and the *Mail* completely confuse in the public mind the asylum question and the refugee question.

I will be honest and bold, the asylum question, because of the existence of traffickers who mislead people that they can only get in Britain illegally, that there are not jobs to be had by legal channels, some of the asylum, ‘some’ is a vague word, some of the asylum seekers are absolutely genuine, some are false and some, God knows. It would take interrogators, such as those who have worked in Northern Ireland perhaps, is the man IRA or is he Sinn Fein, or she, it would take the most skilled interrogators to know whether some of the legends are true or not. It is a tragic and a very sad situation, and great mistakes can be made. The people who are doing these interrogations are not always skilled enough, not always experienced enough, but nonetheless it is ridiculous to think that all asylum seekers are genuine, and it is equally ridiculous to think that they are all false, and then to put this stigma as the popular press does also upon refugees.

Johnny Grimond: Well thank you very much Sir Bernard.

Now we’ve covered a lot of ground and I’ve actually been rather indulgent, though you might not know it, in allowing people to speak a minute or two longer than perhaps they might have done. And so what I propose to do now is to ask you for your questions, but I may take two or three at a time, because otherwise I think we may not have the opportunity to get through them all.

Could I just draw your attention to the title of the debate, which is ‘how should the UK deal with immigrants: integration, assimilation or alienation?’ The focus of that is very much on how should immigrants, who are already in this country, be treated, rather than the question of how many there should be, whom we should welcome, whether asylum seekers should be accepted bla bla. It is a topical subject and all those things of course are related to each other, but I think we must try and confine it within reasonable bounds.

Now let me ask therefore for your first group of questions and there’s a lady in the fourth row.

Sally Elliot: Fellow of the Society. I felt of all the speakers that Mr Aziz was closest to my feelings on this subject, because he said the most important word was ‘integration’. I have great respect for the faith of Islam, I have visited Egypt and that’s where I’ve learnt my knowledge of Islam.

I am the daughter of an economic immigrant, way back in 1910. Not quite the same thing we’re talking about in this debate. He came here to work, he was white in skin colour, he was of the Calvinist faith. Before he came here he had worked in the Stock Exchange in Geneva and spent the rest of his life working in a French Bank in London.

The thing about integration is, in my father’s life he married an English wife, he had an English daughter, he did not show anything in his clothes or on his building that said, ‘I do not want to live in Britain’, and the problem with integration very often is, I think, the visible symbols and the fear that that sometimes insights.

Sukhvinder has referred to the debate in France over the wearing of the veil, I don’t know how we solve this but I think the matter of integration is the visible symbol and that is the problem, and that is the fear in society is that are heavily together, closely knit, not trying to integrate with the communities that surround them.

John Bailey: I am a journalist. I noted yesterday in Howard’s speech, he spoke about

other countries in relation to the problems of immigration and asylum. He mentioned Australia, Ireland, Denmark, America, India and Canada, and I wondered whether any of the members of the panel had any views as to whether those countries had found a successful way to deal with, what Howard referred to as, the problem.

I think whilst that kind of address that we see immigration and asylum as a problem, then all of the matters that were referred to by members of the panel concerning the popular press, are likely to continue. Since when has it been a problem? I think being integrated in the UK, perhaps for Muslims, is rather difficult at a time when marriage and religiosity is disappearing, when those old fashioned notions are, perhaps amongst the younger people in Great Britain certainly, no longer current. So maybe there are problems to be addressed about what is Britishness. It seems to me, as was said by the first speaker, to be a changing process. Thank you.

Eyvor Fogarty: I’m a Fellow, I’m also a translator and interpreter, and I deal every week with the kind of documents that refugees and asylum seekers and so on have and their very intimate problems, and one of the things I’d like to say is regards Mr Aziz’s presentation, is that when he was quoting various aspects of Islam, the words he used were ‘he’ and ‘his’ and never ‘he’ and ‘she’ or ‘his’ and ‘hers’. Thank you.

James Twiss: I’m a Fellow of the Society. Since 1996 we’ve had about 150,000 at least, by the Government figures, new immigrants every single year. I think what the panel has failed to address is, what is actually actively being done, or what do they think should be done in order to integrate those 1.3 million new immigrants into the UK over those years. That’s an incredibly large number and what should be done to help those citizens?

Johnny Grimond: Good, well thank you very much. Now lets take those and if I could just, I will allow each member of the panel to make any points they would like to in the context of those questions and remarks,

but don't feel under an obligation to answer every point, because we have only 20 minutes left and it would be nice to get as many questions as we can from the audience.

