

**'A challenge to principle and to conscience'? The British  
Labour Party's response to New Commonwealth immigration  
c.1958-c.1968.**

by

**Amy Cross**

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## **Abstract**

The Labour Party's response towards New Commonwealth immigration to Britain has been the subject of intense historical debate. Labour's move from opposing the restriction of Commonwealth immigration in 1962 to then tightening immigration controls in 1965 and 1968 whilst simultaneously introducing Britain's first and second Race Relations Acts, has formed part of a wider debate regarding how far Labour was responsible for reconstructing British society along more socially liberal lines during the 1960s. The aim of this thesis is to contribute to existing understanding of the Labour Party's response to New Commonwealth immigration by analysing the extent to which the party adhered to a principled socially liberal approach in developing and implementing its policies regarding Commonwealth immigration restrictions and race relations during the period c.1958-c.1968.

There is little dialogue between the literature which analyses Labour's policies on Commonwealth immigration controls and the texts which interrogate the party's race relations policies. In order to bridge this gap the thesis will assess the rationale and influences which shaped the party's policies in both of these areas, how far policy developments were interlinked, and the electoral implications and internal party debates arising from Labour's policy decisions. Ultimately, this thesis will argue that far from implementing a principled socially liberal approach, the Labour Party pursued a highly pragmatic dual strategy on immigration restrictions and race relations which was rooted in Hugh Gaitskell's leadership and shaped by public opinion emanating specifically from the West Midlands and Greater London. This dual strategy entailed introducing Commonwealth immigration restrictions alongside race relations legislation in an attempt to appease illiberal public opinion, promote integration and ease racial tensions. In making this argument the thesis will reveal that with regards to Commonwealth immigration restrictions and race relations, social liberalism was more contested and interpretations of social liberalism were more fluid within the Labour Party during this period than has hitherto been recognised.

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## **Abbreviations**

CARD	Campaign Against Racial Discrimination
CBI	Confederation of British Industry
CLP	Constituency Labour Party
CRC	Community Relations Commission
EEC	European Economic Community
IWA	Indian Workers Association
MCF	Movement for Colonial Freedom
NCCI	National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants
NEC	National Executive Committee
PEP	Political and Economic Planning
PLP	Parliamentary Labour Party
PMB	Private Members Bill
RRB	Race Relations Board
RRWP	Race Relations Working Party
TGWU	Transport and General Workers' Union
TUC	Trades Union Congress



# INTRODUCTION

## Research aims

The introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act by Harold Macmillan's Conservative government represented a watershed in post-war British immigration policy, restricting the entry of Commonwealth citizens for the first time. The Act removed the right of Commonwealth citizens to enter Britain freely, as established by the 1948 British Nationality Act, and marked an important shift in their legal status from citizen to immigrant. In opposition, under the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell, the Labour Party rejected the Act which they presented at the time as an unnecessary and racially motivated measure. Nonetheless, this initial resistance was short lived and under successive Labour governments, led by Harold Wilson, restrictions on the entry of Commonwealth immigrants were extended. The tightening of immigration restrictions in 1965 and 1968 was accompanied in the same years by Britain's first and second Race Relations Acts, introduced to promote racial equality for those immigrants settled in Britain by outlawing aspects of racial discrimination in British society. These two policy strands formed the basis of Labour's dual strategy on Commonwealth immigration in this period, which sought to appease illiberal public opinion whilst easing racial tensions in British society by combining immigration controls with integration measures. The party's dual approach to immigration controls and race relations in this period fits within a wider debate regarding the extent to which the 1964-1970 Labour governments succeeded in transforming Britain into a more socially liberal society through the pursuit of equality and the expansion of civil liberties.<sup>1</sup> The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to analyse the evolution of the Labour Party's policies on immigration restrictions and race relations c.1958-c.1968 to establish the extent to which they adopted a socially liberal approach to these matters.

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006); Kevin Jefferys, *The Labour Party since 1945* (New York: Macmillan Education, 1993); Clive Ponting, *Breach of Promise – Labour in power 1964-1970* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989).

In order to do so, the thesis will analyse the rationale and influences which informed Labour's policies in both of these areas, how far policy developments were interlinked, and the electoral implications and internal party debates arising from Labour's dual approach. A number of overarching research questions relating to these issues underpin this thesis. Firstly, how far did the dual strategy on immigration restrictions and race relations implemented by the 1964-1970 Wilson governments represent a continuation of the party's policy approach under Gaitskell? In addition, how influential was electoral pragmatism in shaping the Labour Party's policies on immigration restrictions and race relations? Further, how far was the Labour Party's decision to extend race relations legislation to housing and employment in 1968 a consequence of the failure of their two-fold approach to easing racial discrimination in these areas, which combined limited legislation with voluntarism? Finally, to what extent was there a consensus within the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) on the party's immigration and race relations policies? In addressing these questions this thesis will provide a reappraisal of the Labour Party's dual strategy on immigration controls and race relations to argue that far from implementing a principled socially liberal approach, the party instead pursued a highly pragmatic response to these issues during this period.

With regards to the key research questions this thesis will challenge the established view that there was a shift from principled policy under Gaitskell to a pragmatic strategy under Wilson, by demonstrating that Labour's dual strategy on restrictions and race relations was in fact deeply rooted in Gaitskell's leadership. This has not been adequately acknowledged within current literature which instead tends to suggest there was a clear distinction between the approaches of the two leaders on these matters. As such, according to Erik Bleich, the strong moral line adopted by Gaitskell against the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act quickly evaporated under the leadership of Wilson as the party no longer contested the need for controls.<sup>2</sup> Further, the thesis will illustrate that this approach was influenced primarily by public opinion, particularly when expressed through the ballot box. More specifically,

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<sup>2</sup> Erik Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France: Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 46.

it contends that public opinion emanating from the West Midlands and Greater London, where Labour faced an electoral backlash in 1964 because of immigration, influenced their decision to extend restrictions in 1965 and 1968. This is in contrast to existing historiography which has tended to refer to public opinion in a very general manner and has failed to make these important regional distinctions.<sup>3</sup> On the related matter of race relations the thesis goes beyond the narrow parameters of legislation, which has dominated the focus of current literature, to highlight that the party initially adopted a two-fold approach which combined limited legislation with voluntary methods in housing and employment. As with immigration restrictions it will be argued that the exclusion of these areas from legislation in 1965 was underpinned by a desire to avoid antagonising public opinion in the most affected regions, and a belief in the principles of voluntarism which at least initially made Labour reluctant to impinge on the responsibilities of local authorities and trade unions in these areas. Nonetheless, the failure of this two-fold approach to ease racial discrimination in housing and employment eventually contributed to the decision to extend legislation to incorporate these areas.

The 1968 Race Relations Act is highlighted as an important landmark, which demonstrated that there were limitations to how far Labour was willing to go in appeasing illiberal public opinion through their dual approach to immigration and race relations. The thesis reinforces this argument by bringing into focus Labour's refusal to endorse further restrictions on Commonwealth immigration after 1968, which it argues signalled a growing recognition of the potential importance of immigrant voters and demonstrated that after 1968 the party's electoral strategy was not only responsive to the illiberal opinions of white working class voters but started to incorporate immigrant opinion too. Furthermore, this thesis illustrates that in relation to immigration restrictions and race relations legislation, social liberalism was a far more contested concept within the PLP than has been acknowledged. It disputes the established view that liberal revisionist MPs, led by

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. V-VI; Catherine Jones, *Immigration and Social Policy in Britain* (London: Tavistock Publications Limited, 1977), p.162.

Roy Jenkins, were the key campaigners for and instigators of a principled socially liberal approach to these matters,<sup>4</sup> by showing that they in fact adopted a pragmatic approach to restrictions and were less influential in initiating the extension of race relations legislation than has hitherto been acknowledged. Instead, it contends that MPs on the left of the party, motivated by strong anti-racist beliefs, were the strongest and most consistent opponents of immigration restrictions and were committed supporters of race relations legislation. By contrast, trade union sponsored MPs on the right of the PLP, who interpreted liberalism through the lens of trade union voluntarism and collective working class rights, were the staunchest opponents of the extension of race relations legislation and the foremost advocates of immigration controls. It is, therefore, argued that Labour's dual strategy on immigration restrictions and race relations legislation was not only shaped by public opinion but by internal party divisions too.

### **Scope of thesis**

The 1964-1970 Labour governments have, as mentioned, been recognised by academics and participants alike for their contribution in making Britain a more socially liberal society during the 1960s. This was after all 'the liberal hour of the British Parliament' according to Labour's Roy Hattersely who claimed that if it had done nothing else the Wilson governments existence 'would have been justified by the opportunity it provided for Parliament to create a more enlightened society.'<sup>5</sup> Many academics have agreed, with Mark Donnelly enthusing that the liberal hour arrived in the sixties' bringing with it 'major reforms of the laws relating to capital punishment, abortion, divorce and homosexuality.'<sup>6</sup> Equally, Kevin Jeffery's and Clive Ponting's critiques of the shortcomings of the 1964-1970 Labour governments are nonetheless accompanied by an acknowledgement of the achievements they made

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<sup>4</sup> This view has been put forward by a number of scholars including E.J.B. Rose and associates, *Colour & Citizenship – A Report on British Race Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 513-515; Shamit Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy' *Journal of the Institute of Contemporary British History*, 7, 2 (1993), p. 267.

<sup>5</sup> Roy Hattersley, *Fifty Years On: A Prejudiced History of Britain Since the War* (London: Abacus, 1997), p. 177.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Donnelly, *Sixties Britain – Culture, Society and Politics* (Harlow: Pearson Education, 2005), p. 116.

in the realm of social reform.<sup>7</sup> Building on this, Peter Dorey contends that whilst the governments were viewed as disappointing in many respects, including their inability to resolve Britain's economic woes in this period, they enjoyed 'rather more success' with matters of social policy and reforms.<sup>8</sup>

Amongst these advances in social policy were developments in Secondary and Higher Education, including the creation of the Open University in 1969, as well as the introduction of the Equal Pay Act in 1970 which established the principle of equal pay for equal work between men and women. The government also helped to pass a number of Private Members Bills (PMBs) which led to the abolition of the death penalty, the legalisation of homosexuality between consenting adults, legislation to provide easier access to abortion and divorce, and an end to theatre censorship.<sup>9</sup> According to Ben Pimlott these reforms were driven by Wilson's personal commitment to creating a more equal society, which he in turn believed would lead to greater efficiency and economic prosperity. It was this pursuit of equality and fairness which Pimlott argues 'provided the motif for the most important domestic policies of the 1964-70 administration.'<sup>10</sup> If the 1960s saw the introduction of a swathe of liberal legislation, the foundations for this reforming zeal had been laid a decade earlier. As Donnelly has argued, many of the reforms introduced relating to homosexuality, abortion, and divorce were not simply the product of a changed moral climate in the 1960s but had been gathering pace since the 1950s during Gaitskell's tenure.<sup>11</sup> Writing in 1956, the revisionist Anthony Crosland's *The Future of Socialism* had implored the Labour Party to move away from economic objectives to tackle socially imposed restrictions on the individual's private life and liberty:

*'There come to mind at once the divorce laws, licensing laws, prehistoric (and flagrantly unfair) abortion laws, obsolete penalties for sexual abnormality, the*

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<sup>7</sup> Jefferys, *The Labour Party since 1945*, pp. 60-70; Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 390.

<sup>8</sup> Dorey, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, pp. 359-372.

<sup>9</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, pp. 390-391.

<sup>10</sup> Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), p. 510.

<sup>11</sup> Donnelly, *Sixties Britain*, p. 122.

*illiterate censorship of books and plays, and remaining restrictions on the equal rights of women. Most of these are intolerable and should be highly offensive to socialists.*<sup>12</sup>

These issues, and others besides, were confronted by the Wilson governments and in doing so helped forge its reputation as a socially liberal administration.

If the Labour governments were responsible for the liberalisation of many elements of society during this time, on the matters of immigration controls and race relations the story was more complex and social liberalism proved to be a far more contested concept. The growing political prominence of Commonwealth immigration from the late 1950s led the Labour Party to consider its policy position on immigration more seriously and, in doing so, marked the beginning of a period of intense intra-party debate and disagreement which spanned across the leaderships of Hugh Gaitskell and Harold Wilson. The restrictive immigration policies introduced by the Labour government in this period sat uneasily alongside the otherwise liberal framework being implemented in other areas of social policy reform, influenced by the works of revisionist thinkers in the 1950s, and presented a profound challenge to the socially liberal reputation of the Labour government after 1964. In the sphere of Commonwealth immigration the importance of individual rights which the Labour government championed in so many other areas was brought in question. As Hansen observes 'a Labour Party that had passed a series of liberal measures...on hanging, divorce and abortion, and homosexuality passed legislation that even its supporters admitted to be illiberal and 'racialist'.<sup>13</sup> Aside from immigration restrictions the Labour Party's race relations policies have also faced charges of inadequacy, with Saggart suggesting that the 'liberal hour' came to a close on a disappointing note with the introduction of a second, weak Race Relations Act in 1968.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Anthony Crosland, *The Future of Socialism* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1956), pp. 355-356.

<sup>13</sup> Randall Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968', *The Historical Journal*, 42, 3 (1999), p. 833.

<sup>14</sup> Saggart, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', pp. 277-278.

Unlike other areas of social reform, the struggle over immigration policy illustrated the dilemma between principle and pragmatism on matters of high electoral salience. Thus, whilst Dorey suggests the government may have been happy to defy many of their working class supporters in the pursuit of some social and legal reforms, such as the legalisation of abortion and the Divorce Reform Act, 'ministers felt rather more constrained by electoral opinion regarding the twin issues of immigration and race relations.'<sup>15</sup> Not only did Labour have to contend with competing strands of public opinion between white and immigrant voters on immigration controls and race relations, it also had to grapple with divergent beliefs within the Parliamentary Party as to how these matters should, or indeed could, be dealt with. Whilst for some members of the PLP immigration restrictions contradicted Labour's adherence to equality and social justice, others held no such objections believing it was the party's duty to protect the interests of the white working class first and foremost, something which continued unrestricted immigration was perceived as threatening.<sup>16</sup> Immigration controls, and the related matter of race relations, posed great difficulties for the Labour Party as they brought into focus and further sharpened conflict over which sections of society Labour should seek to represent and what principles the party stood for. According to Callaghan, therefore, immigration controls and race relations posed 'a challenge to principle and to conscience.'<sup>17</sup> As such, unlike other areas of social policy in this period, with regards to Commonwealth immigration and race relations the notion of Labour's 'liberal hour' requires further interrogation. In analysing the Labour Party's response to these issues in closer detail, the thesis will illustrate that the party ultimately prioritised an electorally pragmatic policy approach over one which adhered to the principles of social liberalism.

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<sup>15</sup> Dorey, *The Labour Governments*, p. 374.

<sup>16</sup> Steven Fielding and Andrew Geddes, 'The British Labour Party and "ethnic entryism": Participation, Integration and the Party context', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24, 1 (1998), p. 62.

<sup>17</sup> James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London: Politico's, 2006), p. 263.

## Research context

In order to adequately demonstrate the originality of this thesis it is first necessary to provide an overview of the existing literature, as this thesis contributes to what is a vast area of research on the political response towards Commonwealth immigration to Britain. Within this body of literature the Labour Party's approach to immigration restrictions and race relations legislation has been the subject of considerable historical debate. This debate falls into two broad categories. The 'racialisation' school of thought which suggests that the political elite, including those in the Labour Party leadership, led concern over the presence of Commonwealth immigrants and continually acted to restrict their entry to Britain, versus the 'public opinion' viewpoint which argues that a hostile anti-immigrant public influenced the direction of Labour's policy on restrictions. This section will provide a detailed, though by no means exhaustive, summary of both perspectives before establishing where the thesis fits within this framework and how it will make an original contribution to existing scholarship in this area.

The concept of an illiberal public forcing an otherwise liberal Labour government to act is one much disputed by proponents of the racialisation theory. Kathleen Paul, one of the foremost advocates of this view, argues that the perception of the public pushing successive governments to introduce and subsequently extend controls is an image which policy makers themselves created to escape blame.<sup>18</sup> Rather, in allowing and encouraging a hostile public opinion to develop Paul argues policy makers were able to pass the responsibility for introducing immigration controls onto the electorate.<sup>19</sup> According to this theory, it was the attitude of the political elite which generated public anxiety over the presence of Commonwealth immigrants in Britain. As early as 1965 Sheila Patterson highlighted the hypocrisy of politicians' relatively liberal attitude towards European workers with their fears of the potential problems that would arise from the presence of Commonwealth

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<sup>18</sup> Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain Race and Citizenship in the Post-war Era* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 177.

<sup>19</sup> Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, p. 112.



workers.<sup>20</sup> Sivanandan too suggests that whilst the state was initially happy to exploit Commonwealth immigrants for economic benefits, they quickly moved to restrict their entry.<sup>21</sup> As such, by the 1950s Labour's commitment to maintaining the rights of Commonwealth citizens to enter Britain freely was in doubt and those who felt it would be dishonourable to 'close the door' were still open to limiting the numbers entering Britain through collaboration with Commonwealth governments, according to Caroline Knowles.<sup>22</sup> Building on this, Ian Spencer refutes the notion that the Labour Party was more progressive in the field of immigration than its Conservative counterparts by suggesting the attitude of both parties barely differed when they were formulating their thoughts on the issue of Commonwealth immigration in the 1940s and early 50s.<sup>23</sup> Consequently, Spencer argues that during this period both Labour and Conservative governments attempted to prevent the settlement of Commonwealth immigrants in Britain, eventually crystallising in formal legislation in 1962. The approach of policy makers surrounding debate on the control of 'coloured' immigration was, therefore, always 'racialised'.<sup>24</sup> Reiterating this view, Joshi and Carter suggest the Labour Party played an active role in initiating fears over the presence of Commonwealth immigrants by identifying them as a potential problem before the public had time to formulate their own opinions. By using these negative portrayals to justify implementing restrictive immigration policies they argue Labour played an active role in the creation of a 'racist Britain'.<sup>25</sup> More recently, advocates of the racialisation theory, such as John Solomos, have highlighted the personal views of politicians on the grounds that the motives of these individuals should not be overlooked in favour of arguments that the state was purely responsive to public opinion.<sup>26</sup> Instead, the shift in the Labour Party towards

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<sup>20</sup> Sheila Patterson, *Dark Strangers – A study of West Indians in London* (London: Pelican Books, 1965), p.62.

<sup>21</sup> Ambalavaner Sivanandan, 'Race, class and the state: the black experience in Britain', *Race and Class* 17, 4 (1976).

<sup>22</sup> Caroline Knowles, *Race, Discourse and Labourism* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 93-94.

<sup>23</sup> Ian Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939 – The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.55.

<sup>24</sup> Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939*, pp. 152 -153.

<sup>25</sup> Shirley Joshi and Bob Carter, 'The role of Labour in the creation of a racist Britain', *Race and Class*, 25, 3 (1984), pp. 55-64.

<sup>26</sup> John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed), pp. 52-56.

strict immigration controls was part of a wider political movement happening during this period started by the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 and followed by further legislation in 1965, 1968 and 1971. These increasingly restrictive measures were part of a process that established the 'institutionalization of racist immigration controls.'<sup>27</sup> The simultaneous introduction of race relations legislation in 1965 and 1968 by the Labour government has, where it has been considered by scholars of the racialisation perspective, tended to be viewed in an equally negative light.

Sivanandan, for instance, argues that the 1965 Race Relations Act was a 'half hearted affair', which by only covering discrimination in public places effectively encouraged discrimination in all other areas including housing and employment.<sup>28</sup> Whilst these two areas were omitted from the 1965 Act, Sivanandan's critique fails to acknowledge the alternative means of easing racial discrimination the Labour Party pursued in these areas from 1965 through its two-fold approach. Despite the extension of legislation to cover both of these areas in 1968 some scholars have remained unconvinced that this represented a genuine commitment to the eradication of racial discrimination. Solomos, for instance, has criticised the inadequacy of both Acts, suggesting they were symbolic rather than effective measures.<sup>29</sup> Equally, Kathleen Paul and Clive Ponting have both viewed the Acts as attempts to make amends for the illiberal immigration restrictions introduced by the Labour government.<sup>30</sup>

However, whilst these scholars have blamed successive British governments for encouraging an anti-immigrant public opinion to develop in order to justify their restrictive policies, they have failed to acknowledge important factors within the Labour Party's policy approach to Commonwealth immigration which undermine the credibility of this argument. If political parties continually sought to restrict the entry of Commonwealth immigrants, the Labour Party's refusal to introduce further immigration controls after 1968 as they actively attempted to encourage immigrant

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<sup>27</sup> John Solomos, 'The politics of immigration since 1945', in Peter Braham, Ali Rattansi and Richard Skellington (eds), *Racism and Antiracism – Inequalities, opportunities and policies* (London: Sage Publications, 1992), pp. 20-21.

<sup>28</sup> Sivanandan, 'Race, class and the state', p. 359.

<sup>29</sup> Solomos, *Race and Racism*, p. 78.

<sup>30</sup> Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, p. 176; Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, pp. 332-333.

voters to support them, represents a clear contradiction of this which the racialisation perspective has overlooked. Equally, supporters of this argument have relied heavily on Cabinet Papers as their evidential base, and have not delved beyond government records to gather a more thorough understanding of the Labour Party's policy development. Thus, the racialisation thesis has been criticised by supporters of the public opinion perspective, such as Randall Hansen, who claims it is 'too sweeping and exaggerated to be anything but an impoverished account of the British State's varied response to postwar migration.'<sup>31</sup> Despite acknowledging the existence of racist individuals within political parties, Hansen maintains that 'the claim that migration control was unrelated to public opposition is untenable.'<sup>32</sup> Donley Studlar also refutes the suggestion that political elites were responsible for the construction of the public's response to Commonwealth immigration by arguing that they simply did not have the ability to radically alter opinion on this matter. 'The supposed power of the political elite to affect major changes in public attitudes toward immigrants has not been demonstrated in this period of time, despite a large amount of elite activity, both pro and anti-immigrant.'<sup>33</sup> As such, political parties were bound by the electorate on this issue and were ultimately responsive to public desires on immigration policy, which were consistently anti-immigrant in this period.<sup>34</sup> This is supported by Messina who, referring to the Labour Party specifically, contends that their future policy options on immigration were constrained after the initial introduction of controls in 1962. Despite being 'fairly progressive and open minded' on immigration, Labour's options were limited by the public who would not have tolerated a reversal of controls after 1962.<sup>35</sup> Catherine Jones was one of the first to demonstrate that the Labour Party realised more votes could be won from supporting controls than merely promoting integration policies. As such, their subsequent extension of controls was a method of securing electoral support.<sup>36</sup> Dilip

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<sup>31</sup> Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain*, pp. V-VI.

<sup>32</sup> Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain*, p. 14.

<sup>33</sup> Donley Studlar, 'Elite responsiveness or elite autonomy: British immigration policy reconsidered', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 3, 2 (1980), p. 210.

<sup>34</sup> Studlar, 'Elite responsiveness or elite autonomy', p. 210.

<sup>35</sup> Anthony M. Messina, 'The impacts of Post-WWII Migration to Britain: Policy Constraints, Political Opportunism and the Alteration of Representational Politics', *The Review of Politics*, 63, 2 (2001), pp. 259-285.

<sup>36</sup> Jones, *Immigration and Social Policy in Britain*, p.162.

Hiro has also suggested that although not conceding as quickly as the Conservative Party did, Labour too later reneged on their opposition towards restrictions as they were ultimately forced to bow before public opinion on immigration.<sup>37</sup> As Peter Fryer demonstrates, the implementation and extension of controls in this period was a capitulation to racism which reflected political parties' fear of losing votes and seats.<sup>38</sup> This body of literature has provided a successful counter argument to the racialisation perspective. By highlighting clear evidence that anti-immigrant public opinion directly influenced the Labour Party's immigration policy, it has exposed flaws in the notion that the restriction of Commonwealth immigration in this period solely stemmed from the racist views of successive Conservative and Labour governments.

A raft of more recent literature has further strengthened the case for the public opinion position. Steven Fielding argues that the Labour Party's initial opposition to restrictions alienated prejudiced working class voters and the party's subsequent decision to impose further controls was primarily intended to prevent a public backlash.<sup>39</sup> James Hampshire has also demonstrated that electoral considerations were at the forefront of Labour's policy on immigration restrictions which he claims was intended to appease anti-immigrant sentiment.<sup>40</sup> Central to this argument has been the impact that the change in leadership from Hugh Gaitskell to Harold Wilson in 1963 had on the party's policy approach. Gaitskell's death is frequently cited as signalling the end of Labour's principled stand against restrictions in favour of a more pragmatic policy adopted by Wilson in response to the growing public anxiety over Commonwealth immigration. Alongside the view of Bleich, noted earlier,<sup>41</sup> Hiro, Fielding, and Foot have also characterised Gaitskell's opposition to the 1962

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<sup>37</sup> Dilip Hiro, *Black British White British – A History of Race Relations in Britain* (London: Grafton Books, 1991, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed), p.203.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Fryer, *Staying Power – The history of black people in Britain* (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p. 381.

<sup>39</sup> Steven Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970 : Labour and Cultural Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p.156.

<sup>40</sup> James Hampshire, 'Immigration and race relations', in Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), pp. 309-317.

<sup>41</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 46.

Commonwealth Immigrants Act as a principled, moral stand.<sup>42</sup> In contrast, after the change in leadership in 1963 Hiro argues 'Labour began smelling victory at the polls' and thus became more responsive to voter opinion.<sup>43</sup> Zig Layton-Henry and Dennis Dean further highlight the appointment of Wilson as leader in 1963 as signalling a shift in Labour's policy from one of total opposition to an acceptance of the need for controls.<sup>44</sup> According to this narrative Wilson was far more attuned to the electoral sensitivities of public opinion on Commonwealth immigration than his predecessor. As such, it is deemed to logically follow that the party's narrow election victory in 1964 and the exploitation of immigration in Smethwick at the election prompted Wilson to adopt a more pragmatic response to immigration led by public opinion. As Saggar argues, the party recognised it had moved 'dangerously out of line' with public opinion and the exploitation of immigration at Smethwick only confirmed the need for policy change.<sup>45</sup> Anwar reiterates the importance of Smethwick in prompting the Labour Party to try to seek a bi-partisan agreement with the Conservative Party over immigration restrictions to prevent it becoming a vote-losing issue at the next election.<sup>46</sup> However, whilst the change in leadership from Gaitskell to Wilson has been perceived as crucial to the decision to extend controls, this thesis will illustrate that the electorally pragmatic policy pursued by Wilson was in fact rooted in Gaitskell's leadership. Equally, by considering Smethwick within the wider context of the racialised discourse regarding immigration which took place across the West Midlands and Greater London during the 1964 election and dominated the Leyton by-election in 1965, the thesis demonstrates that it was public opinion in these specific regions which heavily influenced Labour's immigration policy.

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<sup>42</sup> Hiro, *Black British White British*, p. 205; Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, p. 139; Paul Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 174.

<sup>43</sup> Hiro, *Black British White British*, p. 205.

<sup>44</sup> Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Race and Race Relations in Postwar Britain* (London: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 77; Dennis Dean, 'The Race Relations Policy of the First Wilson Government', *Twentieth Century British History* 11, 3 (2000), p.262.

<sup>45</sup> Shomit Saggar, 'Immigration and the Politics of Public Opinion', *The Political Quarterly*, 74, 1 (2003), p. 182; Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', pp. 255-258.

<sup>46</sup> Muhammad Anwar, *Race and Politics* (London: Tavistock, 1986), p.19.

Labour's decision to introduce further immigration controls in 1968, following an influx of arrivals in Britain from Kenya, has similarly been attributed to the party's concern over public opinion. This was, Hansen notes, a result of the government becoming more attuned to public opinion.<sup>47</sup> In particular, he references the swift action of Home Secretary, James Callaghan, to the Kenyan Asian 'crisis' when he responded to public pressure and hurriedly prepared the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act as evidence of this new attitude.<sup>48</sup> Writing in the immediate aftermath of the 'crisis' Gupta agreed, insisting the haste in which they acted reflected Labour's desperation to appease public opinion.<sup>49</sup> In contrast to the racialisation perspective, supporters of the public opinion approach have tended to view Labour's race relations policies with more generosity, seeing the 1965 and 1968 Acts as clear evidence of Labour's commitment to challenging racial discrimination. Pimlott claims 'the successive Acts turned a corner', establishing the principles of anti-discrimination which have guided government policies, and social attitudes, ever since.<sup>50</sup> Hampshire too sees the 1965 Act as a pivotal moment in British race relations which broached the issue of discrimination for the first time and led to the implementation of more effective legislation in 1968.<sup>51</sup> According to supporters of this view the introduction of a second extended Race Relations Act in 1968 was not an attempt to salve Labour's guilt over further controls. Instead it was a response to growing evidence of discrimination and the campaign of Labour Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, to extend legislation. Rose, for instance, has argued that Jenkins' commitment to civil liberties led him to pursue an extension of legislation from the outset of his Home Secretary-ship.<sup>52</sup> Saggat and Bleich have also credited Jenkins with initiating the 1968 Act, arguing he made it a top priority to extend the act to cover housing and employment.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians', pp. 810-812.

<sup>48</sup> Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians', p.818.

<sup>49</sup> Anirudha Gupta, 'Ugandan Asians, Britain, India and the Commonwealth', *African Affairs*, 73, 292 (1974), p.314.

<sup>50</sup> Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 511.

<sup>51</sup> James Hampshire, *Citizenship and Belonging: Immigration and the Politics of Demographic Governance in Postwar Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 33.

<sup>52</sup> E.J.B. Rose and associates, *Colour & Citizenship*, pp. 513-515.

<sup>53</sup> Saggat, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', p. 267; Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 85.

Despite the vast literature on this subject there remain a number of areas that have hitherto been either under-represented or oversimplified, and which this thesis aims to address. Though arguing broadly in line with the public opinion school of thought the thesis makes a number of important revisions to existing historical understanding of Labour's immigration and race relations policies during this period, which will be outlined in more detail in the chapter structure section below. In contrast to much of the existing historiography this thesis devotes equal attention to both immigration restrictions and race relations legislation. This is unlike the bulk of studies in this area which instead tend to focus either on restrictions or race relations, with one issue being used primarily as context for the other. Both issues are important in their own right and as such this thesis takes a more balanced approach which is reflected in the structure, with two chapters focusing on immigration controls and two focusing on race relations. The first two chapters consider the development of the Labour Party's policy on immigration restrictions by focusing on influences on and responses to policy formulation, whilst Chapters Three and Four re-evaluate the Labour Party's race relations strategy. In addition, whilst there are clear dividing lines between the racialisation and public opinion perspectives, neither has adequately analysed the implications of the contested nature of policy debate on finalising policy. For instance, the public opinion school of thought sees Labour's policy as a direct consequence of the party collectively uniting around anti-immigrant public opinion. Meanwhile, the racialisation perspective treats policy formulation in an equally broad-brush manner, suggesting the political elite as a whole, including those in the Labour Party, were inherently opposed to Commonwealth immigration and therefore united in support of controls at the opportune time. However, policy formulation on immigration was far from simple and certainly did not invoke unanimous support amongst the PLP. Thus, whilst this thesis broadly supports the view that public opinion drove policy, unlike existing literature it argues that public opinion became integral to the party's policy formulation on immigration specifically because of the contested nature of the debate within the Labour Party.

The timeframe for this thesis spans the decade from the racial disturbances in Nottingham and Notting Hill in August 1958, after which immigration and race became increasingly politicised, through to the introduction of the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act and Race Relations Act under the Labour government in 1968. This period encompasses the evolution of the Labour Party's response to immigration restrictions and race relations legislation under the leadership of Hugh Gaitskell in opposition, through to his successor Harold Wilson who led the Labour Party in office between 1964 and 1970. As already noted, many of the social reforms introduced by the Labour governments in the 1960s were the product of ideas which emerged during the 1950s.<sup>54</sup> In order to understand the rationale, influences and debates which informed the immigration and race relations policies implemented by the 1964-1970 Labour governments it is necessary to analyse the party's initial response to these issues in the 1950s. As this thesis will attest, the immigration and race relations policies of the Wilson governments were in fact deeply rooted in the period of Gaitskell's leadership. Viewing the 1964-1970 period in isolation as most historians have done, therefore, presents an incomplete account. Though primarily concerned with the period 1958-1968 for the reasons outlined above, the thesis will draw on a wider timeframe where appropriate. Chapter One will, for instance, consider the earlier period of Gaitskell's leadership from 1955 to establish the context in which the Labour Party's initial response to immigration restrictions and race relations legislation were formulated. Equally, Chapters Two and Four of the thesis will go up to and include the 1970 general election in order to examine the electoral implications of the party's policies in these areas.

## **Chapter structure**

Chapter One charts the Labour Party's policy on the restriction of Commonwealth immigration between 1958 and 1968 and the intra-party conflicts this created. It challenges the established view that the death of Gaitskell and arrival of Wilson as

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<sup>54</sup> Donnelly, *Sixties Britain*, p. 122.



Labour leader represented a clear shift from principled opposition to a pragmatic acceptance of controls as immigration grew in electoral salience. Instead, the chapter contends that the formulation of Gaitskell's policy response to immigration restrictions was in fact far more pragmatic than has previously been acknowledged. It is argued that his decision to oppose the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was the result of careful and practical political consideration, influenced by a desire to retain party unity and achieve other policy objectives, rather than a moral stand informed by his revisionist ideological beliefs. Far from ruling out controls entirely, Gaitskell constructed a highly conditional opposition which left the option for future controls very much open. As such, Wilson's decision to extend restrictions after 1964 should be viewed as an adjustment to rather than a reversal of Gaitskell's policy position. In addition to this, the chapter will challenge the assumption that the Labour Party underwent a collective and unified transformation around supporting controls after 1964. By extending the scope of analysis beyond ministerial level, where restrictions were accepted, it will be illustrated that the response of the wider PLP was far more varied. The few texts that acknowledge opposition to Labour's decision to extend controls within the parliamentary party tend to attribute it to a unified alliance between the liberal revisionists on the party's right wing, who sought to maintain Gaitskell's principled opposition, and MPs on the left wing of the party.<sup>55</sup> In contrast, this chapter contends that the role played by the revisionists has been overstated and that it was predominantly MPs on the left of the PLP who led and sustained the opposition to Labour's immigration policies.

Continuing with the Labour Party's approach to restrictions, Chapter Two considers regional influences on the party's national policy on immigration restrictions in this period. It refines the argument that the Labour Party's acceptance and extension of controls after 1964 was influenced by public opinion in general, by demonstrating that it was illiberal public opinion emanating specifically from the West Midlands and

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<sup>55</sup> See for example Tim Bale, *Sacred Cows and Common Sense: the Symbolic Statecraft and Political Culture of the British Labour Party* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), p.187; Steven Fielding, 'Brotherhood and the brothers: Responses to 'coloured' immigration in the British Labour Party c. 1951-1965', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3, 1 (1998), pp. 83-88; Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Postwar Britain*, p.130.

Greater London, where the immigration issue posed the biggest electoral threat to the Labour Party, which influenced their policy on controls. Whilst there has been some consideration of regional responses to immigration in this period this has not been linked specifically to the Labour Party's national policy formulation.<sup>56</sup> In contrast, this chapter argues that the exploitation of immigration across the West Midlands and Greater London at the 1964 general election and beyond had a direct influence on the party's immigration policy, as Wilson finally conceded to the demands for restrictions which voters and local party activists and organisers in these regions had been making since the mid-1950s. Thus, by 1965 the Labour Party had converged their immigration policy with the Conservatives in the hope of eliminating immigration as an electoral issue in these regions. Despite succeeding in creating a temporary consensus, during which time immigration lost some of its salience as a vote determining issue in these regions at the 1966 general election, this chapter will illustrate that this consensus was undermined from 1968 by the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Enoch Powell. Labour's refusal to capitulate to further demands for controls and repatriation of Commonwealth immigrants after this time heralded a collapse of the political consensus on immigration. The stance taken against Powell's demands challenges the perception that the Labour Party was only responsive to a negative white public opinion by demonstrating that by 1968 they were becoming increasingly aware of the importance of responding to the views of immigrants in order to secure the votes of this growing demographic. The chapter concludes that Powell's involvement in the immigration debate once again heightened the electoral salience of immigration and had an adverse effect on the Labour Party's electoral performance in the West Midlands and Greater London, contributing to Labour's defeat at the 1970 general election.

Moving beyond Labour's policy on immigration restrictions Chapters Three and Four reappraise the party's approach to race relations legislation. They will explain the

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<sup>56</sup> See for example Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, pp. 139-159 and Jeanette Money, 'No Vacancy: The Political Geography of Immigration Control in Advanced Industrial Countries', *International Organization*, 51, 4 (1997), pp. 703-707. Stephen Deakin has put forward similar arguments about regional influences on national policy but from the perspective of the Liberal Party. Stephen Deakin, 'Immigration control: The liberal party and the west midlands liberals 1950-1970', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 3, 3 (1984).

rationale behind the transition from limited legislation which covered only racial discrimination in public places in 1965 to a second extended Race Relations Act in 1968 which covered housing and employment, as well as the varying responses towards the extension of legislation within the PLP. As such, Chapter Three considers the development of race relations legislation in relation to housing. Though supporting the view that the Labour Party was committed to reducing racial discrimination this chapter looks beyond the scope of the race relations legislation itself to demonstrate that the party adopted a two-fold approach to race relations in 1965 which combined limited legislation with measures to target racial discrimination in housing at its perceived source. In part, the decision to exclude housing from the 1965 Act reflected Labour's unwillingness to encroach on the responsibility of local authorities to allocate housing, as well as their concern regarding public opinion. However, this chapter contends that this decision also reflected the Labour Party's belief that legislation would not resolve racial discrimination in this area. Instead, Labour felt the problems of racial discrimination in housing were part of the wider housing problems in Britain. The solution, therefore, lay in reducing competition for housing through tighter regulation of the housing market and increased house building, whilst working alongside local authorities to ensure the voluntary implementation of fair housing allocation policies. The party's approach to race relations in 1965 reflected their belief that discrimination in housing was a highly localised problem which did not require national race relations legislation. The chapter also reappraises the origins of the 1968 Act through reference to the two-fold approach. In particular, it nuances the prevailing view that the impetus for a second extended Race Relations Act in 1968 stemmed from pressure exerted by Roy Jenkins during his time as Home Secretary, by highlighting the failings of the party's initial two-fold approach as a catalyst for this decision. Thus, this chapter argues that the decision to extend race relations legislation to housing in 1968 was heavily influenced by Labour's inability to effectively challenge racial discrimination in this area through its wider housing policy, together with growing evidence of the continuation of discriminatory practices by some local authorities in the allocation of housing.

In connection to this Chapter Four considers the party's evolving approach to race relations legislation in employment. As with housing it will be argued that the initial exclusion of employment from the terms of the 1965 Race Relations Act reflected the party's unwillingness to impinge on the responsibilities of the trade unions in this area, as well as their concern over antagonising illiberal public opinion in the regions most affected by immigration. The chapter will further reinforce the argument that the role played by Jenkins in initiating the extension of race relations legislation to cover employment has been overstated. Whilst acknowledging the contribution made by Jenkins, this chapter will emphasise the impact that the deteriorating relationship between the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress (TUC) had on the decision to extend legislation to employment against the wishes of the TUC in 1968, a factor which has been overlooked within the existing literature. It will also consider the extension of legislation to employment in the context of the TUC's own failure to effectively challenge discrimination in the workplace, as well as growing pressure for further reform from immigrant groups, particularly the under-researched Indian Workers Association (IWA), and Labour's developing awareness of the potential importance of immigrant voters. Crucially, this chapter will make an original contribution to the wider debate on the internal splits created within the Labour Party over the question of trade union reform by arguing that these divisions, which have tended to be researched through the lens of the 1969 White Paper *In Place of Strife*, first emerged in the struggle over the Race Relations Act in 1968. The tensions created between the party and the TUC over race relations legislation in this period have been overlooked in a number of key studies on the party/union relationship,<sup>57</sup> which in turn has impeded analysis of how far these divisions contributed towards the decline of trade unionist support for Labour at the 1970 general election. Thus, this chapter challenges the conventional narrative which

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<sup>57</sup> Race relations legislation is not mentioned within Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance – Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991). Similarly Clegg touches only very briefly on the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, discussing the failings of the Acts to resolve issues and complaints in practice. Nowhere is the attitude of the TUC towards the legislation mentioned. Hugh Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), pp. 398-401.

attributes party/union tensions to *In Place of Strife*,<sup>58</sup> by highlighting the ways in which the debate over the 1968 Race Relations Act soured party/union relations and contributed towards a notable decline in electoral support for Labour amongst trade unionists at the 1970 general election.

## **Methodology and source base**

The thesis adopts a case study approach in order to facilitate focused in depth analysis of the integral themes of the research. An 'outside in' research approach has been adopted, beginning by looking at the Labour Party records from when the party was outside of government in the 1950s, and then following their path into office in the 1960s. Previous studies in this area have relied extensively on government records and Cabinet papers held at the National Archives. As a result of this top-down approach high politics have dominated research in this field. Whilst the merit of these documents is not in question, it is important to recognise that no one set of records alone can provide the full picture. As such, I have layered my research by relying not only on the governmental records of the Labour Party in office, but by focusing down further into the party itself and out into the trade union movement too. Consequently, my research takes a much broader perspective, concentrating on voices in the wider party and labour movement to provide fresh insights into how policy and opinion on immigration and race relations developed. This material has not been used to the same extent as governmental records by previous historians, therefore broadening the scope for original insight. Consulting a wider range of material for this thesis was essential for a number of reasons. Firstly, this thesis is concerned not only with the Labour Party in government but in opposition too. Relying on the records of the 1964-1970 Labour administrations would have inhibited analysis of the continuities and changes in Labour policy and revealed very little about the policy formulation undertaken by the Labour Party whilst in opposition. Equally, it is important to recognise that the process of policy making in

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<sup>58</sup> Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, p. 219; Steve Ludlam, 'Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1964', in Brian Brivati and Richard Heffernan (eds), *The Labour Party A Centenary History* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000).

the Labour Party in this period extended far beyond parliament into the various strands of the Labour Party, involving a complex balancing act between the party conference, the National Executive Committee (NEC) and the trade unions too. Thus, it is only by looking at a wider source base that a greater insight into these areas and the influences they exerted on policy making can be attained. This is not to say that government records have no place in this thesis as it would be remiss to ignore documents which help reveal the internal decision making processes of the 1964-1970 Wilson governments. More frequently cited sources such as Cabinet papers have also been incorporated into the thesis where relevant, though these documents provide supplementary evidence to support my wider research as opposed to taking a central role as they have in previous studies.

The main archival source base for my research has been the Labour Party archive held at the Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC) in Manchester. As well as consulting some of the sources most commonly cited in existing studies of Labour's immigration and race relations policies, such as documents from the NEC and PLP collections, the thesis has also drawn on a substantial range of the archives' un-catalogued collections, many of which have been underutilised or overlooked in previous studies. The National Agents Department material for instance provided useful insights into the role of regional organisers and election agents, helping to establish how election campaigning was organised, executed and then appraised. In addition, the un-catalogued general election collection deepened my understanding of campaigning, both at constituency and national level, and of how issues such as immigration played out during elections. Previously unseen material uncovered in the general election collection has also been vital in challenging existing views regarding the Labour Party's efforts to appeal to immigrant voters. Through the discovery of Labour Party campaign material aimed at immigrant voters during the 1970 general election, the thesis has been able to challenge the prevailing narrative that Labour only recognised the importance of immigrant voters after the 1974 elections. Uncovering this material strengthened the argument that by 1968 the Labour Party was not only responsive to white public opinion on immigration, but was also becoming increasingly aware of immigrant opinion when formulating its

immigration and race relations policies. Finally, the Research Department files on race and immigration have proved invaluable to this thesis. It is essential to recognise that policy development was a continuous process within the Labour Party and was not confined to government. Indeed, as this thesis attests, the immigration and race relations policies which were implemented during the 1964-1970 Wilson governments were very much a continuation of policy ideas established during the party's years in opposition under the leadership of Gaitskell. The Research Department material was able to provide a direct link to this process of policy development during the 1950s and early 1960s when the party was outside of government. Although some of this material has been utilised to a limited extent by other historians, it has been overshadowed by government records and as a consequence its full analytical potential has not been exploited. Fielding, for example, has used the NEC Race Relations Working Party (RRWP) and Research Department material as supporting evidence for his argument that public opinion influenced Labour's policy, whilst I have used these documents as leading evidence to demonstrate that public opinion in specific regions influenced the change in policy.<sup>59</sup> Using a wider range of material provided greater insight into how Commonwealth immigration was being interpreted and discussed at different levels of the party before being formulated into the dual policy approach. In particular, the evidence consulted at the LHASC has proved crucial in highlighting how the emergence of varying regional attitudes towards Commonwealth immigration influenced Labour's national policy on Commonwealth immigration restrictions.

Alongside the extensive use of material at the LHASC, further research was undertaken at the Modern Records Centre (MRC) at Warwick University where the archives of the TUC are held. As my research focuses on the wider labour movement, an important aspect of this has involved looking at the interactions between the Labour Party and the TUC over restrictions and race relations legislation. The Labour Party and the trade unions were inextricably linked in this period, with formal consultation and co-operation on policy matters, including on immigration and race

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<sup>59</sup> See Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*.

relations, forming an important part of this. This research involved detailed analysis of the TUC Race Relations collection, minutes of the General Council meetings, Annual Congress Reports, as well as the papers of the TUC's General Secretary in this period, George Woodcock. This material has been integral in establishing the attitude of the TUC towards racial discrimination in employment, as well as the turbulent relationship between the TUC and the Labour Party over whether employment should fall within the scope of race relations legislation. Additionally, the papers of Labour MP for Coventry East and Minister of Housing between 1964 and 1966, Richard Crossman, which are also held at the MRC, have been examined, adding to understanding of Labour's two-fold approach to addressing racial discrimination in housing in this period. Further archival research using the IWA papers, held at the Library of Birmingham, has brought a fresh dimension to the thesis. Engagement with these papers is extremely limited within the existing literature. As the biggest immigrant association at this time the value of the IWA records is evident. The IWA played an active role in local election campaigns, encouraging or in some cases discouraging its members to support Labour candidates depending on their stance on immigration restrictions. Exploring this collection has enhanced the originality of my research and has provided crucial insights into the pressure exerted on the Labour Party by the IWA, and other immigrant organisations they worked in conjunction with, to extend race relations legislation and revoke immigration restrictions. This material has enabled the thesis to incorporate immigrant voices and bring into focus Labour's developing awareness of immigrant public opinion. Finally, the personal papers of Hugh Gaitskell, Harold Wilson and James Callaghan have also been consulted at the National Archives and Bodleian Library in Oxford respectively. Utilising the papers of key figures involved in the internal Labour Party and Cabinet policymaking process has enhanced understanding of the rationale behind these policymaking decisions. In particular, documents in the Gaitskell collection helped to illustrate that his decision to oppose the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was a pragmatic one linked to the formulation of policy on British membership of the European Economic Community (EEC).



Although archival research forms the basis for this thesis, national and local newspapers have been harnessed and extensive analysis of the parliamentary debates relating to immigration restrictions and race relations legislation has also been undertaken in the course of this research. Detailed consideration of the parliamentary debates on these issues has been instrumental in identifying the key supporters and opponents of immigration restrictions and race relations legislation. Furthermore, personal and oral testimonies have formed another significant component of the research. Although there are obvious limitations to the use of such evidence, as memory is both subjective and potentially unreliable, it can also be an incredibly useful resource when used in conjunction with other sources as it has been in this thesis. With regards to personal testimony, the diaries and memoirs of key Labour Party figures have been analysed in order to ascertain their contributions to, and interpretations of, the internal party debate surrounding immigration restrictions and race relations legislation. The use of personal testimony has allowed me to gain greater insight into the internal debates, influences on policy making, and personal relationships within the party which cannot be gleaned from other sources. For example, the PLP minutes for this period are very vague and reveal little information about these factors. The paucity of information from these records has been somewhat offset by the valuable contributions of the memoirs of Cabinet members, such as Richard Crossman and James Callaghan, which amongst other things revealed that the introduction of immigration restrictions in 1965 and 1968 was influenced by 'the Midlands factor.' This testimony, which reinforced evidence found at the LHASC and within parliamentary debates further strengthened one of the central arguments of the thesis that regional influences shaped Labour's national policy on immigration restrictions after 1964.