So Mohammed, I think your name cropped up most frequently, so why don't you take first shot and we'll run through, but if you want to, please feel free to say 'I'll come back to that later'.

Mohammed Aziz: Okay. Well, Sally first on the question of visible symbols. I think it would be really sad if we expected people to integrate so much that they would need to lose all visible symbols. What is a visible symbol, anyway? Is my colour a visible symbol that I'm a foreigner? Is the way I dress on my religious occasion a visible symbol that I'm a foreigner, that I have a foreign religion? Should I not have that right to dress the way I would like to dress on my festival day because I'm trying to integrate? Must the Sikh, for whom the turban is such an integral part of his religious identity, forgo that identity in order to integrate into British society, even if he hurts nobody by wearing that turban? I think we really have to be careful about suggesting that integration should mean doing away with all visible symbols.

John's point about 'the problem' and if there are countries around the world that we can learn from. Canada is often highlighted as a good example on multi-culturalism. Bernard might disagree, I don't know, but possibly we can learn from the Canadian example. But let me take the point about 'the problem', the focus on 'the problem'. I always say, particularly in light of the Muslim communities, if it's a problem, then it's also an opportunity. I tried to highlight how the Muslim community could be an opportunity, and I'm sorry if I've only spoken about the Muslim community and not about other communities, but I thought I would focus on a community that I know best, to test some of the points that are being raised with concrete examples.

Eyvor's point about the 'he' and 'she', I'm sorry, I was just using biblical language, the language of the Old and New Testaments and the Qur'an. That's how the teachings are

couched in these religious texts. Perhaps its not acceptable in 21st century Britain, and perhaps we should talk about 'he' and 'she' and 'they'. So I apologise if I've offended in any way, but I was just quoting or paraphrasing in the existing language of the texts..

I didn't quite catch the last point, but I'm sure others have and will answer to it.

Johnny Grimond: Well I think the last point, if I understood it correctly, was a pretty big one, namely how do we integrate the 1.3 million people who have come here in recent years, which might well take a little while to answer fully, but perhaps, oh here we are, we have a simple answer.

Sir Bernard Crick: Well the simple answer is that these numbers are employment driven and that is the control on the numbers. They will continue to rise while there is a shortage of people to fill jobs, they will stop otherwise. Now there's a wee snaggy in this, and these of course are the refugees who come because they have been accepted as being persecuted, that they are genuine asylum seekers and they may have no skills at all or they may have irrelevant skills or they may have very high skills, but no English. So I think there's a great need to concentrate on education for them.

Johnny Grimond: Okay, so you think employment and education will lead automatically to integration.

Sir Bernard Crick: Yes I do, well I'm not sure to integration, but not... the question was about flooding of numbers, are there too many numbers, now integration is unfortunately a different thing because, after all, the question about visible marks is largely a question of colour and that is largely a question of racism, and there still is unfortunately a lot of racism about.

Now just on the journalist, sorry John I didn't catch your surname or your paper, so perhaps I'd better not... I mean that was marvellous that sweeping generalisation of Howard yesterday, I think he named, just looking in his script and studying it with

relish, I think he named six countries and amazingly they're all doing better than we are.

Well I know something about five of them because we had a look at this in my Committee, and I think this is just sheer ignorance, you know, this is just to beat the Government by saying they're all... I mean if one just takes Canada, he must forget about ((?)) en Provence to Quebec, whose state motto is ((?)), which if I may translate it means, 'I forget and forgive nothing'. I mean this is just not so. The Dutch have their problems I gather, the Swedes even have their problems, it's an even more difficult language to learn and that, no, no, no, I think that was... I mean my conviction is that integration is uniquely tied to the culture and history of particular countries, that's why I went on about Scotland rather than about the recent waves of immigration, because we are already, that's why I want to stick with multi-cultural, but not in the sense of separate but equal, no, no but because this is a term that is used by the Welsh and the Scots and the Irish, and if the editor of a London magazine *Prospect* and even my old student, Mr Blunkett, suddenly think that diversity is clearer than multi-culturalism, well I think they're living in a slightly different world personally.

Johnny Grimond: Thank you. Now Kenan, someone had a crack at you too.

Kenan Malik: I think part of the problem in this whole debate is a confusion between the public sphere and the private sphere, and I think that came in in what Bernard said in his original comment about my argument.

You see I'm quite happy for Bernard to read his Scottish poet, even follow a so called football team, Scottish football team. You know, I love James Kelman, the first novel I can remember reading was *Ivanhoe* and I think Kenny Dalglish is one of the most wonderful footballers that ever lived. Nevertheless, I feel there's a, you know, having common values doesn't mean having to watch Eastenders or read Evelyn Wall or, you know, wear a David Beckham shirt.

What I'm saying is that the laissez faire attitude to values cannot work, the one that says

that values are ((incommensurate?)) of different groups, of different values, different beliefs, well there's nothing we can do about it, we'll all live as different communities pursuing our different values and our different beliefs.

And the argument which says that we're the most institutionalised difference in public, give it that private differences are somehow to be given... seen as a public good, I think that's where the problem is, and that's where the distinction between the public and the private is crucial.

An ideal plural society would be one where in private people could follow whatever faith they wanted, whatever beliefs they have, whatever football team they wanted, read whatever novels they want, watch whatever TV they wanted etc, etc, etc, but in public they are treated exactly the same whatever, despite their differences in background etc, etc, etc.

The problem is we're creating almost a totally opposite kind of society, whereas private matters are becoming matters of public good, so its become, for example if you go to Bradford, state funding, local council funding is based on what ethnic group you are, so if you want to set up a table tennis club, it depends, you know, if you're in one ethnic group you'll be able to do so. So there are Gujarati community centres, there are Punjabi community centres etc, etc, each of which gets a particular funding. In other words, the differences, the ethnic differences become institutionalised in public. And at the same time there is an attempt, in order to maintain this fiction of tolerance, to restrict what people can say or do in public in order not to offend other groups. I've lost count, for instance, of the number of times that I have been stopped, refused from quoting from the *Satanic Verses* by newspaper editors, by BBC editors and so on, on the grounds that it is offensive to Muslims.

So it seems to me that we've got pluralism exactly the wrong way around. Whereas public discourse and debate is constrained in the name of tolerance, and that

what should be private matters have become public matters and become institutionalised as a public good.

Johnny Grimond: Do you think any other countries do this better than us, to answer John's question.

Kenan Malik: No I don't and of the countries you were talking about, Canada is the, you know, is heralded as the store with the multi-culturalism, Bernard had a few points about it, but you know, the idea that different religious groups can pursue their own laws and have their own courts, I mean most notably now, of course, with ((?)) law, its true for other religious groups ((?)), I think its nonsense and that's what I mean by treating different people differently in public as opposed to allowing people to pursue their own faith in private, that's a very different matter.

Same in Australia, its interesting, on Australia you had a different set of laws for Aborigines than you have for the rest of Australians, at the same time you have one of the most racist societies in relation to Aborigines. Aborigines suffer greatly in terms of policing, jobs, etc, etc, so no; these countries do not have a better system than we do.

Johnny Grimond: Okay thank you. Sukhvinder would you like to comment, preferably to answer some of the points made by the audience.

Sukhvinder Stubbs: I think that there's, you know, in terms of the questions that have been posed, I still get the impression that there's a perception that the problem is actually of the making of the immigrants, and that there is very little responsibility from, you know, the wider society in terms of what happens to them, and so I'd just like to go back to this idea that the actual stage of what happens to people when they come into this country.

The Government policy is that integration starts once an individual has secured indefinite right to remain in this country. Now they may well have been in this country already for months before they get that right, and the way that they are treated in that period, you know, is... may well be about being locked up

in detention centres, may well be deprived of welfare or, you know, money, just the sort of things we'd take for granted. And while I understand why politically it isn't feasible, shall we say, to actually recognise asylum seekers as residents and potential citizens, I think that we do have to accept that how they're treated in their early months is likely to influence their later attitudes in terms of how they feel they belong or not to this country.

I think that there's also, once integration starts, it starts from the sort of dispersed communities so you have people that are actually posted out to, probably some inner-city area in Hemsworth, for example, or other parts of our big cities and what you have are these poor people actually being imposed on other poor people, so you get layer upon layer of poverty and disadvantage and then you wonder, you know, why there's such an inability to be able to actually develop a sense of identity or, you know, Britishness there.

So I think that actually having access to decent housing, having access to employment early on, you know, these are things we take for granted and I think that immigrants should also be able to take these things for granted, so a bit more quid pro quo there.

Johnny Grimond: Good, thank you. Now let's take some questions from this side of the room, and we have a gentleman just there.