Furthermore, oral testimony has provided invaluable first hand insights into the intra-party debates and divisions over immigration controls, as well as external influences on Labour policy making. Beginning outside the Labour Party, Avtar Jouhl, General Secretary of the Birmingham branch of the IWA in this period was interviewed during the early stages of the research. As with the IWA papers, the interview illuminated the crucial role played by the Association in leading opposition

against immigration restrictions in 1965 and pressurising the Labour Party to extend race relations legislation. The interview also helped to deepen my understanding of the relationship between the IWA and the Labour Party by contextualising information already found through archival research. For instance, Jouhl explained that the IWA did not operate a policy of unconditional support for the Labour Party. Instead, support for Labour candidates was dependent on whether they were deemed to promote 'pro-immigrant' policies. This testimony helped to explain instances where the IWA had advised immigrant voters to abstain from voting, as was the case at Birmingham Sparkbrook and Birmingham All Saints in 1966, where the respective Labour candidates had vocalised their support for immigration controls. Moving inside the party interviews were also conducted with two former Labour MPs from this period, Stan Newens, MP for Epping and opponent of immigration restrictions and Dick Taverne, MP for Lincoln and junior Minister at the Home Office during Roy Jenkins' Home Secretaryship. Stan Newens was a left winger and part of a group of MPs predominantly on the left of the party who defied the government by voting against immigration restrictions in both 1965 and 1968. The interview informed the argument that ideological beliefs were central to the decision to oppose immigration controls for those on the left of the party, forming part of their broader fight against colonialism and racism. The interview also provided keener insights into how Newens, and other left wingers, regarded the Labour Party's policy on Commonwealth immigration at the time. Moreover, it illuminated the crucial role left wing Labour MPs played in leading and co-ordinating opposition to immigration controls both inside and outside of parliament throughout this period. Working through extra-parliamentary groups such as the Movement for Colonial Freedom (MCF) a core group of left wing Labour MPs, including Newens, organised rallies and demonstrations against the restriction of Commonwealth immigration. Similarly, the interview with Dick Taverne helped to establish the rationale which motivated a much smaller group of MPs on Labour's revisionist right wing to oppose the tightening of restrictions in 1965. Whilst members of the left and revisionist right may have opposed immigration restrictions, they were by no means united in their opposition. In contrast to the ideological opposition of the left, information gleaned from this interview underpinned the argument that the

opposition of individual MPs on the revisionist right did not reflect a wider ideological anti-restriction revisionist position. Instead, the interview revealed that Taverne's position, which changed from opposing controls in 1965 to supporting the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, was heavily informed by the view of Roy Jenkins. A loyal Jenkinsite, Taverne very much followed his lead on this matter and fell in line with Jenkins' stance. For the majority of former Gaitskellites who initially opposed controls, including Taverne, opposition to restrictions was not an absolute. Instead, they adopted a more pragmatic approach which altered as public opinion against immigration hardened and they advanced into ministerial office. As these interviews both demonstrated, like many other issues at this time, the question of immigration controls was a complex one which elicited varying responses within the party. Thus, as Chapter One will illustrate, far from establishing a consensus on controls through their dual strategy, the Labour Party remained divided on this issue throughout this period.

## **Chapter One: Internal debates and divisions – the Parliamentary Labour Party and the restriction of Commonwealth immigration**

The motivation behind the Labour Party's change in immigration policy from opposing controls in 1962 to supporting and then extending restrictions in 1965 and 1968 has, as previously discussed, been the subject of debate between scholars of the public opinion school of thought and proponents of the racialisation argument.

<sup>1</sup> In contrast, the intra-party conflicts created over this policy change have received relatively little consideration within the existing literature, thereby creating the misleading impression that this decision was collectively endorsed by the Labour party as a whole. Thus, whilst this thesis argues broadly in line with the public opinion perspective, it is essential to recognise that this policy change was not supported by the entire PLP. This is something which current historiography has largely failed to acknowledge, instead arguing that the change in leadership from Gaitskell to Wilson denoted a clear shift from a principled opposition to controls under the revisionist leadership of Gaitskell, to the adoption of an electorally pragmatic immigration policy under Wilson as immigration became an increasingly salient electoral matter. The oversimplification of this policy shift as a clear transition from 'principle' to 'pragmatism' will be reappraised in this chapter which argues that Gaitskell laid the foundations for Wilson's immigration policy through the construction of a highly conditional opposition to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. The chapter will also further challenge the notion that the party underwent a collective and unified transformation on the issue of immigration controls by demonstrating that a sustained level of opposition towards the restriction of Commonwealth immigration persisted amongst MPs on the left of the PLP in this period.

In order to understand the internal conflicts within the PLP over the further restriction of Commonwealth immigration in 1965 and 1968, it is first necessary to re-evaluate the rationale for opposing controls in 1962. There has been a somewhat casual assumption that Gaitskell's revisionist beliefs led him to adopt a principled

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<sup>1</sup> See introduction chapter for an outline of this debate.

socially liberal stance against immigration controls, whilst Wilson's pragmatic nature informed his subsequent decision to extend restrictions. Dilip Hiro, for example, attests that whilst Gaitskell saw the abidance of moral principles as more important than electoral popularity, Wilson was far more responsive to public opinion.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, Layton-Henry and Hansen have reinforced the view that the principled opposition of Gaitskell was in sharp contrast to Wilson, who held no strong beliefs against controls.<sup>3</sup> This view will be challenged in this chapter by demonstrating that Gaitskell's decision to oppose the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was the outcome of a process of careful and pragmatic political calculation, as opposed to a principled rejection of controls. Rather than representing a radical departure from social liberal principle, the policy pursued by Wilson after 1964 can instead be viewed as a continuation of the pragmatic approach initiated by Gaitskell.

Following a re-evaluation of the party's initial policy approach, the internal disputes created over Wilson's decision to extend immigration controls after 1964 will then be focused on. Building on the view that the extension of restrictions was accepted at Cabinet level as part of the broader political consensus on immigration in this period,<sup>4</sup> this chapter will argue that regardless of ideological beliefs, concern over the racialisation of public opinion combined with the careerist aspirations of Cabinet ministers to ensure support for Wilson's immigration policy. However, the scope of analysis will also be broadened beyond ministerial level to highlight the more varied response of the wider PLP. Though differences of opinion within the PLP have been largely marginalised within the existing literature, Steven Fielding has provided a more detailed account of the variegated responses towards coloured immigration

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<sup>2</sup> Dilip Hiro, *Black British White British – A History of Race Relations in Britain* (London: Grafton Books, 1991, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed), p. 205.

<sup>3</sup> Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Race and Race relations in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), Randall Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians, British Politics, and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1968', *The Historical Journal*, 42,3 (1999), pp. 810-812.

<sup>4</sup> See for example Steven Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970 – Labour and cultural change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 156; James Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', in Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006), pp. 313-316; Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in post-war Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 162; Clive Ponting, *Breach of Promise – Labour in Power 1964-1970* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), pp. 331-333.

within the Labour Party than other scholars.<sup>5</sup> Yet, in contrast to this chapter, Fielding focuses on Labour Party members rather than MPs specifically. In the few other instances where internal opposition to restrictions has been discussed, it tends to be presented as something which brought together elements of the liberal revisionist wing, linked to Gaitskell's initial 'principled' opposition, and the left wing of the party. Here, Fielding and Hansen have suggested Commonwealth immigration united the 'ideologists' on the activist left and revisionist right, against those who viewed Labour merely as a trade union cipher and were therefore sceptical of large-scale immigration.<sup>6</sup> Bale also asserts that opposition towards controls 'united the Tribunes and the 'unattached Left' with the so-called 'Radical Right' of the PLP who maintained the Gaitskellite repugnance for racial discrimination.'<sup>7</sup> Others have overlooked the role of the left entirely. Paul Foot suggested that the introduction of controls had caused consternation amongst the 'principled' right of the party, with no mention of left wing opponents.<sup>8</sup> Conversely, this chapter will argue that the role played by revisionists in opposing legislation to restrict Commonwealth immigration has been overstated. By re-evaluating the response of leading revisionists such as Gaitskell and latterly, Jenkins, it will be argued that although the attainment of racial equality in Britain was an important component of revisionist ideology, maintaining the unrestricted entry of Commonwealth immigrants was not viewed as integral to the achievement of that goal. Therefore, whilst a few individual revisionists may have continued to oppose controls throughout this period, this did not reflect a wider ideological anti-restriction revisionist position.

Instead, this chapter will demonstrate that the impetus for opposition came predominantly from the left of the party. Building on the work of Howe, who suggests the fight against racism replaced the struggle against colonialism for the

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<sup>5</sup> Steven Fielding, 'Brotherhood and the brothers: Responses to 'coloured' immigration in the British Labour Party c. 1951-1965', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3, 1 (1998).

<sup>6</sup> Fielding, 'Brotherhood and the brothers', pp. 83-88; Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Postwar Britain*, p.130.

<sup>7</sup> Tim Bale, *Sacred Cows and Common Sense: the Symbolic Statecraft and Political Culture of the British Labour Party* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), p.187.

<sup>8</sup> Paul Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1968), pp. 256-257.

Bevanite left,<sup>9</sup> this chapter will contend that by the early 1960s the rejection of racially discriminatory immigration legislation became a key focus for this group. The remaining figures on the 'old left' who began the campaign against the restriction of Commonwealth immigration were joined in their fight by a new generation of young left-wing MPs, drawn from the Bevanites' successor group, Tribune, as well as figures on the 'unattached' left. The cohesive opposition of this group towards controls was informed by their anti-colonial, anti-fascist and anti-racist ideological beliefs. In contrast to the Cabinet and wider PLP's acceptance of controls by 1964, the left advocated an alternative approach based on confronting and re-educating public opinion. However, given the precarious position of the first Wilson government, together with the vast support for controls both inside and outside the PLP after 1964, this chapter will question how far this represented a viable policy alternative.

### **Explaining party factionalism**

Prior to any detailed discussion of the internal divisions instigated by Labour's immigration policy, it is first necessary to put these divisions into context by briefly outlining the nature of party factionalism in this period. According to Rose the Labour Party has been, since its foundation, a party of factions.<sup>10</sup> The amalgam of various groups with divergent interests and ideas has made it, perhaps more so than other political parties, predisposed to disputes. Indeed, for the majority of the period under study in this chapter the Labour Party was consumed by internal splits. By establishing the broad factional groups which existed within the Labour Party during the 1950s and 60s, as well as some of the key policy areas on which they divided, the internal response to Labour's immigration policy can be better understood.

The end of Clement Attlee's post-war government in 1951 marked the beginnings of a protracted period of bitter internal divisions which helped consign Labour to thirteen long years in opposition between 1951 and 1964. The initial radicalism of

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<sup>9</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics – The Left and the End of Empire 1918-1964* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 301.

<sup>10</sup> Richard Rose, 'Parties, Factions and Tendencies in Britain', *Political Studies* 12, 1 (1964), p. 41.

Attlee's reforming socialist government had, according to the left, given way to 'inertia' by the early 1950s.<sup>11</sup> Thus, following Aneurin Bevan's resignation from the government in 1951, the left united in support of Bevan and emerged as cohesive group in the Labour Party.<sup>12</sup> According to Brand the objective of the Bevanites in the 1950s and its successor group Tribune after 1964, both of whom represented a moderate left position, was to encourage Labour MPs to remember their 'radical roots'.<sup>13</sup> In essence the Bevanites, and latterly the Tribunites too, wanted to continue their pursuit of transforming Britain into a truly socialist society.<sup>14</sup> Inevitably, the policy objectives of the Bevanites, which included securing further nationalisation and unilateral nuclear disarmament, brought them into direct conflict with the right of the party. Whilst the left were pushing to revive radical socialism in this period, a new group of revisionist thinkers emerged in the party who believed the achievements of Attlee's government had exhausted the traditional policy objectives of British Socialism.<sup>15</sup> This group of right-wing intellectuals, distinct from the 'non-intellectual, pragmatic, old trade union right',<sup>16</sup> initially coalesced in support of the moderate policies of the leadership under threat from the attacks of the left. However, under the leadership of Gaitskell from 1955 the revisionists distinguished themselves from the moderates by rejecting traditional socialism and instead seeking to 're-vamp' the 'concepts of class, ownership, individual, and market' which the Labour Party had previously adhered to.<sup>17</sup> Alongside the diverging left and right, it is essential to recognise the centre of the party too. Though somewhat more elusive to define in terms of ideological beliefs,<sup>18</sup> MPs occupying the centre of the party played a crucial role in balancing the opposing views of the left

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<sup>11</sup> Raymond Plant, Matt Beech, Kevin Hickson (eds), *The Struggle for Labour's Soul – Understanding Labour's political thought since 1945* (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>12</sup> Stephen Haseler, *The Gaitskellites – Revisionism in the British Labour Party 1951-1964* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1969), pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Jack Brand, 'Faction as its own Reward: Groups in the British Parliament 1945-1986', *Parliamentary Affairs* 42, 2 (1989), p. 154.

<sup>14</sup> Rose, 'Parties, Factions and Tendencies', p. 41.

<sup>15</sup> Alan Warde, *Consensus and beyond – The development of Labour Party strategy since the second world war* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 42-43.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Meredith, *Labours old and new – The parliamentary right of the British Labour Party 1970-79 and the roots of New Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 32.

<sup>17</sup> Warde, *Consensus and beyond*, pp. 43-45.

<sup>18</sup> Noel Thompson, 'The Centre', in Raymond Plant, Matt Beech and Kevin Hickson (eds), *The Struggle for Labour's Soul – Understanding Labour's political thought since 1945* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 47.



and right. Indeed, Wilson's perceived centre ground position by the early 1960s allowed him to present himself as a unifying force, able to create consensus within the party and avoid the issues which had proved divisive in the past, thereby enhancing Labour's electoral prospects.

However, the broad titles ascribed to these groups do not convey the complex and diverse nature of party factionalism at this time. The left for example were beset by continuous divisions of opinion and strategy disputes which has rendered any attempt to identify a single set of ideas or policies impossible.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, Bevan's own alleged betrayal of the left during his 1957 u-turn on unilateralism placed him in direct opposition to the majority of his fellow Bevanites who favoured immediate nuclear disarmament.<sup>20</sup> Equally, clashing beliefs about the efficacy of large scale nationalisation further split the left by the mid-1950s. According to Favretto, whilst figures such as Michael Foot, Barbara Castle and Jennie Lee remained wedded to the importance of public ownership as a central socialist principle, members of the Centre-Left Technocratic Group made up of Wilson, Richard Crossman, Thomas Balogh and Peter Shore 'championed a more instrumental notion of planning and state ownership strictly connected with economic efficiency arguments.'<sup>21</sup> Thus, the Centre-Left revisionists, or the politics of 'Wilsonism'<sup>22</sup>, broke away from the Bevanites due to their belief that planning rather than public ownership needed to take centre stage.<sup>23</sup> As Meredith highlights, this fragmentation was not unique to the Labour left as the right of the party was not a homogenous group either. Thus, whilst the Gaitskellites in the 1950s may have been broadly united against extensive public ownership and economic planning, notions of equality and social justice generated

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<sup>19</sup> Patrick Seyd, *The Rise & Fall of the Labour Left* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1987), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Arblaster, 'The Old Left', in Plant, Beech and Hickson (eds), pp. 18-19.

<sup>21</sup> Ilaria Favretto, 'Wilsonism' Reconsidered: Labour Party Revisionism 1952-64', *Contemporary British History* 14, 4 (2008), p. 55.

<sup>22</sup> The notion of 'Wilsonism' as an ideological movement has been subject to substantial criticism, with many arguing it was simple opportunistic pragmatism aimed at creating unity within the party. Others, such as Warde and more recently Favretto have urged a reconsideration of this prevailing argument by suggesting that far from being a temporary compromise it was a distinct movement with its own policies and ideas. See Alan Warde, *Consensus and beyond – The development of Labour Party strategy since the second world war* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1982), pp. 94-95; Favretto, 'Wilsonism' Reconsidered', pp. 54-55.

<sup>23</sup> Favretto, 'Wilsonism' Reconsidered', p. 60.

little agreement.<sup>24</sup> Equally, disputes forged over trade union reform and Britain's role in Europe during the 1960s and into the 70s further accentuated these divisions. Not only did the question of membership of the EEC divide left and right, 'it provoked disabling divisions both between and within the dimensions of the so-called 'old' and 'revisionist' Labour right.'<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, it is clear that foreign, economic, and defence policies were major sources of division in the Labour Party throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Defence was, in fact, 'the pre-eminent focus for dissent' up to 1964.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, clashes over nationalisation and pressing questions over Britain's role in Europe provoked further widespread divisions by the early 1960s. Very rarely did such issues split the party down simple left/right lines but, as has been shown, generated more complex divisions. Thus, studies into Labour Party factionalism in this period have tended to focus on these key policy areas, whilst issues such as immigration have received scarce attention. In some ways this is understandable as immigration did not provoke the same level of intra-party division as some of the more prominent issues already mentioned. Instead, the perception of immigration as a highly salient electoral issue post-1964 actually appeared to initiate a convergence of competing factional elements in the party around a pragmatic response to controls, particularly at Cabinet level. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assume that Labour's decision to go from opposing to supporting immigration controls was endorsed by the entire PLP. Crucially, immigration was one of the very few issues which accounted for more than 5% of rebellions in the PLP between 1959 and 1970.<sup>27</sup> Alongside the more 'traditional' areas of foreign and defence policy immigration too was a focus of dissent for the left in this period. Thus, the failure to acknowledge immigration

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<sup>24</sup> Meredith, *Labours old and new*, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> Meredith, *Labours old and new*, p. 137.

<sup>26</sup> Nick Randall, 'Dissent in the Parliamentary Labour Party, 1945-2015', in Emmanuelle Avril and Yann Béliard (eds), *Labour united and divided from the 1830s to the present* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), p. 198.

<sup>27</sup> Randall groups immigration with Civil Rights, Minority Issues and Civil Liberties as a single issue. In the period between 1959-1964 rebellions on these issues constituted 8% of PLP rebellions, rising to 10% for the period between 1966-1970. The only other issues which accounted for over 5% of rebellions between 1959-1970 were macroeconomics, labour and employment, defence, government operations and international affairs. See Randall, 'Dissent in the Parliamentary Labour Party, 1945-2015', pp. 199-203.

controls as a source of internal conflict within existing accounts of Labour Party factionalism, and more specifically within studies of Labour's policy response to Commonwealth immigration, necessitates further analysis in this chapter.

### **A point of principle? Re-evaluating Gaitskell's response to the 1962**

#### **Commonwealth Immigrants Act**

The Labour Party's opposition towards the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act has, as already noted, been interpreted by proponents of the public opinion argument as illustrative of Gaitskell's uncompromising and principled objection to the restriction of Commonwealth citizens entering Britain. The possibility that this opposition could have been anything other than the product of high moral principle has received scant consideration. It is only by considering the wider context in which Gaitskell formulated this policy, both in terms of the ongoing internal party disputes as well as other policy decisions which arose simultaneously and the influence these factors may have had on the decision to oppose the 1962 Act, that the established view of Gaitskell's stance can be challenged.

The constructed image of Gaitskell as a principled opponent of immigration controls was certainly less apparent to some of his contemporaries. Indeed, Conservative Prime Minister in this period, Harold Macmillan, criticised what he deemed to be an opaque stance, accusing Gaitskell of continually failing to commit to the question of whether a system of immigration controls was necessary.<sup>28</sup> Although refuted by the Labour leader, Macmillan's allegations were not entirely baseless as Gaitskell's policy response to potential immigration controls was marked with ambiguity. In a correspondence with Labour MP for Leyton, Reg Sorensen on the issue of immigration in October 1961, Gaitskell remarked that he did not think the Labour Party should take a 'very definite line' on immigration until they saw what legislation was being proposed. Though qualifying this by saying it would be difficult to accept anything that amounted to a colour bar, he continued to say that regardless of the

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<sup>28</sup> *HC Deb* 23 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 1539-1543.

proposals there would have to be a full party discussion before any conclusion could be reached.<sup>29</sup> This failure to commit to a policy direction was highlighted again only days before the debate on the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill when Gaitskell informed the editor of *The Guardian*, Alastair Hetherington, that although the party would 'probably' have to oppose the Bill they had not made up their minds and considerations were ongoing.<sup>30</sup> Evidently then, it was not a foregone conclusion that Labour would oppose the proposals. Even as the party declared its formal opposition, it remained unclear on exactly what grounds they opposed the Bill. The amendment put forward by Patrick Gordon Walker during the debate on the Second Reading appeared to instigate this confusion. This House, he declared:

*'declines to give a Second Reading to a Bill which, without adequate inquiry and without full discussion at a meeting of Commonwealth Prime Ministers, removes from Commonwealth citizens the long standing right of free entry to Britain, and is thus calculated to undermine the unity and strength of the Commonwealth.'*<sup>31</sup>

According to *The Guardian* this left 'some doubt about where indignation chiefly lay: was it over the ending of the "long standing right of free entry" or was it the failure to consult the Commonwealth properly?'<sup>32</sup> Whilst the article concluded that this was merely a poor articulation of Labour policy, *The Telegraph* was less convinced. Instead, they claimed that the amendment 'skirmished round the fringes of the Bill but left its essential principles unchallenged'.<sup>33</sup> Labour, the article contended, did not reject the principle of controls but simply objected to the fact there had not been a Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference on the matter. Evidence that Labour's chief objections related to the terms of the Bill became more apparent during its

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<sup>29</sup> The National Archives (TNA): Letter to Gaitskell from Reg Sorensen, 18 October 1961, and response from Gaitskell, 19 October 1961, Gaitskell/C238-240/Box 114.

<sup>30</sup> John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), meeting between Gaitskell and Hetherington, 1 November 1961, C5/59/1-3.

<sup>31</sup> *HC Deb* 16 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819.

<sup>32</sup> 'Anti-Commonwealth and anti-colour: Mr Gaitskell condemns the Immigrants Bill', *The Guardian*, 17 November 1961 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers 08/03/2018).

<sup>33</sup> *The Telegraph*, 'Narrower Door', 17 November 1961 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers 08/03/2018).

passage through parliament. Importantly, the existence of problems associated with immigration were not denied and nor were future controls ruled out entirely. Instead, three main objections were put forward. Firstly, the exclusion of Irish immigrants from the proposed legislation meant it would introduce a blatant colour bar. Secondly, there did not appear to be any economic justification for controls at this time as the rate of immigration was closely related to the labour needs of the country. Finally, there was extensive concern that Britain's relationship with the Commonwealth would be in jeopardy, particularly as there had been a lack of consultation with Commonwealth Prime Ministers over the proposals.<sup>34</sup> According to the Research Department's John Lyttle, framing the party's opposition in this manner was an intentional move by Gaitskell to emphasise that their quarrel was with the terms of the Bill and not the broader principle of controls.<sup>35</sup> Gaitskell's subsequent refusal to be drawn into 'irrelevant' questions on whether he would maintain an open door policy under any circumstances was a further indication that he wished Labour's position to remain flexible.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, Gaitskell privately acknowledged that the party's position did not represent an indefinite committal to an open door policy. In a PLP meeting the day before the Second Reading of the Act he admitted 'we might well have to do something about this problem later', but confirmed his belief that such legislation was not required imminently.<sup>37</sup> In Gaitskell's absence during the Third Reading of the Bill, Shadow Commonwealth and Colonial spokesman Denis Healey maintained this line. In winding up for the opposition, he reaffirmed his leader's opposition but went on to say 'if the information collected by a serious survey of the whole problem revealed that immigration control was necessary...we would consult other Commonwealth Governments to see how this could be achieved with minimum damage.'<sup>38</sup> Exactly

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<sup>34</sup> *HC Deb* 16 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819; *HC Deb* 23 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 1539-1543.

<sup>35</sup> Modern Records Centre (MRC), Draft speech by John Lyttle for Richard Crossman on Commonwealth Immigration & Racial Discrimination, 11 May 1965, Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/3/SP/5/1-49; Labour History Archive and Study Centre (LHASC), Letter from John Lyttle to Alice Bacon, 20 September 1965, Terry Pitt papers, D/PITT/C/61.

<sup>36</sup> Gaitskell was referring to questions previously put to him by Conservative MP for Lough and advocate of restrictions, Cyril Osborne. *HC Deb* 16 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819.

<sup>37</sup> LHASC, PLP Minutes, 15 November 1961, p.237.

<sup>38</sup> *HC Deb* 27 February 1962, Vol 654, Cols 1189-281.

what a 'serious survey' amounted to, whether that be of public opinion or a research led evidence based approach, was not articulated. Instead, its ambiguity allowed for maximum flexibility with regards to potential policy changes in the future. Therefore, whilst Gaitskell may have adopted a position that led Labour to oppose controls in 1962 this was by no means based upon a principled rejection of restrictions. Instead, this chapter contends that Labour's stance was tied firstly to a broader attempt by Gaitskell to unite the party and, secondly, to help him achieve other policy objectives.

The debate on immigration controls presented itself at a time when bitter internal divisions consumed the Labour Party. Following a disappointing defeat in the 1959 election, Gaitskell's previous attempts to unify the party appeared to be in retreat as he pursued his revisionist political agenda with vigour, firstly through an ill-fated attempt to repeal Clause IV and then through his reversal of the 1960 Conference vote on unilateral nuclear disarmament.<sup>39</sup> Unsurprisingly, these decisions infuriated the left and further fractured party unity. Thus, as Katznelson suggests, the immigration debate provided Gaitskell with an opportunity to heal internal divisions. In particular, she notes that the decision to oppose the Act met with jubilation from his adversaries on the left.<sup>40</sup> Gaitskell's declaration to the PLP that 'electoral consequences, although they had to be taken into account, could not influence the Party if it knew its course to be the right one'<sup>41</sup> was interpreted by the left as an endorsement of their opposition towards public opinion shaping policy. The left were sceptical of the emergence of new campaigning methods, based upon opinion polling and advertising techniques, which they denounced as a 'mortal threat to the ideological integrity of the party'.<sup>42</sup> Gaitskell was aware that supporting immigration controls on the basis of public opinion would be unpopular with elements of the left and could potentially compromise his chance to unite the party. Thus, opposing

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<sup>39</sup> Timothy Heppell, 'Hugh Gaitskell, 1955-63', in Timothy Heppell (ed), *Leaders of the Opposition – From Churchill to Cameron* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), pp. 37-39.

<sup>40</sup> Ira Katznelson, *Black Men, White Cities – Race, Politics and Migration in the United States, 1900-30, and Britain, 1948-68* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), pp. 136-137.

<sup>41</sup> LHASC, PLP Minutes, 15 November 1961, p.237.

<sup>42</sup> Dominic Wring, *The Politics of Marketing the Labour Party* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 62.

controls emerged as Gaitskell's preferred policy, as it allowed him to assert his authority as leader and acted as a 'rallying point' for party unity, something he was keen to exploit to the full.<sup>43</sup>

Moreover, the debate on the restriction of Commonwealth immigration in November 1961 coincided with burgeoning questions over Britain's future role in Europe. The Conservative government's declaration in July 1961 that it intended to apply for membership of the EEC posed a problem for the Labour leader. The question of Britain joining the Common Market aroused conflicting views within the Labour Party between those who saw Britain's role after empire through the lens of the Commonwealth, versus the pro-Marketeers who felt Britain needed to re-orientate its focus towards European co-operation.<sup>44</sup> For the party's anti-Marketeers the prospect of joining the Common Market represented an inherent threat to the Commonwealth and Britain's leadership role within it. It was a widely held view amongst Labour anti-Marketeers that Britain's position at the head of the Commonwealth was crucial to ensuring that its moral obligations to improve the lives of its now independent former subjects were fulfilled.<sup>45</sup> Unlike the defence debate Gaitskell was fully aware that the majority of the PLP were anti-Common Market.<sup>46</sup> In common with his approach to the restriction of Commonwealth immigration he proceeded with caution, not immediately ruling out entry but stressing the fulfilment of a number of conditions as an essential prerequisite if Labour was to support Britain's proposed entry bid. According to Heppell and Brivati, Gaitskell was loathe to risk another rift in the party and once again moved to a adopt position intended to maximise party unity.<sup>47</sup> On this occasion he 'alienated his traditional revisionist friends' by siding with the left on the issue and opposing

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<sup>43</sup> *The Telegraph*, 'Immigration Tactics', 25 November 1961 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers 08/03/2018)

<sup>44</sup> C.M.M Cotton, 'Labour, European Integration and the Post-Imperial Mind, 1960-1975', in Billy Frank, Craig Horner and David Stewart (eds), *The British Labour Movement and Imperialism* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010), p. 149.

<sup>45</sup> C.M.M Cotton, 'Labour, European Integration and the Post-Imperial Mind', pp. 158-159.

<sup>46</sup> Heppell, 'Hugh Gaitskell, 1955-63', p. 40.

<sup>47</sup> Heppell, 'Hugh Gaitskell, 1955-63, p. 40; Brian Brivati, *Hugh Gaitskell* (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1996), pp. 404-405.

Britain's entry.<sup>48</sup> Indeed, by his own admission Gaitskell acknowledged that laying down conditions for entry was the only policy direction acceptable to the entire party. Urging either unconditional entry or outright opposition would have caused a major split and been fatal to the party's electoral prospects.<sup>49</sup> Stipulating preconditions placated revisionists by appearing, ostensibly at least, to show that proposed entry was being considered whilst the Conservative government's inevitable failure to provide the assurances Labour requested allowed Gaitskell to justify opposing the Conservative's bid for EEC membership. This has led Heppell to characterise Gaitskell as adopting a tactical approach to the European question,<sup>50</sup> an interpretation that could be extended to his response to the immigration debate which was taking place concurrently.

Safeguarding Britain's relationship with the Commonwealth became a key feature of Labour's opposition to proposed entry throughout 1962, which continually highlighted the potential damage EEC membership could have on the Commonwealth.<sup>51</sup> Thus, when Conservative proposals to limit Commonwealth immigration to Britain first emerged in late 1961 during the EEC debate, it presented Gaitskell with an opportunity to further strengthen his case against entry. Direct links were made between these two issues during the debates on the Commonwealth Immigrants Act by some of the party's anti-Marketters. Patrick Gordon Walker for example called the timing of the Bill 'appalling' given that the Common Market discussions had already introduced 'doubt and suspicion among the member states of the Commonwealth'.<sup>52</sup> Michael Foot made similar comments, reiterating the concerns and suspicions raised in the Commonwealth due to the EEC debate.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, Gaitskell used the debate as an opportunity to criticise the

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<sup>48</sup> Heppell, 'Hugh Gaitskell, 1955-63', p. 41.

<sup>49</sup> TNA: Memorandum from Gaitskell to President Kennedy, 11 December 1962, Gaitskell/C257-C260/Box 126, C257.

<sup>50</sup> Heppell, 'Hugh Gaitskell, 1955-63', p. 41.

<sup>51</sup> TNA: Speech made by Gaitskell to the Fulham Labour Party, 14 April 1962, Gaitskell/C256.7/Box 124; TNA: A party political broadcast made by Gaitskell on behalf of the Labour Party, 8 May 1962, Gaitskell/C256.7/Box 124; TNA: Speech made by Gaitskell to the 1962 Annual Conference of the Labour Party, 3 October 1962, Gaitskell/C256.7(3)/Box 125.

<sup>52</sup> *HC Deb* 16 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819;

<sup>53</sup> *HC Deb* 27 February 1962, Vol 654, Cols 1189-1281.



Commonwealth Secretary for failing to represent the interests of the Commonwealth due to being 'too absorbed with trying to drag us into the Common Market'.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, during the debate on the Third Reading of the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill, Healey urged caution in prioritising Common Market negotiations at the expense of the Commonwealth:

*'There is a growing probability today that the negotiations for British entry into the Common Market will not succeed, and if this is the case, it is no good the Government thinking that they can then take the Union Jack out of the dustbin and wave it around, and expect to be greeted by other members of the Commonwealth as reconverted enthusiasts for Commonwealth association.'*<sup>55</sup>

As these comments illustrate, opposing the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and therefore re-affirming the party's commitment to the Commonwealth became an important way of strengthening the anti-EEC policy stance which Gaitskell was simultaneously constructing.

Therefore, contrary to the accepted narrative that Gaitskell led a principled opposition to the 1962 Act, Labour's resistance was the result of a process of careful pragmatic political calculation by Gaitskell. Opposing the Commonwealth Immigrants Act was in many ways an important act of party management. Despite being a potentially unpopular policy, Gaitskell's powerful rhetoric against the Tories 'shameful' legislation acted as a rallying cry for party unity, as well as providing an opportunity to achieve other policy objectives. Supporting controls at this time would have undermined the anti-EEC stance Gaitskell was constructing which hinged on prioritising Britain's relationship with the Commonwealth over a future in Europe. Questions over the restriction of Commonwealth immigration in this period became linked with broader policy discussions surrounding Britain's potential future in the Common Market. Nonetheless, whilst Gaitskell may have considered opposing the measures to be the best course of action in 1962, this by no means represented an

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<sup>54</sup> *HC Deb* 16 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819;

<sup>55</sup> *HC Deb* 27 February 1962, Vol 654, Cols 1189-1281.

indefinite rejection of controls. Instead, it was very much a conditional and moveable opposition. The ambiguous nature of the party's 'opposition' and the competing interpretations of exactly what this policy constituted meant Wilson inherited a much more uncertain and malleable policy position following Gaitskell's death in January 1963 than has hitherto been appreciated.

### **Wilson and the Cabinet response**

Wilson's first foray into the politics of Commonwealth immigration came in November 1963 when the Commonwealth Immigrants Act came up for annual renewal, an agreement the Labour Party had secured during its passage through parliament the previous year. Ensuring that the Act would face an annual renewal debate meant that the Labour Party were not bound to maintain their opposition but instead had the opportunity to review their policy position, as Gaitskell had intended. According to Wilson, consultations with the PLP in the summer of 1963 suggested that the majority of Labour MPs now wished to allow the Act to continue unchallenged,<sup>56</sup> rendering the adoption of a fixed principled position no longer viable. Proceeding tentatively, Wilson followed Gaitskell's negotiating line and sought a compromise whereby the party would not oppose the continuation of the Act if the Conservatives agreed to consult with Commonwealth governments over voluntary controls. This represented clear continuity with the conditions laid down by Gaitskell in 1962 and indicated Wilson's desire to maintain party unity on immigration as his predecessor had. Signalling his preparedness to continue to oppose the Act enabled Wilson to appease MPs on the left of the party, whilst making opposition subject to specific terms was intended to placate the rest of the PLP, who were becoming more supportive of restrictions. Wilson noted that though he had 'quite a job' in bringing party opinion round the majority acquiesced.<sup>57</sup> Despite this acquiescence, the parliamentary debate on the renewal of the Act was

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<sup>56</sup> John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), meeting between Wilson and Hetherington, 4 November 1963, C5/135/1-4; John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), meeting between Wilson and Hetherington, 20 November 1963, C5/138/1-2.

<sup>57</sup> John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), meeting between Wilson and Hetherington, 20 November 1963, C5/138/1-2.

notable for the absence of many of Labour's frontbench spokesmen.<sup>58</sup> If the actions of the Labour frontbench indicated a growing desire within the PLP to support controls, the politicisation of immigration in the 1964 general election solidified this. Public demands for controls in certain regions became apparent and as Hampshire notes, a government with a majority as slim as Wilson's could not afford to be 'cavalier about such a volatile electoral issue.'<sup>59</sup> Where Wilson had sought a compromise in 1963 to retain party unity, the politicisation of immigration in the election and after at the Leyton by-election meant party management now became intertwined with electoral strategy in the field of Labour's immigration policy. Thus, the introduction of the White Paper in 1965 was the new Labour government's statement of intent on immigration. This was followed in 1968 by the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act when immigration once again threatened to become a major electoral issue.

Despite general agreement that both policies were officially supported by the Cabinet, the existing literature cites the differing ideological perspectives of Ministers to draw crude distinctions between open advocates of immigration controls and 'reluctant' supporters. The polarised interpretations of Roy Jenkins' and James Callaghan's handling of immigration controls during their respective periods as Home Secretary between 1965 and 1968 are a prominent example of this. As with Gaitskill, Jenkins' revisionist values have been used to explain his apparent unwillingness to extend legislation whilst at the Home Office. The ideological beliefs of both figures have been used to make broader claims about the competing views in the party on the issue of immigration. Thus Hansen has argued that the 1968 Act represented a triumph for Callaghan's trade union strand of Labour ideology, which was anti-intellectual and indifferent to arguments about international law and obligation, at the expense of the 'Jenkinsites' brand of social liberalism.<sup>60</sup> Dick Taverne, MP for Lincoln and member of the Jenkinsite group in this period made similar suggestions that the different backgrounds and views of these figures led

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<sup>58</sup> Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain* (London: George Allen & Unwin Publishers Ltd, 1984), p. 56.

<sup>59</sup> Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', p. 312.

<sup>60</sup> Hansen, 'The Kenyan Asians', pp. 812-822.

them to take opposing paths on controls. In an interview with Taverne he described Callaghan as 'a very different person' to Jenkins and went on, 'he'd never been to university, incidentally. Able man but very much a traditional Labour man and he was very much a trade unionist.'<sup>61</sup> However, whilst they may have represented different strands of Labour ideology, on the issue of immigration controls the respective positions of Jenkins and Callaghan were far more similar than has previously been acknowledged.

Jenkins was, undeniably, a more liberal Home Secretary than Callaghan. He pursued a progressive agenda of social liberal reforms during his time at the Home Office which resulted in key legislative changes in the fields of homosexuality, divorce, abortion and of course, race relations. According to Diamond, the role played by Jenkins in liberalising restrictive legislation and restoring the concept of individual autonomy helped establish the Labour Party as 'a guardian of social liberal values'.<sup>62</sup> However, the legacy of Jenkins as a liberal and reforming Home Secretary requires reconsideration in the context of immigration control. Whilst his belief in individual equality led him to pursue race relations legislation with far more vigour than his successor, Callaghan,<sup>63</sup> who showed comparatively little support in this area, this did not automatically equate to support for the principle of unrestricted entry of immigrants. According to the 'unofficial mouthpiece' of the revisionists, the *Socialist Commentary* journal, which was edited by Gaitskell's close friend and former secretary of the Fabian Colonial Bureau, Rita Hinden,<sup>64</sup> there was no Socialist principle that dictated unrestricted immigration must be permitted. Emphasising that countries maintained the right to judge what effect immigration would have on their economies and social relations, it asserted that Britain had a 'genuine case for limiting immigration in order to make the problems of integration soluble as rapidly

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<sup>61</sup> Author interview with Dick Taverne (24/05/2017).

<sup>62</sup> Patrick Diamond (ed), *New Labour's Old Roots: Revisionist Thinkers in Labour's History* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2015, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), pp. 157-158.

<sup>63</sup> See Chapters Three and Four.

<sup>64</sup> Kevin Jefferys, 'The Old Right' in Kevin Hickson, Raymond Plant, Matt Beech (eds), *The Struggle for Labour's Soul* (Oxon: Routledge, 2004), p. 74.

as possible.<sup>65</sup> This reflected Jenkins' own view that though there was no rational basis for the resentment of coloured immigrants, there was a limit to the numbers Britain could absorb if successful integration was to be achieved.<sup>66</sup> Thus, immigration controls were viewed by Jenkins as a pre-requisite to creating a more integrated society. In this context, controlling immigration was not seen as a contravention of social liberal principles, but was in fact deemed a necessity in order to help achieve integration successfully. Interestingly, similar sentiments were echoed by Jenkins' successor, Callaghan, in 1968 who declared that controls had to be viewed alongside race relations legislation as two parts of 'a fair and balanced policy.'<sup>67</sup> Therefore far from refusing to consider restrictions, Jenkins responded to the rising immigration levels in 1967 by approaching the Home Affairs Committee and asking for a slot in the legislative programme for an emergency Bill if the need arose; fearing a 'white backlash if he did nothing.'<sup>68</sup> Jenkins' concern over the electoral implications of failing to respond to rising immigration demonstrated that, as with his successor who acknowledged the extension of legislation was necessary in order to convince the public that immigration was being controlled effectively,<sup>69</sup> he too was being influenced by a racialised public opinion on the matter. Nonetheless, although Jenkins may have supported the need for controls he was reluctant to implement them himself and delayed legislating in the hope the situation would resolve itself without intervention. However, far from this being dictated by his social liberal beliefs, Jenkins was more concerned about the damage to his personal reputation. Indeed, as Ponting notes, his image as a liberal Home Secretary would have been 'severely tarnished' if he had proceeded.<sup>70</sup> It was perhaps nothing more than political good fortune for Jenkins that he moved to the Treasury soon after and the decision to legislate fell to Callaghan. Although unwilling to introduce the Act

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<sup>65</sup> LHASC, Rita Hinden, 'Colour prejudice', *Socialist Commentary*, April 1965; Rita Hinden, 'Strangers in our midst', *Socialist Commentary*, September 1965.

<sup>66</sup> *HC Deb* 8 November 1966, Vol 735, Cols 1167-271.

<sup>67</sup> *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, Vol 759, Cols 1241-368.

<sup>68</sup> John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins – A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Random House, 2014), p. 273

<sup>69</sup> James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London: Politico's, 2006), p. 266.

<sup>70</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 341.

himself, Jenkins expressed few qualms about supporting it the following year.<sup>71</sup> The Jenkinsites, by now a recognised group in the PLP, took the lead from their figurehead.<sup>72</sup> Taverne, who as a backbench MP had opposed the White Paper on Immigration, now supported the extension of restrictions. His own response appeared to be influenced by Jenkins' stance, as he remarked 'Roy didn't totally condemn Callaghan's actions at the time. He just said I didn't think it was the right thing to do at the time when the pressure was on me but maybe things have moved.'<sup>73</sup> Therefore, on immigration restrictions the attitude of Jenkins and his revisionist followers closely reflected the response of Callaghan and the trade unionist wing of the party. Neither saw immigration restrictions as a breach of party principle and whilst Jenkins may have been less open about it than Callaghan, he too supported an electorally pragmatic approach to controls.

The response of the wider Cabinet presents a similar story as Ministers, regardless of ideological beliefs, united in their acceptance of a pragmatic approach to controls. Indeed, when the existing restrictions were first tightened by Wilson in 1965, very few questions were raised. Ponting notes that the final White Paper proposals were agreed with virtually no opposition in Cabinet <sup>74</sup>, including from left wing Ministers. Richard Crossman, Minister of Housing and MP for Coventry East, for example declared that although controls were both unpleasant and likely to undermine the 'moral strength' of the government, they were an electoral necessity. Without them, he argued Labour would face certain electoral defeat in the West Midlands and South East at the next election.<sup>75</sup> This view was shared by colleagues on the trade union wing of the party. Despite the continuation of labour shortages Minister of Labour and MP for Southwark, Ray Gunter, defended the White Paper and urged

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<sup>71</sup> Jenkins put in an unsuccessful last minute plea to Wilson to raise the number of vouchers from 1,500 to 2,000. When this failed he supported the legislation as it was. Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan – A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 310.

<sup>72</sup> Patrick Bell identifies the members of the Jenkinsite group as Bill Rodgers, Dick Taverne, David Marquand, David Owen, George Thomson, Tom Bradley, Robert Maclennan, Dickson Mabon and Roy Hattersley. Patrick Bell, *The Labour Party in Opposition 1970-1974* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 193. All members of this group apart from David Marquand, who did not vote in either reading, voted in support of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act.

<sup>73</sup> Author interview with Dick Taverne (24/05/2017).

<sup>74</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 331.

<sup>75</sup> Anthony Howard (ed), *The Crossman Diaries* (London: Mandarin, 1991), p. 132.

others to praise the government for taking steps which would allow the social problems created by immigration to be dealt with.<sup>76</sup> Other Cabinet members, though less effusive in their support, did not express much opposition. As Crossman recalls, the only resistance came from the three Ministers responsible for the Commonwealth and the colonies - Barbara Castle, Anthony Greenwood and Arthur Bottomley, and this was far from absolute.<sup>77</sup> Barbara Castle, MP for Blackburn and Minister for Overseas Development, was the most vocal in her reservations about the White Paper. An MP since 1945, Castle's credentials as a left-winger were well cemented, firstly through her involvement in the 'Keep Left' group and then as a Bevanite in the 1950s. As a sponsor of the MCF and one of its most active campaigners in parliament,<sup>78</sup> as well as being a former President of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Castle held strong anti-colonial and anti-racist views. She had opposed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 and been one of the few members of the Shadow Cabinet to side with Wilson in his decision not to allow the renewal of the Act to go unchallenged in 1963.<sup>79</sup> Nonetheless, whilst she argued the White Paper represented a clear abdication of the party's socialist principles,<sup>80</sup> she did not criticise the measures outside Cabinet. Instead, she fell in line with Callaghan's plea for a united front in support of the government's immigration policy which he declared 'must be sold to the electorate as something the Labour government really believes in.'<sup>81</sup> Whether out of loyalty to Wilson, awareness of the party's precarious electoral position which Shaw argues fostered substantial self-discipline,<sup>82</sup> or concern for her own ministerial place, Castle towed the party line. Consequently, the White Paper was presented as a policy which had the backing of the entire ministerial team. This collective unity was used by MP Bob Mellish at the party's Annual Conference as a means of encouraging support for the White Paper in the wider party. 'Let us get this clear, this is the collective responsibility of the whole

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<sup>76</sup> *HC Deb* 23 November 1965, Vol 721, Cols 378-471.

<sup>77</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister Volume One – Minister of Housing 1964-66* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p. 270.

<sup>78</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, p. 250.

<sup>79</sup> Paul Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics* (Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1965), p. 175.

<sup>80</sup> Howard, *The Crossman Diaries*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>81</sup> Howard, *The Crossman Diaries*, p. 140.

<sup>82</sup> Eric Shaw, *Discipline and Discord in the Labour Party : The Politics of Managerial Control in the Labour Party, 1951-87* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 42.

Cabinet – Anthony Greenwood, Barbara Castle – the White Paper is the collective responsibility of the Cabinet.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the compliance of leading left wingers who would be expected to oppose the measures was used by Mellish to create the impression that regardless of ideological leanings there was a consensus on restrictions, in order to placate anxious conference delegates. Despite more intense conflict within Cabinet over the controversial 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, Ministers once again fell in line with official policy.

The increasing arrival of Kenyan Asians in Britain by the latter half of 1967, precipitated by the punitive 'Africanisation' policies implemented by Kenyan leader Jomo Kenyatta, reinvigorated the immigration debate. As dual-citizenship holders this group had retained the right to enter Britain freely and were exempt from the existing restrictions.<sup>84</sup> As Wilson recalled, few issues could have presented a more difficult problem for the Cabinet. 'On the one hand, there was the human issue presented by homeless persons expelled from their country...on the other, there was the disruptive effect on national immigration policy...including the special problem of the strain on the services of the areas where they would have to be assimilated.'<sup>85</sup> Wilson was faced with a difficult dilemma, honour previous obligations and risk the possible electoral consequences or, respond to public pressure at the expense of these commitments. In the event Wilson chose the latter. The introduction of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act signalled the continuation of a pragmatic immigration policy linked closely to public opinion. As in 1965 this was constructed as one part of a dual policy, with the second Race Relations Act being introduced alongside it. If approval of this legislation was less than resolute in Cabinet and attracted more criticism than the 1965 White Paper had done, it was ultimately accepted by all Cabinet Ministers, none of whom voted against the Act during its passage through parliament.

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<sup>83</sup> LHASC, *Labour Party Annual Report 1965* (London, Labour Party, 1965), p. 217.

<sup>84</sup> Ian Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939 – The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 140-141.

<sup>85</sup> Harold Wilson, *The Labour Government 1964-1970 – A Personal Record* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), pp. 504-505.



On this occasion, the strongest expression of resistance within Cabinet came from the Commonwealth Secretary, George Thomson, and Foreign Secretary, George Brown. Thomson viewed the proposals as a breach of faith to Kenyan Asians and felt it was wrong in principle to impose quotas on a group who had been assured of their British citizenship as recently as 1963.<sup>86</sup> Brown too joined Thomson in registering his disapproval. In a clear link back to Gaitskell's conditional opposition in 1962, both Thomson and Brown raised concerns about the lack of consultation over the Bill. Nonetheless, when consultation in the form of talks between the British High Commissioner in Africa, Malcolm Macdonald, and President Kenyatta failed, both Thomson and Brown accepted the Act.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Shirley Williams' initial threat to resign over the 1968 Act was easily placated by a very vague concession made by Callaghan that Britain would accept immigrants who were 'in danger'.<sup>88</sup> Once again, the Cabinet's left wingers failed to take a decisive stand against the measures. Castle, now Minister for Transport, had no discernable impact during either Cabinet or Parliamentary debates on the matter. She was absent from the first Cabinet meeting in February 1968 and failed to contribute during the second crucial meeting because she fell asleep!<sup>89</sup> In her diaries Castle attributes her lack of input on the immigration Bill to a preoccupation with her own departmental issues and being exhausted by the late night Transport Bill sessions.<sup>90</sup> However, the feelings of residual guilt Castle expressed in her diaries about not having a more influential role in the debate,<sup>91</sup> are contradicted by her decision to vote for the Act during its Third Reading. It appears her role as Cabinet Minister had a direct influence on the position she took. Recalling a conversation with her husband on the matter she wrote "Ted said to me the other day 'If I were a member of the Government I would have introduced the Bill and if I were a back bencher I would have opposed it.' Of such stuff is political reality made."<sup>92</sup> Thus, Castle's role as government Minister appeared to take precedence over her ideological beliefs in this instance. Had she

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<sup>86</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: C(68)35, Immigration Legislation Memorandum, 12 February 1968, p. 1; CAB/128/43, Cabinet Meeting Conclusions, 15 February 1968, p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 333.