Richard Goss: Retired Professor, University of Cardiff. I'd like to ask whether the panel agree that before we decide where to go, we ought to think where we are and where we have been in the past. It is useful to know where you have come from.

Let me give you one or two examples. In 1913 my grandfather was working in Malawi and had the magnificently imperial title, 'Superintendent of Native Affairs', quite wonderful. And he became very unpopular when he suggested that perhaps the African would benefit from education, and not be confined to manual work, which was the standard thinking of that time.

If you go on to my childhood, we find that large numbers of people in other countries were given funny names in World War Two, we were at war with the ‘Crouts’ and the ‘Ities’ but the ‘Frogs’ were on our side. This goes up to very recent years in 1982, the British Army invented a new word, ‘The Argies’ for the enemy and this implies that all of the people given that name are pretty much the same.

It’s not really a record to be proud of, and if you look today at any standard economics textbook, you will find that free trade is advocated as it is by the *Economist* and indeed as I would. Free trade in goods, free trade in services, free trade that is to say in outputs, what about the inputs? Well the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank are all in favour of free movement of capital, but nobody talks very much about free movement of labour.

Johnny Grimond: Good point, okay thank you very much.

Ravi Mattu: I’m an editor at the *Financial Times* and formerly of *Prospect*. My question was, when does an immigrant become a Britton and particular with reference to non-white immigrants and finally my comment was, as a Canadian who’s British and, to some extent, Indian, I would actually say the discussion is handled in a much more progressive and advanced way in Canada, unfortunately, than it is here. Thanks.

Johnny Grimond: Thank you.

Antonia Burrows: Just a student. In regards to Mr Aziz’s point on how integration was a way forward because their values were so similar, I want to ask how you expect people to trust in those values being similar when in the press its always portrayed as Islamic views to be extremist, even though that’s not the case, we only see the extremist views and how Islamic extremists seem to affect the world.

Eugene Quinn: From BBC World Service. I was wondering if the panel think that migrants to Britain should be obliged to learn English if they want to become British citizens.

((Nigel Harris?)): Two quick points. I don’t think there is an existential crisis in the

Western nations, it is being used in *Prospect* magazine to argue a political case, and I think we shouldn’t just accept it.

Secondly, on the topic, I don’t know why immigrants are seen as the problem, I’m picking up a point by Sukhvinder, that is to say the problem is the Xenophobia of part of the native born population. That is the problem. The problem is not immigrants and whether they should or should not be integrated.

Secondly, we need to distinguish between those who come to work who are going to number in hundreds of millions in the coming period and those who wish to settle.

This debate is about those who wish to settle and whether they should be peculiarly discriminated in wanting to settle vis a vis the native population. I think if they wish to settle they should have the same rights as the native population, finish, period, we don’t need to discuss their integration, but the real issue is the hundred million migrant workers who are going to flow through the United Kingdom, that’s a much bigger question.

Johnny Grimond: Good, thank you very much. Now we really are running out of time, so I will just take two more questions, one from this gentleman and there’s a gentleman from the third from back row who has not yet had a chance.

Nico MacDonald: I’m an independent writer. The integration of Scotland which Bernard Crick alluded to was an integration of common values as far as I can see, even though it stayed culturally distinct, many of which were championed by the Scots.

Most of the panel seem to support integration of one sort or another and may support the idea that integration should be around a common set of values. I’m interested to know, for those who do what those common values should be and the extent to which they are currently held in British Society.

Johnny Grimond: Another easy question, and one more at the back.

Jon Collins: From the Charity Nacro. Do the panel think that the stigmatisation of immigrants in some sections of the media will make integration or acceptance more difficult?

Johnny Grimond: Well I don't quite know what to... I doubt whether many people are going to argue for stigmatisation even if they in fact rather approve of it.

I think this has to be, I'm afraid, the closing statement from our panellists because it is 8 o'clock and we are therefore technically in overtime, and so what I propose to do is to reverse the running order with which we began and start with Sir Bernard giving, what I must fear, must be a rather brief response even to those large questions about such things as common values.

Sir Bernard Crick: Does the press make it worse? Yes, that's a short enough answer, horribly worse. The state of the British popular press is a national disgrace, and I can't understand the morality talking of common values of some of the people who write this stuff, alas.