<sup>88</sup> Shirley Williams, *Climbing the Bookshelves* (London: Virago Press, 2009), pp. 193-194.

<sup>89</sup> Barbara Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), p. 377.

<sup>90</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970*, p. 390.

<sup>91</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970*, p. 381.

<sup>92</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970*, p. 390.

not been in the Cabinet at this time, it is likely she would have opposed the legislation, thus reinforcing the importance of career aspirations in shaping Cabinet Ministers responses to immigration restrictions.

Castle's experience was not an isolated one and was shared by a number of left wing junior Ministers too. Of particular note is David Ennals who, having signed the appeal against the White Paper in 1965, went on to play a crucial role in passing the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. As another former President of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and prominent human rights campaigner, Ennals was firmly on the left of the party. His transition from backbencher to junior Minister in 1967, when he was made Callaghan's junior at the Home Office, led to him being given the role of 'piloting' the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act through parliament.<sup>93</sup> Ennals expressed considerable guilt over his role in the matter to Castle, though attempted to salve his conscience by arguing that he had approved the policy because he felt it was genuinely necessary to prevent the deterioration of race relations.<sup>94</sup> Nonetheless, attempts to justify his changing line found little support amongst his former left wing opponents on the back benches, who criticised the careerist motivations at the heart of Ennals' decision, noting his desire to remain in his post led him to support the government line.<sup>95</sup> In the knowledge that opposing legislation would have made his position at the Home Office untenable, Ennals chose to compromise his principles on immigration controls. This too was the case for a number of other left wing Labour MPs who, having actively opposed the 1965 White Paper, failed to take a stand against the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968. Crucially, all had attained junior ministerial roles in the intervening period. Reg Freeson, for example, who was editor of the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* between 1964 and 1967 and a regular contributor to *Tribune*, had been the 'most anxious and dedicated opponent' of the 1965 White Paper and had led the

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<sup>93</sup> Hampshire, 'Immigration and race relations', p. 315.

<sup>94</sup> Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1970*, p. 390.

<sup>95</sup> Tam Dalyell, Lord Ennals Obituary, 18 June 1995, available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/obituarylord-ennals-1587195.html> (accessed 10/01/2018).

opposition to it.<sup>96</sup> However, his promotion to Parliamentary Secretary at the Ministry of Power in 1967 appeared to secure his silence during the passage of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Fellow left wingers and signatories of Freeson's appeal to Wilson against the 1965 White Paper, David Kerr and Paul Rose, also abstained from voting in 1968. Respectively, they were the Parliamentary Private Secretaries to Judith Hart and Barbara Castle at this time, both of whom voted for the Act. Therefore, whilst some Ministers and junior Ministers may have felt privately torn over the prospect of restrictions, an acute awareness of the electoral ramifications of failing to act, coupled with a desire to retain their Cabinet positions appeared to take precedence over principle, as the Cabinet made a collective shift toward a pragmatic response to immigration controls. Outside of the Cabinet the tightening of restrictions after 1964 met with significant support on the backbenches. Though most of these MPs had supported Labour's decision to oppose the 1962 Act, they now welcomed a policy which they perceived to be more in tune with public opinion.

### **The Labour right and a pragmatic approach to controls**

Despite official support for Gaitskell's policy line in 1962, any claim that the Labour Party united enthusiastically on principle behind its leader on immigration,<sup>97</sup> overstates the level of consensus within the party. Although MPs on the Labour left may have stringently opposed the Act on principle, this was by no means the case for all. Rather, whilst Labour MPs sided with their leader and shadowed his position by objecting to the Act, they did not necessarily oppose the restriction of Commonwealth immigration per se. As Foot notes, 'the deep split in the party over defence had rallied many right-wing MPs to his [Gaitskell's] side over the Immigration Act, though in their hearts they had felt that he was wrong.'<sup>98</sup> For sceptics of Labour's immigration policy, particularly those from the trade union wing,

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<sup>96</sup> Foot, *The Politics of Harold Wilson*, p. 320.

<sup>97</sup> Katznelson, *Black Men, White Cities*, p. 137.

<sup>98</sup> Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics*, p. 174.

the death of Gaitskell and the debate on the annual renewal of the Act offered an opportunity to revise the party's position.

If the PLP had supported opposing controls in 1962 as a show of support for Gaitskell, by 1963 the tide was beginning to turn. As already noted, enquiries made by Wilson prior to the debate on the Act's renewal had revealed the majority of Labour MPs now supported the continuation of the Act. Although eventually securing the support of most Labour MPs for his policy compromise, Wilson did not manage to convert all. A small group of MPs, predominantly made up of right wing trade union moderates, rebelled against Wilson on this matter and refused to accept any compromise, instead advocating support for the continuation of the 1962 Act in its existing form. This group of eight MPs comprised of Christopher Mayhew in Woolwich East, Patrick Gordon Walker in Smethwick, Gerry Reynolds in Islington North, Charles Howell in Birmingham Perry Barr, George Pargiter in Southall, Maurice Edelman in Coventry North, Frank McLeavy in Bradford East and Frank Tomney in Hammersmith North.<sup>99</sup> With the exception of Mayhew and Gordon Walker on the revisionist right, and Edelman on the left, the remaining figures were all older, traditional working-class, non-university educated trade union MPs.<sup>100</sup> Alongside the common feature of constituency pressure on these MPs to restrict immigration, the trade union MPs were also concerned that working class living standards were being jeopardised by Commonwealth immigration. Articulating this view Frank McLeavy justified his support for restrictions on the ideological grounds that the Labour Party had a responsibility to protect the working class interest:

*'I believe that controlled immigration is both in the interests of our country and of those wishing to come here from overseas...we have a responsibility to our people from the trade union point of view when they feel that they are being put into difficulty because of the danger to public health of*

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<sup>99</sup> David Steel, *'No Entry: The Background and Implications of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act 1968'* (London: C. Hurst & Co, 1969), p. 55.

<sup>100</sup> *Dod's Parliamentary Companion 1964* (London: Business Dictionaries Ltd, 1964).

*overcrowding. We have a responsibility to our ordinary trade union members in our towns and cities...*<sup>101</sup>

McLeavy's speech encapsulated the views of the trade union right who felt it was their duty to represent the legitimate concerns of Labour's traditional working class voting base. As Fielding suggests, those who adhered to the view that the Labour Party was a cipher of the trade unions essentially saw coloured immigrants as a threat to the living standards of the working class.<sup>102</sup> As such supporting controlled immigration was, as McLeavy argued, beneficial both for working class communities in Britain and for the immigrants wanting to settle there. It would allow the numbers coming in to be regulated according to demand for labour and would also ensure that all immigrants arriving in Britain had jobs to go to and were not faced with the difficulties involved in being unemployed.<sup>103</sup> Although McLeavy was one of very few Labour MPs to actively rebel against the party line in 1963, support for immigration restrictions was also beginning to build amongst the wider PLP.

The politicisation of the immigration issue in the 1964 general election proved to be a pivotal moment in shaping the trajectory of Labour's immigration policy. For most of the MPs who had been coerced into accepting Wilson's compromise in 1963, the results of the election confirmed the need to adopt a pragmatic approach to controls. This shift was completed firstly by the introduction of the White Paper on Immigration in 1965 and later through the introduction of the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968. Labour MPs who had expressed reservations about Labour's immigration policy prior to this point, such as the aforementioned group of trade unionists, now felt vindicated and welcomed the new stance. Outside of this group the growing social and electoral ramifications of opposing restrictions which had been highlighted in 1964 led others to endorse a pragmatic approach to controls too. The decision of the party leadership was welcomed by the majority of the PLP, and particularly by MPs on the right of the

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<sup>101</sup> *HC Deb* 27 November 1963, Vol 685, Cols 289-406.

<sup>102</sup> Fielding, 'Brotherhood and the brothers', p. 85.

<sup>103</sup> *HC Deb* 27 November 1963, Vol 685, Cols 289-406.

party who represented constituencies with high immigrant populations.<sup>104</sup> Roy Hattersley, MP for Birmingham Sparkbrook, epitomised the shift within this group. Though he had sided with the Labour Party in opposing the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the events of the 1964 election led him to support both the White Paper on Immigration in 1965 and the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. His rationale for accepting restrictions reflected the revisionist stance of Jenkins, as he justified limiting the rate of Commonwealth immigration in order to achieve the successful integration of those already in Britain. Hattersley declared that 'integration without control is impossible, but control without integration is indefensible.'<sup>105</sup> As with Jenkins, public opinion influenced his response to restrictions as Hattersley stated on a number of occasions that he had changed his mind despite there being no economic case to do so because of social considerations in his Birmingham constituency.<sup>106</sup> He admitted that whilst coloured immigrants were not to blame for problems such as the housing shortages and the strain on social services, he favoured restrictions because other people wrongly believed that that was the case.<sup>107</sup> Fellow Birmingham MP Donald Chapman made similar statements. In rejecting the Act in 1962 he had criticised the government for failing to rise to the challenges of an expanding economy of which immigration was an integral part. The solution according to Chapman was not to restrict immigrants coming in but to deal with the problems created by immigration.<sup>108</sup> Yet he too came to accept the necessity of controls in order to resolve social problems arising from immigration.<sup>109</sup> Chapman even praised Callaghan in 1968 for his principled handling of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, commending his 'sincere liberal approach to what for him has been a very difficult and most heart-rending task.'<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See Chapter One for a more detailed discussion of these MPs.

<sup>105</sup> *HC Deb* 1965, Vol 721, Cols 378-385.

<sup>106</sup> *HC Deb* 23 March 1965, Vol 709, Cols 378-453; *HC Deb* 23 November 1965, Vol 721, Cols 262-378; *HC Deb* 8 Nov 1966, Vol 735, Cols 1167-271.

<sup>107</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, Library of Birmingham (LoB), Statement to the press, 24 March 1966, file MS.2141/A/3/3.

<sup>108</sup> *HC Deb* 27 February 1962, Vol 654, Cols 1189-281.

<sup>109</sup> *HC Deb* 8 Nov 1966, Vol 735, Cols 1167-271.

<sup>110</sup> *HC Deb* 28 February 1968, Vol 759, Cols 1693-713.

It should of course be noted that this shift was not universal and although the majority of those who continued to oppose restrictions came from the left, they were joined by a much smaller group of MPs considered to be on the right of the party on most other issues. This group included the ‘maverick right winger’<sup>111</sup> Reginald Paget, MP for Northampton. Paget’s opposition to the Act appeared to be connected to his anti-colonial beliefs, as he was a supporter of the MCF. Equally, the revisionist intellectual, John Mackintosh, MP for Berwick and East Lothian, was also considered something of a ‘maverick’. Certainly, he was an outspoken critic of the government and rebelled on a wide range of Labour policies throughout his time in parliament.<sup>112</sup> Others, including Toxteth’s Richard Crawshaw and York’s Alex Lyon both had an interest in matters relating to immigration. Again for Crawshaw this appeared to stem from his wider interest in colonial issues. He had also sided with the left against government policy on Rhodesia.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, Alex Lyon’s involvement in the Anti-Apartheid Movement and his keen interest in immigration were rare for a revisionist. On such issues, Lyon aligned far more closely with the left than with his revisionist colleagues. Indeed, Lyon’s fraught relationship with Jenkins, particularly in the 1970s, was exacerbated by his perceived preoccupation with immigration. ‘Lyon saw himself as the immigrants’ champion whose job, in every disputed case, was to take the individual’s side against bureaucracy.’<sup>114</sup> Therefore whilst limited opposition to controls did exist on the right, these individuals had more in common with the opponents on the left as opposed to representing any wider anti-restrictionist revisionist position. Instead, the response of Hattersley and Chapman more accurately represented the pragmatic shift which was taking place across large sections of the party, including amongst the revisionists. However, the tightening of restrictions after 1964 was not welcomed by all Labour MPs. For a core group of left wingers the implementation of tougher immigration restrictions represented a surrender to racism and an affront to their socialist principles.

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<sup>111</sup> O. Morgan, *Callaghan – A Life*, p. 140.

<sup>112</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, available online at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-31393?rskey=dHJzgk&result=5> (accessed 10/05/2018).

<sup>113</sup> *HC Deb* 22 October 1968, Vol 770, Cols 1096-1229.

<sup>114</sup> Campbell, *Roy Jenkins*, p. 430.

## **The Labour left – principled opponents**

The Labour Party's implementation of an immigration policy that sought to balance the limitation of Commonwealth immigration alongside the promotion of integration may have eased the consciences of some, but for MPs on the Labour left this policy was just as indefensible as the restrictions introduced under the Tory government in 1962. It would of course be wrong to assume the entirety of the left opposed immigration controls. On the contrary, some left wing figures openly advocated restrictions. George Craddock, MP for Bradford South, for example spoke of his support for the White Paper in 1965 arguing that the scale of immigration had become 'unmanageable' for some local authorities.<sup>115</sup> Renee Short, member of the Tribune group, put forward similar views. As MP for Wolverhampton North-East, incidentally Enoch Powell's neighbouring constituency, she appealed for more vigorous health checks on would-be immigrants in 1965 and welcomed the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, arguing that her constituency needed relief from the 'constant' influx of immigrants.<sup>116</sup> However, whilst opposition to controls was not universally advocated by the left, the vast majority of opponents did emanate from this section of the party.

The opposition of the left towards the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962 developed out of their earlier fight against colonialism. The majority of Labour MPs who took up the struggle against colonialism and subsequently became sponsors of the MCF after its establishment in 1954 came from left of the PLP and were often, though not exclusively, Bevanites.<sup>117</sup> With de-colonisation well underway by the late 1950s, completion of the anti-colonialists' primary objective was in sight. Consequently, their focus now shifted to ensuring the British government fulfilled its responsibility to its former colonies by making the transition from colony to independent nation as smooth as possible. Providing overseas aid as well as taking steps to overcome racism, which was viewed as a bitter consequence of colonialism,

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<sup>115</sup> LHASC, *Labour Party Annual Report 1965* (London, Labour Party, 1965), p. 215.

<sup>116</sup> *HC Deb* 01 February 1965, Vol 705, Cols 712-3; *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, Vol 759, Cols 1241-368.

<sup>117</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, p. 248.



were central to achieving this transition. Thus as Howe argues, 'the campaign against colonialism, then, was replaced by two parallel crusades: against hunger and poverty, and against racism.'<sup>118</sup> Writing about the formation of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Gurney too has suggested that left wing groups both inside and outside of parliament came together on the related issues of anti-colonialism and opposition to widespread racism in Britain,<sup>119</sup> including its expression through the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. The link between these two related causes was evident in the group of MPs involved. Indeed, many of the individuals most heavily involved in the MCF and the fight against colonialism were also those who latterly fought against the restriction of Commonwealth immigration. Fenner Brockway, for example, became a leading spokesperson on both issues. In his role as Chairman of the MCF, he led the campaign against imperialism and formed a key pressure group on Labour's colonial policy.<sup>120</sup> In addition, he was one of the most persistent campaigners for anti-discrimination legislation throughout the 1950s and subsequently led the left in its opposition to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962. Other anti-colonialists on the left who were amongst the most active MCF campaigners in parliament, including Tom Driberg, Ian Mikardo, Maurice Orbach and Konni Zilliacus,<sup>121</sup> also went on to play an important role in opposing controls in this period. The anti-colonial, and in turn anti-racist, ideological beliefs of the left informed the rigorous opposition they put forward to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Thus, Gaitskell's official opposition to the Act was of course welcomed by this group but with the caveat that this should be a principled and uncompromising opposition. Concern that the party's condemnation was not strong enough was reflected in *Tribune*, the weekly newspaper of the Labour left, which criticised the party for allowing its resistance to the Act to 'fizzle out' and blamed suspected abstentions from MPs on the right of the party for the large majority the Act received in its Third Reading.<sup>122</sup> By contrast, MPs on the left were far more proactive in their response. Once again the close association between this issue and

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<sup>118</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, pp. 301-302.

<sup>119</sup> Christabel Gurney, 'A Great Cause': the Origins of the Anti-Apartheid Movement, June 1959 – March 1960', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26, 1 (2000), p. 128.

<sup>120</sup> Gurney, "A Great Cause", p. 129.

<sup>121</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism in British politics*, p. 250.

<sup>122</sup> LHASC, 'RACE: Labour MPs abstain', *Tribune*, 2 March 1962; *Tribune*, 9 March 1962.

anti-colonialism was illustrated by the organisation of a number of marches in protest at the proposed legislation in 1961 and its renewal in 1963, under the banner of the MCF.<sup>123</sup> The desire of this group to see a stronger denunciation of the Act by the Labour leadership was reiterated during the Act's renewal in 1963. Once again, concerns were raised by the left about the conditional nature of Wilson's opposition to the Act's renewal, which focused only on the lack of consultation with Commonwealth governments. In one of his regular columns for *Tribune*, Brockway indicated that many of those voting against the Act's renewal would be doing so 'for reasons deeper than the reasons officially sponsored.'<sup>124</sup> Quite apart from the lack of consultation, the racially discriminatory nature of the legislation lay at the crux of the left's opposition. Therefore, far from Gaitskell putting forward a principled opposition to the 1962 Act, it was the Act's opponents on the Labour left who continually pushed for an unequivocal rejection of restrictions on Commonwealth immigration in place of the conditional opposition which Gaitskell, and latterly Wilson, constructed.

The ensuing exploitation of the immigration issue in the 1964 election was roundly condemned by anti-colonialists on the Labour left, who foresaw the dangers of using race for political gain. Prophetic links were made between the growing racism in Britain and the anti-Semitism which had taken hold in Nazi Germany. Reg Sorensen, who was involved in movements for colonial liberation particularly in India, the Caribbean and Africa, and became chairman of the Fabian Colonial Bureau,<sup>125</sup> warned of the dangers of the growth in the Keep Britain White movement, drawing parallels between this and the rise of Hitler.<sup>126</sup> During the same debate Tom Driberg spoke of Griffiths' election in Smethwick with disdain, stating that for members of

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<sup>123</sup> A number of marches against the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill were organised by the MCF and advertised in *Tribune*. LHASC, 'No Colour Bar on Immigration', *Tribune*, 20 October 1961; 'Mass march against the colour bar bill', *Tribune*, 15 December 1961; 'March against Racial Discrimination', *Tribune*, 22 November 1963.

<sup>124</sup> LHASC, Fenner Brockway, 'Labour and the Immigrants', *Tribune*, 29 November 1963.

<sup>125</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, available online at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-75406?rskey=5CTI0F&result=1> (Accessed on 10/05/2018); Gurney, "A Great Cause", p. 130.

<sup>126</sup> *HC Deb* 17 November 1964, Vol 702 Cols 332-97.

the parliamentary delegation who visited Buchenwald concentration camp after the war and witnessed 'what racialism to the Nth degree, as under Hitler, can mean', there was bitterness at the election of any candidate as the result of a 'racialist' campaign.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, for Ian Mikardo the memory of the struggle that his parents faced as part of the generation of Jewish immigrants who settled in Britain at the turn of the century had a 'profound effect' in shaping his attitudes.<sup>128</sup> He recalled that when he began his election campaign in Poplar in 1964, a constituency with a diverse population, he wanted to challenge and reverse the anti-immigrant stance of East End Tories who had fought for immigration restrictions.<sup>129</sup> The continued opposition to controls put forward by long-standing figures on the Labour left was now supported by the arrival of a new influx of young left wing MPs who entered parliament in 1964. The growth of this group reflected the wider change in the composition of the party in this period, as a disproportionate number of MPs elected in 1964 and 1966 as well as in by-elections during 1963-1967, came from the left of the party.<sup>130</sup> According to Bale, these new recruits also tended to be 'younger, better educated, more impatient' and crucially shared the same views on race, colonialism and 'moral issues' as the existing left.<sup>131</sup> Therefore, when it came to immigration controls many of this new cohort were also influenced by anti-colonial and anti-fascist beliefs. Stan Newens for example, who was elected to represent Epping in 1964, had participated in the struggle against colonialism in his role as a member of the MCF and also played an active role in opposing restrictions. In line with the views expressed by Sorensen, Driberg and Mikardo, he attributed his repugnance towards racial discrimination to the influence of the Holocaust. During an interview with Newens where he explained his opposition towards restrictions, he stated 'the biggest international crime that was ever committed in my lifetime was the Holocaust and the idea that you could discriminate against human beings... whether

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<sup>127</sup> *HC Deb* 17 November 1964, Vol 702 Cols 332-97.

<sup>128</sup> Ian Mikardo, *Back-Bencher* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988), p. 11.

<sup>129</sup> Ian Mikardo, *Back-Bencher*, p. 173.

<sup>130</sup> Hugh Berrington, 'The Labour Left in Parliament: Maintenance, Erosion and Renewal' in Dennis Kavanagh (ed) *The Politics of the Labour Party* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), pp. 70-80.

<sup>131</sup> Tim Bale, 'Crimes and Misdemeanours: Managing Dissent in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Labour Party', in Brian Brivati and Richard Heffernan (eds), *The Labour Party – A Centenary History* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), p. 276.

we're Jews or blacks whatever we are, that is simply terrible.'<sup>132</sup> Alongside Newens, the majority of the new cohort of left wing MPs who opposed restrictions after 1964, were either members of the MCF or had an interest in its associated campaigns, including the Anti-Apartheid Movement, Rhodesia and Vietnam. Thus, as with the opponents of restrictions on the 'old left', anti-colonial views and an ideological commitment to opposing racism led many of this new generation on the left to reject controls too.

The events of the 1964 election made the firm repudiation of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act an even higher priority for this group. In place of what they perceived to be racially discriminatory legislation, the left advocated an alternative 'educationalist' policy approach based on challenging misconceptions on immigration and re-educating public opinion. The successful implementation of this approach during the election by a number of left wing Labour candidates in constituencies with high immigrant populations was highlighted in *Tribune* to illustrate to the new Labour government that the solution to removing immigration as an electoral issue lay in confronting it, rather than shying away from it. Marcus Lipton in Brixton, who more than doubled his majority in 1964 from 6% to 16%, was used as proof that 'a Labour candidate need not lose votes over immigration if he sticks his neck out and says what he believes.'<sup>133</sup> Equally Ben Parkin in North Paddington, whose majority rose in 1964 from 2% to 15%, believed race had been eradicated as an issue in his constituency by dealing with it firmly and coming out 'strongly against the racists.'<sup>134</sup> Their success was replicated in a number of other constituencies including Wandsworth and Willesden East, where David Kerr and Reg Freeson unseated Conservative MPs. In both instances the Labour candidates did not try to distract from the issue but instead dealt with it openly. Kerr for example made clear that he would not allow the immigrant community to take the blame for the Conservative's inadequate housing policy.<sup>135</sup> These successes legitimised the left's belief that public opinion could be re-educated on immigration if Labour were more

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<sup>132</sup> Author interview with Stan Newens (02/11/2016).

<sup>133</sup> LHASC, Anthony Nicholas, 'Immigration and the Election', *Tribune*, 23 October 1964.

<sup>134</sup> LHASC, Anthony Nicholas, 'Immigration and the Election', *Tribune*, 23 October 1964.

<sup>135</sup> LHASC, Anthony Nicholas, 'Immigration and the Election', *Tribune*, 23 October 1964.

pro-active in their approach. Consequently, the election of a new Labour government with Wilson at the helm was initially greeted with enthusiasm by much of the left. Wilson's Bevanite past was deemed to have given him a greater affinity with the left and fostered hope that this would be reflected in his policies, including on immigration. Further, the presence of seven sponsors of the MCF in the Cabinet, including the Prime Minister himself, was seen as a source of optimism.<sup>136</sup> The new government's declaration that it intended to legislate against racial discrimination, something Brockway and the MCF had fought a long campaign for appeared to show their commitment to left wing priorities.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, despite his own defeat at Eton and Slough due to his association with the immigrant community, Brockway declared he was 'full of hope' following Labour's successful election which he believed signalled a great step forward for freedom and equality.<sup>138</sup>

If the opponents of immigration controls had hoped Wilson's election would result in the repeal of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, they were quickly disappointed. Wilson's announcement that the first Race Relations Act was to be introduced alongside the further curtailment of Commonwealth immigration in the summer of 1965 dispelled any such hopes and provoked strong criticism from some in the party.<sup>139</sup> Despite being part of the first Labour government in over a decade, the left were not afraid to challenge Wilson on policies they disagreed with, including immigration. The tenuous position of the new government, with its wafer-thin majority, was no guarantee of their support. In fact, the impetus to form a new left wing pressure group in the parliamentary party after 1964 stemmed from concern over the precarious footing of the government. Mikardo recalled that the Bevanites successor group, Tribune, emerged because the left 'foresaw the danger that the new Labour Government, with its very small majority, might be tempted to follow the same path as its predecessor and waver in its commitment to some of the

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<sup>136</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p. 308.

<sup>137</sup> Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics*, p. 307.

<sup>138</sup> LHASC, Fenner Brockway, *Tribune*, 23 October 1964.

<sup>139</sup> Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', p. 313; Patterson, *Immigration and Race Relations*, p. 46.

policies on which we were elected.’<sup>140</sup> Thus, members of the newly established Tribune group along with other sympathetic unattached MPs on the left saw it as their job to ensure the government did not renege on its previous commitments, including those on immigration.<sup>141</sup>

The lack of a clear evidential basis, which Healey had claimed in 1962 would be essential to justify a policy change on this issue, was central to the opposition mounted by the left to the White Paper on immigration. Whilst the party leadership and a majority of the PLP viewed the public backlash against immigration as legitimate grounds to increase restrictions, the left did not agree. As far as this group were concerned no new evidence had come to light to warrant this change.

Brockway wrote of his sense of shame of being a member of the Labour Party following the publication of the White Paper and declared the restrictions as nothing more than ‘electoral concessions to public opinion.’<sup>142</sup> Equally, Foot registered his bitter opposition to the ‘appalling’ legislation and questioned on what grounds immigration policy had changed.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, Joan Lestor, prospective candidate for Lewisham West in 1964 and co-editor of the anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* with Freeson, wrote to Wilson in August 1965 rubbishing party claims that there was a limit to the number of immigrants Britain could absorb by arguing that labour shortages, along with emigration figures, undermined this justification.<sup>144</sup> The left’s belief that there was no sound economic case for restrictions was validated by Wilson’s own economic advisor, Thomas Balogh, who warned the Prime Minister against further limiting immigration in 1965, arguing that it would restrict Britain’s economic growth rate and lead to a serious shortage of unskilled workers.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Mikardo, *Back-Bencher*, p. 174.

<sup>141</sup> Over the course of the Wilson government the Tribune group put pressure on Wilson to change a number of policies including those on Rhodesia, Vietnam, the economy, the EEC and immigration. Mikardo, *Back-Bencher*, p. 175.

<sup>142</sup> LHASC, Fenner Brockway, ‘My head is bowed in shame’, *Tribune*, 13 August 1965.

<sup>143</sup> *HC Deb* 23 November 1965, Vol 721, Cols 262-378.

<sup>144</sup> Letter from Joan Lestor to Wilson, 7 August 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.

<sup>145</sup> TNA: Letter from Thomas Balogh to Wilson, 5 July 1965, PREM 13/383.

Incensed by Wilson's decision, the left took collective action to try to obtain a policy reversal. A group of 16 Labour MPs, which later rose to 41,<sup>146</sup> led by Reg Freeson signed a direct appeal to Wilson to withdraw the White Paper in favour of creating a 'rational' immigration policy.<sup>147</sup> Once again, emphasis was put on a logical, evidence-based policy rather than one founded on 'expressions of fear, prejudice and muddled thinking'.<sup>148</sup> Notably the original signatories, with the exception of Shirley Williams and Dick Taverne, all came from the left of the party and comprised MPs of the 'old left' who had voted against controls in 1962, such as Michael Foot, Tom Driberg and Frank Allaun, along with many of the newer group elected in 1964.<sup>149</sup> Alongside this loose grouping of left wing MPs, members of the Tribune group registered their opposition separately in a letter sent to Wilson in October 1965. It was signed by around half of the members of the Tribune group, which indicated a fairly strong level of support given that, as Randall notes, factional groups including Tribune were 'rarely cohesive in their dissent'.<sup>150</sup> In this instance, opposition to the White Paper united Tribunate sponsors of the MCF, including Foot, Driberg, Mikardo, Newens, Orme, Silverman and Zilliacus, with others who had an interest in colonial affairs.<sup>151</sup> The letter reiterated their opposition to a number of government policies, including the Immigration White Paper. They stated that they would not support the government in the House 'on those matters on which each of us dissents strongly and conscientiously from the Government's proposals'.<sup>152</sup>

The controversy surrounding the legislation went beyond the Parliamentary Party as members of the Research Department took what they acknowledged was an

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<sup>146</sup> LHASC, *Labour Party Annual Report 1965* (London, Labour Party, 1965), p. 217.

<sup>147</sup> Freeson letter, 21 September 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.

<sup>148</sup> Freeson letter, 21 September 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.

<sup>149</sup> The 16 MPs to sign the appeal were Reginald Freeson, David Kerr, Norman Atkinson, Shirley Williams, John Mendelson, William Hamling, Joyce Butler, Stan Newens, Dennis Hobden, David Ennals, Lena Jeger, Dick Taverne, Paul Rose, Frank Allaun, Ben Parkin and Micheal Foot. Freeson letter, 21 September 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.

<sup>150</sup> Randall, 'Dissent in the Parliamentary Labour Party, 1945-2015', p. 210.

<sup>151</sup> As well as the figures mentioned above, this letter was also signed by Norman Atkinson, Eric Heffer, Hugh Jenkins, John Mendelson, Trevor Park, Eric Varley and William Warbey. LHASC, Jo Richardson Papers, RICH/3/4/5, Letter to Wilson, 18 October 1965, Tribune Group Correspondence 1965.

<sup>152</sup> LHASC, Jo Richardson Papers, RICH/3/4/5, Letter to Wilson, 18 October 1965, Tribune Group Correspondence 1965.

‘unusual step’ in writing to Wilson to express their own opposition. This was justified on the grounds that their attitude went ‘beyond disagreement to the point of disgust’.<sup>153</sup> Reiterating the concerns of the left, they also appeared to question the rationale for this decision. They expressed concern that vouchers were being cut at a time when manpower was greatly needed and registered their dismay that the White Paper represented a fall in the standards previously upheld by the Labour Party.<sup>154</sup> In a further letter of objection, a request was made for a meeting between Wilson and members of the Research Department to discuss their concerns in more detail.<sup>155</sup> This was clearly deemed to be a matter of high importance, as the letter stated that whilst it was both ‘irregular and potentially dangerous’ for members of the Research Department to make such demands, there was no other circumstance which would have persuaded them to act collectively in this way.<sup>156</sup> Growing anger and resentment that Wilson was allowing anti-immigrant sentiment to dictate policy was palpable amongst its opponents. Whilst the majority of the PLP now appeared to support the extension of restrictions as an electoral necessity, opponents on the left remained fundamentally opposed to what they perceived to be a capitulation to a racialised public opinion. Instead, they viewed public opinion not as a fixed, immovable obstacle but as something which could be altered if the party leadership was willing to adopt a more radical approach which challenged the misconceptions about immigration head on. Wilson though, was acutely aware of the major political difficulties involved in adopting an educationalist approach, namely the government’s extremely precarious electoral position. With a majority of only three seats by 1965, implementing what would have been a controversial policy reversal prior to another general election would have carried major electoral risks and was simply unworkable. Almost certainly, removing restrictions would have been highly divisive with the public and PLP alike, both of whom were largely in favour of controls by this time. Equally, as Messina has argued the politicisation of

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<sup>153</sup> Letter from members of the Research Department to Wilson, 11 August 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.

<sup>154</sup> Research Department Letter, 11 August 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.

<sup>155</sup> Letter from John Lyttle to Wilson, 20 September 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.

<sup>156</sup> Lyttle letter, 20 September 1965, Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.891.



immigration through the introduction of controls in 1962 had acted as a restraint on the future policy options of both parties and by 1964 they were essentially tied to a political discourse on immigration which prohibited them from 'significantly altering the policy status quo.'<sup>157</sup> Thus, it would have been difficult for Wilson to renege on his previous declaration that immigration controls were necessary and break the emerging consensus with the Conservative Party on the necessity of controls. In addition, whilst there had certainly been seats where confronting immigration benefitted Labour candidates, this was not consistent throughout the country. The loss of Eton and Slough was a prominent example, as Brockway attributed his own defeat to his pro-immigrant stance. The high profile losses of Smethwick and, later, Leyton had been a major blow for Labour and there were many other seats across the West Midlands and Greater London where immigration had been electorally significant and had the potential to continue to remain so.<sup>158</sup> As such, the alternative approach put forward by the left after 1964 posed too many political risks to be considered as a viable alternative by Wilson, who instead sought to balance opinion both inside and outside the party through implementing a dual strategy on controls and race relations legislation.

If the internal conflict created over the 1965 White Paper demonstrated that the restriction of Commonwealth Immigrants was by no means endorsed by the entire party, the disputes waged over the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act only confirmed this. Despite securing a more decisive victory at the polls in 1966, this did little to remedy growing divisions in the party. Instead, the re-emergence of the immigration debate in 1968 reflected the growing discord in the party and the willingness of an increasing number of backbench MPs to challenge the party leadership on policies they opposed. The arrival of increasing numbers of Kenyan Asians to Britain during the latter months of 1967 and early 1968 put the question of immigration controls firmly back on the political agenda. Amid increasing public

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<sup>157</sup> Anthony M. Messina, 'The impacts of Post-WWII Migration to Britain: Policy Constraints, Political Opportunism and the Alteration of Representational Politics', *The Review of Politics*, 63, 2 (2001), pp. 273.

<sup>158</sup> See Chapter Two for a breakdown of the constituencies where immigration had been electorally significant.

pressure, Wilson and his deputies took the decision to introduce the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act in late February 1968, rushing the Bill through parliament in only three days. Contrary to the claim put forward by Dilip Hiro that the 1968 Act attracted strong protest from Liberal quarters but on the whole Labour backbenchers displayed little interest or concern,<sup>159</sup> there remained a core group of Labour backbenchers, predominantly on the left, who vehemently opposed the legislation. Over half of those who opposed the Bill during its Second Reading came from the Labour side with an estimated further 30-40 Labour MPs abstaining.<sup>160</sup> In percentage terms, this equated to around 20% of the PLP either voting against the Bill or abstaining. Equally, although only 31 MPs voted against the Act during its Third Reading this was a particularly poorly attended debate, with only 145 votes in favour. Again, over half of the votes against the Act during this reading came from Labour MPs. In both instances the majority of Labour rebels emanated from the left of the party and comprised largely of members from the new generation of Labour MPs elected in 1964 and 1966, along with the remaining MPs on the 'old left' and the few revisionist figures.<sup>161</sup> The sharp criticisms directed at the Bill during its passage through parliament dispel any myth that Labour backbenchers displayed little interest or concern on the matter. Indeed, mirroring the earlier criticisms of the White Paper in 1965, opponents again questioned the validity of Wilson's apparent belief that controls would appease public opinion and foster an atmosphere where the integration of immigrants could be successfully achieved. Joan Lestor, now MP for Brockway's former constituency of Eton and Slough, continued her condemnation of the government's surrender to 'racialism' and critiqued the wider party by pointing out the contradiction between claiming not to be 'racialists' whilst passing legislation 'which is what those who speak with racist tongues want us to pass.'<sup>162</sup> Dingle Foot, whose career as a lawyer specialising in constitutional and civil

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<sup>159</sup> Hiro, *Black British, White British*, p. 215.

<sup>160</sup> Of the 64 (including tellers) who opposed the Second Reading 35 were Labour Members, 12 Liberals, 15 Conservatives, 1 Welsh Nationalist and 1 Scottish Nationalist. Philip Norton, *Dissent in the House of Commons – Intra-Party Dissent in the House of Commons' Division Lobbies 1945-1974* (London: Macmillan Press, 1975), p. 281.

<sup>161</sup> Of the 35 Labour MPs who voted against the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act in its Second Reading, 26 were elected in 1964 or 1966. Of the 16 Labour MPs who voted against the Act in its Third Reading, 12 were elected in 1964 or 1966.

<sup>162</sup> *HC Deb* 28 February 1968, Vol 759, Cols 1693-713.

liberties cases led him to work all over the Commonwealth, was a passionate supporter of racial equality.<sup>163</sup> He vowed to oppose the Bill at every stage and asked the House to reject it. Further, he remarked that whilst he held his front bench colleagues in high regard he nevertheless believed they were all 'guilty of a tragic error' in tearing up the obligations previously made to Commonwealth citizens.<sup>164</sup> Some of the new left wing MPs who entered parliament in 1966 were also amongst the most vocal opponents of the 1968 Act and expressed similar sentiments to the other left-wing opponents. Both Ben Whitaker and David Winnick, MPs for Hampstead and Croydon South respectively, were sponsors of the MCF, and condemned the discriminatory nature of the Bill. Whitaker declared it a 'miserable measure' and reiterated the left's educationalist approach, insisting it was the role of the government to give a lead on such matters rather than allowing a prejudiced public opinion to dictate policy. He commented, 'we must come to recognise that some prices are too high to pay for electoral popularity or even for survival: pandering to racial prejudice is one of them.'<sup>165</sup> David Winnick also deplored the Bill as 'thoroughly bad and unjustified' and expressed his deep unhappiness at it.<sup>166</sup> Evidently, despite the imposition of a three-line whip on the Bill, this new generation of Labour MPs continued to defy the party leadership. As Newens explained, 'I took my decision and I was not going to allow the whip or anybody else to overrule me. I was there to support a Labour government but I was not an automaton.'<sup>167</sup> The response of Newens perhaps reflected the wider mentality of this group, not only on this issue but in other acts of rebellion, that regardless of any potential repercussions they would not be dictated to on matters of ideological principle. Thus, the ideological beliefs of the left which informed their opposition to the restriction of immigration brought them into direct conflict with the Labour Party's pursuit of an electorally pragmatic immigration policy post-1964.

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<sup>163</sup> Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, available online at <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-31115?rskey=y4hWre&result=2> (accessed 10/05/2018).

<sup>164</sup> *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, Vol 759, Cols 1241-368.

<sup>165</sup> *HC Deb* 27 February 1968, Vol 759, Cols 1241-368.

<sup>166</sup> *HC Deb* 28 February 1968, Vol 759, Cols 1693-713.

<sup>167</sup> Author interview with Stan Newens (02/11/2016).

## Conclusion

Far from representing a collective and unified transition, the Labour Party's move from opposing the restriction of Commonwealth immigration in 1962 to implementing tighter controls on this group by 1965, elicited divergent responses within the parliamentary party. Whilst broadly maintaining the view that this policy shift occurred as a result of public opinion, this chapter has made a number of important qualifications to this argument. It has challenged the notion that the change in leadership from Gaitskell to Wilson represented a clear delineation from a principled to pragmatic immigration policy. Gaitskell's struggle to maintain party unity during his leadership has partly been attributed to his alignment with the revisionists, which made him a 'factional leader of a factional party'.<sup>168</sup> By contrast, Wilson's centre ground position has cultivated an image of a pragmatic leader, more adept at handling issues of party management and policy formulation.<sup>169</sup> However, despite these apparent differences there were elements of continuity in the strategies adopted on immigration restrictions by both Labour leaders in this period that have previously been overlooked. As Heppell and McMeeking attest, though he may have been a 'factional leader' Gaitskell was on occasion able to act as a symbol of party unity by blurring factional lines.<sup>170</sup> In line with the view of Katznelson, this chapter has shown that the immigration debate offered Gaitskell an opportunity to unite the party during a time of internal strife. In addition, it has demonstrated that the rejection of controls at this particular time was integral to the successful attainment of other policy objectives too. Thus, far from representing a principled rejection of controls, Gaitskell applied a pragmatic response to a difficult policy issue. In constructing a conditional opposition to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, the path was laid for Wilson to alter and adapt this policy as he saw fit.

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<sup>168</sup> Timothy Heppell and Thomas McMeeking, 'The oratory of Hugh Gaitskell' in Andrew Crines and Richard Hayton (eds), *Labour orators from Bevan to Miliband* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 32.

<sup>169</sup> Keith Laybourn, *Fifty Key Figures in Twentieth-century British Politics* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 226-227.

<sup>170</sup> Heppell and McMeeking, 'The oratory of Hugh Gaitskell', p. 32.

Though the policy result may have been different, Wilson too sought to satisfy competing opinion both inside and outside the party through the formulation of his immigration policy. Where Gaitskell had considered opposing legislation in 1962 to be the best policy option at that time, the intensification of anti-immigrant public opinion after 1964, changed the terms of the debate and led Wilson to reconsider the party's position. Indeed, whilst there remained few economic justifications for controls, the increasing racialisation of public opinion played a crucial role in determining the policy direction pursued by the Labour leader. Wilson's decision to extend immigration controls was largely supported by the right of the PLP, as both the revisionist and trade union wings of the party united in support of an electorally pragmatic immigration policy after 1964. At Cabinet level too, Wilson's policies were endorsed. Although controls remained morally objectionable to some, the potential electoral consequences of failing to stem further Commonwealth immigration combined with careerism to ensure ministerial support for controls. Heffernan's observation that "personal progression within political parties is so often determined by the Disraelian adage "damn your principles and stick to your party",<sup>171</sup> was certainly applicable to some members of the Cabinet on the immigration issue. Thus, at Cabinet level at least, pragmatism clearly outweighed principle on this issue.

However, in contrast to the existing literature which has either ignored or downplayed the presence of opponents, this chapter has shown that there remained significant discord on the backbenches. Informed by their earlier fight against colonialism and their broader anti-fascist and anti-racist ideological beliefs, the left pursued a largely consistent and unified opposition to the restriction of Commonwealth immigration throughout this period. Whilst a small group of individual revisionists continued to oppose Labour's immigration policy in this period, hostility to immigration controls undoubtedly emanated most strongly from the left of the party. The left's opposition to restrictions was rooted in socialist as opposed to social liberal principles. For this group, the abandonment of the party's

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<sup>171</sup> Richard Heffernan, 'Leaders and Followers: The Politics of the Parliamentary Labour Party', in Brian Brivati and Richard Heffernan (eds), *The Labour Party – A Centenary History* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), p. 265.

ideological commitment to racial equality by restricting immigration from the Commonwealth, was unjustifiable, irrespective of the potential electoral repercussions. In any case, opponents on the left did not agree that controls were the only way to prevent an electoral backlash. Whilst they too acknowledged the racialisation of public opinion, the left disputed the claims of the party leadership that addressing public demands for controls was the only way to retain electoral appeal. Instead, they promoted an alternative approach based on confronting and re-educating public opinion. However, the unconditional endorsement of unrestricted Commonwealth immigration, justified on the grounds of racial equality, posed too many political risks to be deemed a viable policy alternative by Wilson. In 1965 the Labour government were simply not in an electoral position to be able to deliver such a policy. Equally, by 1968 they had not only supported the existing restrictions but had introduced further legislation to tighten controls. Making a u-turn on their position by dispensing with immigration restrictions, as the left advocated, would have severely weakened the government's credibility and likely fuelled public support for a Powellite policy approach. Instead, a dual policy on restrictions and race relations legislation, was deemed by Wilson to be preferable to the alternative of risking an electoral backlash and the election of a Conservative government with less liberal policies on Commonwealth immigration and race relations.

## **Chapter Two: Commonwealth immigration to the West Midlands and Greater London – regional influences on national immigration policy**

The decade between 1958 and 1968 saw the Labour Party's policy on immigration restrictions undergo something of a transformation. Whilst there may have been continuity in the approaches of the two Labour leaders to this issue, as established in the previous chapter, the formal policy positions adopted by the party in opposition and in government were nonetheless different. Thus, the Labour Party went from opposing the introduction of controls in 1962 when in opposition, to supporting and even extending restrictions in both 1965 and 1968 when in government. The role played by public opinion in determining Labour Party policy on Commonwealth immigration controls has formed an important facet of wider historical debate over the perceived socially liberal character of the Labour Party during this period. The aim of this chapter is to explain the shift in Labour policy by analysing regional influences on the Labour Party's national policy on immigration restrictions between c.1958-c.1970. The existing literature on the party's changing immigration policy in this period has largely been confined to debate between scholars of the public opinion perspective and supporters of the racialisation argument, neither of which has afforded the regional dimension much attention in explaining the course of national policy development. This chapter intends to address this, and, in so doing shed further light on Labour's commitment to social liberal principles, through the following research questions.

Firstly, to what extent did fear of losing votes in the vital electoral regions of the West Midlands and Greater London, the two areas with the largest Commonwealth immigrant populations, influence the Labour Party's decision to extend immigration restrictions in both 1965 and 1968? In addition, how far did Labour's attempt to create a political consensus on immigration controls in order to remove it as an electoral issue succeed in this period? Further, what impact did the growing importance of immigrant voters from the New Commonwealth have on the Labour Party's refusal to extend controls after 1968? Finally, did the revival of the immigration debate in 1968 and the impact of the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Enoch

Powell in the West Midlands and Greater London contribute to Labour's defeat in the 1970 general election?

The chapter will begin by arguing that the exploitation of immigration in the West Midlands and Greater London at the 1964 general election and beyond acted as a catalyst for action, as Wilson finally conceded to the demands for restrictions which voters and local party activists and organisers in these regions had been making since the mid-1950s. In doing so, this chapter will nuance the public opinion perspective by demonstrating that Labour's immigration policy was shaped by illiberal public opinion emanating specifically from these two regions, where the party had faced an electoral backlash in 1964 due to its perceived opposition to regulating the entry of Commonwealth immigrants. Further, it will highlight that Wilson's attempt to reconstruct a political consensus with the Conservative Party on immigration restrictions temporarily succeeded, with the extension of controls in 1965 appearing to remove immigration as an electoral issue at the 1966 general election. Nonetheless, despite this initial success the consensus collapsed after 1968 as the Labour Party, believing existing controls were sufficient to deal with any further immigration and with an increasing awareness of the importance of immigrant votes, refused to endorse any further measures against Commonwealth immigrants. Consequently, it will be argued that the re-emergence of immigration as an electoral issue at the 1970 general election, fanned by the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Enoch Powell, once again had an adverse effect on the Labour Party in the West Midlands and Greater London and contributed to their defeat.

In order to understand the centrality of these two regions to the evolution of Labour's immigration policy it is important to briefly consider the process of post-war immigration to Britain and the impact this had on these areas in particular. Labour shortages following the Second World War provided the impetus for large-scale migration to Britain including the arrival of significant numbers from the New Commonwealth for the first time. Invariably, the distribution of immigrants was uneven, and demand for labour in areas where industry was expanding rapidly and



shortages were commonplace led to a clotting of the immigrant population.<sup>1</sup> As a result, by the mid-1960s the majority of Commonwealth immigrants were concentrated in just 51 of Britain's 630 constituencies, with 70% residing in the West Midlands and Greater London alone.<sup>2</sup> Despite the economic rationale for increased migration to meet the demands of post-war reconstruction, the lack of central and local planning to ensure adequate social provisions were in place to cope with the influx led to rising tensions in the areas immigrants concentrated in. Whilst the West Midlands and Greater London were not the only places to be affected, as other industrial areas such as Manchester, Merseyside, Lancashire, and Yorkshire also attracted large immigrant populations, housing shortages were far more pronounced in these two regions than elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, demands for immigration restrictions emanated most strongly from the West Midlands and Greater London and were heavily connected to competition for housing. Besides boasting the largest Commonwealth immigrant populations in the country these were also crucial electoral regions, containing over 150 constituencies collectively.<sup>4</sup> Their political importance was further heightened by the fact that many of the seats in these regions were marginals. As Jeanette Money has argued, political parties tend to focus more attention on constituencies where voters are likely to defect to the opposition if they feel their policy preferences are being ignored.<sup>5</sup> This is significant in the context of Labour's immigration policy because, as will be shown, Wilson appeared to be responding to the demands of a largely anti-immigrant public opinion in constituencies where a Labour vote was not guaranteed.

Despite the centrality of these regions, their influence on the evolution of the Labour Party's policy on immigration restrictions in this period has been under-represented

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<sup>1</sup> Zig Layton-Henry, 'The New Commonwealth Migrants 1945-1962', *History Today*, 35, 12 (1985), p.31; E.J.B Rose and associates, *Colour & Citizenship – A Report on British Race Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p.80.