Common values, well yeah, but not all values are in common, this is the point. I mean this is just, forgive my saying, I mean its just bladder to say that we all should have common values. I don't want to have common values with everyone else, I want to have some common values and I don't think the distinction between public and private washes, you know, unless one is a lunatic living on one's own in a cell, you know, because how one, I mean John Stewart Mill discussed all this years ago, if you are interacting with others there ceases to be privacy, we interfere with the most intimate sexual relationships between couples in public law and matters of violence, and thank God we do.

No, no, no I think one has got to define one's values and I've done this in a very rough way, but I think the values we have in common are the values of a common political citizenship, they are not necessarily... well they are certainly not the values of faith, the humanist respects other's faith. I am what ((Kersley?)) once called, that's a fine person to quote, but anyway, a pias humanist, because I

really take seriously your beliefs although I do not share them, and although we appear to share quite a lot in common about democratic values and the shortest answer to the question, should people speak English, I think if people want to become a citizen of any country with a dominant language, I think they should, they should and I'll put that also in utilitarian terms of advantage, you really can't expect to pursue your life chances well from an employment point of view if you are stuck in the basement of a so called Indian, but in fact Bangladeshi restaurant only able to speak Bangladeshi, or if you are actually a Muslim woman in employment, if you are allowed out of the home, but you're working in a sweat shop.

English is the way of getting mobility if people choose to be mobile. I'm not saying people should leave their communities, but I do think it's the duty of the State to give people, just as we give our children, the education that enables them to make choices. We should give immigrants with little English or little knowledge of this country, before they can become naturalised, that's the only hold we have on people, we can't force people who've got indefinite leave to remain and don't want to become citizens and don't want to learn English. We can't force, but if people want to be a British citizen, which means getting a passport and being able to travel safely in some circumstances, of not getting nicked by the local courts in India when you go back for a family wedding or something like that.

I'm speaking factual common sense, if people want the passport and if they want to vote, I hope people want to vote, I can't force it on people, can't force it on our young, I think naturalisation is really the only hold we have, and I've got no compunction and nor did my advisory group, look at their names if you choose, 50/50, gender-wise too as well as ethnic-wise, had no compunction in thinking that English must be the pathway to social advancement.

Johnny Grimond: Good thank you very much. Mohammed Aziz.

Mohammed Aziz: Three quick points. The first with reference to Nico's question. I share with Bernard his concerns around this idea of common values, especially when it ends up as being no more than a set of English values that may be imposed on everybody else. I much prefer the idea of developing 'shared values' as we redefine a new national identity.

I do think that the European Convention of Human Rights, as incorporated into UK law through the Human Rights Act, provides a starting place. Whatever your religion, whatever your beliefs, I think the European Convention of Human Rights provides us with a starting place to develop that set of shared values that we need to have as a nation, as a community, as a society, something that glues us together.

I also have doubts about this public/private distinction, it's never water tight, often artificial, and I much prefer the idea of the harm principle. I think people should be allowed to do as their faith or belief suggests that they should do, so long as they are not harming others and, in some cases, not harming themselves. In my view, so long as they are respecting the rights, dignity and worth of others, then they should be allowed to do as they wish to do.

My third point is in response to Antonia's question with regards to how Islamic values are portrayed in the media. I completely agree. I think we have a huge job to do in terms of a fairer media; more work also needs to be done in terms of education around the religions of minority groups or the cultures of minority groups; and I think there is a responsibility on those minority groups as well to help in that media and education work.

Johnny Grimond: Thank you very much. Sukhvinder its now your turn.

Sukhvinder Stubbs: Just a quick response to Ravi's question. I believe that if you are a refugee it takes 5 years before you can call yourself a Britton. I was surprised though that we are still using the term 'immigrants', if we're talking about people who have been in this country for, you know, say, even since 1996, you know, and there has to

come a time where you are allowed to not be an immigrant or a refugee anymore. So I thought that was a very interesting point.

But I wanted to just focus on two things; the first is about common values. When I was at the Runnymede Trust, we did a poll amongst young people about what it means to be British, and we asked them to try and identify what things they held in common, and I have to confess that what emerged as points of consensus, if I can remember were, Eastenders, fish and chips and football. There doesn't seem to be any great sense of what these common values are that we ought to be aspiring to, and I think that there's a particular difficulty there when you have a secular country which is then contending with communities where religious identity is so intrinsic to life, and I think that that's one of the issues that we have to think about is that interaction or that interface and how we move forwards in that way.

The second issue is just about the question about whether people should, should learn English, whether they should be made to learn English. And I mean this sort of language is verging on the offensive. I would say that most people coming into this country would actually want to learn English. It's a clear way of actually getting access to the labour market, but we're still talking in terms of actually herding and forcing people into doing things as opposed to welcoming them into this country and enabling them to contribute fully.