<sup>2</sup> Jeanette Money, 'No Vacancy: The Political Geography of Immigration Control in Advanced Industrial Countries', *International Organization*, 51, 4 (1997), pp. 700-701.; John E. Roemer, Woojin Lee and Karine Van der Straeten (eds), *Racism, Xenophobia and Distribution – Multi-Issue Politics in Advanced Democracies* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 142.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>4</sup> David Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1964* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 307-318.

<sup>5</sup> Money, 'No Vacancy', p. 703.

within existing research. Stephen Deakin has considered the impact of regional pressure in shaping national party policy in this area, but from the perspective of the Liberal Party. Making similar arguments to those put forward in this chapter he contends that the Liberal Party's move from opposing to supporting immigration controls was influenced by the perceived electoral unpopularity of their position, along with growing pressure to alter policy from party members in areas with high immigrant populations, particularly the West Midlands.<sup>6</sup> Jeanette Money has also argued that the growth of anti-immigrant feeling in the constituencies most affected was central in influencing the introduction of the Conservative Party's Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1962. Nonetheless, her attempts to argue that the Labour Party responded to similar pressures after 1964 concentrates on the results at Smethwick and Leyton and fails to consider the more widespread exploitation of immigration across these two regions. The importance of regional influences on the 1968 Act are also overlooked.<sup>7</sup> Back and Solomos, who provide one of the more thorough discussions of local race politics, focus only on the development of racialised politics in Birmingham between the 1950s and 1970s and the role this played in stimulating new forms of political mobilisation around race.<sup>8</sup> Fielding too has explored the varied local responses elicited by immigration during the 1950s and 60s through regional sources to demonstrate that the national picture was uneven, though has not directly linked regional experiences to national policy formulation.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to demonstrate clearly that the Labour Party's changing national policy on Commonwealth immigration restrictions in this period was directly influenced by concern that they would lose electoral support in the West Midlands and Greater London if they did not act.

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<sup>6</sup> Stephen Deakin, 'Immigration control: The liberal party and the west midlands liberals 1950-1970, *Immigrants and Minorities*, 3, 3 (1984).

<sup>7</sup> Money, 'No Vacancy', pp. 703-707.

<sup>8</sup> Les Back and John Solomos, *Race, Politics and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 40-66.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970 – Labour and cultural change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), pp. 139-159.

## Avoidance – the political response to Commonwealth immigration in the 1950s

The desperate need for migrant labour to help resolve acute shortages in industry did not prevent both Labour and the Conservatives expressing anxiety over the arrival of Commonwealth immigrants. As early as 1950 Attlee's Labour government discussed the potential problems associated with this type of immigration and foresaw difficulties surrounding groups settling in what they termed 'residential colonies' as opposed to being evenly dispersed throughout the country.<sup>10</sup> The Conservative Party shared similar concerns, in particular noting the severe housing shortages in London and the Midlands where the bulk of immigrants had settled.<sup>11</sup> Although both parties dismissed the prospect of controls at this stage, tensions surrounding the social consequences of this increase in immigration began to emerge in the West Midlands and Greater London as the decade wore on. Despite the rising economic prosperity of these regions, with Birmingham for example being one of the most affluent and fully employed cities in the country at this time,<sup>12</sup> the effects of wartime bombing, the post-war baby boom and the influx of migrant labour meant housing shortages were rife. Unlike other areas with large Commonwealth immigrant populations such as Yorkshire, where a prolonged period of emigration ensured competition for housing did not become a major issue, pressure on housing had increased in these two regions due to substantial population growth throughout the twentieth century.<sup>13</sup> The inadequate supply of public housing coupled with rising rents in the private rental sector due to the virtual decontrol of rents as a result of the 1957 Rent Act made for dire housing problems in these regions, fuelling the resentment of local residents.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> CAB/128/17, Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 19 June 1950, p.77, <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-128-17-cm-50-37-37.pdf> (accessed 15/2/2018).

<sup>11</sup> CAB/129/77, Report of the Committee on the social and economic problems arising from the growing influx into the United Kingdom of coloured workers from other Commonwealth countries, 22 August 1955, p. 6, <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-77-cp-55-102-2.pdf> (accessed 15/2/2018).

<sup>12</sup> John Rex and Robert Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict – A study of Sparkbrook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> David Swift, 'A Class Apart'? – *South Asian Immigrants and the White Working Class Left, Yorkshire 1960-1981* (Master's thesis, University of York, 2011), p. 72.

<sup>14</sup> See Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion on housing.

Alongside this rising resentment over competition for housing, the changing composition and character of many constituencies in these regions due to the rapid influx of Commonwealth immigrants led to cultural clashes between immigrants and local residents. As a result, demands for action began to emerge from these regions, usually framed in terms of the strain which continuing immigration was putting on housing and other social services. By 1955, for instance, a number of London MPs and Councillors had begun advocating controls in order to ease the anxieties of local residents over the impact of immigration on access to housing.<sup>15</sup> In the West Midlands too, public feeling was equally clear. A public opinion poll taken in Birmingham in 1956 found that 80% of respondents favoured restricting Commonwealth immigration.<sup>16</sup> A further poll the following year revealed an increase in this figure to over 90% wanting immigration from the Commonwealth to be restricted or stopped entirely.<sup>17</sup> Reflecting the views of its local residents, the Labour controlled Birmingham City Council proceeded to express its support for restrictions too.<sup>18</sup>

The developing picture of regional anxiety was further emphasised when the Labour Party undertook research in 1957 to enhance its understanding of the 'colour problem' in the UK. A request was sent by Assistant Commonwealth Officer, Eric Whittle, to Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) in affected areas appealing for information on the matter. Responses varied and it was clear not all CLPs were forthcoming in declaring the existence of race related problems. The reply from Nottingham, for example, confidently declared that there was 'no discrimination between coloured persons and others.'<sup>19</sup> The outbreak of race related violence the following year suggested otherwise. Whilst there may not have been any overt

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<sup>15</sup> Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, p. 144.

<sup>16</sup> Romain Garbaye, *Getting into Local Power: The Politics of Ethnic Minorities in British and French Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), p. 104.

<sup>17</sup> LHASC, LPRD, 'Race Relations and Immigration 1920s-1960s', box 34, LP/RD/33/2, Working Party on Racial Discrimination, opinion poll results taken from publication entitled 'Colour and Conscience.'

<sup>18</sup> Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British – A history of Race Relations in Britain* (London: Grafton Books, 1991, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed), p. 200.

<sup>19</sup> LHASC, LPRD, 'Race Relations and Immigration 1920s-1960s', box 34, LP/RD/34/2. See for example responses from Nottingham and Islington that claimed no colour discrimination existed.

conflict in the form of physical violence in 1957, this did not mean that discrimination did not exist. However, as Daniel Lawrence argues, equating a lack of violence with racial harmony as well as a desire in some cases to protect a place's reputation for tolerance, led to a false impression being conveyed of well-integrated communities.<sup>20</sup> Conversely, other CLPs submitted far more comprehensive replies which openly highlighted rising racial tensions in their constituencies because of Commonwealth immigration. Once again housing, namely the growth of multi-occupancy accommodation, emerged as a key area of discontent. A letter from the South Paddington CLP cited there was 'a great deal of anti-colour feeling' as a direct consequence of the housing situation and the actions of the 'coloured landlord' who force out sitting white tenants then proceed to overcrowd the houses.<sup>21</sup> A similar response from North Paddington reiterated resentment toward unscrupulous landlords who were trying to force out white tenants in order to overcrowd the property with immigrants.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, the Vauxhall CLP discussed the growing anger over the 'appalling housing situation' and resentment that immigrants were able to come to Britain and access the benefits of the welfare state to which they had made no contribution.<sup>23</sup> Although advocating that sympathy and understanding be extended towards immigrants, the letter urged the Labour Party to pay attention to the 'natural reactions of working-class white people' and to adopt a more 'realistic attitude' to the increasing problem.<sup>24</sup> In a similar fashion the Norwood CLP declared that overcrowding was 'not unnaturally encouraging discrimination, sometimes violence and is developing into a problem that cannot be ignored simply with the phrase 'there is no colour bar in Britain.'"<sup>25</sup> These responses were indicative of the frustration felt by areas with large immigrant populations and represented a rejection of the prevailing national political consensus which sought to sideline

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<sup>20</sup> Daniel Lawrence, *Black Migrants: White Natives – A study of race relations in Nottingham* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 5.

<sup>21</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/34/2, Letter from M Haston, South Paddington Labour Party, 14 February 1957.

<sup>22</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/34/2, Letter from V Carpenter, North Paddington Labour Party, 5 March 1957.

<sup>23</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/34/2, Letter from Elsie Boltz, Vauxhall Labour Party, 26 February 1957.

<sup>24</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/34/2, Letter from Elsie Boltz, Vauxhall Labour Party, 26 February 1957.

<sup>25</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/34/2, Letter from Leslie Reeves, Norwood Labour Party, 27 March 1957.

immigration as a topic of political debate. At this stage, restrictions were not on the agenda of either party. Labour continued to espouse its pro-Commonwealth values including maintaining unrestricted entry for Commonwealth citizens. At the same time the Conservative government ruled out legislation believing they would receive more criticism for being seen to act in an illiberal manner and concluded that 'unless a particular incident excited public feeling' it would be better not to act.<sup>26</sup>

### **The 1958 riots and the road to restrictions**

The Conservative government did not have long to wait for such an incident as September 1958 saw the outbreak of race riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill. Only two years earlier the Conservative Party had declared that the public were generally very tolerant of Commonwealth immigrants and there was 'little prospect...of race riots.'<sup>27</sup> If they had previously underestimated the extent of racial tensions in some areas of the country, the events of 1958 proved to be a turning point. Although no immediate action was taken the political prominence of the issue rose sharply thereafter. Certainly, it prompted the Conservative Party to consider more seriously the findings of its Working Party on immigration which had concluded in 1957 that they could not afford to ignore the resentment of the white electorate.<sup>28</sup> Just days after the disturbances the Conservative Party began to outline plans for a policy restricting the flow of immigrants from the West Indies to be implemented with the co-operation of the Federal government there.<sup>29</sup> Conversely, Labour re-affirmed their support for the continuation of unrestricted immigration, citing their commitment to the brotherhood of man and importance of the Commonwealth in doing so. Although condemning the riots Labour were quick to emphasise that they

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<sup>26</sup> CAB/129/81, 22 June 1956, p. 3, <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-81-cp-56-145-45.pdf> (accessed 15/2/2018).

<sup>27</sup> Cab/129/81, Report of the Committee of Ministers on Colonial Immigrants, 22 June 1956, p. 3, <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-81-cp-56-145-45.pdf> (accessed 15/2/2018).

<sup>28</sup> Nicholas J Crowson, 'Conservative Party Activists and Immigration Policy from the Late 1940s to the Mid-1970s', in Stuart Ball and Ian Holliday (eds), *Mass Conservatism – The Conservatives and the Public since the 1880s* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2002), p. 172.

<sup>29</sup> CAB/128/32, Conclusions of a meeting of the Cabinet, 11 September 1958, p. 3, <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-128-32-cc-58-71-71.pdf> (accessed, 15/2/2018).

were isolated incidents and maintained the socially liberal view that if Britain wanted to retain its place at the heart of the Commonwealth then its citizens should continue to be welcomed wholeheartedly and unreservedly.<sup>30</sup>

Labour's flippant dismissal of the events as isolated racial disturbances and its refusal to consider endorsing restrictions on Commonwealth immigrants exacerbated the rising resentment amongst voters in the most affected areas and strengthened calls for action. Anger that the party was out of touch with the views of its largely working class voting base in these areas was highlighted in a letter sent to Gaitskell after the disturbances in September 1958 by an enraged Labour Party member in Paddington. The letter berated Gaitskell for speaking out against racial discrimination and insisted he should instead be attacking the Conservatives for 'letting these coloured people come in their thousands.' It continued, 'you do not have the experience to know what you are talking about. Let the people of North Kensington, Paddington, Brixton, Lambeth, Willesden, Birmingham, Coventry and Nottingham be the judges of that.'<sup>31</sup> Some Labour MPs in affected constituencies also demanded stronger action. Labour MP for North Kensington, George Rogers, was critical of the party's response to the riots, taking exception to the way they were characterised as acts of hooliganism. Instead he argued they were symptomatic of genuine widespread resentment over the behaviour of West Indians including 'prostitution, brothels and wild drinking parties.'<sup>32</sup> Direct links were also made between the worsening housing situation in the area and the outbreak of the racial disturbances. In a direct challenge to Labour's socially liberal approach, a policy of wider dispersal and failing that, immigration controls, was put forward as a solution to the problems in a statement issued by the North Kensington CLP.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Labour MP for Nottingham North, James Harrison, condemned the NEC's statement

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<sup>30</sup> LHASC, Labour Party International Department (LPID), Box 15, LP/CSC/57/61, Statement issued by the NEC on Racial Discrimination, 26 September 1958.

<sup>31</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/33/1, Letter to Hugh Gaitskell from member of the public J.H Sells, 19 September 1958, pp. 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> LHASC, General Secretary's Papers, Volume 2, Box 18, GS/RAC/51, Press Reports of speeches of Labour MPs, p. 3; LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/34/4, IRR, Summary of press news and comment, September 1958, p.7.

<sup>33</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/33/3, Statement issued by the North Kensington Labour Party, 11 September 1958, pp. 1-2.

of policy on racial discrimination as 'inadequate...to cope with local difficulties', and advocated controls.<sup>34</sup> The suggestions made by Rogers and Harrison were reiterated by Labour's regional organisers in London and the Midlands. In response to an appeal for information about the racial disturbances from the Research Department, East Midlands Assistant Regional Organiser, Ron Simmons, outlined his belief that whilst press reports of the disturbances had been sensationalised there was nonetheless jealousy amongst white residents towards the Commonwealth community in Nottingham surrounding access to housing and employment opportunities. Simmons observed that jealousy and tension stemmed from the fact 'coloured people have houses (no matter how overcrowded) and white people on the housing list are not yet satisfied.'<sup>35</sup> The report issued by the London District Organiser, Jim Raisin, also drew attention to the resentment of white residents and warned that Labour's small majority in North Kensington could be jeopardised if the situation was not dealt with effectively. Significantly, the report stressed that though there was large potential support for Labour amongst the coloured immigrants in the area, these additional votes would only be secured at the expense of many more white votes. Though the report focused on North Kensington, its findings had clear implications for other marginal constituencies with large immigrant communities. In a firm departure from official party policy, Raisin concluded that Labour had little choice other than to support Rogers' calls for controls or at least encourage the relocation of immigrants to less overcrowded London districts.<sup>36</sup> Thus, by the late 1950s the beginnings of an alternative policy approach to immigration based on electoral pragmatism was emerging from CLPs, MPs and party officials in the West Midlands and Greater London. The proposals for an interventionist policy through controls and dispersal to manage the social effects of high levels of immigration and placate voters illustrated that at regional level at least, the Labour Party was starting to consider the electoral implications of continued unrestricted Commonwealth immigration.

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<sup>34</sup> LHASC, General Secretary's Papers, Volume 2, Box 18, GS/RAC/57, Letter from George Rogers to Morgan Phillips, 10 July 1959; LHASC, General Secretary's Papers, Volume 2, Box 18, GS/RAC/51, Press reports of speeches by Labour MPs.

<sup>35</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/33/3, Letter by Ron Simmons, 11 September 1958, p. 6.

<sup>36</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/33/3, 'Racial Disturbances in London', report by J.W Raisin, 11 September 1958.



Nonetheless, the growing disconnect between local sentiment in these regions and national policy widened as the Labour Party voted against the introduction of immigration restrictions in 1962. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act controlled the entry of immigrants from the Commonwealth for the first time and signalled a Conservative government in tune with public anxieties.<sup>37</sup> Conversely, Labour's opposition to the Act, which incidentally was not welcomed by all Labour MPs,<sup>38</sup> underlined the gulf between party policy and public opinion. Gaitskell declared controls to be unnecessary at this time, though did not rule out potential future restrictions,<sup>39</sup> and continued to appeal to the Conservative government to resolve social problems by building more houses, educating the public about immigration and legislating against racial discrimination.<sup>40</sup> In turn Labour were condemned by some Conservative MPs for failing to recognise that the uneven regional settlement of immigration, and the social repercussions of this, necessitated restrictions. Cyril Osborne, Conservative MP for Lough in Lincolnshire and one of the earliest agitators for controls, accused Labour of not understanding the problems facing British people living in areas with high immigrant populations.<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Selly Oak's Harold Gurden emphasised that it was not an option for Birmingham MPs to ignore the issue and suggested that the Labour Party did not understand the responsibilities of government who had to act to avoid a potentially 'ugly situation' arising. Controls, he argued, rather than any housing measures were the only way to combat the appalling housing situation in Birmingham, where slums now existed in their hundreds.<sup>42</sup> Labour's opposition to the Act only confirmed the feelings of many voters living in areas with high immigrant populations that the party were failing to represent their interests. The continued alienation of these voters highlighted the party's underestimation of the strength of public feeling on immigration, particularly in these two regions. However, if the electoral implications of maintaining an anti-restriction immigration policy had until this point been unclear, it was about to

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<sup>37</sup> Frank Reeves, *British racial discourse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 110.

<sup>38</sup> See Chapter One for more information on this internal party debate.

<sup>39</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>40</sup> *HC Deb*, 16 November 1961, vol 649, cols 687-819.

<sup>41</sup> *HC Deb*, 16 November 1961, vol 649, cols 687-819.

<sup>42</sup> *HC Deb*, 16 November 1961, vol 649, cols 687-819.

become apparent this was an issue which had the potential to cause major electoral damage to Labour in these regions.

### **Immigration and the 1964 general election**

Despite the lack of public appetite for it, Labour continued to discuss immigration through the lens of race relations legislation. Tony Benn's misguided declaration before the 1964 election that he believed Labour's determination to outlaw racial discrimination had succeeded in 'killing immigration' as an election issue<sup>43</sup> illustrated that the Labour Party or certain socially liberal elements of the party at least, were out of touch with many voters. The continued emphasis on anti-discrimination legislation was now accompanied by an acknowledgment that the number of immigrants entering the UK should be restricted. The Labour Party's initial opposition to the Commonwealth Immigrants Act had not been universally popular within the party and an internal review by new leader Harold Wilson in the summer of 1963 revealed strong support for the continuation of the legislation when it faced its annual renewal later that year.<sup>44</sup> Whilst the Conservative Party's refusal to consult Commonwealth governments over controls led Wilson to temporarily maintain the party's conditional opposition to the Act, the need for controls was no longer contested. The importance of consultations with the Commonwealth to establish a system of voluntary controls continued to be emphasised but Labour vowed to retain current restrictions until such an agreement could be reached.<sup>45</sup>

Though official Labour policy by 1964 had settled upon a qualified endorsement of restrictions, little attempt was made to convey this to voters during the election campaign. This was, according to the Labour candidate in Birmingham Handsworth Sheila Wright, a result of the party leadership's apprehension that bringing immigration into open discussion would exacerbate the matter. She noted the party were 'sick with fright about the effect on the electorate.'<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness Diaries 1963-1967* (London: Arrow Books Limited, 1991), p. 138.

<sup>44</sup> See Chapter One for a more detailed account of this.

<sup>45</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Manifesto 'The New Britain', 1964.

<sup>46</sup> Shirley Joshi and Bob Carter, 'The role of Labour in the creation of a racist Britain', *Race and Class*, 25, 3 (1984), p. 65.

Instead, a concerted effort was made to keep immigration off the agenda. As a result, there was confusion not only amongst the public but amongst Labour candidates too as to what the party's policy on immigration actually was. The scale of queries on the matter forced the NEC to publish guidance notes on the party's immigration policy to aid MPs, candidates and party workers during the campaign. The guidance notes stressed that the Labour Party did not contest the need for controls but rather how controls should be operated. Labour's immigration policy was, therefore, based on three key principles - fair application to immigrants from all Commonwealth countries, agreed quotas and effective controls operated by the Commonwealth governments, and consultation with Commonwealth countries in order to reach an agreement on immigration policies. It was stated that controls were only one part of Labour's 'wide ranging policy' to address the problems of immigrants in Britain, which also included limited legislation to make racial discrimination in public places an offence, together with greater action to help with the integration of Commonwealth immigrants by tackling areas such as housing.<sup>47</sup> The week before the election Wilson was also pressured into discussing immigration during a speech he made in Birmingham. Jeering members of the crowd continually pressed the Labour leader to address immigration and, forced to respond, Wilson confirmed that a Labour government would retain existing restrictions until a system of voluntary controls could be agreed, although he reiterated the importance of introducing legislation to make racial discrimination illegal.<sup>48</sup>

The failure of Wilson to give a clear, public lead on the issue of Commonwealth immigration during the election reflected the difficulty of responding to a matter which not only provoked competing internal party divisions, but one which had such complex local variations too. Labour's acceptance of Commonwealth immigration controls was clearly at odds with social liberal principles, yet the caveats attached to this policy position conveyed a degree of reluctance in appeasing the prejudiced

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<sup>47</sup> LHASC, 1964 General Election Box, Research file, 'The Labour Party and Commonwealth Immigration'.

<sup>48</sup> 'Students shout down Home and Wilson', *Daily Mail*, 7 October 1964 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 01/05/2018); 'Mr Wilson rides heckling on immigration', *The Guardian*, 7 October 1964 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 01/05/2018).

views expressed by some Labour Party members and voters. The party faced a difficult dilemma in having to balance the interests of immigrant voters from the Commonwealth and the white electorate. The potential electoral importance of immigrant votes was beginning to be understood within the Labour Party. As early as 1962 Secretary of the International Department, David Ennals, identified securing the electoral support of immigrants as a key aim for the Labour Party. This was accompanied by a draft poster aimed at immigrants, encouraging them to register to vote and support Labour.<sup>49</sup> Potential immigrant votes were also monitored by the Labour Party. Prior to the election in 1964 the Study Group on Commonwealth Immigrants compiled a document with the estimated size of immigrant populations in constituencies with significant immigrant communities, together with a note of which party won each seat in 1959 and by what majority.<sup>50</sup> The value of immigrant support had been made clear in a number of by-elections where their votes had helped secure victory for Labour candidates. At the 1961 by-election in Birmingham Small Heath, for example, the IWA rallied votes for Labour's Dennis Howell, including publishing a leaflet encouraging all immigrants to vote for the Labour candidate, stating 'Labour Party victory is your victory.'<sup>51</sup> Similarly, during the 1963 by-election in West Bromwich the IWA helped Labour candidate and future Minister of Integration, Maurice Foley, attain an increased majority against Conservative candidate, George Hawkins, who had tried to exploit immigration.<sup>52</sup> However, while it may have been politically expedient in some constituencies to court the immigrant vote, this was not the case for all, as the report by Raisin in 1958 had highlighted. Consequently, Dancygier argues Labour strategists were continually weighing up how votes from immigrants might equate with the prospective losses from Labour's traditional working class voters.<sup>53</sup> With such a complex and difficult situation to

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<sup>49</sup> LHASC, LPRD, 'Race Relations and Immigration 1920s-1960s', box 34, LP/RD/34/7, 'Immigrants and the Labour Party', 2 July 1962.

<sup>50</sup> LHASC, LPRD, 'Race Relations and Immigration 1920s-1960s', box 34, LP/RD/33/6, 'Study Group on Commonwealth Immigrants – Background Paper'.

<sup>51</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Birmingham branch publications, IWA campaign leaflet, file MS.2141/A/8/2/4.

<sup>52</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Birmingham branch policy papers, Report of the Executive Committee 1 May 1963-1 April 1966, p.5, file MS.2141/A/8/2/2.

<sup>53</sup> Rafaela M. Dancygier, *Immigration and Conflict in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 83.

manage, marginalising immigration as an election issue appeared to be seen by Wilson as the best option. However, the lack of clarity regarding the party's official policy enabled Conservative MPs in certain West Midland and Greater London constituencies to exploit the issue for electoral gain through populist local campaigns. For example, having considered the electoral situation in the city a group of five Conservative Birmingham MPs agreed to make immigration a prominent part of their election campaigns following a meeting with the Chairman of the Birmingham Conservative Association, Geoffrey Lloyd, in July 1964.<sup>54</sup> In what was a very narrow victory for the Labour Party the immigration issue proved to be a major cause for concern in the 1964 general election.

The result at Smethwick in Birmingham demonstrated this most clearly and has frequently been cited as a catalyst in Labour's changing line on immigration.<sup>55</sup> A solid Labour seat since 1945, the industrial town was home to a large population of Commonwealth immigrants, amounting to around 6,000 in 1964.<sup>56</sup> Social tensions in the area were rife and in 1963 led some residents to demand an anti-vice squad to tackle Rachman landlords, soliciting, and increased crime and drunken behaviour attributed to Commonwealth immigrants.<sup>57</sup> Housing was a major issue and received relentless attention in the local paper the *Smethwick Telephone*, alongside more general concerns about the local impact immigration was having on the area.<sup>58</sup> The preoccupation of the *Smethwick Telephone* with Commonwealth immigration, devoting more than 1,650 inches of column space to it, ensured that it remained a

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<sup>54</sup> The five MPs were Dame Edith Pitt at Edgbaston, Leslie Seymour at Sparkbrook, Harold Gurden at Selly Oak, Leonard Cleaver at Yardley and John Hollingworth at All Saints. 'Immigration an Election Issue', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 9 August 1964 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 14/02/2018).

<sup>55</sup> See for example Erik Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France – Ideas and policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 60; Shamit Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', *Journal of the Institute of Contemporary British History*, 7, 2 (1993), pp. 255-258; Ian Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939 – The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 136.

<sup>56</sup> Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain – A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), p. 332.

<sup>57</sup> LHASC, Smethwick file 0860 (2), 'Smethwick call for anti-vice squad', *Birmingham Mail*, 25 July 1963; 'Call for Vice Squad', *Smethwick Telephone*, 26 July 1963; 'It could lead to riots in Smethwick', *Express & Star*, 25 July 1963.

<sup>58</sup> Elizabeth Buettner, 'This is Staffordshire not Alabama': Racial Geographies of Commonwealth Immigration in early 1960s Britain', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 42, 4 (2014), pp. 715-716.

prominent issue throughout the campaign.<sup>59</sup> The election itself saw a shock defeat for Labour's shadow Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, who had won a reasonably secure majority of over 3,500 votes in 1959. In 1964 he was beaten by a strongly anti-immigrant campaign led by Conservative candidate, Peter Griffiths, in what proved to be the highest swing to a Conservative candidate in the entire election. Although initially opposing the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, Gordon Walker was by no means against restrictions altogether. On the contrary, he had been one of Labour's keenest advocates for the Act's renewal in 1963.<sup>60</sup> Despite his personal support for restrictions by this point, 'in the undiscriminating public eye' he was as Robert Pearce notes 'quite simply, pro-immigration.'<sup>61</sup> His avoidance of the immigration issue during the election campaign in Smethwick did little to help dispel this image. His only response to questions relating to immigration was to say that immigrant labour was vital to local industry. The problem, he claimed, was inadequate housing and exploitative landlords.<sup>62</sup> Whilst this may have been the case, his reaction was symptomatic of the wider failings of the Labour Party's election campaign to address the social concerns of constituents in these areas and make their own policy stance clear. By contrast, Griffiths built his campaign around local issues in Smethwick, focusing in particular on immigration and exploiting the fears of the towns white working-class constituents over this issue.<sup>63</sup> Griffiths criticised his opponent for being out of touch with voters,<sup>64</sup> and refused to condemn the slogan 'If you want a nigger neighbour, vote Labour' arguing it was a popular manifestation of the feeling in Smethwick over immigration.<sup>65</sup> As well as attracting major national attention, the racialisation of the immigration debate in Smethwick became the subject of international interest too, even prompting a subsequent visit from prominent American activist Malcolm X. During this visit, which was reported in the

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<sup>59</sup> LHASC, Smethwick file 0860 (2), 'Immigrants main election issue at Smethwick', *The Times*, 9 March 1964.

<sup>60</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>61</sup> Robert Pearce (ed), Patrick Gordon Walker - *Political Diaries 1932-1971* (London: The Historians' Press, 1991), p. 42.

<sup>62</sup> Pearce, *Political Diaries 1932-1971*, pp. 41-42.

<sup>63</sup> Joe Street, 'Malcolm X, Smethwick, and the Influence of the African American Freedom Struggle on British Race Relations in the 1960s', *The Journal of Black Studies*, 38, 6 (2008), p. 943.

<sup>64</sup> Pearce, *Political Diaries 1932-1971*, p. 44.

<sup>65</sup> Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Immigration: Race and Race relations in Postwar Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1992), p. 77.

*New York Times*, he drew parallels between the racial tensions in America and Smethwick and warned that the continued oppression of coloured people would 'start a bloody battle.'<sup>66</sup> Such publicity further undermined Labour's efforts to contain the issue.

Whilst the importance of Smethwick has been well documented, it should be recognised that the exploitation of immigration during this election was not confined to this constituency alone but had a much wider impact across the West Midlands and Greater London. At the marginal Labour seat of Birmingham Perry Barr for example, the Birmingham Immigration Control Association helped Conservative candidate, Wyndham Davies, secure a narrow victory over sitting Labour MP, Charles Howell.<sup>67</sup> The loss of Eton and Slough was another blow for the party and reiterated the risks immigration posed in marginal constituencies. A Labour seat since 1950, Eton and Slough had become increasingly vulnerable because of immigration. Labour MP Fenner Brockway had been re-elected in 1959 but with only a slim 88 vote majority, something he attributed to the work of opposing canvassers claiming he was responsible for the increasing presence of immigrants in the area.<sup>68</sup> As the previous chapter highlighted, Brockway led the Labour left's principled opposition to controls, which further heightened the salience of immigration in his constituency. In 1964 he was beaten in the narrowest of defeats to Conservative candidate, Anthony Meyer, by only 11 votes. Press coverage in the run up to the election billed it as a difficult seat for Labour due to Brockway's 'alliance with the coloured cause' and the presence of a large immigrant population in the area was identified as an explosive issue.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, Brockway remained confident that the votes he expected to receive from immigrant communities in the area would outweigh those he stood to lose because of his stance on immigration.<sup>70</sup> This was not the case and he latterly acknowledged that he lost his seat because immigration was the 'determining issue'

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<sup>66</sup> 'Aid to Malcolm X by BBC assailed', *New York Times*, 14 February 1965, accessed online via [www.nytimes.com/archive](http://www.nytimes.com/archive) (02/08/2016).

<sup>67</sup> Muhammad Anwar, *Race and Politics— Ethnic minorities and the British political system* (London: Tavistock, 1986), p. 18.

<sup>68</sup> Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, pp. 149.

<sup>69</sup> LHASC, General Election Box 1964 Press Cuttings, 'A microcosm of the nation', *The Times*, 6 October 1964; 'Labour's majority of 88 in danger at safety town', *The Daily Telegraph*, 6 October 1964.

<sup>70</sup> LHASC, Fenner Brockway, 'Eton and Slough', *Tribune*, 9 October 1964.

of the contest.<sup>71</sup> As well as the overt loss of a small number of seats, immigration had an adverse effect on Labour candidates' majorities in other constituencies in these regions too. This was highlighted in the election report by the party's General Secretary, Len Williams:

*'The "taint" of Smethwick spread to the neighbouring constituencies of West Bromwich, Oldbury and Halesowen, Rowley Regis and Tipton, Bilston and Wednesbury, as well as some of the Birmingham seats. In all these seats the Labour majorities were reduced and in many other seats in the region the swing to Labour was not nearly as great as it might otherwise have been.'*<sup>72</sup>

The impact of immigration in the region at the election was further reiterated in the report by the West Midlands Regional Council of the Labour Party which also stated that the focus on immigration at Smethwick and Perry Barr also had an effect in adjoining constituencies.<sup>73</sup> In Greater London too immigration proved to be a key issue in some constituencies. Southall was one such example. Described by *The Times* as a difficult seat for Labour because of local resentment over the 'coloured influx',<sup>74</sup> the presence of British Nationalist Party (BNP) candidate John Bean was a further complicating factor. Labour MP George Pargiter remained confident of a comfortable victory, forecasting a majority of around 7,000, taking into account an anticipated 1,000 votes for Bean.<sup>75</sup> Instead, the contest proved much closer. Pargiter retained the seat but with a much smaller majority than anticipated, with less than 2,000 votes separating himself and Conservative opponent Barbara Maddin. Bean, with the help of the anti-immigrant Southall Residents' Association, far exceeded Pargiter's expectations receiving over 3,000 votes which equated to around 9% of the total vote. The relative success of the BNP candidate illustrated that immigration had been a central issue of the election. A similar situation arose in

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<sup>71</sup> Fenner Brockway, *Towards Tomorrow* (London: Granada Publishing Limited, 1971), p. 234.

<sup>72</sup> LHASC, General Election Box 1964, General Secretary's Circulars File, 'General Election 1964 – Final Report by the General Secretary', Appendix 2, p. 4.

<sup>73</sup> LHASC, West Midlands Regional Council of the Labour Party Report 1965, p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> LHASC, General Election Box – 1964 Press Cuttings, 'No getting away from race issue', *The Times*, 8 October 1964.

<sup>75</sup> LHASC, General Election Box – 1964 Press Cuttings, 'No getting away from race issue', *The Times*, 8 October 1964.



Deptford where Colin Atkins stood as an independent candidate on an anti-immigrant platform and won 8.4% of the vote. Atkins said he felt compelled to enter the election in order to 'break the conspiracy of silence' on immigration which both the Labour and Conservative candidates had tried to maintain.<sup>76</sup> Although Southall and Deptford remained Labour seats in 1964, the emergence of local anti-immigration candidates was concerning as it represented clear competition for Labour votes.

In other constituencies in the region, Conservative candidates made immigration a campaign issue. In Clapham, the attempt of Labour's Margaret McKay to keep the 'coloured question' out of the campaign was undermined by sitting Conservative MP, Alan Glyn, who spoke openly of his support for immigration controls in his election address, insisting it was his duty to consider the needs of his constituents.<sup>77</sup> Similarly, in Fulham, Conservative candidate Michael Grylls responded to accusations he had made immigration an election issue by arguing bluntly 'It *is* an issue, and you can't dodge it.'<sup>78</sup> Thus, as these examples illustrate, far from being an isolated incident the impact of immigration was felt far beyond Smethwick in 1964 into other constituencies across both the West Midlands and Greater London. Indeed, behind nationalisation, Labour candidates reported back to the leadership that immigration had in fact been the most disadvantageous issue for the party at the election.<sup>79</sup>

### **The Leyton by-election – Labour's wake-up call**

If the election had exposed the flaws in Labour's uncertain response to immigration, Wilson did not immediately move to tighten restrictions. Instead, in a bid to show that racial prejudice would not be allowed to triumph he denounced Griffiths as a 'parliamentary leper' during his maiden speech as Prime Minister and set about finding a seat for his newly appointed Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker.

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<sup>76</sup> Butler and King, *The British General Election of 1964*, p. 366.

<sup>77</sup> 'Immigration an issue in Clapham', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 October 1964 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 19/03/2018).

<sup>78</sup> 'Labour changes colour', *The Daily Telegraph*, 8 October 1964 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 19/03/2018).

<sup>79</sup> LHASC, General Election Box 1964, General Secretary's Circulars File, 'General Election 1964 – Final Report by the General Secretary', Appendix 1, p. 3.

Leyton was selected and after some persuasion long-serving MP, Reginald Sorensen, retired to the Lords to make way for the new Foreign Secretary. Sorensen's nearly 8,000 vote majority in 1964 had solidified the image of Leyton as a safe Labour seat and as such made it an ideal choice for Gordon Walker. In what was expected to be an easy victory the Labour candidate once again found himself at the centre of a campaign marred by immigration. The residual association between immigration and Gordon Walker which stemmed from Smethwick appeared to have an impact in Leyton too, a constituency which itself was relatively unaffected by immigration. Despite the Labour Party's qualified support for immigration restrictions, and Gordon Walker's personal backing for this, he continued to be seen as representative of Labour's perceived pro-immigration stance.

Determined to recreate another Smethwick, leader of the far-right National Socialist movement, Colin Jordan, saw the by-election as an opportunity. Jordan and his associates carried out demonstrations throughout the campaign, targeting Labour meetings and press conferences.<sup>80</sup> The eventual defeat of Gordon Walker to Conservative candidate Ronald Buxton, himself an advocate of tougher controls, reinforced concerns that Labour's qualified support for restrictions was simply not an electorally viable strategy. It would be inaccurate to suggest that this issue alone cost Labour the seat as other reasons including the suspected abstention of older voters who objected to Wilson's pensions policy, as well as local resentment that long-serving Labour MP Sorensen had been replaced were held partially accountable for the loss.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, that immigration was a contributing factor at all in a by-election for a constituency which was relatively unaffected by immigration is significant. In a lengthy memo sent by Sorensen to Wilson following the defeat of Gordon Walker, he suggested that Labour's unclear policy on controls had enabled immigration to be exploited during the campaign. Thus, the balancing act that Wilson had tried to maintain to appease the conflicting opinions both inside and outside the party was criticised by Sorensen for undermining Labour's electoral

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<sup>80</sup> David McKie, 'By-elections of the Wilson Government', in Chris Cook and John Ramsden (eds), *By-elections in British politics* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 181

<sup>81</sup> 'The Leyton By-election', memorandum sent from Reginald Sorensen to Harold Wilson, 26 January 1965. Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.1477.

prospects. If, Sorensen argued, the party had done more when the Commonwealth Immigrants Act faced renewal to emphasise that they accepted the necessity of restrictions, they would have been less vulnerable on the issue in Leyton.<sup>82</sup> Instead, their continued opposition to the Act when it faced renewal, and silence on immigration during the campaign appeared to be widely regarded, accurately or not, as an outright rejection of controls.

The belief that Wilson was being punished in Leyton for his condemnation of Griffiths after Smethwick and his failure to acknowledge the views of many voters was reflected in letters he received after the by-election.

*'YOUR FACE MUST BE RED...' wrote one, 'SHOULD YOU WISH TO CONTINUE AS NURSE MAID TO PATRICK GORDON WALKER YOU WILL HAVE TO CREATE ANOTHER LORD. WHOSE THE LEPER NOW. THE LESSON SHOULD BE NOTED THAT YOU CANNOT MUCK ABOUT WITH THE ELECTORATE.'*<sup>83</sup>

This was one example amongst many which rebuked Wilson for what was perceived to be an inadequate response to the question of immigration controls. If further clarity was needed after the 1964 general election about the potential electoral impact of immigration, the Leyton by-election provided this. The result not only sent a clear message to Wilson that he had misjudged and underestimated the mood of the electorate, it also demonstrated that the localised electoral impact of immigration could have repercussions for the balance of political power nationally. The loss of Leyton in January 1965 reduced Labour's already tiny majority of four seats to three and increased worries that public concern over immigration posed a serious threat to the survival of the government. As Hiro suggests, the Labour government were left visibly shaken by the result and realised it was not enough to simply be in favour of restrictions. Controls had to be tightened to demonstrate that they were taking the issue seriously.<sup>84</sup> After this result, the urgent need to form a

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<sup>82</sup> 'The Leyton By-election', memorandum sent from Reginald Sorensen to Harold Wilson, 26 January 1965. Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.1477.

<sup>83</sup> This was one example from the series of letters sent to Wilson following the Leyton by-election defeat. Bodleian Library, Harold Wilson Papers, MS. Wilson c.1477.

<sup>84</sup> Hiro, *Black British, White British*, p. 205.

bipartisan consensus with the Conservative Party was fully appreciated.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, a Labour Research Department paper in the immediate aftermath of the by-election conceded that immigration would likely be exploited again in the next general election, particularly in marginal seats if action were not taken.<sup>86</sup> Although voters nationally may have failed to see a marked difference between the immigration policies of Labour and the Conservatives in 1964, this was not the case in areas with high immigrant populations. According to Butler and Stokes, in these areas three times as many voters thought the Conservative Party would be more restrictive than Labour.<sup>87</sup> It was, therefore, public opinion in the regions most affected by immigration and where it had been exploited in 1964 which convinced the Labour government to abandon a social liberal approach in favour of tighter Commonwealth immigration controls. Addressing public opinion in these regions was now perceived as essential for the Labour Party if they were to prevent immigration policy from becoming a major electoral handicap in these regions at the next election. Unwilling to take this risk the Labour Party set about reconstructing a bipartisan agreement with the Conservative Party to ensure that the next election would not be fought on the grounds of immigration.<sup>88</sup> The culmination of this came in July 1965 when Wilson announced the introduction of the White Paper on Immigration.

### **Regional influences on national policy**

In a clear effort to reassure Labour's working class voting base in the regions most affected by immigration, the White Paper tightened the restrictions on Commonwealth immigrants already in place with the 1962 Act. Importantly this included a reduction in the number of category C vouchers available for unskilled workers; those deemed the biggest source of competition for jobs and housing to Labour's working class voters. There can be little doubt that the decision to introduce the White Paper was directly influenced by the need to placate illiberal

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<sup>85</sup> Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1984), p. 60

<sup>86</sup> MRC, Draft paper by John Lyttle for Richard Crossman, 'The Labour Party and Commonwealth Immigrants', 3 February 1965, Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/3/SP/5/1-49.

<sup>87</sup> David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political change in Britain: the evolution of electoral choice* (London: Macmillan, 1974), pp. 304-305.

<sup>88</sup> Anwar, *Race and Politics*, p. 19.

public opinion in the regions most affected by the impact of immigration; namely the West Midlands and Greater London. Whilst immigration may not have been a decisive factor in shaping the results in many constituencies in 1964, it undoubtedly posed future electoral risks in both of these regions. This was mirrored in the rationale put forward for the White Paper at the 1965 Labour Party Conference, which made clear these regions had provided the impetus for action. The intention of the White Paper, it declared, was to give the affected local authorities time to absorb immigrants already there as the government were concerned about the extent to which immigrants were concentrating in a few areas.<sup>89</sup> Alice Bacon, MP for Leeds South East and NEC member continued, 'the pace of immigration must slow down to give these hard-pressed areas time.'<sup>90</sup> Thus, the extension of immigration controls was viewed as a means of facilitating the integration of immigrants in the places where they were most heavily concentrated.

The connection between the regional impact of immigration and the extension of controls was made explicit by some Cabinet Ministers too. Minister of Housing and MP for Coventry East, Richard Crossman, acknowledged that although restrictions were both difficult and illiberal and would further accentuate the acute shortage of labour in Britain, without them the party 'would have been faced with certain electoral defeat in the West Midlands and the South East' at the next election.<sup>91</sup> Learning from the mistakes of the election, a concerted effort was made to ensure voters were aware of Labour's tougher stance on immigration. National Agent, Sara Barker, was tasked with contacting all regional organisers following the publication of the White Paper to emphasise the importance of the new policy being explained and understood, especially in the areas most affected by immigration. The suggestion was to hold a series of briefing meetings to cover the constituencies affected by large-scale Commonwealth immigration to be attended by Minister of Integration Maurice Foley.<sup>92</sup> The appointment of a Minister from a West Midlands

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<sup>89</sup> LHASC, *Labour Party Annual Report 1965* (London, Labour Party, 1965), p. 218.

<sup>90</sup> LHASC, *Labour Party Annual Report 1965* (London, Labour Party, 1965), p. 218.

<sup>91</sup> Anthony Howard (ed), *The Crossman Diaries* (London: Mandarin, 1991) p. 132.

<sup>92</sup> LHASC, National Agents Department (NAD) Material un-catalogued, box 'NAD 1958-1965', letter from Sara Barker, Labour Party National Agent to Labour Party Regional Organisers, 13 August 1965, NAD/RO/28/8/65.

constituency with such a portfolio in itself spoke volumes about the Labour Party's perception of immigration as a serious issue in the aftermath of 1964. The eagerness of the party to ensure voters in these areas were made aware of the tightening of immigration restrictions appeared to confirm that public opinion in these regions had a direct influence on the government's decision to introduce the White Paper.

### **Immigration and the 1966 general election**

Labour's efforts to prevent a regional electoral backlash on immigration were soon put to the test in the March 1966 general election. The party's election manifesto stated Labour's intentions to continue to administer realistic immigration controls and underlined their determination to ensure racial equality. Although immigration remained one of the key topics of debate well into 1965, the introduction of the White Paper reduced the salience of the issue at the election by quashing the argument that Britain was in danger of being 'flooded' by immigrants.<sup>93</sup> Instead, the policy convergence with the Conservative Party over the extension of controls signalled that Labour too could be trusted to be firm on restrictions. Conservative leader, Ted Heath, was keen to ensure his party would not be blighted by a 'Smethwick-style exploitation of race' in the 1966 election,<sup>94</sup> and was responsive to Wilson's attempts to depoliticise race and immigration by forging a bi-partisan consensus around controls and limited race relations legislation. With a strong desire from both leaders to keep immigration out of the election, it was instead fought on the more traditional areas of the economy, Europe, trade union reform and social services.<sup>95</sup> Labour's success in neutralising immigration as an electoral issue appeared to be confirmed by the election results, which saw the party achieve a decisive 97 seat majority over the Conservatives. The re-taking of all seats which had been lost where immigration had been a decisive factor in 1964, as well as the attainment of higher majorities in many other constituencies across the West Midlands and Greater London seemed to illustrate that immigration had been

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<sup>93</sup> David Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1966* (London: Macmillan, 1966), p. 268.

<sup>94</sup> Philip Lynch, *The Politics of Nationhood – Sovereignty, Britishness and Conservative Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1999), p. 33

<sup>95</sup> Butler and King, *The British General Election of 1966*, p. 92.

successfully marginalised as an election issue in 1966. Overall, the Labour Party increased the number of seats they held in both regions between 1964 and 1966. Of the 54 seats available in the West Midlands the Labour Party won 32 of these in 1966 compared to 28 in 1964. In Greater London, of the 103 seats available the Labour Party won 65 in 1966 compared to only 53 in 1964.<sup>96</sup> This improvement was confirmed by the party's internal analysis of the election which included a comparison of results from 1964 and 1966 in constituencies where immigration was deemed electorally significant. Of the 51 constituencies listed 37 were in Greater London and the West Midlands,<sup>97</sup> reinforcing the centrality of these two regions to the immigration debate. The other 14 constituencies were made up of two in the East Midlands, seven in the Home Counties and five in the North of England.<sup>98</sup> Overall the analysis showed that Labour had clearly performed better across the West Midlands and Greater London in 1966, gaining six seats from the Conservatives across the two regions and increasing their majority in 28 of the remaining 31 constituencies.<sup>99</sup> This improvement was particularly marked in the West Midlands where the 1.6% swing towards Labour in 1964, which was far lower than the national average, had increased to 3.6% by 1966. Importantly, the declining electoral salience of immigration was identified as the main reason for this increase.<sup>100</sup>

However, if immigration had 'lost much of its sting as an election issue' by 1966, this is not to say that no attempts were made to exploit it.<sup>101</sup> It continued to be mentioned far more frequently in London and the West Midlands than elsewhere during the election, as opposition candidates sought to exploit residual anti-immigrant feeling.<sup>102</sup> Nonetheless, even in constituencies where opponents adopted

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<sup>96</sup> Butler and King, *The British General Election of 1964*, pp. 307-318; Butler and King, *The British General Election of 1966*, pp.301-312.

<sup>97</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Research Series (LPRS), RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee - *The 1966 General Election*, table 6a.

<sup>98</sup> The two constituencies in the East Midlands were Nottingham Central and Nottingham West. The seven constituencies listed for the Home Counties were Bedford, Cambridge, Eton and Slough, Luton, Oxford, Reading, Wycombe and the five constituencies in the North were Bradford East, Huddersfield West, Manchester Moss Side, Preston North and Preston South. LHASC, LPRS, RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee - *The 1966 General Election*, table 6a.

<sup>99</sup> LHASC, LPRS, RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee - *The 1966 General Election*, table 6a.

<sup>100</sup> LHASC, LPRS, RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee - *The 1966 General Election*, table 6a.

<sup>101</sup> LHASC, LPRS, RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee - *The 1966 General Election*, p. 8.

<sup>102</sup> Butler and King, *The British General Election of 1966*, p. 200.

a very strong anti-immigration line, such as Norwood, Southall and West Bromwich, it did not appear to have any impact on the outcome of the results.<sup>103</sup> Immigrant voters by and large continued to support Labour, as was the case in Southall where the IWA campaigned for Labour's Sid Bidwell and ran a voter registration drive between the two elections, which doubled immigrant registration to 2,000 by 1966,<sup>104</sup> helping Bidwell to more than double his majority. However, there were notable exceptions which proved there was no guarantee of immigrant support.

Labour's perceived u-turn on controls meant they had to contend with a backlash from immigrant communities in some constituencies. In contrast to Southall, immigrant communities in two of Labour's marginal constituencies, Birmingham All Saints and Birmingham Sparkbrook, were encouraged to boycott voting in the 1966 election due to the attitude of the Labour candidates there towards Commonwealth immigration. The IWA, Pakistani Welfare Association and Birmingham Standing Conference of West Indian Organisations issued a joint statement outlining their disillusionment with the party and its immigration policies since the last election and advised members not to vote.<sup>105</sup> Whilst the IWA maintained that their approach was still one of general unity and co-operation with Labour, by targeting two West Midland seats in a region where Labour had been vulnerable in 1964 because of immigration, they showed that this support was not unconditional.<sup>106</sup> The boycott in these constituencies may not have had a detrimental impact on the results, as both Labour candidates were in fact returned with increased majorities, but it once again illustrated the difficulty Wilson faced in trying to appease white voters in these regions without simultaneously alienating immigrant voters. If Labour's policy on immigration controls had succeeded in the short term by helping the party secure a comfortable majority at the 1966 election, the re-emergence of immigration as a

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<sup>103</sup> LHASC, LPRS, RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee – *The 1966 General Election*, p. 6.

<sup>104</sup> LHASC, General Election 1966 press cuttings box, 'Indian group decides to back Labour', *The Guardian*, 7 March 1966.

<sup>105</sup> LHASC, General Election 1966 press cuttings box, 'Immigrant attack on Labour', *The Guardian*, 25 March 1966; 'No Voting by Immigrants', *Express and Star*, 25 March 1966.

<sup>106</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Circulars, Central Executive Committee Circular to all branches, file MS.2141/A/3/2.



major electoral issue by 1967 threatened to fracture the tentative political consensus that the Labour government had been constructing.

### **The Kenyan Asian 'crisis' and the re-emergence of the immigration debate**

Labour MP for Birmingham All Saints Brian Walden's confident declaration on the night of the 1966 election that they had 'buried the race issue' reflected the misplaced confidence of the Labour Party.<sup>107</sup> In reality, the successful neutralisation of the matter proved fleeting and by the following year immigration was dominating the political agenda once more, this time with the Kenyan Asian 'crisis'. The Labour government, who were convinced they had eradicated immigration as an electoral issue in 1966, were ill-prepared to deal with it. The growing numbers of Kenyan Asians arriving in Britain by late 1967 to escape the punitive Africanisation policies being implemented by Kenyan President Jomo Kenyatta caused alarm. This group were exempt from controls on the grounds that all British passport holders living in independent Commonwealth countries, as Kenya was, retained unrestricted entry to Britain. The situation was depicted as a crisis in the British press and pressure mounted on the government to introduce fresh controls to stem the flow. Conservative MPs Duncan Sandys and Enoch Powell, who represented Streatham and Wolverhampton South West, were quick to demand action. They led an inflammatory campaign, which in addition to demanding stricter controls contained a further demand for repatriation of Commonwealth immigrants. In reviving and extending the scope of the immigration debate these two MPs, who represented constituencies in Greater London and the West Midlands, also reignited Labour's sensitivities over anti-immigration opinion in these regions. Consequently, after being rushed through parliament in only three days, the Labour Party passed the second Commonwealth Immigrants Act on 1 March 1968 in a desperate bid to avoid inflaming public opinion in these regions.

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<sup>107</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Birmingham branch policy papers, Programme of the IWA GB Birmingham branch, p.1, file MS.2141/A/8/2/2; The 1966 General Election, p.2, MS.2141/A/4/13.

Although in numerical terms the Wilson government was in a much stronger electoral position than it had been when Commonwealth immigration first emerged as a key issue in 1964, the Kenyan Asian 'crisis' arose at a time when the reputation and credibility of the Labour government was particularly low. The party's faltering economic policies, which led Wilson to introduce a deflationary economic package in July 1966 followed by devaluation in November 1967, proved hugely damaging to the popularity of the government.<sup>108</sup> In addition, tensions between the government and unions over trade union reform were worsening rapidly in this period.<sup>109</sup> Wilson's foreign policy objectives fared little better as Britain's second application to join the EEC was vetoed. A series of poor local election results in 1967 compounded these problems and reflected the government's growing instability. The Greater London Council (GLC) elections were particularly disastrous for Labour. Their success in the first GLC elections in 1964, where they gained control of 64% of seats, was dramatically overturned in 1967 when Labour was reduced to just 18% of seats.<sup>110</sup> Losing control of the GLC was especially significant as Rallings and Thrasher argue the London elections were seen as a microcosm of the political battle taking place at the national level.<sup>111</sup> If the GLC elections were considered to be an indication of the parties' national standing, Labour was facing serious difficulty. Thus, in this uncertain climate the Labour government believed it could ill afford for another issue to compromise their prospects at the next election. Immigration, with the potential electoral implications it held, threatened to do just that. Once again concern over losing regional support influenced Labour's decision to tighten controls. The speed with which the party passed the Bill through parliament reflected its view that this was a high risk issue in areas with large immigrant communities which needed a quick resolution. Indeed, following the passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in 1968 Crossman admitted it had been the most popular thing the government

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<sup>108</sup> Glen O'Hara and Helen Parr, 'Introduction: the Rise and Fall of a Reputation' in Glen O'Hara and Helen Parr (eds), *The Wilson Governments 1964-1970 Reconsidered* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. VIII.

<sup>109</sup> See Chapter Four.

<sup>110</sup> Colin Rallings and Michael Thrasher, *Local Elections in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 111.

<sup>111</sup> Rallings and Thrasher, *Local Elections*, p. 86.

had done.<sup>112</sup> Crucially, he also indicated that regional concerns over immigration had necessitated action, justifying his support for Callaghan's Bill on the grounds that he represented a Midlands seat 'where racialism is a powerful force.'<sup>113</sup> Further, Crossman drew comparisons with 1966 as he argued that the threat of immigration becoming a dominating issue in the region during that election had been 'damped down' by controls, seemingly suggesting extending restrictions would have the same effect in 1968.<sup>114</sup> Callaghan also emphasised the 'Midlands factor' as influencing the party during the decision making process over the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. He stated his decision to legislate was welcomed particularly by Midlands MPs who informed him that their constituents resented previous governments' failure to act on the issue.<sup>115</sup> In acknowledging the Labour Party's previous reticence in responding to the immigration issue and the electoral backlash this created during the Bill's Second Reading in February 1968, he restated the importance of public opinion, which had been integral to the decision to implement further controls. 'It would be irresponsible not to legislate on this vast issue...I believe that we must face the facts. We have got into trouble in the past for not being willing to face them.'<sup>116</sup> Thus, Callaghan was driven by fear of a repeat of the anti-immigration backlash experienced in 1964 and his response in rushing legislation through was intended to show the public, particularly in the West Midlands and Greater London, that Labour could be trusted to address their concerns.

### **Enoch Powell, the end of consensus, and the 1970 general election**

Despite the implementation of tougher restrictions than ever before, the simultaneous introduction of a more comprehensive Race Relations Act, which covered the controversial spheres of housing and employment, appeared to spell the

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<sup>112</sup> John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), Meeting between Richard Crossman and Alastair Hetherington, 21 March 1968, C5/334/1-7, p.2.

<sup>113</sup> Howard (ed), *The Crossman Diaries*, p. 448.

<sup>114</sup> John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), Meeting between Richard Crossman and Alastair Hetherington, 21 March 1968, C5/334/1-7, p.2.

<sup>115</sup> Kenneth O' Morgan, *Callaghan – A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 309; Callaghan, *Time and Chance*, p. 26.

<sup>116</sup> *HC Deb*, 27 February 1968, vol 759 cc 241-368.

end of the political consensus on immigration which had been constructed since 1965. Instrumental to this was the popular salience of Enoch Powell's anti-immigrant rhetoric. The government's announcement shortly after the introduction of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act that it intended to introduce a second more extensive Race Relations Act was emphatically denounced by Powell in his infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech delivered at the Conservative Association meeting in Birmingham on 20 April 1968. The legislation, he believed, would enable immigrants to 'campaign against their fellow citizens, and overawe and dominate the rest with the legal weapons which the ignorant and ill-informed have provided.' Essentially, he saw the Race Relations Act as a clear prioritisation of immigrant rights at the expense of white British citizens. If the prospect of further anti-discrimination legislation had provided the impetus for Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech, its roots were much deeper. According to Schofield this was not merely a response to the Race Relations Act but reflected Powell's rejection of the wider political consensus on immigration which had been constructed without the consent of the British public,<sup>117</sup> or more specifically the consent of the public in areas of high immigration. Powell firmly believed that there was a gulf between the nation and the political establishment on immigration and saw his intervention as striking a blow for democracy by giving a voice to the hitherto 'silent majority' who advocated tighter controls and mass repatriation as the only solutions to Britain's immigration problems.<sup>118</sup> By channelling the full force of illiberal public opinion, Powell's high profile campaign was intended to undermine the carefully calibrated balance between controls and race relations legislation which underpinned Labour's dual strategy. The increase in public backing for tighter restrictions following his speech in April 1968 appeared to strengthen Powell's campaign, with a National Opinion Poll survey revealing 93% of respondents advocated a dramatic reduction on further immigration.<sup>119</sup> Support for Powell was particularly strong in the West Midlands and London where dock workers went on strike and took part in demonstrations in

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<sup>117</sup> Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Post Colonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), pp. 222-224.

<sup>118</sup> Schofield, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 222-224.

<sup>119</sup> LHASC, Study Group on Immigration, 'Public Opinion and Immigration', Dr Mark Abrams, January 1969.

protest at his dismissal from the Conservative Shadow Cabinet, voicing support for his anti-immigrant views and the right to free speech.<sup>120</sup>

Despite public support for action, the Labour Party refused to contemplate additional legislation or abandonment of its dual strategy. As far as the party was concerned, it had responded to the immigration 'crisis' in 1968 with controls and felt the restrictions introduced in the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act were sufficient to manage any further inflow of immigration. The imposition of further measures to limit the rate of immigration were, therefore, viewed as unnecessary and repatriation was opposed on grounds of principle, leading Labour to resist public pressure to act. Reflecting on the public response to Powell's 'Rivers of Blood' speech Crossman encapsulated Labour's reticence. 'It's in these crises that the British constitution is like a rock against which the wave of popular emotion breaks, and one hopes after a time the tide will go down and the rock stands untouched...Parliament is the buffer which enables our leadership to avoid saying yes or no to the electorate in the hope that, given time, the situation can be eased away.'<sup>121</sup> Thus, Wilson now shifted emphasis away from controls and back towards the importance of successful integration, including the introduction of the second Race Relations Act later in 1968. As the previous chapter demonstrated Labour's dual policy on restrictions and race relations legislation had been carefully calibrated to allow the leadership such flexibility. Consequently, the fragile political consensus on immigration that had been maintained since 1965 began to falter as both parties took divergent paths on the issue once more. Although Powell was dismissed from the Shadow Cabinet for his controversial remarks, elements of his policy suggestions were nevertheless endorsed by the Conservative Party. By 1970, their election manifesto declared that there would be no further large-scale immigration to Britain and outlined the party's support for a voluntary repatriation scheme which would help Commonwealth immigrants who wanted to return to their country of origin.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Fred Lindop, 'Racism and the working class: strikes in support of Enoch Powell in 1968', *Labour History Review*, 66, 1 (2001), p. 82.

<sup>121</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister Volume Three: Secretary of State for Social Services, 1968-1970* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), p.30.

<sup>122</sup> LHASC, Conservative Party Manifesto, 'A Better Tomorrow', 1970.

By contrast, the Labour Party re-affirmed that there would be no further restrictions, highlighting that immigration rates were under firm control and lower than previous years, whilst pledging to invest the necessary resources to secure good race relations.<sup>123</sup> The shift in focus from controls to integration not only reflected Labour's belief that further restrictions were unnecessary, but their growing awareness of the importance of securing the electoral support of immigrants too.

The potential electoral significance of immigrant votes in regions such as the West Midlands and Greater London had been on Labour's radar for some time. As early as 1959 Raisin had cited the possibility that the Labour Party might gain large numbers of votes amongst the immigrant communities in constituencies where they had settled, though warned this would likely be at the expense of many more white voters.<sup>124</sup> Thus, whilst some local parties recognised the importance of gaining the electoral support of immigrant voters, encouraging them to vote and making attempts to recruit them into the party, the approach of CLPs frequently differed depending on the level of risk this posed to losing white voters. In Ealing for instance Dancygier suggests the Indian electorate was misinformed by members of the local party that 'local ward parties were "full" and no longer accepting applications. Growing the size of the local Labour Party was apparently not worth the risk of potentially losing white candidates and voters.'<sup>125</sup>

Aside from the complex electoral calculations of appealing to immigrant voters, low voter registration figures amongst immigrant communities presented a further problem. A lack of understanding about the process of voter registration and fear of exposing overcrowded housing conditions appeared to be at the crux of the problem. A report in the *Daily Telegraph* on Eton and Slough prior to the 1964 election for instance predicted that whilst there was an immigrant population of around 5,000 in the town, only 1/5 would vote due to fear of exposing overcrowding

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<sup>123</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Manifesto, 'Now Britain's Strong – Let's Make it Great to Live In', 1970.

<sup>124</sup> LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/33/3, 'Racial Disturbances in London', report by J.W Raisin, 11 September 1958.

<sup>125</sup> Dancygier, *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*, pp. 83-84.

if they registered, which was the case in many other constituencies too.<sup>126</sup> After the 1964 election the Labour Party acknowledged that there were a number of constituencies where the outcome of the election could have been changed if all eligible immigrants had registered and voted.<sup>127</sup> In order to improve registration figures increased contact between immigrants and CLPs as well as maintaining contact with the leaders of immigrant communities were promoted.<sup>128</sup> Therefore, Labour opposition to enlisting the support of immigrant voters gradually eroded by the end of the 1960s as the advantages of securing the support of this growing section of the electorate started to be recognised at national level. By 1970 there were between 20 to 30 constituencies in Britain where immigrant communities were big enough to change the outcome of election results.<sup>129</sup> As such, during the 1970 general election campaign the Labour Party attempted to encourage Commonwealth immigrants to vote for the Labour Party on a national scale for the first time.

Election material was produced by the party aimed specifically at immigrant voters. A pamphlet 'Why you should vote Labour' implored immigrants to support the party at the election on the grounds that 'the Labour Party is the party for all the citizens of the United Kingdom, irrespective of race, colour and creed', citing Labour's achievements in this field, including the Race Relations Act and establishment of the Community Relations Commission (CRC) as evidence. Labour contrasted its stance with the respective attitudes of Enoch Powell and the Conservative Party toward Commonwealth immigrants, which 'outwardly professes to be the party of liberal views' but 'also speaks of repatriation of the coloured immigrants.'<sup>130</sup> The pamphlet, which was translated into Hindi, Bengali and Urdu, was mass produced and made available to all regions, with nearly 30,000 copies being distributed in London

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<sup>126</sup> LHASC, General Election 1964 press cuttings box, *Daily Telegraph*, 'Labour's majority of 88 in danger at 'safety town'', 6 October 1964.

<sup>127</sup> MRC, Draft paper by John Lyttle for Richard Crossman, 'The Labour Party and Commonwealth immigrants', 3 February 1965, Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/3/SP/5/1-49.

<sup>128</sup> MRC, Draft paper by John Lyttle for Richard Crossman, 'The Labour Party and Commonwealth immigrants', 3 February 1965, Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/3/SP/5/1-49.

<sup>129</sup> 'Immigrant votes could hit Tories', *The Observer*, 31 May 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 03/04/2018).

<sup>130</sup> LHASC, 'Why you should vote Labour', un-catalogued 1970 general election collection.

alone.<sup>131</sup> This evidence, therefore, refutes the established view that British political parties only acknowledged the importance of appealing to immigrant voters after 1974. Zig Layton-Henry, for instance, has suggested that it was only after the 1974 general elections that more attention was paid to the importance of immigrant voters, who were by then an expanding portion of the electorate.<sup>132</sup> Anwar and Geddes have also viewed 1974 as a watershed. Anwar suggests that it was only after the publication of the results of a CRC report into the participation of ethnic minorities in 1974 which showed that immigrant voters had played a significant role in determining the outcome of the election in Labour's favour,<sup>133</sup> that 'special efforts were made by the three main political parties to recruit ethnic minority members and encourage them to register.' Anwar concludes that from this point onwards 'election literature, manifestos, and election addresses were translated into various Asian languages and bilingual party workers were used during election campaigns.'<sup>134</sup> Geddes too has asserted that political parties paid little attention to immigrant voters in the 1960s and early 1970s, and has also identified the CRC report in 1974 as influential in making them more aware of immigrant voters.<sup>135</sup> However, as this chapter has demonstrated the Labour Party in fact recognised the importance of immigrant voters much earlier and took steps to encourage them to register and vote years before the publication of the CRC report. This evidence is highly significant as it helps explain why Labour refused to capitulate to public demand for further action after 1968. The rightward drift of the immigration debate instigated by Powell limited Labour's ability to continue to appease anti-immigrant voters. As such, their policy focus after 1968 shifted emphasis to securing immigrant votes, which could potentially compensate for the expected loss of white votes they would incur in areas such as the West Midlands and Greater London. Any additional curtailment of the entry rights of Commonwealth immigrants, and certainly support for repatriation, would have risked alienating the growing number of immigrant voters to whom they were trying to appeal. Therefore, whilst Labour's policy on

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<sup>131</sup> LHASC, un-catalogued 1970 general election collection.

<sup>132</sup> Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain*, p. 145.

<sup>133</sup> Anwar, *Race and Politics*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>134</sup> Anwar, *Race and Politics*, p. 85.

<sup>135</sup> Andrew Geddes, *The Politics of Immigration and Race* (Indiana: Baseline Books, 1996), p. 86.



Commonwealth immigration restrictions continued to be led by public opinion, it was after 1968 no longer white voters they were trying to appease but rather immigrant voters instead.

Labour's efforts to appeal to immigrant voters appeared to have some traction at the 1970 general election. In certain Birmingham constituencies immigrant voters were able to exert influence. At All Saints the swing of 1.2% to Labour's Brian Walden was largely attributed to immigrant support. Similarly, at Smethwick immigrant voters 'helped to overcome the influence of Powellism' to return Labour's Andrew Faulds. In other constituencies immigrant votes were attributed as minimising the swing from Labour to the Conservatives, as was the case in Handsworth and Lewisham.<sup>136</sup> Nonetheless, whilst Labour was starting to feel the benefit of immigrant votes in some areas, the revival of the immigration debate after 1968 had elevated it into a key electoral issue which had the potential to damage their electoral prospects once more. Shortly before the election *The Guardian* predicted that immigration would once again be an important factor in the election, particularly in the West Midlands and London.<sup>137</sup> Although the impact of immigration on the outcome of the 1970 election has been contested,<sup>138</sup> there is clear evidence to suggest it had a discernable impact. Spencer for instance has argued that the Conservative Party's pledge to end any future large-scale immigration contributed to the party's success in 1970, particularly in the West Midlands.<sup>139</sup> Sagar too has argued that Powell's intervention in 1968 reinforced in the minds of voters that it was the Conservative Party who understood public attitudes on immigration.<sup>140</sup> Equally, both Studlar and Miller have demonstrated that the Conservative Party's perceived tougher stance on immigration, due largely to the anti-immigrant rhetoric

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<sup>136</sup> 'Varied reactions on race', *The Times*, 20 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 22/03/2018).

<sup>137</sup> 'Whose guard at the door?' Malcolm Dean on the immigration issue', *The Guardian*, 5 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 03/04/2018).

<sup>138</sup> See for example David Butler and Michael Pinto-Duschinsky, *The British General Election of 1970* (London: Macmillan, 1971), pp. 405-407 and Nicholas Deakin and Jenny Bourne, 'Powell, the Minorities and the 1970 Election', *The Political Quarterly* 41, 4 (1970).

<sup>139</sup> Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939*, p. 143.

<sup>140</sup> Shamit Sagar, 'Immigration and the Politics of Public Opinion', *The Political Quarterly* 74, 1 (2003), p. 179

of Powell, had a direct impact on Labour's defeat in 1970.<sup>141</sup> Powell spoke frequently about immigration during the campaign. In one election address in Wolverhampton he described Commonwealth immigration as 'the greatest danger facing Britain' and demanded an immediate halt to any further immigration.<sup>142</sup> Continuing with this theme at a later address in Birmingham, Powell reiterated that the nation was under threat from 'the enemy within'.<sup>143</sup> Incensed by Powell's emotive rhetoric Tony Benn launched a bitter attack on the Conservative MP during an election address in London in which he suggested that the flag over Wolverhampton was 'beginning to look like the one fluttered over Dachau and Belsen.' Heath's perceived refusal to publically condemn Powell led Benn to further declare 'Enoch Powell has emerged as the real leader of the Conservative Party...The final proof of Powell's power is that Heath dare not attack him publicly even when he says things that disgust decent Conservatives.'<sup>144</sup> Benn's virulent attack drew a strong critique from Heath for its extremism and infuriated Wilson, who felt it had completely undermined Labour's decision not to play up to Powell during the campaign.<sup>145</sup> Benn's attack was also at odds with the large public support for the Conservative MP and his views, which was confirmed only days later when Powell's eleventh-hour endorsement of Heath and the Conservatives led to an increase in public support for the party. Whilst he had been highly critical of Heath and the party's policies after his dismissal from the front bench, he urged the public to vote for them during a speech just days before the election. The shift in public support for the Conservative Party which followed this speech has been used to illustrate the centrality of Powell and his views on immigration to their unexpected victory in June 1970.<sup>146</sup> Studlar for instance suggests that Powell succeeded in overshadowing in the public mind events such as

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<sup>141</sup> Donley Studlar, 'Policy voting in Britain: The Coloured Immigration Issue in the 1964, 1966 and 1970 General Elections', *The American Political Science Review* 72, 1 (1978), pp. 63-64; W. Miller, 'What was the profit in following the crowd? The effectiveness of party strategies on immigration and devolution', *British Journal of Political Science* 10, 1 (1980), pp. 22-27.

<sup>142</sup> 'Flood of mail for Powell', *The Guardian*, 2 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 03/04/2018).

<sup>143</sup> 'Conservative anger with Powell over rift on immigrants', *The Times*, 15 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 03/04/2018).

<sup>144</sup> "'Belsen flag' jibe by Benn at Powell", *The Daily Telegraph*, 4 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 22/03/2018)

<sup>145</sup> Howard, *The Crossman Diaries*, p. 724.

<sup>146</sup> Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 191.

the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and was able instead to associate the Conservative Party with more restrictive policies. Although Powell did not create the antipathy towards immigrants 'what he did was to channel this hostility into votes for the Conservative Party in 1970.'<sup>147</sup> Thus, much like 1964 and unlike in 1966, voters perceived a marked difference in the policies of Labour and Conservatives on immigration by 1970. As a result of this issue alone, Studlar estimates the total net increment to the Conservatives was 6.7%.<sup>148</sup>

As in previous elections, the immigration issue resonated most strongly in the West Midlands and Greater London. Labour's markedly better performance in these two regions in 1966 appeared to have been reversed by 1970. Using the comparison of election results in 1964 and 1966 for constituencies where the Labour Party identified immigration as being electorally significant, together with the results of the 1970 election, it is clear to see that Labour's performance in these constituencies in 1970 was far weaker than it had been in 1966. Whilst Labour had gained six seats and increased its majority in 28 of the 37 constituencies listed in the West Midlands and Greater London in 1966, by 1970 they had lost four of these seats and reduced their majorities in 27 of the other constituencies.<sup>149</sup> Once again, immigration appeared to have depleted the Labour vote in these key regions and in the process shaped the outcome of the election. *The Guardian's* Malcolm Dean credited Powell with single-handedly resuscitating the Conservatives in the West Midlands by making race a key election issue.<sup>150</sup> Certainly, the results in the region demonstrated the pervasiveness of 'Powellism.' In a surprising defeat, Labour Minister for the Arts, Jennie Lee, lost her seat at Cannock, where she was defending an 11,000 vote majority, to Conservative candidate Patrick Cormack. Speaking after the result Lee attributed her defeat to Powell and immigration. 'I am in the Powell Belt and I have no doubt that Mr Powell's speeches about what he claims to be the effects of

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<sup>147</sup> Studlar, 'Policy voting in Britain', p. 62.

<sup>148</sup> Studlar, 'Policy voting in Britain', p. 61.

<sup>149</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Research Series (LPRS), RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee - *The 1966 General Election*, table 6a; 'Final results of general election', *The Guardian*, 20 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 23/03/2018).

<sup>150</sup> 'Tonic for W Midland Tories', *The Guardian*, 18 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 23/03/2018).

immigration in this area was a decisive factor in my result.’<sup>151</sup> The Conservatives also gained Birmingham Perry Barr and Oldbury where constituency surveys before the election revealed support for the Conservative Party had increased following Powell’s speeches on immigration.<sup>152</sup> In other West Midland constituencies where Powell visited during the course of the election campaign, such as Birmingham Selly Oak and Brierley Hill, his presence was considered to have helped increase the majorities of the Conservative candidates.<sup>153</sup> Powell’s visit to Birmingham Yardley was also viewed as influential in helping the Tories to capture the seat from Labour.<sup>154</sup> In his own constituency of Wolverhampton South West Powell’s majority more than doubled, whilst in the neighbouring Wolverhampton North East Labour’s Renee Short managed to retain her seat but with a massively reduced majority, again attributed to the impact of Powell. In Greater London too immigration proved problematic. Prior to the election it was flagged as an issue which could potentially affect Labour in the region, particularly in its marginal seats.<sup>155</sup> Certainly, immigration was a feature in some election campaigns and in the case of Battersea South, Deptford and Southall the presence of National Front candidates reduced Labour’s majority in all three constituencies. Equally, in Islington East although Labour retained the seat, the Conservative candidates’ strong support for Powell was considered to have helped increase their share of the vote.<sup>156</sup> In another shock result, Clapham’s West Indian born Labour candidate Dr David Pitt was defeated with a 10.2% swing against Labour in a result where race was considered to be the key issue. Therefore, as these examples illustrate the consensus on immigration had

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<sup>151</sup> ‘Powell is blamed by Miss Lee’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 23/03/2018)

<sup>152</sup> ‘Tonic for W Midland Tories’, *The Guardian*, 18 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 22/03/2018).

<sup>153</sup> ‘Varied reactions on race’, *The Times*, 20 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 22/03/2018).

<sup>154</sup> ‘Powell was vote winner’, *The Guardian*, 20 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 23/03/2018).

<sup>155</sup> ‘Whose guard at the door?’ Malcolm Dean on the immigration issue’, *The Guardian*, 5 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 03/04/2018); ‘Greater London Sensitive marginals’, *The Guardian*, June 18 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 03/04/2018).

<sup>156</sup> ‘Varied reactions on race’, *The Times*, 20 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 22/03/2018).

well and truly collapsed by 1970, taking with it Labour's hopes of neutralising Commonwealth immigration as an electoral issue.

## Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated the importance of regional influences in shaping the Labour Party's national policy on immigration restrictions after 1964. In line with the public opinion approach, it has reiterated the importance of this in providing the impetus for Labour's decision to extend immigration controls. However, it has refined this argument by demonstrating that it was illiberal public opinion emanating specifically from the West Midlands and Greater London, where immigration resonated most strongly and posed the biggest electoral threat, which influenced this decision. The exploitation of immigration across these two regions in the 1964 election, together with the shock defeat at the Leyton by-election because of immigration, prompted the party to review its qualified endorsement of restrictions. Although immigration may not have been accountable for the direct loss of many seats in 1964, political responsiveness to immigration, as Studlar argues, is not necessarily dictated by its tangible consequences but rather by fear of the potential electoral losses it could inflict.<sup>157</sup> Whilst the party's previous emphasis on outlawing racial discrimination in public places and maintaining its commitment to the 'Brotherhood of man' to justify their stance on controls may have appealed to some middle-class voters, it certainly had little sway with the 'hard-headed 'economic man' of the working class.'<sup>158</sup> Thus, a realisation that this position was alienating their traditional voters in electorally pivotal regions led the Labour Party to converge their immigration policy more closely with the Conservative Party in order to eliminate it as an electoral issue. It is clear, therefore, that both the 1965 White Paper on Immigration and the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act were the product of an electorally pragmatic immigration policy adopted by Wilson to prevent losing vital support in the West Midlands and Greater London.

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<sup>157</sup> Donley T Studlar, 'Elite responsiveness or elite autonomy: British immigration policy reconsidered', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 3, 2 (1980), p. 217.

<sup>158</sup> Reeves, *British racial discourse*, p. 94.

Nonetheless, the initial success of Labour's plan to neutralise immigration as an electoral issue by creating a political consensus with the Conservative Party was short-lived. By 1968 the consensus had collapsed. Despite the introduction of tighter immigration restrictions than ever before in March 1968, the announcement of a more comprehensive Race Relations Act shortly afterwards led to a public backlash, instigated by Enoch Powell. Viewed as an infringement of personal freedom and evidence of the prioritisation of immigrant rights, Powell used the experiences of his own West Midland constituents to cultivate the image of race relations legislation as a threat to British values and the British way of life. In moving the parameters of policy discussion away from controls and towards halting immigration and initiating repatriation Powell succeeded in undermining the political consensus on immigration, as these were policies which the Labour Party simply could not and would not engage with. Wilson had gone as far as he was prepared to go in terms of restrictions and the endorsement of such policies would have evoked strong criticisms both inside and outside the party. Moreover, it would have undermined the efforts being made to secure the support of immigrant voters, which was becoming increasingly important by this time. Labour's subsequent refusal to entertain the possibility of any further action, either through controls or repatriation, underlined that there was a limit to how far they would go to appease anti-immigrant opinion. After 1968 this limit had been reached as the immigration debate shifted too far to the right for the Labour Party to continue to engage with. Thus, by reiterating that the rate of immigration was under 'firm control' and instead emphasising the need to integrate immigrants already in Britain,<sup>159</sup> Labour started to adopt a more inclusive view of public opinion which acknowledged Commonwealth immigrants as a valued and expanding component of the electorate which could be harnessed to the party's electoral advantage. Consequently, by the close of the decade Labour's policies on Commonwealth immigration controls were once again firmly perceived by the public to be more socially liberal than the Conservatives.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Manifesto, 'Now Britain's Strong – Let's Make it Great to Live In', 1970.

<sup>160</sup> According to Butler and Stokes by the summer of 1970, 57% of voters thought the Conservatives were more likely to 'keep immigrants out' versus just 4% who thought Labour. 33% said there was no difference between the two and 6% said they did not know. Butler and Stokes, *Political change in Britain*, p. 306.

Due to Labour's inability to de-politicise immigration it re-emerged as a salient electoral issue in the 1970 general election. Buoyed by the success of the anti-immigrant rhetoric of Enoch Powell; the perception of the Conservative Party as being 'tough' on immigration contributed to their shock victory at the election. Crucially, this chapter has shown that as in 1964, the electoral impact of the immigration issue in 1970 was felt most strongly in the West Midlands and Greater London, where the Labour Party once again faced an electoral backlash for their refusal to capitulate to demands from white working class voters for further controls.

### **Chapter Three: Race relations legislation and housing – a two-fold approach 1958-1968**

Alongside the strengthening of immigration controls in 1965 and 1968, the 1964-1970 Labour governments were responsible for introducing Britain's first and second Race Relations Acts in the same years. The Acts outlawed aspects of racial discrimination and have contributed to the view of the Wilson governments as socially liberal administrations committed to the expansion of civil liberties. Together, restrictions and race relations legislation formed the basis of Labour's dual strategy on immigration. Whilst the previous chapters considered influences on and responses to the party's evolving policy on immigration restrictions, the next two chapters will address the development of the party's race relations policy in relation to housing and employment, where racial discrimination was most prevalent. This chapter will focus on housing with specific reference to the interplay between Labour's race relations and general housing policies during the period 1958-1968. In contrast to existing literature which tends to evaluate Labour's commitment to challenging racial discrimination solely through the lens of race relations legislation, the chapter will argue that Labour adopted a two-fold approach which combined introducing limited anti-discrimination legislation with an alternative means of tackling racial discrimination through general housing policy in voluntary co-operation with local authorities. This argument is constructed in response to several inter-related research questions. Firstly, the chapter analyses the extent to which the two-fold policy approach implemented by the 1964-1970 Labour government represented continuity or a break with previous party policy regarding racial discrimination in housing? In addition to this, the chapter scrutinises why, and in what ways, the two-fold policy approach's emphasis on voluntary over legislative methods of addressing racial discrimination in housing shifted over time? Finally, the chapter analyses how far the Labour governments eventual decision to extend race relations legislation to housing in 1968 represented an abandonment or recalibration of the two-fold policy approach?

The introduction of the 1965 Race Relations Act was a landmark moment, legislating against racial discrimination in Britain for the first time by prohibiting both



incitement to racial hatred and racial discrimination in public places. Nevertheless, the Act's failure to cover the crucial areas of housing and employment, where racial discrimination was most prevalent, has contributed to debate as to whether the Labour government was genuinely committed to challenging racial discrimination or was merely trying to preserve its faltering liberal image in the wake of implementing tighter immigration controls in their White Paper on immigration.<sup>1</sup> Thus, whilst to some historians the introduction of the 1965 Race Relations Act has contributed to the view that this was a socially liberal government others have contested this interpretation by highlighting the limited nature of the Act and the government's perceived reluctance to extend the scope of legislation.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the subsequent extension of legislation to cover both housing and employment in the 1968 Race Relations Act has been viewed in two ways. On the one hand, it has been presented by scholars such as Kathleen Paul and Clive Ponting as a further attempt to assuage Labour's conscience as it introduced additional restrictions.<sup>3</sup> Alternatively, it has been viewed as a product of concerted campaigning by socially liberal Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, to extend legislation to these areas on the basis of growing evidence of continued discrimination in both housing and employment produced by the race relations bodies established through the first Act. Rose, for instance, has argued that Jenkins' commitment to civil liberties led him to pursue an extension of legislation from the outset of his Home Secretary-ship.<sup>4</sup> Saggar also credits Jenkins with initiating the 1968 Act, stating his 'top priority was the successful adoption of a second Act to encompass both the employment and housing markets.'<sup>5</sup> Similar arguments too have been put forward by both Bleich and

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<sup>1</sup> An overview of this debate is provided by Gavin Schaffer, 'Legislating against Hatred: Meaning and Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25, 2 (2014), pp. 255-257.

<sup>2</sup> See introduction chapter for an overview of this debate.

<sup>3</sup> See for example Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain Race and Citizenship in the Post-war Era*, (London: Cornell University Press, 1997), p. 176 and Clive Ponting, *Breach of Promise – Labour in Power 1964-1970* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), pp. 332-333

<sup>4</sup> E.J.B. Rose and associates, *Colour & Citizenship – A Report on British Race Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 513-515.

<sup>5</sup> Shamit Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', *Contemporary British History*, 7, 2 (1993), p. 267.

Hampshire.<sup>6</sup> However, what has been overlooked within existing evaluations of Labour's race relations policies is whether alternative means of addressing racial discrimination outside of legislative action were pursued. Thus, whilst this chapter agrees with the view that the Labour Party was committed to challenging racial discrimination and reaffirms the importance of Roy Jenkins in initiating the eventual extension of legislation, it will demonstrate that the development of the party's race relations policy in the field of housing was a far more complex and multifaceted process than has hitherto been acknowledged. It will be shown that for the majority of the period under consideration, Labour did not intend to deal with racial discrimination in housing through legislation. Instead, the highly localised nature of racial discrimination in housing led Labour to target the issue at its perceived source through the party's wider housing policy and by enlisting the voluntary co-operation of local authorities in the affected areas, a policy approach which was established in Labour Party thinking by the mid-1950s.

In this sense the chapter challenges the underlying assumption of existing research on the Labour Party's race relations policy in this period that housing and employment were inextricably linked by arguing that they were treated as two distinct issues by Labour and should be viewed as such, hence their separation into two chapters within this thesis. Furthermore, by measuring Labour's commitment to tackling racial discrimination solely through the lens of the legislative process, existing analysis of Labour's race relations strategy has been somewhat one-dimensional and has overlooked the alternative policy approaches utilised by the party. In particular, the continuity in the approaches of Gaitskell and Wilson has not been acknowledged. In contrast, this chapter looks beyond the scope and content of the legislation itself to argue that Wilson, continuing with his predecessor's commitment to limited legislation alongside tackling racial discrimination through wider housing policy,<sup>7</sup> pursued a two-fold approach to race relations in housing that

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<sup>6</sup> Erik Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France – Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 85; James Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', in Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006), pp. 322-325.

<sup>7</sup> LHASC, Labour Party International Department (LPID), Box 15, LP/CSC/57/61, Statement issued by the NEC on Racial Discrimination, 26 September 1958.

married social liberal principle with pragmatism. He took a principled stand against the expression of racially discriminatory views by legislating against incitement to racial hatred and racial discrimination in public places in 1965 whilst promoting voluntary co-operation between government departments and local authorities as crucial to challenging the wider problems of discrimination in housing.<sup>8</sup> In part, the adoption of a voluntary approach reflected the Labour Party's objection to enforcing legislation that would overrule the responsibilities of democratically elected local authorities to allocate housing. As well as breaching local authority autonomy, the inclusion of housing would have antagonised an already racialised public opinion in the areas most affected by housing shortages by reinforcing the views of many voters that immigrants were being given preferential treatment. Encroaching in this area would have been counter-productive for the party by risking antagonising the very voters they had been trying to placate with tighter immigration restrictions. More importantly, however, the party leadership did not think that the issue could be resolved through legislation alone. Racial discrimination in housing was interpreted as forming part of a wider set of exploitative practices in the housing sector facilitated by the Conservative government's deregulation of the housing market. As such, the solution to easing racial discrimination in this area lay in addressing it at its perceived source by reducing competition for housing through tighter regulation of the housing market and increased house building, whilst encouraging local authorities in the affected areas to operate fair and non-discriminatory housing policies. Therefore, contrary to the existing narrative, the chapter concludes that the failure of the two-fold approach to ease racial discrimination in housing was pivotal in prompting a shift in Labour's approach towards legislative action. This combined with a growing body of evidence detailing the scale of discrimination in the housing sector to strengthen Jenkins' case for extending the 1965 Race Relations Act, leading to the introduction of the 1968 Race Relations Act.

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<sup>8</sup> *HC Deb*, 23 March 1965, Vol 709, Cols 378-453.

## Racial discrimination and housing – the formulation of Labour’s approach

Housing was, as noted in the previous chapter, a source of immense tension and a major contributing factor to the manifestation of poor race relations between white and immigrant communities in some regions in this period. Housing shortages were a long-standing problem in Britain which had been worsened by the impact of the Second World War. The funnelling of resources into the war effort meant housing was neglected during the course of the war with fewer than 200,000 houses being completed between 1939 and 1945. In addition, four million homes were damaged and a further 450,000 destroyed completely, meaning a quarter of all housing in Britain had been affected in some way by the war.<sup>9</sup> The incoming post-war Labour government clearly faced an enormous task. Despite some progress being made under the Attlee administration, deteriorating housing conditions and severe shortages remained when Labour left office in 1951. Increasing public concern over housing made it a key policy priority for both Labour and the Conservatives respectively. As Ponting observes, the Conservatives’ pledge during the 1951 general election campaign to build 300,000 homes a year was immensely popular with the electorate and he argues that their subsequent achievement of that target contributed to their victory at the 1955 general election.<sup>10</sup>

After 1955, however, the Conservative government shifted emphasis away from public housing towards private house building and by 1959 house completions in the public sector had fallen by 30%.<sup>11</sup> As Jones suggests, the Conservative government’s successful housing record between 1951-1955 enabled them ‘to take more radical steps to limit state involvement in the provision of housing, ultimately returning the sector to its pre-war model of strictly limited state intervention’, something they had been keen to do for some time.<sup>12</sup> Alongside a focus on private rather than public housing the liberalisation of rent control was also seen as central to achieving this

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Malpass, *Housing and the Welfare State – The Development of Housing Policy in Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 120.

<sup>11</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 120.

<sup>12</sup> Harriet Jones, “This is magnificent!': 300,000 houses a year and the Tory revival after 1945', *Contemporary British History*, 14, 1 (2000), p. 118.

vision. Consequently, the Conservative government introduced the 1957 Rent Act, which controversially removed rent control entirely from unfurnished accommodation rated at more than £40. For accommodation rated below this level rent increases were limited to twice the gross annual value except in cases where a change of tenancy occurred and this accommodation then too became entirely decontrolled.<sup>13</sup> What followed was a sharp rise in both rents and house prices, as exploitative landlords sought to capitalise on the relaxation of rent controls by forcing out longstanding tenants whilst property prices soared as a result of increased demand to buy in order to escape inflated rents. Inevitably, the effects of the worsening housing situation were felt most strongly in areas where large Commonwealth immigrant populations had begun to settle and competition for housing was at its highest; namely the West Midlands and Greater London. Though employment opportunities for migrants may have been abundant in both regions, they were also affected by severe housing shortages. Whilst these problems were not precipitated by the arrival of growing numbers of Commonwealth immigrants, their concentration in regions where shortages were most acute exacerbated the situation. Pressure on housing in London specifically was emphasised during a parliamentary debate on the issue in 1957 when a number of Greater London Labour MPs spoke about the extent of overcrowding and housing shortages in their constituencies, which they alleged the 1957 Rent Act had worsened. Labour MP for Islington South West, Albert Evans, criticised government inaction and appealed to the Minister of Housing and Local Government to develop a strategy to help local authorities cope with these issues. Eric Fletcher, MP for neighbouring Islington East, also made a plea for action, warning that overcrowding was the cause of colour prejudice in his constituency.<sup>14</sup>

The Conservative government's housing policy was condemned by Gaitskell who made a clear connection between the decontrol of rents in 1957 and the further

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<sup>13</sup> John Davis, 'Rents and Race in 1960s London: New Light on Rachmanism', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12, 1 (2001), p. 75.

<sup>14</sup> *HC Deb*, 22 November 1957, vol 578, cols 743-776.

deterioration of housing problems and tensions surrounding immigration.<sup>15</sup> Difficulty obtaining accommodation was, as Davis suggests, the biggest challenge facing new arrivals. Immigrants were particularly vulnerable to exploitation in the private rental sector due to their inability to secure local authority accommodation as a result of residential qualifications which they did not meet. 'Discrimination in the rental market was endemic' and immigrants were 'the least secure players in an increasingly insecure rental market.'<sup>16</sup> Consequently, this led to a rise in multi-occupancy houses in areas where immigrants congregated leading to a deterioration of already poor quality housing. As a result they were often forced to live in very poor quality accommodation whilst being charged exorbitant rents. The activities of Peter Rachman, a London-based Polish refugee who made his fortune by buying and renting properties in areas with deteriorating housing conditions, dubbed 'twilight-zones', later became synonymous with exploitative landlordism. Rachman was renowned for rent-racking and the use of intimidation in order to remove rent-controlled tenants.<sup>17</sup> The practice of 'Rachmanism' did not affect immigrants exclusively and often white residents were victims too. As mentioned in the previous chapter for example, the South Paddington Labour Party attributed the growth of 'anti-colour feeling' in the area primarily to the actions of immigrant landlords forcing out sitting white tenants then proceeding to overcrowd the houses with immigrants.<sup>18</sup> This view was reiterated by a number of Labour MPs during the parliamentary debate on housing in London in November 1957 where it was contended that the exploitative practices of some black landlords was increasing racial tensions.<sup>19</sup> Nonetheless, the actions of immigrant landlords must be considered in the context of the racial discrimination which operated throughout the housing sector. As a result of their inability to secure accommodation some arrivals from the New Commonwealth worked together, pooling their savings to raise enough money for co-ownership of a house. Once secured, existing non-immigrant

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<sup>15</sup> *HC Deb*, 16 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819.

<sup>16</sup> Davis, 'Rents and Race in 1960s London: New Light on Rachmanism', pp. 78-79.

<sup>17</sup> Davis, 'Rents and Race in 1960s London: New Light on Rachmanism', p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> See Chapter Two. LHASC, LPRD, box 34, LP/RD/34/2, Letter from M Haston, South Paddington Labour Party, 14 February 1957.

<sup>19</sup> See for example contributions of Albert Evans and Ben Parkin. *HC Deb*, 22 November 1957, vol 578, cols 743-776.

tenants would be removed and rooms would then be let to relations, friends and other newcomers, with the money raised through letting the rooms then being used to acquire other properties.<sup>20</sup> Given the evident lack of alternative options for immigrants due to discrimination in housing, it is understandable that they adopted this collective approach. However, it further entrenched racial segregation and meant that immigrants were often blamed by white residents for overcrowding and increased rents. The deterioration of the housing situation in these regions and the rise in racial tensions that followed eventually came to a head in the summer of 1958 with the explosion of race conflicts in Nottingham and Notting Hill.

Whilst tensions had been growing between immigrant and white communities in some areas throughout the decade, often linked to housing, the events at Nottingham and Notting Hill convinced the Labour Party of the need to clarify its position on racial discrimination by issuing a statement. The statement reiterated Gaitskell's belief that the Conservatives' housing policies had played a major role in creating the circumstances which enabled racial discrimination and tensions to flourish. As well as committing the next Labour government to legislate against racial discrimination in public places, the statement issued by the party's NEC also suggested that a change to existing housing policy was essential if racial discrimination was to be tackled successfully. 'To meet the challenge of racialism in this country and to develop a genuine sense of racial equality' it read 'the next Labour Government will therefore... by its housing policy reduce pressure on accommodation.'<sup>21</sup> Exactly how Labour's housing policy intended to reduce the effects of competition was outlined more clearly the following year in the party's election manifesto which pledged firstly to return security of tenure to tenants by repealing the Rent Act. This was accompanied by a promise to increase the building of public housing which had been 'slashed' by the Tory government. Finally, more focus was to be put on slum clearance.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, it became evident that Labour

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<sup>20</sup> Ron Ramdin, *The Making of the Black Working Class in Britain* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1987), p. 194.

<sup>21</sup> LHASC, Labour Party International Department (LPID), Box 15, LP/CSC/57/61, Statement issued by the NEC on Racial Discrimination, 26 September 1958.

<sup>22</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Manifesto, 'Britain belongs to you', 1959.

was seeking to combat racial discrimination in housing through general housing policy and in voluntary co-operation with local authorities.

The notion of addressing racial discrimination in housing through general housing policy and voluntary methods as opposed to anti-discrimination legislation was not a new idea but instead reflected a policy approach which had been developing in the party for more than a decade. As early as 1948, when the possibility of introducing legislation to challenge racial discrimination in housing was first considered, it was rejected by the Attlee government.<sup>23</sup> A further attempt by backbench Labour MP Reginald Sorensen in 1950 to introduce a Colour Bar Bill making racial discrimination an offence was treated with a similar lack of enthusiasm by the Labour government who felt legislation designed to outlaw discrimination in aspects of housing and employment was both 'undesirable and impracticable.'<sup>24</sup> When the issue was next considered in 1954 by the Labour Party NEC's Commonwealth sub-committee, tightly circumscribed anti-discrimination legislation was supported in line with the recommendations of a report by Social Anthropologist Dr Kenneth Little. In his report, Little suggested that though there was a good case for 'colour bar legislation' the main aim of legislation should be 'as a means of stirring the national conscience and of creating a new standard of public behaviour in relation to coloured people.' Little was clear however that whilst local authorities should be advised on matters relating to integration 'nothing should be done to diminish the responsibility of local or municipal authorities for the work which is to be done in their districts...'<sup>25</sup> Effectively, housing and integration were to remain under local rather than national control. Similar suggestions were made the following year when the matter of racial discrimination was considered by John Hatch in the party's Research Department. Hatch put forward a number of suggestions which once again centred on voluntary measures over wide-reaching legislation. Potential actions included talks with the Jamaican government to consider problems arising from immigration, discussions

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<sup>23</sup> TNA: 'A report to sub-committee appointed to examine the possibility of legislating against restrictive covenants in leases', 12 October 1948, PRO HO344/11.

<sup>24</sup> TNA: 'The Colour Bar Bill', 31 March 1951, PRO HO45/25245.

<sup>25</sup> LHASC, NEC Minutes January-February 1954, 'Colour Bar Legislation', Commonwealth Sub-committee of the NEC.



with the TUC, and a conference between local authorities and 'coloured representatives' to discuss problems.<sup>26</sup> Even some of the strongest Labour advocates of anti-discrimination legislation made the case that it should be limited to specific areas. During one of his nine attempts to introduce a PMB to make discrimination against colour, race and religion illegal, Labour MP for Eton and Slough, Fenner Brockway, conceded in 1956:

*'I recognise that there must be a limitation of the powers of legislation. Often acts of discrimination are due to prejudice, to ignorance or to irrational repulsion, and those can be removed only by education or experience. More often they are due to social and economic conditions and fears: to housing overcrowding, concern about the under-cutting of standards if unemployment comes. Those can be removed only by social and economic solutions.'*<sup>27</sup>

Legislation, therefore, was not seen as an all encompassing solution to the various strands of discrimination, but was instead viewed as one element within a much wider policy approach to race relations. The eventual publication of the Labour Party's statement of policy on racial discrimination following the race riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958 closely mirrored this belief, combining limited legislation with a targeted housing plan and voluntary methods of easing discrimination in housing. Thus, by the late 1950s a two-fold policy approach to race relations had been adopted by the Labour Party as the best means of reducing discrimination in this area.