Johnny Grimond: Thank you very much. Now Kenan Malik.

Kenan Malik: I'll come to this question of common values because that appears to be kind of the core of this debate and one with which most people disagree with me, but I just want to pick on this thing about learning English.

If you remember, this debate first started after the Oldham Riots, when there was much said about the problems that Asian kids in Oldham don't speak English. In fact you'd probably find that the Asian kids who rioted probably spoke better English than the

white kids who were rioting. I think its kind of, its missing the issue really to put it in that fashion.

I think I agree for everyone to learn to speak English, for immigrants to speak English is necessary if they want to have a economically rich, socially fulfilled life in this country, but that's not the way this debate has taken place in this country, and I think we need to separate those two things up.

Let's come back to this question of common values. I agree with everyone that there is no such... I cannot make a list of common values to which we could all subscribe unless it was the most banal.

There is always conflict, that's a point I was making, there's always conflict over what our values should be, that there are different visions of the kind of society that we want, of the kind of polity that we want and there always has been. It has nothing to do with immigration.

If you go back to the days when we talked about class conflict, there were different views as to what kind of society that we want. As I said, if you go back to the 1840's and look at the conflict between, say, the Chartists and others, or the 1920's and so on, so there is always, always conflict between different sets of values, but the fact that there is a conflict between different set of values does not mean that one set of values or one type of values are not better than another, and that's the confusion that has been taking place here, that just because there is conflict doesn't mean that we can't say, this is better, this is what we should aspire to.

I will try and convince you that these are the values that are better than that. And it comes down to the question of what is diversity good for? We all... they say diversity is wonderful, we live in a plural society, wonderful, but what is diversity good for? Diversity is not good in and of itself, it just says we're all different, so what? What diversity is good for is that first it broadens our horizons, we understand other peoples' cultures, beliefs etc, and it puts to the test different kinds of beliefs and values, and we can have a dialogue,

debate conflict as to which is better, which is worse.

I agree with Bernard that what we're talking about here are political values, not cultural values, and the problem with multiculturalism is that it confuses the two, and this confusion of the public and the private is also the confusion of the cultural and the political. I agree that there are grey areas between the public and the private; it is difficult to say this is the public arena, this is the private sphere. Nevertheless, the fact that there is a grey area doesn't mean that we shouldn't think about those two areas. The fact that there's a grey area between town and country, doesn't mean that a town doesn't exist and a country doesn't exist. It is useful to think about two areas, the public and the private and to deal with them differently and for the state to deal with them differently.

It seems to me that what we're talking about here is for, in the private sphere for people to pursue their cultural values, beliefs and so on as they wish, but in the public sphere to be treated exactly the same whatever their background.

But the problem with multiculturalism is that your cultural beliefs become part of the public sphere and how you become treated in the public sphere. Its predicated on your cultural background, cultural beliefs so that I know, I remember that in the 80's the notion of equality shifted from being wanting to be treated the same as everybody else, to be wanting to be treated differently from everybody else. So that the question of equality, which in the early 80's, for instance, was one about opposition to Police brutality against Police racism, opposition to racist immigration controls, opposition to discrimination at workplaces. By the mid 80's it had become support for separate schools, the right to speak your own language etc, etc, etc.

In other words the question of political equality became the quest of cultural difference and that is the problem that I think is the issue. So I think that's what we need to separate out the question of politics and

culture as best we can, it's a grey area, I know, but we need to separate it, and between the private and the public, and say in private people should be allowed to pursue their beliefs, but that the state should not interfere, should not support one set of private beliefs against another or see it as a public good that needs institutionalisation, and in public we should be treated exactly the same whoever and whatever we are.

Johnny Grimond: Well thank you very much, thank you Kenan, and thank you.

I'm sorry that we have to leave it there because there is obviously huge interest in this subject which has endless ramifications, and I'm particularly sorry for those people who wanted to ask a question and weren't allowed to by the autocratic chairman. Had we had more time we could have gone on.

But once again, many thanks for coming, thank you for your questions, thank you for taking part, and thanks in particular also to our panel.

I should just say that if you feel dissatisfied or perhaps so satisfied that you want to hear more, you can join another *Economist*/RSA debate on the self same subject in Edinburgh next month. So all you have to do is take a train or a plane and you can continue the discussion.