Conversely, the Conservative government embraced a different approach. They began to look towards restricting the entry of Commonwealth immigrants as the solution to rising racial tensions following the incidents in Nottingham and Notting Hill. This vision came to fruition in 1962 with the introduction of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act which limited the entry of Commonwealth citizens to Britain for the

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<sup>26</sup> LHASC, NEC Minutes March-April 1955, 'Problems of Colour Prejudice in Britain', Commonwealth Sub-Committee of the NEC, 1 March 1955.

<sup>27</sup> *HC Deb*, 12 June 1956, Vol 554, Cols 247-250.

first time. The ensuing conflict between the two parties over the Act further demonstrated Labour's conviction that housing lay at the crux of easing racial tensions. Labour criticised the Conservatives' failure to recognise the link between the appalling housing situation and increasingly poor race relations. Objecting to the government's use of controls to resolve racial problems Labour's Patrick Gordon Walker, MP for Smethwick, outlined his party's position:

*'Of course, there is a real problem, a problem of social relations, housing, and overcrowding, which produces racial tension...The Government are to blame for this situation. The Government have totally failed to relate the increase in the number of jobs to housing. They have totally failed to disperse industry. They have contributed to homelessness and overcrowding by their Rent Act and by cutting back local authority house building. We must get the problem in perspective. It is a very grave problem, but it occurs only in relatively small areas and the Bill is quite irrelevant to the problem; it will do nothing whatever to remedy it...A real drive now to start local authority building again and to disperse industry would have a relatively quick effect on this problem and much of the present tension might go rather quickly.'*<sup>28</sup>

As well as underlining Labour's conviction that racial discrimination could be eased through general policy, Gordon Walker's response emphasised the Labour Party's belief that racial tensions required local solutions. Moreover, the rhetoric used implied that a voluntary approach to empower local authorities in the relatively small number of affected areas to deal with the problems of racial discrimination by increasing house building would be preferable. The need for more public housing in areas where shortages were rife and immigrant populations at their highest was reiterated by Labour MP for Birmingham Small Heath, Denis Howell. He accused the government of aggravating the housing situation through its policies and suggested that if they wanted to remove a cause of friction in his region they would 'ginger up the Ministry of Housing and Local Government for the provision of housing, not simply for immigrants but for Birmingham people.'<sup>29</sup> Howell's sentiments reflected

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<sup>28</sup> *HC Deb*, 16 Nov 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819.

<sup>29</sup> *HC Deb*, 16 Nov 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819.

Labour's view that a general increase in house building was the most effective way of easing tensions and reducing racial discrimination in housing. In rounding up the debate for the opposition, Labour leader, Hugh Gaitskell, reaffirmed the view that whilst racial tensions did exist, the approach put forward in the Bill would do nothing to remedy them. He urged the government to deal with racial discrimination through 'building more houses and enforcing laws against overcrowding, by using every educational means at their disposal to create tolerance and mutual understanding, and by emphasising to our own people the value of these immigrants and setting their face firmly against all forms of racial intolerance and discrimination.'<sup>30</sup> In essence, part of the reason the Labour Party objected to the introduction of controls at this time was because they felt it would do nothing to ease racial discrimination and achieve integration. As Labour saw it, the issue was not the presence of immigrants per se but the lack of adequate social provisions, primarily housing, to cope with the influx. Good race relations would therefore not be achieved simply by restricting the numbers coming in to the country. Instead, and in line with the proposals they had been making since the mid 1950s, the Labour Party stressed in their 1962 publication *The Integration of Immigrants* that improved race relations would be achieved only by 'educating whites about the Commonwealth and the realities of immigration; outlawing discrimination against blacks in public places; and alleviating competition for housing in areas of greatest settlement.'<sup>31</sup> Whilst existing literature has acknowledged the Labour Party's commitment to legislating against racial discrimination by 1962, the nuances in Gaitskell's position, including a rejection of the inclusion of housing within future legislation, have not been adequately recognised. Despite this, Gaitskell's policy approach was clear. The next Labour government would introduce limited legislation to challenge racial discrimination in public places accompanied by a targeted housing plan to relieve competition for what was a scarce resource in some areas.

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<sup>30</sup> *HC Deb*, 16 Nov 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819.

<sup>31</sup> Steven Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970 – Labour and cultural change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p. 146.

## **From rhetoric to action – race relations legislation and housing policy under the 1964-1966 Labour government**

The unexpected death of Hugh Gaitskell in early 1963 meant the original architect of Labour's race relations policy would not oversee its implementation. Upon replacing Gaitskell as Labour leader Harold Wilson was quick to re-affirm the party's commitment to challenging racial discrimination, using his first major speech as Labour leader as an opportunity to confirm the party's support for anti-discrimination legislation.<sup>32</sup> As with his predecessor, Wilson continued to promote limited legislation and expanded public investment reinforced by voluntary co-operation with local authorities as the best solutions to escalating racial tensions. The nature of immigrant settlement meant Wilson followed the already established logic of regarding issues such as housing, employment, and education as local in nature and tied to specific areas.<sup>33</sup> In relation to housing, emphasis continued to be placed on aiding the voluntary efforts of local authorities through general housing policy as opposed to wide reaching race relations legislation. This was reflected by the three main policy points outlined by Wilson during a PLP meeting on immigration controls in November 1963, during which the issue of racial discrimination was discussed. Firstly, he declared that racial discrimination should be made illegal. Secondly, that greater help be given in housing and education including 'proper rent control and control of the law.' Finally, he argued for help to be given to local authorities with their efforts, especially in the establishment of working parties.<sup>34</sup> The pledge to introduce limited legislation was confirmed by Wilson in February 1964 following Fenner Brockway's ninth failed attempt to get a Bill against racial incitement and discrimination passed by the Commons.<sup>35</sup> As a result, Labour went to the polls in 1964 with a manifesto which vowed to introduce legislation to outlaw racial discrimination and incitement to racial hatred in public places alongside alternative measures aimed at targeting racial discrimination in housing.

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<sup>32</sup> Schaffer, 'Legislating against Hatred', p. 253.

<sup>33</sup> Dennis Dean, 'The Race Relations Policy of the First Wilson Government', *Twentieth Century British History* 11, 3 (2000), p. 268.

<sup>34</sup> Tony Benn, *Out of the Wilderness Diaries 1963-67* (London: Arrow Books, 1988), p. 76.

<sup>35</sup> *The Times*, 'Wilson Pledge on Racial Bill', 17 February 1964, accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

The manifesto outlined plans to repeal the 1957 Rent Act, accelerate slum clearance in areas with the biggest housing problems and increase house building to around 400,000 a year.<sup>36</sup> This was an ambitious target given that house building had consistently been below 300,000 in the early 1960s, but was indicative of the electoral importance of housing, particularly in the areas with severe housing shortages.<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the growing electoral salience of housing, which opinion polls in the lead up to the election ranked third on a list of voters' priorities behind only the economy and the cost of living,<sup>38</sup> led to it forming a prominent part of Labour's election campaign in 1964. Housing featured heavily in Labour's 'Let's GO' national publicity campaign as well as in the party's election manifesto as they attempted to capitalise on the unpopularity of the Rent Act and the drop off in public sector house building.<sup>39</sup> In addition, by regulating rents in the private and public sectors to make housing more affordable and initiating a large-scale house building drive to relieve shortages, which were most pronounced in regions such as the West Midlands and Greater London with large immigrant populations, Wilson believed the causes of racial discrimination in housing would be greatly eased. The results of the 1964 election saw a very narrow victory for Labour and returned the party to office for the first time in thirteen years. The exploitation of immigration across some regions during the election led Wilson to address the issue almost immediately.<sup>40</sup> In his maiden speech as Prime Minister he denounced Conservative MP Peter Griffiths for the squalid campaign he had led at Smethwick, accusing him of using 'racialist appeals' to gain votes. Further, Wilson declared Griffiths would serve his time as a 'parliamentary leper' until another general election returned him to 'oblivion'.<sup>41</sup> The attack on Griffiths reflected Wilson's personal disdain for racism, particularly the exploitation of racial tensions for electoral gain, and laid a clear marker that such behaviour would not be tolerated. As such, the Labour Party's longstanding pledge

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<sup>36</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Manifesto 'The New Britain', 1964.

<sup>37</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 120.

<sup>38</sup> Glen O'Hara, *From Dreams to Disillusionment – Economic and Social Planning in 1960s Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 137.

<sup>39</sup> LHASC, Un-catalogued 1964 General Election Collection.

<sup>40</sup> See Chapter Two for more information on the exploitation of immigration at the 1964 election.

<sup>41</sup> *HC Deb*, 3 November 1964, Vol 701, Cols 42-183.

to legislate against racial discrimination was acted upon the following year in November 1965 with the introduction of the first Race Relations Act.

The Act represented a landmark moment in Britain's history on race relations and, as promised, delivered on its main objectives of prohibiting racial discrimination in public places and incitement to racial hatred. The Act did not cover housing or employment, which the Home Secretary Frank Soskice admitted were considered by many to be where the worst abuses occurred.<sup>42</sup> In addition, the original provision for criminal proceedings was replaced with conciliation machinery by the time the Bill reached its Third Reading. The limited scope of the 1965 Act has led some to view it as a token gesture which demonstrated Labour's lack of serious commitment to challenging racial discrimination. Miles and Phizacklea for instance have suggested that the Act was merely an attempt to balance out the further tightening of immigration controls the Labour government had implemented only months before.<sup>43</sup> Deakin and Patterson have also criticised Labour's *laissez-faire* and non-differentiatory, or voluntarist, approach to racial discrimination for failing to acknowledge that discrimination against immigrants in housing required specific legislation.<sup>44</sup> Even those who have treated Labour's intentions with more generosity have still suggested that the Act was the product of compromise. Goulbourne, for example, argues that it was 'a step in the right direction' but suggests that Labour always intended to review and extend legislation when the opportunity arose.<sup>45</sup> Bleich attests that the 1965 Act reflected the political bargaining taking place not just between the Labour and Conservative parties but within the Labour Party itself.<sup>46</sup> For example, the shift from criminal sanctions, which had been included in the original terms of the 1965 Bill and the earlier Bills of Reginald Sorensen and Fenner

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<sup>42</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 129/121/27, Memorandum by Frank Soskice, 'Race Relations Bill – Conciliation Machinery', 18 May 1965, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7660124> (accessed 22/3/2017), p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea (eds), *Racism and Political Action in Britain* (London: Routledge, 1979), pp. 24-25.

<sup>44</sup> Nicholas Deakin, *Colour, Citizenship and British Society* (London: Panther Books, 1970), p. 149; Sheila Patterson, *Immigration and Race Relations in Britain 1960-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 207.

<sup>45</sup> Harry Goulbourne, *Race Relations in Britain Since 1945* (London: Palgrave, 1998), p. 102.

<sup>46</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 73.

Brockway, to civil proceedings can be interpreted as a compromise intended to ensure maximum parliamentary support, as the Conservatives made clear they were only willing to support a Bill with conciliatory sanctions.<sup>47</sup> In fact, Labour's Minister for Integration, Maurice Foley, opposed the Labour leadership's support for criminal sanctions and promoted conciliation machinery as the most effective method of dealing with discrimination instead.<sup>48</sup> However, if certain elements of the Bill can rightly be interpreted as the product of compromise with the Tories and Cabinet critics, to attribute the absence of housing and employment from the Bill to political horse trading is to misunderstand Labour's race relations policy as it had evolved since 1958. Rather, as outlined earlier, these areas were never intended to be covered by legislation. From the moment the Labour Party under Gaitskell first declared its commitment to race relations legislation in 1958, this was only ever designed to encompass racial discrimination in public places and incitement to racial hatred. In contrast, discrimination in housing was from the outset identified as an issue which would be dealt with through the party's wider housing policy. There were two main reasons for this.

Firstly, there was a clear reluctance to encroach on the responsibilities of local authorities in the allocation of council housing. When the possibility of including these areas in the legislation was discussed during the Bill's drafting process it was ruled out on the grounds it would be 'objectionable in principle and unacceptable to local authorities that non-elected bodies should be empowered to override the decisions of elected councils in the selection of council tenants.'<sup>49</sup> Similar objections were put forward regarding employment and the role of the TUC.<sup>50</sup> Mindful of their relationships with these bodies, maintaining the autonomy of local councils and trade unions was, therefore, deemed more desirable by the Labour government than exerting what would amount to greater central regulation over the allocation of council housing. Secondly, and more importantly, official Labour policy since 1958

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<sup>47</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 195/25/25, Notebook, 20 May 1965, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D8621262> (accessed 22/3/2017), p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, pp. 52-56.

<sup>49</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 128/39/47, Cabinet Meeting Conclusions, 20 May 1965, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7664406> (accessed 22/3/2017), p. 5.

<sup>50</sup> See Chapter Four.

had consistently maintained that the problems immigrants faced in this area reflected the wider housing problems in Britain and needed to be addressed within the overall context of housing policy. Labour argued that there was no need to legislate against racial discrimination in housing because an extensive house-building programme would reduce the problem by removing the source of the tension in a way which delivered tangible benefits for entire communities, as opposed to taking special measures targeted only at immigrants. This had the perceived benefit of boosting Labour's electoral popularity by addressing Britain's housing shortage whilst easing racial tensions over housing in the process. Moreover, the policy was carefully configured to avoid impinging on the responsibility of local authorities or antagonising white voters. Nonetheless, this approach was not universally agreed upon within Cabinet. Although there was a consensus that racial discrimination should be challenged, the means of doing so were contested. Wilson and Soskice, along with Cabinet Ministers in the interested departments, including Minister of Housing Richard Crossman, Minister of Labour Ray Gunter, and Minister of Technology and General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU), Frank Cousins, supported the two-fold approach of limited legislation combined with voluntary methods in housing and employment. Others were less convinced. During a Cabinet meeting on the 1965 Race Relations Bill Barbara Castle questioned why the proposed legislation would not cover housing and employment when these were the worst affected areas.<sup>51</sup> Equally, Roy Jenkins, who replaced Soskice as Home Secretary in December 1965, was from the outset a strong advocate of wider reaching race relations legislation. Nonetheless, this dissension did not derail the 1965 Race Relations Act which was passed with full Cabinet support.

With the first element in Labour's two-fold approach falling into place through the introduction of the 1965 Race Relations Act, the task of implementing Labour's housing programme fell to Richard Crossman. Crossman was appointed as Minister of Housing and Local Government following the party's election victory in October

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<sup>51</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 195/25/25, Notebook, 20 May 1965, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D8621262> (accessed 22/3/2017), p. 3.



1964 and as an MP for a constituency in the West Midlands, was all too aware of the tensions surrounding immigration and housing. These tensions were laid bare during one of his first ministerial duties on a tour of Birmingham slums. Speaking during this visit the new Housing Minister reiterated Labour's policy objective of challenging racial discrimination through housing policy. 'I do not say that racial problems are something special, but I do say that if you have these kind of conditions and you tolerate them for 30 or 40 years you make racial problems almost insoluble. This undertone of race is far more related to housing conditions than any other single factor. We cannot go on allowing it if we want to handle that further problem.'<sup>52</sup> The message was clear. Unless the housing situation was addressed racial tensions and discrimination would remain. Reflecting further on the issue in his diaries Crossman suggested that in the long-term 'comprehensive urban renewal', meaning slum clearance and redevelopment, was essential. Birmingham, London, Liverpool, Manchester and Glasgow were all identified as the key areas to focus on as these were where the housing situation was at its worst, where Commonwealth immigrants tended to settle and where racial problems existed.<sup>53</sup> Despite housing problems being most acute in areas with large Commonwealth immigrant populations, particularly the West Midlands and Greater London, Crossman was adamant from the outset that there was to be no 'special measures' to assist immigrants as this would only aggravate tensions and expose local authorities to accusations of partiality in favour of immigrants.<sup>54</sup> Instead, he consistently maintained that the only way to deal with the housing problems encountered by immigrants was to overcome the housing shortage as a whole.<sup>55</sup> Although he contended that this meant it was imperative that discrimination against immigrants in the allocation of council housing should be eradicated and that his department would work with local authorities to monitor this, Crossman nonetheless maintained that he would not intervene in the decision making processes of the local

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<sup>52</sup> MRC, 'Crossman: No Delay in Slum Clearance', *Birmingham Post*, 2 November 1964, Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/3/HLG/5/1-8.

<sup>53</sup> Richard Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister Volume One: Minister of Housing 1964-1966* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1975), p. 44.

<sup>54</sup> TNA: Letter from Crossman to Soskice, 30 November 1964, PRO HO376/3.

<sup>55</sup> TNA: Letter from Crossman to Soskice, 30 November 1964, PRO HO376/3; MRC, Opening address to the Institute of Housing Managers Annual Conference, 16 September 1965, Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/4/SPE/1, p. 10.

authorities.<sup>56</sup> Essentially, whilst there was to be enhanced local-central collaboration on the issue of discrimination it was to remain voluntary. Ultimately, this meant local authorities could continue to manage their housing stock as they saw fit.

The new Housing Minister was also quick to turn his attention to one of the party's key election pledges, repealing the Rent Act. From its introduction in 1957 the Labour Party had strongly objected to the Act, which they deemed responsible for the increasing exploitation of tenants and growing racial discrimination in the private rental market. Work on creating a new Rent Act began almost immediately. In December 1964 Crossman began consultations with Sir Milner Holland, who had been appointed by Conservative Housing Minister Keith Joseph to investigate and report on relations between tenants and private landlords in London's private rental market following the Rachman scandal. In July 1965 a new Rent Act was passed, which reversed some of the worst features of the original Act, though not repealing it in its entirety as the manifesto had pledged. The new Act did strengthen security of tenure for tenants in private rentals and introduced the notion of 'regulated tenancies' and 'fair rents' which were to be established by rent officers employed by local councils.<sup>57</sup> Aside from addressing the unfair practices which existed in the private rental sector, the Labour government believed that the best way to ease racial discrimination in housing was quite simply to reduce competition by building more houses. During a parliamentary debate on immigration in March 1965 Herbert Bowden, MP for South Leicester and Chair of the Cabinet Committee on immigration, commented that the government intended to pursue a 'vigorous housing policy directed to the provision of more houses of better quality' to resolve shortages in the areas where housing was needed most.<sup>58</sup> The government's official housing policy was outlined shortly afterwards in November 1965 in the White Paper on Housing, which coincided with the introduction of the first Race Relations Act. Building on Labour's election manifesto it outlined a national housing plan which

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<sup>56</sup> MRC, Opening address to the Institute of Housing Managers Annual Conference, 16 September 1965. Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/4/SPE/1, p. 10.

<sup>57</sup> Peter Kemp, 'The transformation of private renting' in Peter Malpass and Rob Rowlands (eds), *Housing, Markets and Policy* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> *HC Deb*, 23 March 1965, Vol 709, Cols 334-77.

included a commitment to build 500,000 homes a year by 1970, an increase on the manifesto target of 400,000. This was to include both owner-occupied and council houses. According to the White Paper this would be achieved by imposing controls on less essential building to ensure housing was given top priority, together with an increase in land allocation and acquisition to make the necessary land available. In addition, increased subsidies were to be granted to local authorities to help them achieve higher building rates, and industrialised house building techniques were to be employed to meet the target.<sup>59</sup> These new-builds were intended to be prioritised in areas in which immigrants had settled and shortages were most pronounced. Accordingly, the first priority of the housing programme was slum clearance and relieving the shortages in rental accommodation 'especially in areas which attract newcomers including immigrants from the Commonwealth.'<sup>60</sup> Relieving shortages as a whole in these areas would, according to Labour thinking, remove the source of the problem and obviate the need to take any special measures to help immigrants specifically. A Ministry of Housing report on the relationship between housing and immigration issued shortly after the White Paper further reiterated that the long-term answer to the problems of discrimination against immigrants was 'the provision of more houses to be let at reasonable rents.' Once again it was local authorities as opposed to central government which were considered to have 'a major role to play in this.'<sup>61</sup> Evidently, Labour's plan to challenge racial discrimination through its wider housing policy looked to have crystallised by the end of 1965, with both the Rent Act and Housing White Paper being targeted at the perceived source of the problem. However, despite the vigour with which the Labour government's housing plans were launched, the ability of their housing policies to successfully challenge racial discrimination was quickly cast into doubt.

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<sup>59</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 129/123 c-151, Housing Programme 1965-1970: Draft White Paper, 12 November 1965, available at <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-123-c-151.pdf> (accessed 24/3/2017), pp. 8-9.

<sup>60</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 129/123 c-151, 12 November 1965, available at <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-123-c-151.pdf> (accessed 24/3/2017), p. 19.

<sup>61</sup> TNA: 'Housing Aspects of Immigration', PRO HLG118/545.

## **The failure of the grand housing plan**

Pressure on Wilson and the Labour government to deliver on its housing pledges was intense from the outset. Not only was the party's approach to challenging racial discrimination in housing reliant on the success of its housing plans, it was also an electorally crucial issue. As a result of extensive public opinion survey research carried out by the party from 1962 housing was selected as one of the key areas to concentrate on in their 1964 election campaign alongside other issues such as pensions, prices, and the economy. A growing awareness of the importance of effective campaigning led to an increase in expenditure on advertising and public relations, with three times as much being spent trying to project the party's major themes in 1964 than in 1959.<sup>62</sup> Thus, the party had gone to great lengths during the 1964 election campaign to emphasise the existing deficiencies and to raise expectations that it possessed the policy solutions to renew Britain's housing stock. Nevertheless, the promises made by the Labour Party failed to materialise.

In the first instance the Labour government appeared ill-equipped to deal with the task that lay ahead. Crossman, who had no prior experience of housing, arrived at the Ministry and quickly discovered that there was something of a policy planning vacuum. He noted in his diaries that there was 'only one slim series of notes by Michael Stewart' [former shadow Housing Minister] on the Rent Act. 'That's all there is. Everything else has to be thought up on the spot.'<sup>63</sup> Crossman's Parliamentary Private Secretary, Tam Dalyell, reiterated the absence of any formal planning. 'The housing cupboard was bare...all the incoming minister found from the files of Labour Party headquarters at Transport House was one small series of notes by the former Shadow Minister of Housing, Michael Stewart. Precious little work had been done by the party on how to replace the hated Powell Act or the means of redeeming much-

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<sup>62</sup> David Butler and Anthony King, *The British General Election of 1964* (London: Macmillan, 1965), pp. 71-72.

<sup>63</sup> Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, p. 28.

trumpeted electoral promises.<sup>64</sup> Thus, far from having a clear blueprint to follow, Crossman was in fact left to adopt a far more ad hoc approach to achieving Labour's housing objectives. The 1965 Rent Act was illustrative of this. Although the party's election manifesto had boldly claimed that a Labour government would repeal the much hated 1957 Act very little policy development had been done since 1962, when their plan for municipalisation was abandoned,<sup>65</sup> to establish how this would be achieved and what would replace it. As a result although the 1965 Rent Act certainly made improvements to the lives of tenants in rented housing by enhancing their rights, it was not the direct repeal of the 1957 Act which the manifesto had promised. As Child argues, the 1965 Rent Act was more about 're-imposing an amended form of control' within the existing system than it was a complete overhaul of this system itself.<sup>66</sup>

Inadequate planning was not the only obstacle to the achievement of Labour's housing plans as the financial pressures associated with the housing programme proved to be a major stumbling block. From the moment they entered office in October 1964 the Labour government was confronted with a precarious economic situation, facing a far bigger balance of payments deficit than had been anticipated.<sup>67</sup> Indeed upon his arrival Labour's new Chancellor, Callaghan, was greeted with a message from his predecessor, Reginald Maudling, 'Sorry to leave such a mess, old cock'.<sup>68</sup> Maudling's letter set the tone for the financial woes which were to plague the 1964-1970 Labour governments, with Tomlinson describing this entire period as the government 'lurching from crisis to crisis as it grappled with short-term macro-economic problems'.<sup>69</sup> In this context, the scale of Labour's ambitious housing plan became a matter of contention within Cabinet. Nonetheless, Crossman's leverage was strengthened by the support of Wilson who was acutely

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<sup>64</sup> Tam Dalyell, *Dick Crossman – A Portrait* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1989), pp. 114-115.

<sup>65</sup> Phil Child, 'Landlordism, Rent Regulation and the Labour Party in mid-twentieth century Britain, 1950-1964', *Twentieth Century British History* 29, 1 (2018), p. 97.

<sup>66</sup> Child, 'Landlordism, Rent Regulation and the Labour Party', pp. 100-101.

<sup>67</sup> Jim Tomlinson, *The Labour governments 1964-1970 – Economic policy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 49.

<sup>68</sup> Martin Pugh, *Speak for Britain! A New History of the Labour Party* (London: Vintage Books, 2011), p. 333.

<sup>69</sup> Tomlinson, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, p. 49.

aware of the electoral importance of delivering the party's housing promises, particularly as their wafer thin majority after 1964 meant they had to be constantly prepared for another election. So keen was Wilson to make housing one of his government's great achievements that he approved plans for an expanded housing programme after only two months in office, even upping Crossman's initial target of 135,000 council houses in the next financial year to 150,000.<sup>70</sup> However, the financial cost of meeting the house building targets devised by Wilson and Crossman brought them into continual conflict with the Treasury, who felt the scale of the programme was simply not economically viable. Crossman's first major battle with the Treasury over housing came in July 1965 shortly after Callaghan announced public investment cuts of £350 million to counter rumours of imminent devaluation. As a result ministers were asked to present four year plans for their departments, justifying any increases to the basic programmes they had been allocated. Crossman argued for a 20,000 increase in house starts for 1965 and approval for a figure of 500,000 houses a year by 1970. Whilst Crossman recalled that the 'five wise men' of the Treasury agreed in theory to approve the half a million homes a year by 1970, they refused to allow any immediate increase in public sector house building due to the cost.<sup>71</sup> Crossman's belief that housing should be prioritised over other departments irked the Treasury, with Douglas Houghton commenting of the Housing Minister during the meeting 'this fellow saunters into the room giving the impression that we dare not cut him for political reasons.' However, as Crossman himself admitted in his diaries, 'Of course, what Houghton said was the precise truth. I know that the Prime Minister is behind me.'<sup>72</sup> Having the backing of Wilson proved crucial in securing demands which may otherwise not have been afforded to Crossman by the Treasury. Indeed, Wilson's support for him during another fraught meeting on public expenditure helped to ensure that the commitment to building half a million homes a year by 1970 was retained as part of George Brown's National Plan,<sup>73</sup> and the later White Paper on Housing.

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<sup>70</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 121.

<sup>71</sup> Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, p. 267.

<sup>72</sup> Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, p. 268.

<sup>73</sup> Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, p. 282.

The issue of housing was again prominent in the party's *Time for Decision* election manifesto in 1966. Reaffirming Labour's commitment to building 500,000 new homes a year by 1970, the manifesto claimed bad and inadequate housing to be 'the greatest social evil in Britain today.'<sup>74</sup> The party's belief that racial discrimination in housing could be reduced through general housing policy continued to be emphasised as the manifesto pledged to continue to administer realistic immigration controls alongside 'an imaginative and determined programme to ensure racial equality.' This 'imaginative' programme eschewed tackling racial discrimination in housing through legislation and sought to address it through general policy instead. The internal Cabinet dynamic surrounding housing was encapsulated by Crossman in his speech to the 1965 Labour Party conference when he described the policy making process as essentially 'persuading my colleagues to allocate enough money, resources and skilled manpower from the construction industry to do much less than I want but more than some of the others want me to do. That's the old battle for priorities.'<sup>75</sup> By June 1966, and with a much more sizeable majority following Labour's decisive victory at the March general election, housing had fallen behind schedule and there was serious doubt as to whether the target of 500,000 a year could be achieved by 1970.

While there had been some initial success in the field of public housing, which had increased in both 1965 and 1966, this was offset by the failure of the private sector to meet its targets. In order to reach the 500,000 mark and ensure higher completion rates over the next two years Crossman was forced to make the case for an immediate increase to the local authority programme.<sup>76</sup> This would of course require additional funding. Crossman's request to the Treasury to allocate an additional £31 million to increase investment in council house building was inevitably not met with unanimous support. Callaghan in particular objected on the grounds that it was totally at odds with the public expenditure cuts he had proposed. Once

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<sup>74</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Manifesto, 'Time for Decision', 1966.

<sup>75</sup> MRC, Richard Crossman Archive, MSS.154/4/SPE/1.

<sup>76</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 129/125 c-92, Authorisation of immediate increases in the Local Authority Housing Programme, 28 June 1966, available at <http://filestore.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pdfs/small/cab-129-125-c-92.pdf> (accessed 22/3/2017).

again it was Wilson who came to Crossman's aid. 'Before anybody else could weigh in, the Prime Minister backed me to the full.' Wilson was acutely aware that unless public house building could make up for the shortfall in the private sector, 'the whole programme would be in jeopardy.'<sup>77</sup> Thus, with the firm support of the Prime Minister Crossman succeeded in securing the much needed additional funds to bolster the housing programme. Wilson's continued support for the programme despite strong Treasury advice to the contrary underlined the political importance of housing to the Labour government. Not only was increased house building a key election promise, it was also the crucial element in Labour's policy to challenge racial discrimination in housing without the use of legislation. Shortly after winning this Cabinet tussle Crossman was replaced as Minister of Housing by Anthony Greenwood. The arrival of a new Minister did little to improve the fortunes of Labour's housing plans which were by 1967 in rapid decline. Devaluation in November 1967, amid a deepening economic crisis, dealt the final blow to the housing programme. Wilson's previous assurances that nothing would deflect the government from its commitment to housing were seemingly forgotten by January 1968, when the target of half a million homes was abruptly reduced to 335,000 in post-devaluation cuts.<sup>78</sup> The scaling back of the housing programme signalled its final failure. Despite some progress being made, ultimately, the financial constraints placed on the Labour government almost from its inception defeated its housing plan, and with it Labour's hope of reducing racial discrimination through its general housing policy. The reduction of the housing programme represented a recalibration of the Labour Party's two-fold approach to challenging racial discrimination in housing, as emphasis began to shift towards extending existing race relations legislation.

### **The 1968 Race Relation Act - an alternative approach**

If the deepening economic crisis had begun to expose the flaws in Labour's two-fold approach, it is crucial to recognise that even if the party's housing plan had not been

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<sup>77</sup> Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister*, p. 556.

<sup>78</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 122.



de-railed by the economic crisis and their targets had been achieved, racial discrimination would have continued as general housing policy alone was not the solution. Labour's approach was predicated on the false assumption that material factors, in this instance housing shortages, were the sole cause of racial discrimination. Accordingly, it was believed that the provision of adequate housing would remove the source of the tension and allow racial harmony to ensue. However, as David Swift has argued, hostility towards Commonwealth immigrants in this period was often a result of cultural differences as opposed to simply material or economic concerns. Through his study of the reception of South Asian immigrants in West Yorkshire during the 1960s and 70s, in an area where there was no competition for jobs or shortage of housing, Swift demonstrates that hostility towards immigrants remained prevalent. This hostility was primarily framed in terms of cultural differences such as religion, hygiene and cooking.<sup>79</sup> This is not to say that housing was not a cause of resentment and discrimination, as in regions such as the West Midlands and Greater London where shortages were most acute and immigrant populations at their biggest, it was undoubtedly a contributing factor. Nonetheless, what Swift's research illuminates is that regardless of whether housing shortages had been resolved or not, racial discrimination would still have existed because it was based on much more than competition for housing alone. Ultimately, Labour's policy of targeting racial discrimination in housing through its general housing policy was destined to fail because it was based on false assumptions about the causes of discrimination.

The realisation that the two-fold approach to reducing racial discrimination in housing was no longer financially viable following devaluation led to a re-working of the party's race relations strategy in favour of extended legislation, as Wilson and other advocates of the two-fold approach began to consider alternative options. The prospect of further race relations legislation had seemed remote after the passage of the 1965 Act. It had been introduced by Soskice as a first and what he hoped would

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<sup>79</sup> David Swift, 'Competition or culture? Anti-immigrant hostility and industrial decline: the case of West Yorkshire, 1962-1981, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, DOI:10.1080/1369183X.2019.1573663 (2019), pp. 8-13.

be a last step in dealing with race relations.<sup>80</sup> However, Roy Jenkins, who replaced Soskice as Home Secretary in December 1965, was immediately keen to move away from a voluntary approach to addressing racial discrimination in housing and employment by bringing these areas within the framework of race relations legislation to ensure a consistent national standard. As such, Jenkins prioritised extending the Race Relations Act to cover housing and employment which he perceived to be the two crucial areas overlooked in 1965.<sup>81</sup> Jenkins' pursuit of an extended Act inevitably brought him into conflict with members of the Cabinet with links to these areas, including Crossman, Gunter and Callaghan, who initially continued to maintain that voluntary methods in these areas were the right approach.<sup>82</sup> Aware that he would have to overcome opponents of extended race relations legislation, Jenkins recognised that in order to advance his case he needed proof that discrimination in housing and employment had not been adequately resolved by the two-fold approach. In order to do so, he worked with the race relations institutions which had been established by the first Act to generate the evidence needed to justify further legislation.<sup>83</sup> Jenkins took steps to ensure that the Race Relations Board (RRB) and the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants (NCCI), both of which had been established by the 1965 Act to work at the periphery to resolve racial discrimination and integrate immigrants 'without ruffling too many native feathers',<sup>84</sup> maximised their potential influence. The appointment of Mark Bonham Carter, a former Liberal MP, as chairman of the RRB helped Jenkins fulfil this aim. Bonham Carter was committed to achieving racial equality and only accepted the chairmanship on the condition that he would be allowed the autonomy to argue for the Act's extension.<sup>85</sup> In undertaking their research the NCCI and RRB also cooperated with a number of other groups, including the Campaign Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), as well as American and Canadian anti-discrimination groups. They used their limited authority to their

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<sup>80</sup> *HC Deb* 16 July 1965, Vol 716, Cols 969-1088.

<sup>81</sup> Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', pp. 265-267.

<sup>82</sup> MRC, 'Crossman may fight Jenkins on race laws', *The Observer*, 18 December 1966, MSS.292B/805.9/1.

<sup>83</sup> Rose, *Colour & Citizenship*, p. 519.

<sup>84</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p.71.

<sup>85</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p.72.

advantage by stressing that the extent of existing problems necessitated the expansion of race relations institutions and their functions.

The publication of a number of studies and reports from 1965 onwards revealed the grave extent of racial discrimination immigrants faced in housing and helped strengthen the campaign for extended legislation by providing quantifiable evidence that the voluntary approach to addressing discrimination was failing. The Milner Holland report in 1965, for instance, was one of the first investigations to reveal the magnitude of the housing crisis in Greater London and its adverse effect on immigrants in particular. In addition, a sample population census collected by the government in April 1966 reiterated the huge disparities between the living conditions of Commonwealth immigrants and non-immigrant groups in London and the West Midlands. Overcrowding remained a major problem. In London, immigrant households were found to be 30% larger than non-immigrant households and in the West Midlands this rose to 57%.<sup>86</sup> Aside from the size of households, the type of accommodation occupied by Commonwealth immigrants also differed. Immigrants continued to be vastly under-represented in local authority housing and over-represented in furnished privately rented accommodation, deemed to be the worst type of housing due to extortionate rates and often poor amenities.<sup>87</sup> Their under-representation in council housing reflected the discriminatory practices of some local authorities who used their powers to restrict immigrant access to housing to manage social tensions. In Birmingham, Rex and Moore observed that although there was no overt reference to immigrant status in the criteria used for the allocation of housing, a five year residential qualification imposed by the council effectively excluded immigrants from being put on the Housing Register and forced them to seek alternative accommodation.<sup>88</sup> This shift towards racial segregation was reinforced by the Ministry of Housing's approval of the Birmingham Corporation Act in 1965. This private Bill drafted by the Birmingham Corporation granted the council powers to

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<sup>86</sup> Deakin, *Colour, Citizenship and British Society*, p. 67.

<sup>87</sup> Only 4.2% of Commonwealth immigrants in London lived in local authority housing, compared to 22.3% of native residents. In the West Midlands these figures were 7.7% versus 39.1%. Deakin, *Colour, Citizenship and British Society*, p. 70.

<sup>88</sup> John Rex and Robert Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict: A Study of Sparkbrook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 24.

enforce the compulsory registration of all multi-occupied houses and required permission to be obtained from the council for a house to be used for multi-occupancy.<sup>89</sup> The Ministry of Housing's report on the Bill stated that these powers were designed 'to prevent undesirable conditions arising in the first instance', thus presenting the Act as a way of countering overcrowding. Under the terms of the Bill the Corporation could refuse an application for multi-occupancy for a number of reasons. Firstly, if the house was either 'unsuitable' for such occupation, in an area where multi-occupation was 'undesirable', or where the person managing the house 'was not a fit and proper person'.<sup>90</sup> The somewhat broad terms of the Act were clearly open to serious abuse and, as Patterson argued, had a further negative effect on immigrant communities.<sup>91</sup> In granting the local authority the power to decide who was fit to be a landlord and designating areas where multi-occupancy was and was not allowed, the Act inevitably opened the door to further discrimination towards immigrants and compounded the racial segregation of these communities.

Similar schemes to the Birmingham Corporation Act were also approved by Crossman for Leeds City Council in 1965 and for Lambeth Borough and Hull County Borough in 1966.<sup>92</sup> The Birmingham Corporation Act, and its equivalent counterparts, laid bare the problems associated with Labour's voluntary approach to challenging racial discrimination in housing. By relying on local authorities to voluntarily implement fair housing policies rather than compelling them to do so, Labour's two-fold approach enabled racially discriminatory practices to go unchecked. There was a growing danger that if legislative action was not taken, a segregated housing system akin to America's ghettos could become entrenched in regions of Britain where Commonwealth immigrants were most concentrated. Segregated residential patterns were already well established in areas where discrimination effectively consigned immigrants to living in 'twilight zones.'

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<sup>89</sup> *Report of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government 1965 and 1966*, Cmnd 3282 (London: HMSO, May 1967), pp. 71-72.

<sup>90</sup> TNA: 'Report of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government on the Birmingham Corporation Bill', 9 March 1965, p. 2, PRO HLG118/545.

<sup>91</sup> Patterson, *Immigration and Race Relations*, p. 233.

<sup>92</sup> *Report of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government 1965 and 1966*, Cmnd 3282 (London: HMSO, May 1967), pp. 71-72.

Comparisons between the British and American experience, therefore, became central to the case made by Jenkins and supporters of the Act's extension to highlight the need for stronger legislation in order to combat racial discrimination effectively.<sup>93</sup> On announcing the government's commitment to introducing a Bill to ban racial discrimination in housing and employment in April 1967 Jenkins cited the American experience to justify the need to extend legislation. A 'correct legislative framework [would] make it much more difficult for men's minds and men's hearts to move in the wrong direction...American experience provides overwhelming evidence that this is so.'<sup>94</sup>

These issues coalesced in the Political and Economic Planning (PEP) report. Established in the Autumn of 1966 by the RRB and NCCI to investigate the extent of racial discrimination in areas not covered by the 1965 Act, the report provided unequivocal evidence that under the voluntary approach discrimination in housing and employment was widespread and had to be challenged through legislative action.<sup>95</sup> This sentiment was reinforced by the report of the RRWP in June 1967, which brought together the findings of the PEP Report, RRB, NCCI, CARD and concluded once more that legislating against discrimination in housing and employment was necessary.<sup>96</sup> The emergence of this growing body of evidence helped to illustrate that Labour's voluntary approach to resolving racial discrimination in housing was failing and pushed the Cabinet towards a consensus on the need to extend legislation. The publication of the PEP report in April 1967 for instance has been credited with helping to swing divided opinion in Cabinet in favour of further legislation.<sup>97</sup> Official Cabinet support, however, did not mean collective enthusiasm for a second Act. Crossman, for example, who had been one of the main advocates of the two-fold approach to race relations was described by Jenkins as

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<sup>93</sup> John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins, A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Random House, 2014), p. 271.

<sup>94</sup> 'Colour bar in housing and jobs will be outlawed', *The Observer*, 14 May 1967 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 22/03/2018)

<sup>95</sup> Rose, *Colour and Citizenship*, p.414.

<sup>96</sup> MRC, Report of the Race Relations Working Party, June 1967, MSS.292B/805.95/3, p. 10.

<sup>97</sup> MRC, Report of a meeting between TUC and CBI representatives, 24 January 1967, Race relations collection, MSS.292B/805.9/3, p.2.

being sad about the decision ‘for his heart was never in race legislation’.<sup>98</sup> Equally, Callaghan, who replaced Jenkins as Home Secretary in late 1967 and had been in favour of a continuation of voluntary methods after 1965, was described by the former Home Secretary as having little more enthusiasm for the Bill than Crossman.<sup>99</sup> Whether he was enthusiastic about legislation or not, Callaghan did at least accept the need for the new Act to cover housing by late 1967. During a Cabinet meeting in December 1967 Callaghan emphasised that due to continued discrimination, housing would be ‘the touchstone of the sincerity of the Government’s policy on race relations.’<sup>100</sup> He also reiterated Jenkins’ concerns over the development of housing ghettos, which he claimed were a major threat to community relations, and the need to take measures to prevent this development.<sup>101</sup> Measures, in this instance, took the form of a second Race Relations Act. During his opening remarks on the Second Reading of the 1968 Race Relations Bill, Callaghan cited the ‘grave disadvantages’ immigrants continued to face in housing and employment when justifying the need for a second Act. The purpose of the Bill, therefore, was to ‘remove those disadvantages... [and] protect society as a whole against actions which will lead to social disruption, and to prevent the emergence of a class of second-grade citizens.’ Acknowledging the influence of American experience on the decision to introduce further legislation, the Home Secretary emphasised that evidence from the United States demonstrated ‘that the very declaration of what the law is tends to lessen discrimination in practice.’<sup>102</sup>

Despite a shift in emphasis towards legislative action, Labour’s policy of reducing racial discrimination through investment in housing was not abandoned altogether. Even as the 1968 Race Relations Act was being debated in parliament, Callaghan maintained that the provision of housing had a part to play in reducing racial discrimination. ‘Legislation, of course, cannot stand alone. I have frequently said —

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<sup>98</sup> Roy Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre* (London: Macmillan, 1991), p. 210.

<sup>99</sup> Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p. 211.

<sup>100</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 128/42/74, Cabinet Meeting Conclusions, 21 December 1967, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7660613> (accessed 22/3/2017), p. 7.

<sup>101</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 129/134/25 Race Relations Legislation, 15 December 1967, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7660613> (accessed 22/3/2017).

<sup>102</sup> *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, Vol 763, cc53-198.

the Leader of the Opposition has also taken this view—that it needs to be supported by effective social policies.<sup>103</sup> Thus, housing continued to play a role, albeit in a more targeted and costed manner, through the introduction of the Urban Programme. Announced by the Home Secretary in July 1968, the Urban Programme pledged £20-25 million to be spent over four years to help areas facing social problems in the fields of education, health and welfare and, crucially, housing. Its purpose, according to Callaghan, was ‘to supplement the Government’s other social and legislative measures to ensure as far as we can that all citizens have an equal opportunity in life.’<sup>104</sup> Despite the introduction of a second Race Relations Act months earlier, the announcement of the Urban Programme signified that the Labour Party continued to believe legislation alone was not the answer to reducing racial discrimination and ensuring immigrants had equal opportunities. Instead, improving housing conditions in the areas where immigrants settled was still seen as part of the solution. As such, the Urban Programme’s resources were intended to be allocated to areas of urban deprivation with particular social needs, especially those with poor race relations.<sup>105</sup> Although the Programme was later re-branded as a poverty alleviation strategy, to avoid antagonising the white electorate, the initial target was undoubtedly areas with high Commonwealth immigrant populations.<sup>106</sup> The first circular in October 1968 was sent to 34 local authorities selected on the basis of more than 2% of households in the area having a housing density higher than 1.5 people per room and schools containing more than 6% immigrant pupils.<sup>107</sup> Of the 34 local authorities initially invited to submit proposals for funding, 26 of these were in the Midlands and Greater London,<sup>108</sup> illustrating that social problems related to immigration continued to be linked to these specific regions. The criteria used for the selection of the initial local authorities also demonstrated that housing was a central focus of the Urban Programme. The Urban Programme was not, however, as Shapely has

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<sup>103</sup> *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, Vol 763, cc53-198.

<sup>104</sup> *HC Deb* 22 July 1968, Vol 769, cc40-49.

<sup>105</sup> Peter Shapely, *Deprivation, State Interventions and Urban Communities in Britain, 1968-79* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2018), p. 100.

<sup>106</sup> Dancygier, *Immigration and Conflict in Europe*, p. 86; Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, p. 157.

<sup>107</sup> Philip Robinson, *Education and Poverty* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2012, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), p. 93.

<sup>108</sup> The remaining 8 local authorities were in areas such as Bradford, Liverpool and Manchester. LHASC, LP/RD/33/9, Information Paper 22 ‘Immigration and Race Relations’, November 1968, p. 22.

suggested, a completely new governmental response to deprivation.<sup>109</sup> Instead, the Urban Programme's aim of regenerating areas through housing and other general improvements, thereby reducing racial discrimination and improving race relations, did not represent a new initiative but was rather a continuation of a key element of Labour's earlier policy. Therefore, whilst the policy may have been drastically scaled back, the principle of reducing racial discrimination through investment in housing remained.

## Conclusion

The development of the Labour Party's race relations policy in this period was then a more complex process than existing literature suggests. By viewing the party's approach to race relations only through the prism of the legislative process a rather one-dimensional analysis of the evolution of race relations policy in this period has developed, which attributes the extension of legislation in 1968 largely to the pressure initiated by Jenkins together with the growing evidence of discrimination after 1965. In contrast, this chapter has looked beyond the confines of the race relations legislation itself to demonstrate that the Labour Party's approach was more multifaceted. In doing so it has argued that although the Labour Party was committed to challenging racial discrimination, this commitment was not expressed through race relations legislation alone. Instead, the party pursued a two-fold approach to challenging racial discrimination which combined limited legislation with voluntary strategies in housing and employment. Thus, whilst the Labour government implemented legislation in 1965 to outlaw racial discrimination in public places and incitement to racial hatred, housing and employment were excluded. Whilst this has been interpreted either as evidence of Labour's lack of commitment to eradicating racial discrimination or as the result of compromises to ensure its passage through parliament,<sup>110</sup> this chapter has demonstrated that it was instead a conscious decision informed by the party's alternative approach to reducing discrimination in these areas which had been evolving since the mid-1950s.

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<sup>109</sup> Shapely, *Deprivation, State Interventions and Urban Communities*, p. 103.

<sup>110</sup> Deakin, *Colour, Citizenship and British Society*, p. 149; Patterson, *Immigration and Race Relations*, p. 207; Miles and Phizacklea, *Racism and Political Action*, pp. 24-25.



In part, this decision reflected Labour's reluctance to impinge on the responsibilities of local authorities and trade unions by bringing these areas under the remit of legislation. More importantly, and as has been illustrated, the exclusion of housing from the 1965 Act was a result of the Labour Party's conviction that racial discrimination in this area could be lessened through general housing policy. They believed that this discrimination was a symptom of the wider failings of the housing market. As such, investment in a large scale house-building programme would help relieve racial discrimination by reducing shortages and easing competition for housing. This approach was deemed to offer the dual benefit of tackling racial discrimination by increasing the availability of council housing for all without having to infringe on the autonomy of local authorities. Nonetheless, whilst the Labour Party may have genuinely believed racial discrimination in housing could be tackled via this two-fold approach, it proved to be mistaken. Aside from its failure to meet ambitious house-building targets due to financial constraints, Labour's entire approach was based on the false assumption that by removing competition for housing racial discrimination would be eased. This simplistic view failed to recognise that the roots of resentment and discrimination ran deeper than just material resources and instead represented a cultural clash which could not be resolved merely through the provision of more houses. Thus, even if the Labour Party had been able to deliver on its ambitious house-building targets, racial discrimination would still have remained because their approach dealt with only one element of the problem and did nothing to address the wider sources of resentment. In addition, their desire to alleviate racial tensions in the worst affected towns and cities through general housing policy relied on the voluntary co-operation of local authorities in these areas which, as this chapter has demonstrated, was not always forthcoming. The party's initial refusal to take steps beyond simply encouraging local authorities to implement fair housing policies enabled discriminatory practices to continue unchallenged. Government inaction on aspects of discrimination contributed, as Holmes argues, 'to the maintenance of white privilege and developing a feeling of inferiority and powerlessness among many members of the coloured community...at least until 1968, the white community was allowed to practice an almost

unrestricted discrimination against coloured immigrants.’<sup>111</sup> Ultimately, the failure of the government’s voluntary approach to adequately reduce racial discrimination proved to be a crucial factor in facilitating the extension of race relations legislation in 1968.

As evidence of continuing discrimination emerged it strengthened the case made by Roy Jenkins for a consistent national standard to be set through legislation. This chapter, therefore, concurs with the view of Saggar, Hampshire, Rose, and Bleich that by harnessing the growing evidence of racial discrimination in housing which emerged after 1965 Jenkins played an influential role in securing the implementation of a second, wider reaching race relations act. However, unlike the existing literature, this chapter also identifies the failings of Labour’s original two-fold approach as equally significant in precipitating legislative action. Therefore, the 1968 Race Relations Act, which ended Labour’s voluntary approach to tackling racial discrimination by extending legislation into the sphere of housing, did not simply emerge out of Labour’s socially liberal commitment to the expansion of civil liberties, but was, in fact the product of policy evolution which married social liberal principle with pragmatism. Whilst the balance in Labour’s race relations policy had shifted away from general policy solutions in favour of legislative action by 1968, Labour’s two-fold approach was not abandoned altogether but rather was re-calibrated. Though on a much smaller scale, the introduction of the Urban Programme represented a continuation of the party’s attempt to reduce racial discrimination through investment in housing together with legislative action.

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<sup>111</sup> Colin Holmes, ‘Violence and Race Relations in Britain’, *Phylon*, 36, 2 (1975), pp. 120-121.

## **Chapter Four: Legislation versus voluntarism – Labour, the TUC and race relations**

Whilst the previous chapter examined the development of Labour's race relations policy in relation to housing, attention must now be turned to the party's approach to race relations legislation in employment and the conflict this created with the TUC. As with housing the initial exclusion of employment from the first Race Relations Act in 1965 proved to be short lived, with the 1968 Act defying the Donovan Commission's endorsement of voluntarism through the imposition of legislation into an area previously regulated by voluntary methods. This decision brought the Labour Party into direct conflict with the TUC who opposed the extension of race relations legislation to cover employment. The clash between the Labour Party and the TUC over race relations legislation has been underrated by labour historians and within wider studies of the period. As such, this chapter will address the following key questions in order to elucidate the rationale behind Labour's decision to introduce and extend race relations legislation and analyse the intra-party and electoral implications of this policy. It will interrogate the TUC's opposition to the extension of race relations legislation in employment in the context of their adherence to voluntarist principles and assess whether their failure to challenge racial discrimination effectively after 1965 inadvertently helped the campaign to extend legislation? As with immigration restrictions, it will consider how influential electoral pragmatism was in precipitating the extension of race relations legislation to employment by focusing on the growing importance of immigrant votes in this period. In connection with this, the chapter will consider the extent to which pressure from organised immigrant groups, led by the IWA, influenced the campaign to extend race relations legislation in 1968? Finally, the chapter will scrutinise how far the deteriorating relationship between the Labour Party and the TUC after 1965 influenced Wilson's decision to extend legislation to cover employment in 1968? Once the rationale for legislation has been established the chapter will then consider the implications this had both inside and outside of the party. In particular, it will analyse how far the divisions created in the Labour Party over the extension of the Race Relations Act corresponded with the wider internal party debate over voluntary trade union regulation and more broadly over the

party/union partnership by the end of the decade. Finally, it will scrutinise the electoral consequences of ignoring the TUC's policy preference on race relations in the context of declining trade unionist support for the Labour Party at the 1970 general election.

A closer examination of the key issues outlined above is warranted by their absence within the existing literature. As previously discussed, the debate over race relations legislation has centred around two competing interpretations of Labour's intentions, whether the reforms indicated a genuine socially liberal commitment on Labour's behalf to eradicate discrimination or merely represented an attempt to preserve the party's faltering liberal image in the wake of immigration restrictions.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the literature on restrictions, there has been very little contemplation of how far electoral considerations played a role in Labour's adoption of race relations legislation. Whilst Baines has acknowledged that the 1968 Act could be viewed as a 'gesture to the immigrant communities',<sup>2</sup> there is no overt suggestion that this was done to secure or retain their electoral support. In this sense the chapter offers a new perspective on race relations legislation by suggesting that the reforms were influenced by Wilson's growing desire to retain immigrant votes as his premiership progressed. Moreover, the chapter brings into focus the important role organised immigrant groups played, particularly the under-researched IWA, in facilitating the extension of legislation to cover employment through their continual pressing of the government. This has received scant attention in the literature,<sup>3</sup> which as noted in the previous chapter, tends to credit Roy Jenkins and the government appointed

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<sup>1</sup> An overview of this debate is provided by Gavin Schaffer, 'Legislating against Hatred: Meaning and Motive in Section Six of the Race Relations Act of 1965', *Twentieth Century British History*, 25, 2 (2014), pp. 255-257.

<sup>2</sup> Dudley Baines, 'Immigration and the Labour Market', in Nicholas Crafts, Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell (eds), *Work and Pay in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.338.

<sup>3</sup> Dilip Hiro does discuss the leading role the IWA took in organising a broad front of immigrant organisations to tackle immigration restrictions but does not focus on their approach to race relations legislation. Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British – A history of Race Relations in Britain* (London: Grafton books, 1991, 3rd ed), pp. 138-144. James Hampshire disputes that immigrant groups influenced the introduction of the legislation. James Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', in Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006), p. 317.

race relations institutions with creating the impetus for the 1968 Act,<sup>4</sup> thereby marginalising the important contribution made by immigrant associations. Finally, although the TUC's opposition to extending race relations legislation to employment has been acknowledged,<sup>5</sup> the impact of the deteriorating relationship between Labour and the TUC on the Labour government's decision to overrule these objections in 1968 has been overlooked entirely within the literature.

Moving beyond establishing the rationale for legislation, the internal clash this created within the Labour Party has also been neglected. Analysis of the internal splits created in the Labour Party over the question of trade union reform has tended to focus on the 1969 White Paper *In Place of Strife*, and fails to acknowledge that divisions first emerged in the struggle over the Race Relations Act in 1968. Similarly, the tension that race relations legislation caused between the party and the TUC has been overlooked in a number of key studies on the party/union relationship,<sup>6</sup> which in turn has impeded analysis of how far these divisions contributed towards the decline of trade unionist support for Labour at the 1970 general election. This chapter, therefore, challenges the conventional narrative which attributes party/union tensions to Wilson's attempt to pass *In Place of Strife* in 1969,<sup>7</sup> by highlighting the divisive and corrosive impact of the 1968 Race Relations

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<sup>4</sup> Erik Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France – Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 85; James Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', in Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2006), pp. 322-325; Shamit Saggat, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', *Contemporary British History*, 7,2 (1993), pp. 265-276.

<sup>5</sup> Hiro, *Black British, White British*, p. 219; Fred Lindop, 'Racism and the working class: strikes in support of Enoch Powell in 1968', *Labour History Review*, 66, 1 (2001), p. 89; Arthur McIvor, *Working Lives – Work in Britain since 1945* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 133; Saggat, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', p. 270.

<sup>6</sup> Race relations legislation is not mentioned anywhere within Lewis Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance – Trade Unions and the Labour Party* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991). Similarly Clegg only touches very briefly on the Race Relations Acts of 1965 and 1968, discussing the failings of the Acts to resolve issues and complaints in practice. Nowhere is the attitude of the TUC towards the legislation mentioned. Hugh Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), pp. 398-401.

<sup>7</sup> Steven Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970 – Labour and cultural change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 219; Steve Ludlam, 'Trade Unions and the Labour Party since 1964', in Brian Brivati and Richard Heffernan (eds), *The Labour Party A Centenary History* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000).

Act on party/union relations and electoral support for Labour amongst trade unionists.

### **The party/union link**

Given the historic bonds between Labour and the unions it is necessary before proceeding further to provide some context on this relationship in order to explain the chapter's focus on the TUC, and to understand the significance of Labour overruling their policy preferences on race relations. Minkin offers an unparalleled insight into the intricacies of the organisational relationship between the party and the unions, including the nature of the relationship between the TUC and the Labour Party. Referring to the Labour Party as the 'offspring' of the TUC, Minkin explains how the party's conception had lasting effects on the way it operated, particularly in terms of its relationship with the TUC.<sup>8</sup> Notions of consultation and co-operation were fundamental features which characterised this relationship.<sup>9</sup> Nonetheless it must be acknowledged that the TUC was not affiliated to the Labour Party and whilst individual unions could affiliate to the party, the TUC remained a separate entity. Therefore, whilst there may have been certain implied expectations which operated on both sides, the TUC was not obliged to support party decisions without question and nor was the party always responsive to the TUC, as the row over race relations legislation highlighted. It is also important to outline the nature of the TUC's role within the trade union movement itself. As Clegg remarked, the TUC could be defined as the 'industrial spokesman of the unions.'<sup>10</sup> Thus, as the representative body of the collective interests of trade unions and as part of the joint policy making process with the Labour Party, it is the attitude of the TUC as opposed to the response of individual unions which is the primary focus of this chapter.

The indisputable link between Labour and the TUC permeated all aspects of the party's function, including its policy making processes. This was heightened after the

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<sup>8</sup> Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 39.

<sup>10</sup> Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations*, p. 328.

Second World War when the TUC began to play a bigger role in government affairs.<sup>11</sup> The wartime contributions of the unions were recognised as they were awarded 'enhanced consultative status' by successive Labour and Conservative governments.<sup>12</sup> The presence of TUC leaders as equals on the National Economic Development Council in 1962 was an important step as it demonstrated that the unions were seen to be a 'responsible part of the body politic...able to play their part in government.'<sup>13</sup> Trade union participation was not restricted to economic policy-making and extended into other areas including incomes and industrial relations policy-making too.<sup>14</sup> The post-war consensus was underpinned by recognition of the legitimacy of state/union collaboration on certain policy issues, and a respect for voluntary union self-regulation in industrial matters in order to establish shared interests with the trade union leaders and maintain harmonious industrial relations.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, the number of trade unionists appointed to government committees and state run bodies rose,<sup>16</sup> alongside their expectations regarding the right to be consulted over policy making. However, as will be explored in more detail in the chapter, the way in which race relations legislation was implemented represented an affront to these established principles and practices, reflecting a notable change in the nature of the relationship between the Labour party and the TUC, particularly after 1966.

### **The 1965 Race Relations Act and the TUC response**

The introduction of the 1965 Race Relations Act marked the fulfilment of the pledge made by the Labour Party in 1958 to legislate against racial discrimination.<sup>17</sup> As well

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<sup>11</sup> Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations*, pp. 329-331.

<sup>12</sup> Dennis Kavanagh & Peter Morris, *Consensus Politics from Attlee to Major* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1994, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), p. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Wrigley, 'Trade Unions and the 1964 General Election', *Contemporary British History*, 21, 3 (2007), p. 331.

<sup>14</sup> Graeme Hyslop, 'Trade Unions and the State since 1945: Corporatism and Hegemony', *International Journal of Sociology and Social Policy*, 8, 1 (1988), p. 55.

<sup>15</sup> Kavanagh & Morris, *Consensus Politics*, p. 54.

<sup>16</sup> The number of government committees with trade union representatives increased from 12 in 1939 to 60 in 1948. Kavanagh & Morris, *Consensus Politics*, p. 52.

<sup>17</sup> LHASC, Labour Party International Department (LPID), Box 15, LP/CSC/57/61, Statement issued by the NEC on Racial Discrimination, 26 September 1958.

as housing, the Act was notable for its exclusion of employment too. Whilst housing had been left out of the Act partly because it would be deemed as overruling the power of local authorities to allocate housing, similar justifications were put forward for the omission of employment too. Accordingly, it is clear that the Labour Party initially favoured a voluntary approach to challenging racial discrimination in both housing and employment. Wilson stated that there was little possibility for conciliation machinery, let alone legal proceedings, particularly since unions were 'elected bodies on whom we can't superimpose a non elected body.'<sup>18</sup> Therefore, ongoing respect for the demarcation of political and industrial spheres appeared to inform Labour's decision to exclude employment from the Act. This has been reiterated by Saggar who suggests employment was sidelined in 1965 'on the basis of official trade union opposition.'<sup>19</sup> As such, it is clear that the Labour Party had no intention of extending race relations legislation to employment and instead looked to the TUC to challenge racial discrimination in this area. However, as will be explored, the Labour Party's willingness to conform to these expectations decreased as their parliamentary majority increased and the relationship with the TUC deteriorated. In order to understand the repercussions this had on the party/union relationship, it is vital to first understand the basis of the TUC's opposition.

Just as the foundations of the Race Relations Act were formed during the 1950s, so too was the TUC's opposition to legislation. Whilst the TUC had followed the party line on immigration restrictions, both in their opposition to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act and endorsement of the 1965 White Paper on Immigration, their attitude towards race relations legislation was less flexible. Their opposition was outlined as early as 1957 in response to one of Fenner Brockway's PMBs. While acknowledging that the aim was to establish equality, the TUC Assistant General Secretary at the time, George Woodcock, was unambiguous in his rejection of Brockway's legislative proposals. He stated that equality 'cannot be accomplished by

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<sup>18</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 128/39/47 Conclusion, 20 May 1965, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7664406> (accessed 22/3/2017).

<sup>19</sup> Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', p. 270.



legislation for very obvious reasons which I need not go into detail.<sup>20</sup> This view was reiterated the following year when Labour Party General Secretary Morgan Phillips sought the TUC's views on legislation following the establishment of the NEC Working Party on racial discrimination. Woodcock simply reaffirmed the TUC's stance by forwarding the aforementioned letter,<sup>21</sup> clearly conveying the view that this was not a matter worthy of further discussion. The clashes in Nottingham and Notting Hill later that year provoked the TUC's first statement on 'racial problems' in Britain. Although stating their opposition to discrimination, this declaration amounted to little in practice.<sup>22</sup> Even prior to the riots the TUC had begun to identify Commonwealth immigrants as 'problematic' and blamed any potential issues surrounding discrimination on their unwillingness to integrate.<sup>23</sup> As McIlroy points out, the TUC adopted a policy which supported immigration controls and yet failed to demand anti-racist legislation.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, by the time the 1965 Act was being constructed Labour was in no doubt about the TUC's attitude that legislating against racial discrimination would not achieve equality and should not be encouraged. Their justification for adopting this stance was grounded in two key concerns.

Firstly, as the TUC's role was to represent the interests of its members there was apprehension that supporting race relations legislation in employment would be hugely unpopular with many trade unionists. It should be noted that trade union opposition to immigrant labour was not unique to Commonwealth immigrants and substantial hostility was expressed towards the Irish in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and later Jewish workers too.<sup>25</sup> Equally, the influx of European workers who arrived in Britain

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<sup>20</sup> LHASC, LP/RD/33/1, Letter from George Woodcock to Mr J.G Stewart 28 March 1957.

<sup>21</sup> LHASC, LP/RD/33/1, Letter from George Woodcock to Morgan Phillips 5 May 1958.

<sup>22</sup> Beryl Radin, 'Coloured Workers and British Trade Unions', *Race*, 8, 2 (1966), pp.158-160; John Wrench, 'British Unions and Racism: Organisational Dilemmas in an Unsympathetic Climate', in Rinus Penninx and Judith Roosblad (eds), *Trade Unions, Immigration and Immigrants in Europe 1960-1993* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2000), p. 135.

<sup>23</sup> Robert Miles and Annie Phizacklea, 'The British trade union movement and racism', in Peter Braham, Ali Rattansi and Richard Skellington (eds), *Racism and Antiracism – Inequalities, opportunities and policies* (London: Sage publications, 1992), pp.33-34.

<sup>24</sup> John McIlroy, *Trade Unions in Britain today* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), p. 179.

<sup>25</sup> Miles and Phizacklea, 'The British trade union movement and racism', p.32; Dudley Baines, 'Immigration and the Labour Market', in Nicholas Crafts, Ian Gazeley and Andrew Newell (eds), *Work and Pay in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p.337.

post 1945 often faced resentment and were frequently placed in jobs far below their experience and skill set.<sup>26</sup> This continued with Commonwealth immigrants who were subjected to substantial racial discrimination in employment. Thus whilst the principles of trade unionism should have ensured equality for all workers, irrespective of race or nationality, the reality was quite different. The primary problem, according to Joshi and Carter, was the failure to identify with immigrants on a class basis, instead perceiving them as economic competition likely to drive down wages and take jobs.<sup>27</sup> Aware of this attitude some members of the TUC General Council were amongst the earliest advocates of controls.<sup>28</sup> Nonetheless, just as Lunn and Mclvor have debunked some of the misconceptions surrounding trade union treatment of immigrant workers,<sup>29</sup> further clarifications must also be made regarding their response towards race relations legislation too. It would be inaccurate to suggest that all trade unionists or indeed all members of the TUC were opposed to the proposals as the example of the TGWU illustrates. The TGWU was the biggest British union in this period and contained a significant number of immigrant members. The union took a liberal stance on the issue driven by its general secretaries during this period Frank Cousins and, latterly, Jack Jones. Cousins, who was also a member of the TUC General Council, was a staunch opponent of racial discrimination and was committed to achieving racial equality.<sup>30</sup> He declared in 1967 that if voluntary methods were not effective in dealing with racial discrimination then the TGWU would favour legislation.<sup>31</sup> However, whilst the leadership of the union may have been firm in its commitment to opposing racial

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<sup>26</sup> Mclvor, *Working Lives*, p.121.

<sup>27</sup> Joshi and Carter, 'The role of Labour in the creation of a racist Britain', *Race & Class*, 25, 3 (1984), pp.56-67; Andrew Murray, *The T&G Story- A History of the Transport and General Workers Union 1922-2007* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Limited, 2008), p.149.

<sup>28</sup> Miles and Phizacklea, 'The British trade union movement and racism', p.35.

<sup>29</sup> Kenn Lunn criticises the insufficient analysis of the relationship between trade unions and immigrant workers which has led to the impression that race played no major role in the history of the trade unions, or where it has been discussed it tends to be a condemnation of the entire union movement as racist. The reality was far more complex and the response of the trade union movement towards immigrant workers was varied, as both Lunn and Arthur Mclvor acknowledge. Ken Lunn, 'Complex Encounters: Trade Unions, Immigration and Racism', in John Mcllroy, Nina Fishman and Alan Campbell (eds), *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism – Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1964-79* (Monmouth: Merlin Press, 2007), pp.70-82; Mclvor, *Working Lives*, p.136.

<sup>30</sup> Murray, *The T&G Story*, p. 152.

<sup>31</sup> MRC, Report of the NCCI conference on racial equality in employment, 17 April 1967, MSS.292B/805.95/2, p.9.

discrimination the response of its members was less resolute, demonstrating the divergent attitudes the TUC had to attempt to balance. An article published in *The Guardian* in the wake of the pro-Powell strikes by London dockers, protesting against Powell's dismissal from the Shadow Cabinet, in the spring of 1968 highlighted the clear conflict of opinion which existed within the union:

*'One ex- T and G official said that every year the head office gets a lot of resolutions for the union's annual conference from branches all over the country which are strongly colour prejudiced. According to this informant, the senior officers of the union, not least the General Secretary himself, Mr Frank Cousins, see to it that none of them comes up for debate.'*<sup>32</sup>

In addition, the establishment of the Trade Union Anti-Immigration Movement (TRU-AIM) by two members of the TGWU who were furious at the 'contempt shown by T.U Leaders towards Rank and File members' following the 1968 Race Relations Act,<sup>33</sup> further supports the image of a divided body of opinion. The conflict in the TGWU was indicative of the broader clash within the trade union movement over this issue. The progressive attitudes of some TUC General Council members and union leaders did not necessarily filter down to the wider membership. The reverse of this was also true as there are also examples of attempts by rank and file trade unionists to support anti-discrimination legislation being quashed by senior figures. For example, when the Association of Cinematograph Television and Allied Technicians moved a composite resolution at the 1967 Annual Congress to secure TUC endorsement of the government's intentions to extend race relations legislation it was rebuffed by Fred Hayday. Hayday was a member of the TUC's International Committee, and advised Congress to remit the resolution as the General Council were in discussions with the Home Office on this matter and did not want to be 'tied by a resolution of congress.'<sup>34</sup> Race relations legislation posed a difficult dilemma for the TUC as it was torn between upholding trade union principles of solidarity amongst workers and representing the views of its members, many of whom were

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<sup>32</sup> *Guardian*, 'Fears behind white workers' backlash', 28 April 1968 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers 14/06/2017)

<sup>33</sup> MRC, Letter and policy statement by S. Cripps, MSS.292B/805.93/2.

<sup>34</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Research Series, RE 466-507, Study Group on immigration, 'Trade Unions and Racial Discrimination', July 1969.

opposed to legislation. With few exceptions,<sup>35</sup> the TUC General Council opposed the Act with some doing so on the grounds that supporting legislation would be interpreted as giving immigrant workers an unfair advantage.

Aside from preventing a backlash from its members, a more pressing concern for the TUC was that legislation would undermine the principles of voluntary union self regulation which were increasingly under threat in this period. Woodcock expressed 'grave doubts about the use of law in industrial relations' and the importance of unions retaining their independence and legal freedom in order to bargain effectively.<sup>36</sup> Overruling TUC policy preferences in the area of race relations not only represented a fundamental challenge to this consensus but it was all the more unwelcome because it came from a Labour government who were expected to uphold these established protocols. The TUC's hostile attitude toward race relations legislation reflected their broader concern over government intervention in union matters.<sup>37</sup> They feared legislating in one area of industrial relations would set a precedent for the government to legislate in others. Therefore, their consistent response to evidence of racial discrimination was firstly to downplay its existence and, secondly, to continually claim it should be dealt with through the normal machinery.<sup>38</sup> For example, despite the RRWP report making clear that legislation would not be used to override the current systems already in place but would provide additional help to deal with the scale of discrimination, the TUC representative on the RRWP Marjorie Nicholson refused to sign it. She remained unconvinced by further explanations that legislation would alleviate existing difficulties of translating national anti-discrimination policy into action at grassroots

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<sup>35</sup> As well as Cousins, Wilfred Beard, General Secretary of the United Patternmakers Association also declared that he would have no objections to legislation covering employment. MRC, 'The race-law row', *The Sunday Times*, 7 January 1967, MSS.292B/805.9/3.

<sup>36</sup> MRC, George Woodcock papers, 'The Trade Union Movement and the Government' a lecture delivered at the University of Leicester by George Woodcock, 26 April 1968, MSS.292/6/GW/4/15, p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p.70.

<sup>38</sup> MRC, Report of a meeting held of 24 January 1967, MSS.292B/805.9/3, p.1; MRC, Report of a meeting held on 23 May 1967, MSS.292B/805.9/2, pp.1-2; MRC, Report of a meeting held on 27 June 1967, MSS.292B/805.9/2, p.1.

level.<sup>39</sup> Instead Nicholson stuck rigidly to the TUC line that the responsibility for this lay with industry and maintained that voluntary action was the best way to settle disputes.<sup>40</sup>

Despite wanting to avoid government imposed legislation in this area, the TUC's own methods of dealing with racial discrimination were virtually non-existent. The TUC adopted a colour blind approach to the issue by refusing to encourage the introduction of any measures to protect immigrant workers specifically.<sup>41</sup> Their solution to any problems which arose regarding discrimination against immigrant workers was to simply treat them as ordinary workers and to not take any special measures.<sup>42</sup> Jones likened the TUC's insistence on voluntary action and education to 'using a feather duster to combat the evil of racist discrimination.'<sup>43</sup> In particular he denounced the approach of both Alan Hargreaves, head of the TUC's International Department, which was responsible for policy on race and immigration, and Victor Feather, assistant General Secretary of the TUC, as 'mealy mouthed.'<sup>44</sup> The comments of Jack Cooper, General Secretary of the National Union of General and Municipal Workers, that enforcing legislation would be like 'using a sledgehammer to crack a nut'<sup>45</sup> reflected the TUC's denial that there was any major problem to tackle. Similarly, the view of Fred Hayday, a known opponent of legislation, further demonstrated the General Council's failure to grasp the problem. Whilst acknowledging the existence of racial discrimination, Hayday argued that it existed in all walks of life, against women for example, but argued the government was not seeking to outlaw this.<sup>46</sup> This response not only challenged the validity of concerns over racial discrimination but brought into question Labour's commitment to

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<sup>39</sup> MRC, Report of the Race Relations Working Party, June 1967, MSS.292B/805.95/3, p.11; Lindop, 'Racism and the working class', p. 89.

<sup>40</sup> MRC, A note on Race Relations by Marjorie Nicholson, June 1967, MSS.292B/805.95/3, pp.1-2.

<sup>41</sup> Radin, *Coloured Workers*, p.159 ; McIvor, *Working Lives*, p.134.

<sup>42</sup> MRC, Memorandum submitted to the CIAC by the TUC General Council, 7 August 1963, MSS.292B/805.94/6, p.5.

<sup>43</sup> Jack Jones, *Union Man – The Autobiography of Jack Jones* (London: William Collins, 1986), p. 198.

<sup>44</sup> Jones, *Union Man*, p.198.

<sup>45</sup> MRC, 'The race-law row', *Sunday Times*, 7 January 1967, MSS.292B/805.9/3.

<sup>46</sup> MRC, Report of a meeting held on 27 June 1967, MSS.292B/805.9/2, p.3.

expanding civil liberties by implying that discrimination in any form was not a matter for legal action.

Only the growing prospect of further legislation by 1967 stimulated the TUC and the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) to put forward an alternative proposal. Both organisations proposed establishing a central body under an independent chairman to receive and deal with complaints. They further suggested that the Minister of Labour should participate in the machinery, thereby involving the government in some capacity. Jenkins responded diplomatically to this approach. Although stating that no decision had yet been taken on legislation he felt that ultimately discrimination should be made illegal with recourse for legal sanctions, though he still maintained the importance of the pre-existing voluntary machinery. The TUC were aghast at the prospect of legal sanctions, even as a last resort, feeling that they were contrary to the voluntary spirit of the proposition they had made.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, the TUC's objections to race relations legislation emphasised the competing interpretations of liberalism which existed between some members of the party and the unions. There was a genuine belief held by the majority of the TUC that legislation could not achieve equality and that by its nature it would create a distinction between workers which was problematic. However, the TUC's refusal to take meaningful steps to challenge racial discrimination in employment beyond its verbal declaration that it was opposed to racism ultimately helped legitimise the case for further legislation.

### **Jenkins, the IWA and the campaign for extension**

Extending the 1965 Race Relations Act was, as the previous chapter established, initially a remote prospect. There was no mention of additional legislation during the 1966 election campaign, nor was it widely desired by voters, by either of the main parties, and certainly not by the TUC which demonstrated 'outright hostility' to the suggestion.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the arrival of Roy Jenkins as Home Secretary in

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<sup>47</sup> LHASC, 1967 TUC Congress Report, pp. 270-272.

<sup>48</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, pp. 68-70.

December 1965 led to closer scrutiny of existing race relations legislation, as established in the previous chapter. Jenkins had a keen interest in race relations and although no immediate changes were made, he was clear on his intention to push for a second act. As well as covering housing, Jenkins was determined that any new legislation would outlaw racial discrimination in employment.<sup>49</sup> He believed that the TUC's voluntarist approach was inadequate and racial discrimination in this area required more effective, legislative action. The prospect of extending race relations legislation to incorporate employment was not met with unanimous approval amongst the Labour Cabinet.<sup>50</sup> In particular, the proposed inclusion of employment met with strong resistance by Minister of Labour, Ray Gunter, who argued that this was a matter for the TUC to deal with without any outside intervention. In March 1965 Gunter had also resisted Cabinet pressure to ask the TUC General Council to issue a statement deploring racial discrimination in employment on the grounds that 'difficulties' in the employment field were at shop floor level and therefore a central statement would have little effect. Moreover, he warned the government against putting the General Council under pressure on an issue which presented 'a certain embarrassment' for them and should be avoided.<sup>51</sup> Thus, Jenkins' proposals to extend legislation were firmly rejected by Gunter who continued to support the TUC and CBI's insistence on voluntarist methods.<sup>52</sup> The clear opposition of employers and trade unions did nothing to deter Jenkins, who remained committed to pushing for a second act.<sup>53</sup> However, as with housing, the Home Secretary knew evidential proof of continued discrimination in employment was vital in order to legitimise his campaign for the extension of legislation.

Alongside the findings of the NCCI and RRB, which helped strengthen the argument for extending legislation,<sup>54</sup> a number of other important reports published between 1965 and 1968 made a compelling case for any future legislation to cover

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<sup>49</sup> John Campbell, *Roy Jenkins – A Well-Rounded Life* (London: Random House, 2014), pp. 272-273.

<sup>50</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>51</sup> TNA: Letter from Gunter to Wilson, 30 March 1965, PREM13/2314.

<sup>52</sup> MRC, Letter from George Woodcock to Ray Gunter, 12 December 1966, MSS.292B/805.9/1; Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', p. 323.

<sup>53</sup> E.J.B Rose, *Colour & Citizenship – A report on British Race Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 515.

<sup>54</sup> See Chapter Three.

employment. The publication of the Donovan Commission's recommendations in 1968, for example, reinforced the need for legislation in this area. Despite the report's emphasis on maintaining the principles of voluntarism, its investigations strengthened the case for extending the scope of the 1965 Act to employment. The CARD submitted evidence to the commission which identified wide ranging discrimination, including trade unions failing to bargain effectively on behalf of immigrant workers and pressuring managers to refuse employment to certain minorities. In other instances trade unions were found to have negotiated clauses which stated that in cases of redundancy immigrant workers would be the first to lose their jobs.<sup>55</sup> The evidence also highlighted employment agencies and exchanges use of discriminatory practices, including refusals to refer coloured applicants to employers and issuing employment exchanges cards with C.W. to make immigrants easily identifiable.<sup>56</sup> Employers and trade unionists' reluctance to implement equal employment policies was criticised by CARD who reiterated the warnings of the NCCI and RRB that race relations in Britain would deteriorate without effective legislation.<sup>57</sup> The PEP and RRWP reports were also important catalysts for the extension of legislation into both housing and employment.<sup>58</sup> In particular, the RRWP report underlined that racial discrimination in employment was widespread, undermining the TUC's insistence that no problems existed. The insurmountable evidence produced by these reports appeared to help overcome the resistance of some Cabinet members.<sup>59</sup> Callaghan, for instance, admitted government thinking on legislation had been influenced by the report of the RRB and Frank Cousins also suggested the PEP report had been an important factor in deciding to extend legislation.<sup>60</sup> Thus, according to Bleich and Patterson, the growing evidence of

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<sup>55</sup> MRC, Memorandum of evidence submitted by CARD to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Race relations collection, MSS.292B/805.9/3, p. 2.

<sup>56</sup> MRC, Memorandum of evidence submitted by CARD to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Race relations collection, MSS.292B/805.9/3, p. 3.

<sup>57</sup> MRC, Memorandum of evidence submitted by CARD to the Royal Commission on Trade Unions and Employers' Associations, Race relations collection, MSS.292B/805.9/3, p. 5.

<sup>58</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>59</sup> Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference - A study in the Politics of Intra-Party Democracy* (London: Allen Lane, 1978) p. 311.

<sup>60</sup> Bodleian Library, Speech made by Callaghan to the Institute of Race Relations, 8 February 1968, Uncatalogued papers of Lord Callaghan 1968-1970; Frank Cousins, 'Race Relations in Employment in the United Kingdom', *International Labour Review*, 102, 1 (1970), p. 4.



discrimination provided by newly created race relations institutions, together with the influence of liberal reformers, such as Jenkins, generated intense pressure for a second act.<sup>61</sup> However, whilst the pressure exerted by Jenkins for the extension of legislation has been widely acknowledged, the dominance of this narrative in existing literature has resulted in other factors being overshadowed.

Immigrant associations added considerable weight to the growing pressure for extended race relations legislation. Nonetheless, their role has been overlooked or underplayed in the historiography on race relations. Bleich, for example, credits 'a small group of progressive learners' with providing the impetus for the 1968 Act, reducing the part of organised immigrant associations to a minor supporting role.<sup>62</sup> In confining the contributions of immigrant associations, where they have been considered at all, to that of 'minor support' the sustained, organised, and consistent pressure they exerted on the Labour government and the influence this had on the decision to extend legislation has been neglected. As the largest immigrant association in this period with a membership exceeding 20,000,<sup>63</sup> the IWA co-ordinated a joint campaign with a number of other immigrant associations in pursuit of stronger race relations legislation. The IWA focused particularly on extending legislation to cover employment. This campaign ran parallel to their protests against immigration restrictions which saw them issue a document entitled 'The Victim's Speak' to all MPs in an attempt to sway parliamentary opinion against Labour's 1965 White Paper on Immigration. In a further protest the IWA, along with Fenner Brockway, led a number of immigrant organisations and lobbied Parliament on 6 December 1965 to oppose the White Paper.<sup>64</sup> The zeal with which they tackled restrictions was equally evident in the IWA's approach to race relations, as they were

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<sup>61</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, pp.70-71. Sheila Patterson has also drawn attention to the importance of both the PEP report and RRB report in the campaign for the extension of the Race Relations Act. Sheila Patterson, *Immigration and Race Relations in Britain 1960-1967* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 98-107

<sup>62</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 85.

<sup>63</sup> Hiro, *Black British, White British*, p. 140.

<sup>64</sup> These immigrant organisations were the IWA, Pakistani Workers Association, Pakistani Welfare Association and the West Indian Standing Conference. Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Birmingham branch policy papers, Report of the Executive Committee 1 May 1963-1 April 1966, p. 3, file MS.2141/A/8/2/2; Author interview with Avtar Jouhl (16/05/2017).

amongst the first to cite the limitations of the 1965 Act. In particular, they were highly critical of the government's attempt to implement anti-discrimination legislation alongside restrictions stating 'it is impossible to talk about integration and discrimination in the same document'. Expressing dissatisfaction that the Race Relations Act did not cover housing or employment and was not subject to criminal law,<sup>65</sup> they argued that the watering down of the legislation rendered it completely ineffective and warranted immediate revisions.<sup>66</sup>

Their criticism extended beyond the Act itself to encompass Labour's entire race relations policy. Whilst the IWA sought to strengthen links with fellow immigrant associations and other organisations, they operated a policy of non-cooperation with government committees.<sup>67</sup> They shared the TUC's view that the establishment of race relations institutions represented an attack on the agency of voluntary working class organisations. Challenging the legitimacy of government appointed bodies to pass judgements on areas they knew little about, the IWA viewed the establishment of the NCCI and RRB as mere attempts to 'whitewash the governments anti-colour policy' and pacify immigrants.<sup>68</sup> Further scathing comments about Labour's intentions were expressed by the IWA who declared the NCCI as a 'smokescreen concocted very shrewdly by the Labour Government to cover state sponsored racialism.'<sup>69</sup> Similarly, the CARD was described as a middle class organisation 'trying to eliminate discrimination superficially and without any backing of the three major immigrant communities.'<sup>70</sup> The TUC also dismissed its evidence as 'suspect.'<sup>71</sup> A

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<sup>65</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Minutes and Agendas, Letter from Jagmohan Joshi to Rattan Singh, 14 November 1965, file MS.2141/A/1/1.

<sup>66</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Minutes and Agendas, file MS.2141/A/1/2.

<sup>67</sup> The IWA encouraged closer ties with other immigrant communities including Pakistanis, West Indians, Irish and Africans as well as co-operation or affiliation with organisations such as the National Council of Civil Liberties and the MCF. Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Programme of Indian Workers Association Great Britain Birmingham Branch, p. 2, file MS.2141/A/8.

<sup>68</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Birmingham branch policy papers, Letter written by A. Jouhl, General Secretary of the Birmingham Branch on the IWA, on the governments race policy, file MS.2141/A/8/2/2.

<sup>69</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Documents, statements and letters by the IWA on the fight against racism, document on the campaign against racial discrimination, file MS.2141/A/4/10.

<sup>70</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Minutes and Agendas, Letter written by Joshi following the CEC meeting, 14 November 1965, file MS.2141/A/1/1.

<sup>71</sup> MRC, Meeting between the government and the TUC on racial discrimination in employment, 25 October 1966, MSS.292B/805.9/1.

major criticism articulated by both the TUC and IWA was that that these groups failed to represent their members' interests. This had led Woodcock to refuse an invitation to speak at the NCCI conference on racial discrimination in 1967 on the basis that the invite was addressed to him personally and not to him as General Secretary of the TUC General Council. He felt he should not be personally involved in matters which were likely to become the concern of the General Council.<sup>72</sup> Equally, attempts made by the government to co-opt members of the IWA to sit on the NCCI were also rejected. A formal invitation was extended to Avtar Jouhl, General Secretary of the Birmingham branch of the IWA, which he subsequently refused partly as a protest against the White Paper which had established it.<sup>73</sup> In an interview with Jouhl he explained that this refusal also reflected his concerns about the way in which membership of the NCCI was structured, recalling that the government were inviting individuals to sit on the NCCI but not as representatives of their organisations. Jouhl was unequivocal that it was not the place of the government to pick and choose in this manner.<sup>74</sup> Jack Jones, a former member of the NCCI, made similar observations in his memoirs that the committee was overwhelmed with academics and professionals and lacked working people with direct experience of the problems. As a consequence he felt the committee was unable to really 'come to grips' with discrimination.<sup>75</sup> The Labour government's failure to initiate meaningful consultations with the IWA on racial discrimination meant they could not hope to understand the 'real problems' or expect the IWA's co-operation in achieving harmonious race relations.<sup>76</sup> However, the failure to forge links with immigrant associations in this period was not confined to the Labour Party as the TUC remained stubbornly aloof too.

Despite a shared opposition towards Labour's handling of race relations, the TUC also failed to incorporate or represent immigrant views. Throughout the

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<sup>72</sup> MRC, Letter from George Woodcock to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 12 December 1966, MSS.292B/805.9/1; MRC, 'The race-law row', *The Sunday Times*, 7 January 1967, MSS.292B/805.9/3.

<sup>73</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Birmingham branch policy papers, Report of the Executive Committee 1 May 1963-1 April 1966, p.3, file MS.2141/A/8/2/2.

<sup>74</sup> Author interview with Avtar Jouhl (16/05/2017).

<sup>75</sup> Jones, *Union Man*, p. 198.

<sup>76</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, *Daily Worker*, 'Race Relations 'an industry' immigrants', December 1965, file MS.2141/A/4/14.

deliberations over race relations legislation the TUC did not appear to make any attempt to liaise with the IWA. It is particularly telling that not a single delegate from the IWA was present at any of the TUC Annual Congresses between 1958 and 1968.<sup>77</sup> The IWA were an obvious body to converse with and the failure to do so highlights the serious deficiencies of the TUC's 'voluntary' approach, and raises questions about their commitment to challenging racial discrimination in employment. For their part, the IWA made substantial efforts to encourage their members to join and participate fully in all trade union activities.<sup>78</sup> They actively tried to influence immigrant workers to join their unions, publishing leaflets in Gurmukhi and Urdu. Their efforts amongst foundry workers were particularly effective, helping the Amalgamated Union of Foundry Workers to recruit hundreds of new members.<sup>79</sup> It was claimed by the IWA that by joining trade unions immigrants would discredit claims that they isolated themselves from British workers.<sup>80</sup> Thus, union membership was presented as a form of integration. The loyalty shown by the IWA to the trade union movement was not reciprocated in the actions of the TUC, whose channels of communication remained closed to immigrant opinion over this issue.

Despite persistent difficulties in these relationships the IWA led a consistent campaign against what they perceived to be Labour's 'capitulation to racist immigration controls',<sup>81</sup> which helped to galvanise immigrant opinion against the restrictions and inadequate race relations legislation of the Labour government between 1965-1968. Their policy of non-cooperation with government committees as well as actively encouraging immigrants not to vote for Labour candidates in two vulnerable Labour constituencies in the 1966 general election,<sup>82</sup> alerted Wilson and the wider party to the growing dissatisfaction amongst immigrant communities with

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<sup>77</sup> LHASC, TUC Annual Congress Reports 1958-1968.

<sup>78</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Report of the General Secretary 1967, p. 8, file MS.2141/A/1/2; Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Report of the Birmingham branch Executive Committee 1 May 1963-1 April 1966, file MS.2141/A/8/2/2.

<sup>79</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Report of the Birmingham branch Executive Committee 1 May 1963-1 April 1966, p. 5, file MS.2141/A/8/2/2.

<sup>80</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Report of the General Secretary 1967, p. 8, file MS.2141/A/1/2.

<sup>81</sup> Author interview with Avtar Jouhl (16/05/2017).

<sup>82</sup> See Chapter Two for a more detailed discussion of this.

their immigration policies and illustrated that their support was far from guaranteed. Though Bleich refutes any connection between the commitment to race relations legislation and electoral politics as the immigrant vote was 'too thin an electoral vein to mine' and risked alienating working class supporters,<sup>83</sup> there is evidence to dispute this claim. Courting the immigrant vote was becoming increasingly important to the Labour Party by the late 1960s and introducing a second race relations act which did nothing to address the areas of the first Act which immigrant communities had criticised most heavily would do little to help this. Callaghan himself acknowledged that sensitive and controversial issues, eluding to housing and employment, could not be avoided or 'many people including the coloured communities themselves, will doubt our sincerity.'<sup>84</sup> In a further comment during the Acts Second Reading Callaghan again appeared to suggest that government thinking on the extension of legislation had been influenced by concern over the potential immigrant backlash if they failed to introduce effective legislation. Attention was drawn to the second generation immigrants who he suggested would not tolerate a lack of opportunities because of colour prejudice.<sup>85</sup> Junior Minister David Ennals further indicated that failure to address the grievances of the immigrant communities could have detrimental effects both socially and electorally, remarking 'I say with absolute conviction that we may have a flashpoint in this country if we do not extend the field of legislation.'<sup>86</sup> Thus it could be suggested that whilst the extension of legislation to cover employment was influenced by the evidence provided by race relations institutions and the campaigning of liberal reformers, it was also a means of showing immigrant communities that the Labour Party were committed to challenging racial discrimination by addressing the areas which had been so heavily criticised in the first Act. Equally, the knowledge that further immigration restrictions were imminent reinforced the need to take a strong lead in formulating an effective race relations act which would appease opponents of restrictions both inside and outside the party. Just as restrictions had been

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<sup>83</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 60.

<sup>84</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 129/134/25 Race Relations Legislation, 15 December 1967, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7660613> (accessed 22/3/2017).

<sup>85</sup> *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, Vol 763, Cols 53-173.

<sup>86</sup> *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, Vol 763, Cols 53-173.

influenced by concern over losing votes in key areas, a similar rationale could be applied to the other part of Labour's dual strategy on immigration. Certainly, the extension of race relations legislation appeared to be partially influenced by a desire to retain and increase immigrant votes which could be jeopardised if Labour failed to properly address the stark inequalities which existed. However, in attempting to appease immigrant voters with the 1968 Race Relations Act Wilson arguably underestimated the backlash this would cause amongst many of Labour's core voters; trade unionists. Thus, whilst the origins of the 1968 Act lay in a concerted campaign both inside and outside of the party to demonstrate the limitations of the 1965 Act, the extension of race relations legislation to cover employment must also be considered in the context of the deteriorating relationship between Labour and the TUC.

### **Loosening ties – the party and the TUC post 1966**

When Wilson launched Labour's 1964 election campaign at the TUC Congress, inviting them to join the party in their 'great adventure'<sup>87</sup> there was every indication that a Labour victory would result in even closer collaboration between the party and the TUC. The TUC was fully behind Labour's election campaign, providing organisational as well as financial support and there was a generally positive feeling amongst union leaders towards Wilson who they perceived to have energised the party by healing rifts and offering a new, modern image.<sup>88</sup> These initial high expectations soon petered out as TUC/Labour relations soured following the 1966 general election, amidst conflicts over union behaviour and party policies. If the exclusion of employment from the 1965 Race Relations Act reflected a period of positive party/union relationships and a desire to avoid conflict with the TUC by infringing on their domain, the reversal of this decision by 1968 signalled the deterioration of this relationship and a clear disregard for the TUC's preferences by the Labour Party. Thus, it is crucial to analyse the declining relationship between the

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<sup>87</sup> Robert Taylor, 'Industrial Relations', in Andrew Crines and Kevin Hickson (eds), *Harold Wilson The Unprincipled Prime Minister?* (London: Biteback Publishing, 2016), p. 115.

<sup>88</sup> Wrigley, 'Trade Unions and the 1964 General Election', pp. 330-331.

Labour Party and the TUC after 1965, which stemmed from both policy and personality issues, to establish how far this influenced Labour's race relations policy.

Though initially keen to bring the TUC along with Labour on their 'great adventure' Wilson's approach towards the unions was markedly different to his predecessor. Minkin suggests that whilst Gaitskell made little attempt to hide his efforts to mobilise support at annual conferences by actively engaging in discussions with trade union senior figures, the same was not true of Wilson. He had no desire to be seen to be interfering in the private decisions of the unions.<sup>89</sup> This shift in approach contributed to the changing dynamics of the relationship between the TUC and the Labour Party on both a personal and policy level. Similarly, the attitude of George Woodcock, who was by then the General Secretary of the TUC, proved to be a source of further tension. Just as Wilson appeared to be distancing his leadership from that of the unions, Woodcock was also attempting to loosen these links.<sup>90</sup> He felt no great loyalty to the Labour Party and as a result there was a distinct lack of cohesion between the TUC and the party.<sup>91</sup> Nonetheless, the implications of this shift did not become fully apparent until 1966 as amiable relations between the party and the TUC remained largely intact during Wilson's first government. This can be primarily attributed to Labour's precarious victory in 1964 and the need to retain the support of the TUC. Labour won the narrowest of victories in 1964 attaining 44.1% of the votes which was only 0.7% higher than the Conservatives. To put this into context this was only 0.02% higher than their vote share when they were defeated in the 1959 election.<sup>92</sup> The vulnerability of the government inevitably constrained policy making decisions. As has already been established, in terms of race relations this meant the exclusion of employment partly due to TUC objections. However, a more decisive victory over the Conservative Party at the 1966 election

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<sup>89</sup> Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference*, p. 157.

<sup>90</sup> Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 109.

<sup>91</sup> Robert Taylor, *The TUC – From the General Strike to New Unionism* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2000), p. 158.

<sup>92</sup> Fred W.S Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1950-1970* (Surrey: Political Reference Publications, 1971), pp. 709-710.

where Labour achieved a 97 seat majority and 6.2% lead,<sup>93</sup> decreased the leverage the TUC had over the party. Labour's victory in 1966 not only coincided with the onset of a turbulent period in the relationship between the party and the TUC over policy matters but also with the emergence of a Labour Cabinet which was increasingly questioning the party's close ties with the unions.

Scepticism over the party/union relationship grew after 1966 as some members of the Labour government began to take what Ponting describes as a 'more jaundiced' view of it.<sup>94</sup> The growing prominence of left wing leaders in the biggest unions,<sup>95</sup> whose preference for shop-floor bargaining over a top down approach weakened the TUC's ability to regulate union behaviour, contributed to the shifting outlook of some members of the Cabinet. This developing attitude was also symptomatic of the changing composition of the PLP at this time as the prominence of ex-manual workers declined.<sup>96</sup> The resignation of Frank Cousins in a dispute over the Prices and Incomes Act in 1966 was a particularly significant and symbolic loss.<sup>97</sup> Cousins had been appointed Minister of Technology in 1964 and it was hoped he would act as the 'link-man' between the unions and the government. However, his vehement opposition to the introduction of wage controls which he argued defied voluntarist principles by stating 'you cannot have social democracy and at the same time control by legislation the activity of a free trade union movement',<sup>98</sup> led to his resignation. The resignations of other figures from the union wing of the party such as George Brown and Ray Gunter in 1968 further altered the social composition of the Cabinet and by 1969 only one member, Roy Mason, came from a manual worker occupation

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<sup>93</sup> In this election the Labour Party achieved a 6.2% lead over the Conservatives and achieved a 97 seat majority. Craig, *British Parliamentary Election Results 1950-1970*, p. 710.

<sup>94</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise – Labour in power 1964-1970* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), pp.350-351.

<sup>95</sup> After 1967 4 out of the 5 biggest affiliated unions had left wing leaders. Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 115.

<sup>96</sup> The percentage of ex-manual workers in the PLP declined from 40.6% to 27.5% between 1951 and 1970, whilst ex-professionals rose in these same years from 30.8% to 45.6%. Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 111.

<sup>97</sup> Ben Pimlott, *Harold Wilson* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 531.

<sup>98</sup> Hamish Fraser, *A History of British Trade Unionism 1700-1988* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 212.



and only James Callaghan retained strong relations with the unions.<sup>99</sup> This coincided with the emergence of a liberal revisionist grouping on the right of the party, led by Jenkins, which appeared ready to shed the existing 'rules' of the party/union relationship.<sup>100</sup> The lack of government ministers able to bridge the gap between the industrial and political spheres was evident by the end of the 60s with only Callaghan maintaining his close ties with the unions.<sup>101</sup>

Aside from the competing visions within the party over exactly what form the party/union relationship should take, policy difficulties further accentuated the 'union problem' and turned Wilson's attention towards challenging their growing militancy. The economic difficulties which plagued Wilson's government became a major point of contention with the unions after the 1966 election. Ponting suggests the first signs of strain were evident during the July 1966 crisis when the unions reluctantly accepted a twelve month wage freeze amid grave economic difficulties and the threat of devaluation. They considered this to be the government's last chance to right the economy and when it failed they were unwilling to accept further wage caps.<sup>102</sup> The Seamen's strike earlier that year had triggered a run on the pound and unions faced frequent accusations of being out of control as the occurrence of strike action rose sharply.<sup>103</sup> Both Minkin and Pimlott cite this incident as being a turning point for Wilson who subsequently attempted to restore the government's credibility by asserting its independence from the unions in order to challenge the perception that they were bound by their demands.<sup>104</sup> Thorpe shares the view that Wilson's decision to 'take on' the unions was intended to reassert his authority in the midst of a particularly dire time for Labour, with by election defeats, poor local election results, and devaluation at the forefront of the electorate's minds.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>99</sup> Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 111.

<sup>100</sup> Stephen Meredith, *Labours old and new – The parliamentary right of the British Labour Party 1970-79 and the roots of New Labour* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), p. 127.

<sup>101</sup> Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 112.

<sup>102</sup> Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 350.

<sup>103</sup> Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 527.

<sup>104</sup> Minkin, *The Contentious Alliance*, p. 108; Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, pp. 527-528.

<sup>105</sup> Andrew Thorpe, 'The Labour Party and the Trade Unions', in Nina Fishman, John McIlroy and Alan Campbell (eds), *The High Tide of British Trade Unionism? Trade Unions and Industrial Politics, 1964-1979, Volume 2* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p. 138.

Increasingly sceptical public opinion over Labour's close ties with the unions,<sup>106</sup> coupled with concern over rising union militancy provided further justification for this decision.

Consequently, the decision to ignore TUC objections by extending the Race Relations Act to cover employment in 1968 can be viewed as part of a broader rejection of the principles of voluntarism by the Labour Party as the government grappled with the thorny issue of industrial relations reform in the late 1960s. As Clegg observes, the doctrine of voluntarism rests on two principles 'the abstention of the law, and the primacy of voluntary collective action.'<sup>107</sup> The consensus on voluntarism broke down in 1968 as the government became increasingly frustrated by the impact rising union militancy was having on their attempts to stabilise the economy. Wilson was well aware that the abandonment of voluntary union regulation would not be well received by the TUC, especially Woodcock, who opposed anything which strayed from the established rules. Wilson ridiculed Woodcock's dogmatic belief in voluntary union regulation and the protocols of the Labour/union partnership in a private interview with *Guardian* editor Alistair Hetherington in 1966 in which he commented 'you could commit murder and he [Woodcock] wouldn't mind, but you mustn't break the TUC's rules.'<sup>108</sup> Imposing race relations legislation on the TUC in this manner represented a radical departure from the voluntary methods which had previously operated. In doing so, this created conflict within the Labour Cabinet between members keen to protect the party/union relationship and those who wished to loosen these links. Therefore, the divisions forged within the government over the 1968 Race Relations Act can be seen as a pre-cursor to *In Place of Strife* the following year, which divided the party down similar lines.

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<sup>106</sup> A Gallup poll taken in August 1964 for the *Sunday Telegraph* found that 34% of people asked thought the close relationship was a good thing against 37% who thought it was bad and 29% who were unsure. LHASC, Terry Pitt papers, D/PITT/C/61.

<sup>107</sup> Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations*, p. 290.

<sup>108</sup> John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), meeting between Wilson and Hetherington, 27 June 1966, C5/286/1-11.

### **The 1968 Race Relations Act – a precursor to *In Place of Strife*?**

The trade union question posed a dilemma for the Labour Party, with the ensuing attempts to resolve it highlighting the existence of stark divisions within the party which defied a simple left-right split.<sup>109</sup> Whilst these opposing factions came to the fore during the struggle over *In Place of Strife* in 1969 they were also evident in the clash over the 1968 Race Relations Act. The conflict between Jenkins and Callaghan exemplified the complex nature of these divisions. Though both were on the right of the party their attitudes towards the unions, and subsequently towards race relations legislation, differed vastly. Whilst Jenkins felt it was the duty of the government to lead and influence public opinion on race relations and not be swayed by the opposition of the TUC,<sup>110</sup> Callaghan recognised the dangers of marching too far ahead of public opinion by implementing measures which would 'outrage' employers and trade unions.<sup>111</sup> These differences mirrored their divergent views on the wider union question which saw Jenkins readiness to curb union influence contrast with Callaghan's staunch opposition to any actions which would infringe on the established principles of voluntarism. Callaghan's sensitivity to the views of the TUC and his aversion to what he perceived to be a heavy handed approach to industrial relations by figures such as Castle and Wilson, informed his cautious approach to race relations legislation,<sup>112</sup> and vehement opposition to *In Place of Strife*. However, while Callaghan was able to oppose *In Place of Strife* outright, he was constrained by the Race Relations Bill which he inherited from Jenkins when he took over as Home Secretary. Importantly, the Bill had already received the approval of the Home Affairs Committee to be extended into the fields of housing and employment before Callaghan's arrival. In his memoirs, Jenkins suggests that the Bill was 'so far advanced' before he left the Home Office that his successor was simply carried along by its momentum, although he states Callaghan

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<sup>109</sup> Meredith, *Labours old and new*, pp. 103-105.

<sup>110</sup> Rose, *Colour & Citizenship*, p. 515.

<sup>111</sup> James Callaghan, *Time and Chance* (London: Politico's, 2006), p. 269.

<sup>112</sup> MRC, 'Crossman may fight Jenkins on race laws', *The Observer*, 18 December 1966, MSS.292B/805.9/1; Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, pp. 68-69; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Callaghan – A Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), pp. 331-334.

had no more enthusiasm for it than Crossman who, as Minister of Housing, was also sceptical about legislation.<sup>113</sup> Castle also exposed the contrast between the two Home Secretaries, praising Jenkins for being 'so much clearer-headed and naturally progressive – and more courageous' on the Race Relations Act than Callaghan.<sup>114</sup> Accordingly, although Callaghan recognised the potential immigrant backlash that failing to deliver on the promises of extending legislation could cause,<sup>115</sup> he was also very aware of the TUC's objections to the Bill. As such, he sought to implement a number of changes in a bid to make it more palatable to the TUC. In private he made no secret of his intentions to change the Act, telling Crossman 'I haven't got a liberal image to maintain like my predecessor; I'm going to be a simple Home Secretary.'<sup>116</sup> Callaghan's re-packaging of the Race Relations Act relied heavily on praising the voluntary efforts of employers and trade unions,<sup>117</sup> and frequently reiterating that the enforcement of legal sanctions in the 'delicate' field of race relations was not the Act's primary purpose. Instead its main aims were conciliation and educating public opinion.<sup>118</sup> In downplaying the role of legal sanctions, Callaghan attempted to deliver an Act which more closely resembled the TUC preference for education over the law.

Further alterations to the Act included the initial exemption of companies with fewer than 10 employees, as well as inserting a racial balance clause which effectively enabled firms to discriminate in recruitment to keep reasonable proportions of different nationalities. Partly because of these compromises and partly because the government had already declared their intention to legislate, the TUC reluctantly accepted the Act. In July 1968 it was accepted as 'broadly satisfactory' due to the guarantee of consultation on its operation and assurance the Act would be reviewed

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<sup>113</sup> Jenkins, *A Life at the Centre*, p. 211.

<sup>114</sup> Barbara Castle, *The Castle Diaries 1964-1976* (London: Papermac, 1990), p. 177.

<sup>115</sup> See Chapter Three.

<sup>116</sup> Anthony Howard (ed), *The Crossman Diaries* (London: Mandarin, 1991), pp. 436-437.

<sup>117</sup> Speech made by Callaghan to the Institute of Race Relations, 8 February 1968, Bodleian Library, Uncatalogued papers of Lord Callaghan 1968-1970.

<sup>118</sup> TNA Website: Discovery: CAB 129/134/25 Race Relations Legislation, 15 December 1967, available at <http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/D7660613> (accessed 22/3/2017); John Rylands Library, Guardian Archive, Editorial Correspondence of Alastair Hetherington (1956-1975), meeting between James Callaghan and Hetherington, 9 April 1968, C5/336/1-5, p. 1; *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, Vol 763, Cols 53-173.

after six months.<sup>119</sup> Callaghan's alterations to the Act found support amongst colleagues on the left and right of the party who were also sympathetic to TUC objections.<sup>120</sup> Nonetheless support for these amendments was far from unanimous and substantial opposition was raised, particularly over the controversial racial balance clause which many felt undermined the entire purpose of the Act. It brought Callaghan into conflict with Castle, his adversary over *In Place of Strife*, who wanted to see it removed.<sup>121</sup> A number of Labour MPs on the left also voiced their objections to the clause which they felt was far too ambiguous as it failed to define what constituted a 'reasonable proportion' and essentially provided a loophole for the continuation of racial discrimination.<sup>122</sup> Labour MP David Winnick was forthright in his criticism of some of the changes, arguing they represented 'a sop to the CBI and the TUC.'<sup>123</sup> Callaghan's tactical manoeuvrings did not go unnoticed by the opposition either, with Shadow Defence Secretary Reginald Maudling observing 'this is not a Bill of principle, but of compromise' and predicted that it would generate more resentment as opposed to reducing it.<sup>124</sup>

Following a long passage through parliament, which included a two month committee stage, the second Race Relations Act received its Royal Assent in October 1968. The high expectations Jenkins and other liberal reformers had for the Act failed to come to fruition under the leadership of his successor. The IWA regarded the 1968 Act in the same vain as the 1965 Act due to the loopholes which prevented discrimination in housing and employment from being comprehensively addressed,

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<sup>119</sup> MRC, Minutes of the TUC General Council meeting, 24 April 1968, MSS.292B/20/7; MRC, Letter from George Woodcock to general secretaries of affiliated trade unions, 18 July 1968, MSS.292B/805.9/7, p. 2.

<sup>120</sup> See for example the contributions of Eric Heffer and Roy Hattersley who both strongly supported the rights of employers to determine an acceptable 'racial balance' without interference from the Race Relations Board. *HC Deb* 9 July 1968, Vol 768, Cols 181-490.

<sup>121</sup> MRC, 'Callaghan keeps cool on the Race Bill', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 23 June 1968, MSS.292B/805.9/6.

<sup>122</sup> See for example the contributions of Maurice Orbach, Reginald Paget, Paul Rose and Sydney Bidwell in *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, Vol 763, Cols 53-173 and *HC Deb* 9 July 1968, Vol 768, Cols 181-490.

<sup>123</sup> He opposed complaints of racial discrimination in employment going through the Department of Employment and Productivity, rather than directly to the Race Relations Board. *HC Deb* 9 July 1968, Vol 768, Cols 181-490.

<sup>124</sup> *HC Deb* 23 April 1968, Vol 763, Cols 53-173.

and weaknesses in the machinery to enforce the Bill.<sup>125</sup> Ultimately, Callaghan delivered a watered down version of what was intended to be a more radical shift towards achieving racial equality. His relationship with and loyalty to the trade union movement, which differed vastly from Jenkins, influenced his position and altered the eventual composition of the Act which, as Maudling observed, became one of compromise rather than principle. Equally it exposed the wider conflicts beginning to emerge within the party over the union question which came to a head the following year. Despite the changes introduced by Callaghan to placate the TUC, many trade unionists remained deeply opposed to the legislation and subsequently to the Labour Party for introducing it.

### **The implications of legislation**

Formal acceptance of legislation in 1968 did little to alter the attitude of the TUC which continued to claim immigrants' refusal to integrate was the main cause of any problems.<sup>126</sup> It was not until the mid-1970s that the TUC began to recognise the genuine need to combat racial discrimination in employment. Even then, this did not necessarily represent a genuine commitment to equality. Instead, it was precipitated by fears over the formation of breakaway unions due to continued racial discrimination and alarm over the potential repercussions the rising popularity of the National Front could have on the trade union movement.<sup>127</sup> Thus, whilst the TUC nominally accepted the 1968 Act little was done to confront or alter the attitude of trade unionists, many of whom remained opposed to the legislation. As a result resentment towards the Labour Party over the Act built up and was expressed through the declining support of trade unionists for Labour in the 1970 general election. The introduction of this Act and the emergence of Powell as the defender of British rights played a role in altering the perception trade unionists had of the Labour Party.

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<sup>125</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Statements, statement on the Race Relations Bill issued by J. Joshi, file MS.2141/A/3/3.

<sup>126</sup> Miles and Phizacklea, 'The British trade union movement and racism', p. 35.

<sup>127</sup> Miles and Phizacklea, 'The British trade union movement and racism', pp. 36-37.

As has previously been established, the victory of Heath and the Conservative Party at the 1970 general election came as a surprise to many, not least the Labour Party itself. The significant decline in trade union support for Labour in this election marked the end of a period of increasing hostility between the party and the unions which had invoked serious questions about the nature of their relationship. Whilst almost 60% of trade unionists had voted for Labour in 1966, by 1970 this figure had dropped to 51%.<sup>128</sup> Webb suggests that this shift away from Labour indicated that trade unionists, specifically working class trade unionists, had been influenced by the political events of the period.<sup>129</sup> However, the literature exploring this drift away from the Labour Party in 1970 has produced a rather narrow explanation of its roots. Frequently, clashes over prices and incomes policies and the subsequent attempt to introduce *In Place of Strife* have been cited to explain the loss of trade union votes. Fielding, for example, argues that whilst the party appeared to have stabilised their position in the run up to the election many trade unionists, still resentful of wage controls and *In Place of Strife*, failed to be won back by Labour.<sup>130</sup> Similarly, both Simpson and Pelling have suggested the change in voting behaviour could be ascribed to Labour's incomes policy and the ill-feeling generated by the conflict over union reform which both 'raised fundamental issues about how far the state should intervene.'<sup>131</sup> Thus, *In Place of Strife* has dominated existing explanations as it has been depicted as a direct contravention of the conventions of the partnership between Labour and the unions.<sup>132</sup> However, there has been no acknowledgment that these conventions were overruled before this with the introduction of the 1968 Race Relations Act. In many ways this legislation set the precedent for *In Place of Strife* as it gave Wilson a misplaced confidence in his ability to deliver industrial relations reform. Therefore, the existing narrative which emphasises the decisive

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<sup>128</sup> Paul Webb, *Trade Unions and the British Electorate* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1992), p. 126.

<sup>129</sup> Webb, *Trade Unions and the British Electorate*, p. 131.

<sup>130</sup> Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, p. 219.

<sup>131</sup> Bill Simpson, *Labour: the unions and the party* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 114; Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992, 5<sup>th</sup> ed), p. 283.

<sup>132</sup> Hugh Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), p. 319; Pimlott, *Harold Wilson*, p. 528; Clive Ponting, *Breach of Promise*, p. 351.

impact of *In Place of Strife* in undermining trade union votes for Labour in 1970 should be reconsidered in the context of the 1968 Race Relations Act.

Despite the efforts of Callaghan to produce a Race Relations Act more palatable to the TUC, the legislation remained hugely divisive. Labour's claims that the Act would not create a privileged class of people and was simply a means of ensuring equal opportunity for all citizens,<sup>133</sup> were quickly challenged by Powell who delivered his Rivers of Blood speech days after the Act's first reading in April 1968. Powell was highly critical of the legislation arguing it would enable immigrants 'to agitate and campaign against their fellow citizens, and to overawe and dominate the rest with the legal weapons which the ignorant and the ill-informed have provided.' Despite being sacked from the Shadow Cabinet as a result, Powell's views resonated with vast swathes of the British public. Support for tighter restrictions was highest amongst working class respondents, who justified their position on the usual grounds of increased competition for jobs and housing, as well as the strain on social services.<sup>134</sup> The strikes which took place in support of Powell by dock workers in the West Midlands and London in support of his views and right to free speech<sup>135</sup> undermined TUC assertions that no problems existed and emphasised the core problems identified by the PEP and RRWP reports that some trade unionists failed to understand solidarity and class loyalty. The trade unionists who participated in these pro-Powell strikes appeared oblivious to the contradictions between workers' solidarity in the form of strike action, being used to explicitly defend the right of employers to discriminate against workers because of their skin colour.<sup>136</sup> Although they subsequently accepted the 1968 Race Relations Act, the TUC failed to challenge the prevailing negative attitude of trade unionists towards legislation. Instead, they dismissed the strikes as the actions of a few individuals rather than acknowledging

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<sup>133</sup> Gary Freeman, *Immigrant Labor and Racial Conflict in Industrial Societies – The French and British experience, 1945-1975* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 164

<sup>134</sup> LHASC, Study Group on Immigration, 'Public Opinion and Immigration', Dr Mark Abrams, January 1969, p. 7.

<sup>135</sup> Fred Lindop, 'Racism and the working class: strikes in support of Enoch Powell in 1968', *Labour History Review*, 66, 1 (2001), p. 82.

<sup>136</sup> Lindop, 'Racism and the working class', pp. 93-94.



that they were symptomatic of wider problems between white British and immigrant workers.

The failure of the TUC to take a strong lead against racial discrimination in employment enabled Powell to legitimise the fears many trade unionists held that the Race Relations Act was a means of putting the rights of immigrants before those of British workers. Indeed as has already been argued, Powell's anti-immigrant rhetoric had a direct impact on Labour's performance at the 1970 general election.<sup>137</sup> More recently Crines also signalled the importance of Powell in redefining the political discourse on immigration as his speech created a 'refashioned and populist anti-immigration narrative that would resonate far beyond the immediate moment of delivery.'<sup>138</sup> Arguably, Powell's speech helped alter public perceptions and secured the image of the Conservative Party as being tougher on immigration which undermined the electoral popularity of Labour's dual strategy on immigration amongst trade unionists. This chapter, therefore, contends that the decline in Labour support at the 1970 general election represented a backlash against the 1968 Race Relations Act, as well as *In Place of Strife* and Labour's incomes policy, as a section of Labour's traditional voters began to view the Conservative Party as being more responsive to their views.<sup>139</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that race relations legislation was part of a complex balancing act on immigration which Wilson sought to maintain throughout this period. Although the notion that Labour pursued a dual strategy on immigration is not a new concept this chapter has addressed areas that have been glossed over within the existing narrative, which has tended to present race relations legislation as either a genuine commitment to equality implemented by a liberal Labour

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<sup>137</sup> See Chapter Two.

<sup>138</sup> Andrew Crines, Tim Heppell and Michael Hill, 'Enoch Powell's 'rivers of blood' speech: A rhetorical political analysis', *British Politics* 11, 1 (2016), p. 90.

<sup>139</sup> Trade union votes for the Conservative Party rose by nearly 4% between 1966-1970. Webb, *Trade Unions and the British Electorate*, p. 126.

government, or as a means of maintaining the pretence of liberalism against the backdrop of immigration restrictions. This chapter has demonstrated that race relations legislation was not a straightforward process and was instead the product of a number of complex factors. As with the previous chapter it has demonstrated that the issues of housing and employment were treated as two distinct areas by the Labour Party. Thus, whilst legislation may have been extended to cover both of these areas in 1968, this decision was influenced, in part at least, by different issues. In relation to employment this chapter has demonstrated that the exclusion of employment from the 1965 Race Relations Act, and its subsequent inclusion in the 1968 Act, was directly influenced by the Labour Party's relationship with the TUC. Whilst there had been ample evidence of racial discrimination in employment when the first Act was passed, there was a general consensus within the Labour Party that the TUC's preference for dealing with discrimination through voluntary means should be adhered to. Thus, whilst employment was excluded from the 1965 Act partly on the basis of TUC objections, the deterioration of the Labour/union relationship by 1968 meant Wilson was more willing to overrule their opposition. Although Saggar has suggested that opinion began to shift amongst some trade union leaders towards supporting new legislation in employment after the implementation of the 1965 Act,<sup>140</sup> this view is not supported by the evidence in TUC records. Instead, this evidence has demonstrated that the general response of the TUC remained resolutely opposed to the extension of the Act into employment. Nonetheless, the chapter does acknowledge that although the TUC's belief that this was an industrial matter did not waver, their reluctant acceptance of the Act as 'broadly satisfactory' was secured by the government's declaration that it was extending legislation, as well as Callaghan's compromises, rather than a genuine commitment to the principles of the Act.

In addition, this chapter has also highlighted Labour's emerging recognition of the importance of appeasing immigrant voters as an influential factor in the party's decision to strengthen the 1965 Race Relations Act. The IWA's vocal campaign for

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<sup>140</sup> Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', p. 270.

the extension of the 1965 Race Relations Act, which entailed electoral boycotts, alerted Wilson to the potential electoral implications of failing to extend the Act. The extension of legislation was supported by the IWA but there was a clear message that a new act should not contain any half-measures' as the previous one had.<sup>141</sup> Therefore, the increasing likelihood of further immigration restrictions by mid 1967 brought the need for a new, stronger race relations act into sharper focus. In the knowledge that immigration restrictions would be controversial, the chapter has argued that Wilson sought to address the grievances expressed by immigrant communities over the first Act by extending it to include housing and employment in a bid to secure their electoral support. In doing so, there was a clear prioritisation of immigrant opinion over that of the collective trade union views articulated by the TUC.

As well as establishing the rationale for the Labour Party's decision to introduce and extend race relations legislation in this period, this chapter has also provided original insights into the tensions this caused within the party, as well as the electoral implications of extending legislation against the wishes of the TUC. Divisions over the trade union question proved to be one of the defining elements of Wilson's 1966-1970 government. The attempt to pass *In Place of Strife* and the ensuing fallout this created within the Labour Party over the question of trade union reform has been the subject of considerable attention. However, this chapter has illustrated the importance of considering race relations legislation as a precursor of these rifts as the divisions which presented themselves in 1969 first emerged in the struggle over the 1968 Race Relations Act. Finally, this chapter has also challenged the existing consensus that the decline of trade union support for Labour in 1970 was primarily due to *In Place of Strife*, by demonstrating the important impact the 1968 Race Relations Act had on this too. In his desire to placate immigrant voters by producing a stronger second Race Relations Act in 1968 Wilson inadvertently alienated a section of Labour's traditional trade union voters in the process, who perceived the legislation as a sign that the rights of immigrants were being prioritised. Equally, it

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<sup>141</sup> Wolfson Centre for Archival Research, LoB, Statement issued by J. Joshi, General Secretary of the IWA, on the PEP Report, file MS.2141/A/4/12.

has been shown that the Conservative Party directly benefited from this as many trade unionists, influenced by Powell's strong opposition to the Race Relations Act, moved away from the Labour Party and towards the Conservatives who they regarded as more sympathetic to their views. Therefore, whilst the electoral ramifications of *In Place of Strife* for Labour in the 1970 general election have been emphasised within the existing historiography,<sup>142</sup> this chapter has illustrated the need to recognise the role race relations played alongside these traditional factors on the declining support of trade unionists for the Labour Party.

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<sup>142</sup> See for example Fielding, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, p. 219 and Simpson, *Labour: the unions and the party*, p. 114.

## Conclusion

Nine years after the introduction of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act Ted Heath's Conservative government introduced the 1971 Immigration Act, the fourth successive Act in under a decade to curtail the rights of Commonwealth immigrants to live in Britain. The introduction of work permits removed the right of permanent residency for immigrants and their dependants and, in a clear nod to Enoch Powell, the 1971 Act encouraged voluntary repatriation by providing financial assistance to immigrants living in Britain to return to their birth country.<sup>1</sup> The Act was opposed by the Labour Party in a move which confirmed their growing awareness of the potential importance of immigrant voters and underlined the party's newfound reluctance to unconditionally tether its policy on Commonwealth immigration to illiberal public opinion. Nonetheless, the Labour Party's own record in this area between 1964 and 1968 served as a stark reminder that the illiberal policies they had implemented whilst in government had helped to create the preconditions for the 1971 Act. As Layton-Henry argues, 'the blatantly racist aspects of the partiality clauses of the Immigration Act of 1971 were clearly foreshadowed in Labour's own Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968.'<sup>2</sup> In legislating to restrict Commonwealth immigration in both 1965 and 1968 Labour had not been motivated by racist sentiment but rather, as this thesis has shown, to try and remove immigration from the political agenda by appeasing anti-immigrant public opinion in the West Midlands and Greater London. Despite this, the Conservative Party's pledge in 1970 to end any further large-scale immigration proved to be a popular policy and had a discernable impact on the outcome of the election, helping them secure a surprise victory.<sup>3</sup> The 1970 general election result and the subsequent 1971 Immigration Act, therefore, marked the clear failure of the Labour Party's dual strategy on immigration restrictions and race relations, which had been based on eradicating immigration as an electoral issue whilst reducing racial discrimination and promoting equality for Commonwealth immigrants living in Britain.

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<sup>1</sup> Zig Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain* (London: George Allen & Unwin), pp. 80-81.

<sup>2</sup> Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain*, p. 85.

<sup>3</sup> Ian Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939 – The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 143.

This thesis has critically analysed the development and implementation of this dual strategy, with a view to ascertaining the extent to which the Labour Party adhered to a principled socially liberal policy approach to Commonwealth immigration and race relations during the period c.1958-c.1968. It has concluded that the perceived socially liberal character of the Labour Party during this period was not reflected in its policies on immigration restrictions or race relations. In contrast, the thesis has established that the party rejected a principled socially liberal approach in favour of a highly pragmatic strategy linked to public opinion. Although these conclusions have been reached by other scholars, this thesis has made a number of contributions to nuancing and revising existing understanding of the Labour Party's response to Commonwealth immigration in this period. It has challenged the established view of Wilson as the architect of Labour's pragmatic approach, by demonstrating that the dual strategy on Commonwealth immigration and race relations was deeply rooted in Gaitskell's leadership. This marks an important departure from existing literature which has portrayed Gaitskell as adopting a principled stand against the restriction of Commonwealth immigration. First advocated by Paul Foot who argued in 1965 that Gaitskell's 'passionate opposition to the immigration Bill played a leading part in the Labour Party's principled stand',<sup>4</sup> the notion of the Labour leader as a principled opponent of immigration restrictions has, as this thesis has established, been echoed by a number of other scholars.<sup>5</sup> However, by reconsidering Gaitskell's opposition to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act it has been argued that far from being borne out of a principled rejection of controls, this opposition was instead a pragmatic response linked to other policy objectives, namely resisting Britain's entry to the EEC. Although Gaitskell's rejection of the Conservative Party's proposals to join the EEC was primarily aimed at uniting his divided party,<sup>6</sup> he couched this opposition in terms of maintaining Britain's relationship with the Commonwealth,

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<sup>4</sup> Paul Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1965), p. 174.

<sup>5</sup> See for example Erik Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France: Ideas and Policymaking since the 1960s* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.46; Dilip Hiro, *Black British White British – A History of Race Relations in Britain* (London: Grafton Books, 1991, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed), p. 205; Steven Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970- Labour and Cultural Change* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), pp. 139-149.

<sup>6</sup> Timothy Heppell, 'Hugh Gaitskell, 1955-63', in Timothy Heppell (ed), *Leaders of the Opposition – From Churchill to Cameron* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 40; Brian Brivati, *Hugh Gaitskell* (London: Richard Cohen Books, 1996), pp. 404-405.

something he argued joining the EEC would compromise. As such, the publication of the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in November 1961 offered a chance to strengthen the anti-EEC stance he had constructed by rejecting the Bill and re-affirming his commitment to the Commonwealth. Consequently, the thesis has argued that whilst Gaitskell may have opposed the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, this was the result of pragmatic political considerations and not a principled socially liberal position based upon the outright rejection of controls. This was reflected in Gaitskell's refusal to publicly commit to an indefinite open door policy and his private acknowledgement of the possible need for future controls.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, in presenting an alternative analysis of Gaitskell's stance on immigration restrictions the thesis has revealed that Wilson's subsequent decision to support controls did not represent the abandonment of a principled policy position, but rather the continuation of the pragmatic approach adopted by his predecessor.

Whilst recognising that the Labour Party's immigration policy was driven by pragmatism rather than social liberal principle, this thesis has disputed the suggestion put forward by supporters of the racialisation perspective, including Kathleen Paul, Caroline Knowles, and Ian Spencer, that the extension of restrictions in 1965 and 1968 reflected the inherent anti-immigrant views of the party leadership and of the political elite more generally.<sup>8</sup> Instead, it has reinforced the view that the decision to extend controls was influenced directly by public opinion. It has further nuanced this argument by showing that it was illiberal working class public opinion in the West Midlands and Greater London specifically, the two regions with the highest Commonwealth immigrant populations, which acted as the catalyst for the introduction of tighter controls. There had been a growing awareness within the Labour Party from the late 1950s that the presence of Commonwealth immigrants in these regions was causing tensions, as articulated in the responses to the party's appeal for information amongst CLPs on the 'colour problem' in 1957, and further

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<sup>7</sup> LHASC, PLP Minutes, 15 November 1961, p.237; *HC Deb* 16 November 1961, Vol 649, Cols 687-819.

<sup>8</sup> Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain Race and Citizenship in the Post-war Era* (London: Cornell University Press, 1997); Caroline Knowles, *Race, Discourse and Labourism* (London: Routledge, 1992); Ian Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939 – The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997).

highlighted by the racial disturbances in Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958.<sup>9</sup> However, as this thesis has illuminated, it was only when this was articulated through the ballot box at the 1964 general election that the Labour Party took action. Thus, the expression of anti-immigrant opinion in these two regions during the 1964 general election and later at the Leyton by-election prompted the further restriction of Commonwealth immigration through the 1965 White Paper on Immigration. This was alluded to at the 1965 Party Conference which declared the intention of the White Paper was to give local authorities where immigrants concentrated time to absorb them, and subsequently reinforced by Crossman who stated that the political dominance of immigration in these regions and the electoral threat this posed to Labour necessitated the tightening of restrictions.<sup>10</sup> Despite their importance, regional influences on Labour's national policy formulation have been undervalued. Beyond the impact of Smethwick, which has received widespread attention and been credited by a number of scholars with initiating the extension of immigration controls,<sup>11</sup> the wider exploitation immigration across both the West Midlands and Greater London at the 1964 general election and the subsequent influence this had on the direction of the Labour Party's immigration policy has been neglected in the existing literature.<sup>12</sup> Thus, through detailed analysis of the regional impact of immigration, this thesis has shown that in both 1965 and 1968 Wilson responded to illiberal public opinion and chose to extend immigration restrictions in order to eliminate immigration as an electoral issue and to prevent the Labour Party losing crucial votes in these regions.

Nonetheless, whilst acknowledging the Labour Party was influenced by the racialisation of public opinion, the thesis has revealed that there were clear limitations to this. The revival of the immigration debate ignited by Enoch Powell's anti-immigrant rhetoric in April 1968 marked a change in Labour's policy and a

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<sup>9</sup> See Chapter Two for a detailed discussion of the CLP responses.

<sup>10</sup> LHASC, *Labour Party Annual Report 1965*, (London, Labour Party, 1965), p. 218; Crossman, *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister Volume 1*, pp. 270-271 and p. 290.

<sup>11</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 60; Shamit Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy' *Journal of the Institute of Contemporary British History*, 7, 2 (1993), pp. 255-258; Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939*, p. 136.

<sup>12</sup> See Chapter Two for more detail on this.



collapse in the temporary consensus they had constructed with the Conservative Party on immigration. Powell's demands for repatriation and an immediate end to any further immigration to Britain made it almost impossible for Labour to maintain a consensus on immigration restrictions with the Conservatives. Labour's refusal to capitulate to demands for further anti-immigrant measures reflected the party's belief that they had gone as far as they could go in limiting Commonwealth immigration through their dual strategy. There was a limit to the degree of immigration restrictions that the Labour Party would tolerate and by 1968 they had reached this threshold. Unlike existing analysis of the 1970 general election, this thesis has argued that by opposing further restrictions Labour once again experienced an electoral backlash in the West Midlands and Greater London specifically, which helped to swing the election in the Conservatives' favour.<sup>13</sup> In addition to this, the thesis has also established that the Labour Party's refusal to endorse further controls in 1968 was prompted by their growing awareness of the potential importance of the votes of Commonwealth immigrants. Through analysis of campaign material from the Labour Party's 1970 election campaign, which has previously been unused by researchers, this thesis has demonstrated that the party made a concerted and nationally co-ordinated effort to campaign for immigrant votes during this election. In doing so, it has challenged the established view that Labour only began to recognise the importance of immigrant voters after the 1974 elections, as Layton Henry, Anwar, and Geddes have all claimed.<sup>14</sup> This has underpinned the argument made in the thesis that whilst the Labour Party implemented a pragmatic approach to immigration restrictions informed by public opinion, after 1968 the party's definition of public opinion became more inclusive and began to incorporate the opinions of Commonwealth immigrants.

Alongside highlighting the complexities of the Labour Party's policy on immigration restrictions this thesis has also argued that the party's approach to race relations,

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<sup>13</sup> LHASC, Labour Party Research Series (LPRS), RE 1-70, Home Policy Committee - *The 1966 General Election*, table 6a; 'Final results of general election', *The Guardian*, 20 June 1970 (accessed online via ProQuest Historical Newspapers, 23/03/2018).

<sup>14</sup> Layton-Henry, *The Politics of Race in Britain*, p. 145; Muhammad Anwar, *Race and Politics— Ethnic minorities and the British political system* (London: Tavistock, 1986), pp. 84-85; Andrew Geddes, *The Politics of Immigration and Race* (Indiana: Baseline Books, 1996), p. 86.

which formed the second part of their dual strategy on Commonwealth immigration, was equally multifaceted. In challenging the narrow legislative approach towards analysing Labour's race relations policies in the existing literature, the thesis has revealed that social liberal principles were interpreted more fluidly and contested more fiercely in this policy area than has hitherto been appreciated. As such, Labour's dual strategy did not simply seek to enhance race relations solely through legislation but went further than this to incorporate alternative methods of easing racial discrimination in housing and employment. Existing studies have instead evaluated the party's approach to race relations solely through the lens of the 1965 and 1968 Race Relations Acts, leading to oversimplified interpretations of party policy in this area.<sup>15</sup> Conversely, this thesis has taken a wider view. Looking beyond Labour's legislative programme, it has illustrated that between 1965 and 1968 the Labour Party implemented a two-fold approach to race relations which combined limited legislation to outlaw racial discrimination in public places with a voluntarist approach to reducing racial discrimination in housing and employment.

As with immigration restrictions, this thesis has shown that the development of the two-fold approach to race relations can be traced back to Gaitskell's leadership. When, in 1958, the Labour Party committed itself to introducing legislation against racial discrimination in public places, this commitment did not include housing or employment. Instead, Gaitskell clearly stated that racial discrimination in housing, for example, would be eased through general housing policy.<sup>16</sup> The provision of more houses, together with the implementation of fair housing policies by local authorities, was deemed a better response than national legislation to what was perceived as a highly localised problem. Equally, the exclusion of housing and employment from legislation also reflected the Labour Party's ongoing respect for the principles of voluntarism. In effect, for the bulk of the period under consideration Labour was unwilling to enforce legislation which would overrule the

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<sup>15</sup> See for example Dennis Dean, 'The Race Relations Policy of the First Wilson Government', *Twentieth Century British History* 11, 3 (2000); James Hampshire, 'Immigration and race relations', in Peter Dorey (ed), *The Labour Governments 1964-1970* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006); Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy'.

<sup>16</sup> LHASC, Labour Party International Department (LPID), Box 15, LP/CSC/57/61, Statement issued by the NEC on Racial Discrimination, 26 September 1958.

responsibilities of local authorities to allocate housing, and or remove the right of trade unions to manage racial discrimination amongst their members. Nonetheless, despite Labour's emphasis on voluntarism, the thesis contends that pragmatic electoral calculation still outweighed principle in Labour policymaking. The inclusion of housing and employment in the 1965 Race Relations Act was rejected as it would have risked antagonising public opinion in the very regions the Labour Party had been trying to placate through the extension of controls, by reinforcing the views of voters in these regions that immigrants were being given preferential treatment. Consequently, in line with the commitment made by his predecessor, Wilson introduced limited legislation to outlaw racial discrimination and incitement to racial hatred in public places, alongside alternative means of easing racial discrimination in housing and employment. However, this two-fold approach was not universally supported within the party and, as with immigration restrictions, elicited divergent views. Cabinet Ministers, such as Richard Crossman, Ray Gunter, and Frank Cousins, all of whom had responsibilities in the fields of housing or employment, welcomed a voluntary approach, believing it would ease racial discrimination in these areas without antagonising prejudiced Labour voters. Others, including Barbara Castle and Roy Jenkins, remained convinced that wider reaching legislation represented the best means of effectively challenging racial discrimination, but lacked the necessary evidence to discredit the voluntary approach.

In identifying and critically analysing the evolution of the Labour Party's two-fold race relations strategy this thesis has disputed assumptions regarding the Labour Party's subsequent decision to introduce a second Race Relations Act in 1968. The transition from the limited scope of the 1965 Act to a more wide reaching Act in 1968, which included both housing and employment, has frequently been attributed to concerted liberal revisionist campaigning led by the Home Secretary, Roy Jenkins, who opposed the traditional liberal voluntarist approach and instead wanted to extend individual rights through legislation. Jenkins' commitment to civil liberties was, according to Rose, the driving force behind the campaign for the extension of

race relations legislation.<sup>17</sup> Others, including Bleich, Hampshire, and Saggar, have also emphasised the centrality of Jenkins in initiating the 1968 Race Relations Act.<sup>18</sup> Whilst not disputing that this was a contributing factor to the decision to introduce a second Race Relations Act, this thesis has illustrated that the influence of Jenkins and the liberal revisionists has been overstated at the expense of other equally important factors. Firstly, the thesis has argued that the failure of the two-fold approach to effectively reduce racial discrimination in housing and employment played a major role in facilitating the extension of race relations legislation to cover these areas in 1968. Despite the belief of some within the party that general housing policy was the best means of reducing racial discrimination in this area by removing competition for housing, this did nothing to challenge the causes of discrimination which went beyond material factors alone. Moreover, the success of this strategy relied on the voluntary co-operation of local authorities, which was not always forthcoming, and in some cases allowed the continuation and extension of discriminatory housing policies. This was demonstrated, for instance, through the lengthy residential qualifications imposed by local authorities in Birmingham and the approval of schemes such as the Birmingham Corporation Act in 1965, both of which increased discrimination towards immigrants.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the party's failure to reduce racial discrimination in housing through general housing policy and the voluntary efforts of local authorities, together with growing evidence of continuing discrimination in this area, prompted a review of policy and a pragmatic shift towards the acceptance of legislative action.

With regards to employment, the thesis has drawn attention to the important yet marginalised IWA for their role in helping to precipitate the 1968 Act. The IWA, together with other immigrant organisations, led a concerted campaign in support of stronger and more wide-reaching race relations legislation. As a workers association

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<sup>17</sup> E.J.B. Rose and associates, *Colour & Citizenship – A Report on British Race Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969); pp. 513-515.

<sup>18</sup> Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 85; Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', pp. 322-325; Saggar, 'Re-examining the 1964-70 Labour Government's Race Relations Strategy', p. 267.

<sup>19</sup> John Rex and Robert Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict – A study of Sparkbrook* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 24; Sheila Patterson, *Immigration and Race Relations in Britain 1960-1967* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), p. 233.

they were especially keen to see legislation extended to employment to ensure fair and non-discriminatory treatment in this area. Nonetheless, their contribution to the campaign for the extension of race relations legislation has either been ignored or undervalued in favour of a narrative which credits Jenkins with providing the impetus for the 1968 Act.<sup>20</sup> The marginalisation of the important role played by immigrant associations, in particular the IWA, has been countered in the thesis which has argued that pressure for reform exerted by immigrant communities, particularly through electoral means, alerted Wilson to the dangers of alienating an expanding section of the electorate who were willing to protest through the ballot box. This was made clear during the 1966 general election, where immigrant voters in Labour held Birmingham All Saints and Birmingham Sparkbrook were encouraged by the IWA and other immigrant associations to boycott voting due to the attitude of Labour candidates toward Commonwealth immigrants.<sup>21</sup> Therefore, the thesis has illustrated that the incorporation of immigrant opinion within Labour's definition of public opinion was reflected not only in their refusal to countenance further restrictions after 1968, but also in their decision to introduce a second more stringent Race Relations Act in 1968 to tackle the development of racially segregated communities and workplaces. This decision making did not derive from deep seated social liberal principle, but was, once again, the product of pragmatic electoral calculation. In applying this analytical lens to the debate between Labour and the TUC over the parameters of race relations legislation, this thesis has provided original insights into the extent to which the extension of race relations laws to employment soured relations between the Labour Party and the TUC. Clashes between the party and the TUC over a number of policy areas led to burgeoning doubts in the Labour Party over the merits of maintaining a close alliance with the TUC and a desire by Wilson to assert his independence from the unions. Overruling

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<sup>20</sup> Bleich has acknowledged immigrant organisations but argued they played a minor, supporting role in the campaign for the extension of legislation. Dilip Hiro has also discussed the leading role of the IWA in challenging immigration restrictions but does not extend this to race relations legislation, and James Hampshire disputes that immigrant groups had any influence on the introduction of legislation. Bleich, *Race Politics in Britain and France*, p. 85; Hiro, *Black British, White British*, pp. 138-144; Hampshire, 'Immigration and Race Relations', p. 317.

<sup>21</sup> LHASC, General Election 1966 press cuttings box, 'Immigrant attack on Labour', *The Guardian*, 25 March 1966; 'No Voting by Immigrants', *Express and Star*, 25 March 1966.

the objections of the TUC by bringing employment under the remit of the 1968 Race Relations Act provided a clear opportunity to do so. The thesis contends that the debate between Labour and the TUC over this legislation was an important precursor to *In Place of Strife* in damaging the party's relationship with the unions and contributing to Labour's diminishing share of the vote amongst trade unionists at the 1970 general election. This marks an important departure from existing historiography which has hitherto attributed the decline in trade unionist support for Labour in 1970 to the conflict between the party and the TUC over prices and incomes policy, and resentment over *In Place of Strife*.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the thesis has argued that the failure of the party's two-fold approach to reduce racial discrimination combined with developing awareness of the need to appeal to immigrant voters and the Labour Party's deteriorating relationship with the TUC to play a major role in initiating a more far reaching Race Relations Act in 1968.

In interrogating the Labour Party's dual strategy on immigration restrictions and race relations more closely, this thesis has challenged the generalisations present in both the racialisation and public opinion perspectives regarding the Labour Party's approach to Commonwealth immigration in this period. Proponents of the racialisation argument have referred very generally to political parties in this period, arguing that both Labour and Conservative governments continually tried to restrict the entry of Commonwealth immigrants to Britain due to their own racist views. Yet this sweeping condemnation makes no acknowledgment of the internal divisions created over immigration policy within the Labour Party. Likewise, public opinion scholars have treated the Labour Party's move from opposing to supporting immigration restrictions as a unified and collective transition influenced by anti-immigrant public opinion, with little recognition that this was a contested policy decision within the PLP.<sup>23</sup> By extending the scope of analysis beyond ministerial level, where careerism restrained official dissent from party policy, this thesis has

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<sup>22</sup> Hugh Clegg, *The Changing System of Industrial Relations in Great Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed), p. 319; Fielding, *The Labour governments 1964-1970*, p. 219; Henry Pelling, *A History of British Trade Unionism* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992, 5<sup>th</sup> ed), p. 283; Bill Simpson, *Labour: the unions and the party* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1973), p. 114.

<sup>23</sup> See introduction for a detailed overview of the historiography.

demonstrated that the response of the wider parliamentary party to the decision to extend immigration controls was far more diverse.

Where it has been recognised that opposition to the Labour Party's decision to extend controls existed within the PLP, this has been depicted as a moral issue which united the liberal revisionists on the party's right wing, influenced by Gaitskell and later Jenkins, with MPs on the left wing of the party.<sup>24</sup> In contrast, this thesis has disputed the view that liberal revisionist MPs, led by Gaitskell and, latterly, Jenkins, consistently advocated a principled socially liberal approach to immigration by showing that they in fact adopted a pragmatic approach to restrictions. The thesis has questioned Gaitskell's credentials as a principled opponent of immigration restrictions by illustrating the highly pragmatic and tactical nature of his response to the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Similarly, although Jenkins and his supporters may have been committed to the pursuit of racial equality, they did not view the restriction of Commonwealth immigration as contradicting that goal. Consequently, they fell in line behind the restriction of Commonwealth immigration after 1965, fearing the electoral repercussions of failing to extend restrictions. The continued opposition of a small number of liberal revisionist MPs to the extension of controls, therefore, was not representative of any wider, principled socially liberal approach advocated by Gaitskell or Jenkins, as has been assumed in the existing historiography. Conversely, the thesis has identified MPs on the Labour left and their allies in the IWA and the MCF as the most principled opponents of restrictions and advocates of race relations legislation. Motivated by anti-racist, socialist sentiments, as opposed to socially liberal principles, these MPs and activists promoted an alternative approach to Commonwealth immigration based on confronting and re-educating public opinion. Thus, immigration controls were strongly opposed in favour of an educationalist approach combined with stronger race relations legislation. The views of the left were counterbalanced by the trade unions and their

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<sup>24</sup> See for example Tim Bale, *Sacred Cows and Common Sense: the Symbolic Statecraft and Political Culture of the British Labour Party* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 1999), p.187; Steven Fielding, 'Brotherhood and the brothers: Responses to 'coloured' immigration in the British Labour Party c. 1951-1965', *Journal of Political Ideologies* 3, 1 (1998), pp. 83-88; Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-war Britain: The Institutional Origins of a Multicultural Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.130.

sponsored MPs on the right of the PLP who acted as conduits for illiberal working class opinion through their support for restrictions and opposition to the extension of race relations legislation. For this group, Labour's electoral prospects were inextricably linked to the protection of white working class living standards. This meant limiting Commonwealth immigration, which was perceived as a threat to the job security and bargaining power of the working class. Upholding the principles of voluntarism, which underpinned free collective bargaining, and retaining union autonomy to manage racial discrimination in a way that did not compromise white working class living standards was a key priority for this group. However, whilst this right wing union perspective may have initially won through on immigration restrictions and race relations, this thesis has demonstrated that its influence on party policy diminished notably after 1966. The extension of race relations legislation in 1968 to cover employment, in particular, represented a wholesale abandonment of the party's voluntarist approach to this area and, as has already been identified, was an important contributing factor in the declining support of trade unionists for the Labour Party in the 1970 election.

Therefore, as this thesis has shown, in the context of immigration restrictions and race relations, social liberalism proved to be a highly contested concept. Building on the work of Fielding, who has drawn attention to the opposing views of Labour Party members on immigration,<sup>25</sup> this thesis has illuminated the divergent views on immigration restrictions and race relations policy which existed within the PLP too. These matters presented the Labour Party with a policy dilemma which had no clear solution and certainly none which would generate consensus either inside or outside of the party. As such, the emergence of immigration and race relations as issues of high electoral importance were troublesome and, frankly, inconvenient for the Labour Party. As Fielding attests, ultimately 'black immigration was an issue Labour was ill prepared to address and one many wished would disappear as quickly as possible.'<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, once immigration and race relations emerged as electoral

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<sup>25</sup> Fielding, 'Brotherhood and the brothers'.

<sup>26</sup> Fielding, *The Labour Governments 1964-1970*, p. 140.



issues during the late 1950s they retained their salience, exerting profound influence over the political agenda at various points for the next decade and beyond. Throughout this period successive Labour leaders grappled with Commonwealth immigration as they sought to manage public opinion alongside competing interpretations of the principles of equality and liberalism which existed within the parliamentary party. The contested nature of policy debate on immigration restrictions and race relations legislation within the PLP ultimately meant that public opinion became the decisive factor when formulating the Labour Party's dual strategy on immigration restrictions and race relations. By considering both elements of this dual strategy in an equal manner, as opposed to using one as context for the other, this thesis has made significant contributions to historical understanding of the Labour Party's approach to Commonwealth immigration c. 1958-c.1968. Ultimately, the thesis has demonstrated that Labour's dual strategy on immigration restrictions and race relations was not guided by a principled, socially liberal approach. Instead, an electorally pragmatic response to policy development was adopted in both of these areas, influenced by public opinion. Despite the efforts of the Labour Party to remove immigration as an electoral issue and ease racial discrimination through their dual strategy, this unravelled after 1968. The unexpected victory of the Conservative Party in 1970 and the subsequent introduction of the 1971 Immigration Act represented a clear failure of the Labour Party's dual strategy and confirmed that immigration continued to resonate just as strongly with the British electorate as it had done in 1964.

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