

POWELL, THE MINORITIES, AND THE 1970 ELECTION

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THE election of 1966 proved to be a major setback for all those who had predicted that issues of immigration and race would play a major part in the course of the campaign and in determining the results. After the hectic 1964 Parliament, which had opened with the defeat of Patrick Gordon Walker at Smethwick and continued with what was widely seen as the betrayal of Labour's principles in the Prime Minister's White Paper of 1965, it seemed plausible to expect that the election that followed would be one in which race relations figured prominently. In fact, the opposite turned out to be true—and one newly re-elected Labour member was moved to exclaim that the race issue had been "buried". Equally, however, those who took this burial to have been a once-for-all ceremony and argued that race relations would play no significant part in the 1970 election have been proved wrong.

The Commonwealth Immigrants Act

On the face of it, the general view that race relations had declined in importance during the 1966 Parliament is rather a surprising one. The Labour victory in 1966—and, more important, the manner in which it had been obtained—provided breathing space for constructive initiatives which Roy Jenkins put to good use. The passage of anti-discrimination legislation was the chief but by no means only feature of what now seemed a brief Indian Summer for race relations in Britain. After Jenkins left the Home Office, a sharp deterioration set in. This can be dated fairly precisely from the passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act in 1968, which had as its principal purpose the exclusion from Britain of British citizens of Asian origin from Kenya. This legislation placed the Government in breach both of undertakings entered into at the time of Kenyan independence and of international conventions—as the International Commission of Jurists subsequently pointed out. Per-

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haps more important, this legislation represents the point at which Labour in power finally forfeited the belief that Labour was ultimately the Party that had the interests of minorities at heart. The passage of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act also helped to open a new stage in the development of race relations in Britain by providing the occasion for Enoch Powell's belated descent into the arena. Powell's first major speech on this issue, in April 1968, is too well known to require quotation: in style, it was the prototype of several succeeding orations in which the calculated use of extreme language clothed a position shifting towards advocacy of more drastic policies. The speeches earned Powell dismissal and subsequent excommunication from the Shadow Cabinet, together with an enormous fund of publicity on which he was able to draw for subsequent speeches.

The significance of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act as a turning-point is underlined when the movement of public opinion on this issue is more closely examined. The evidence of opinion polls suggests that at the beginning of 1968 a narrow majority existed in favour of legislation against discrimination. But after the debate was wrenched back by Powell's intervention into the immigration frame of reference, all the evidence suggests that government policy was strongly repudiated by the bulk of those questioned. Even if the level of support for Enoch Powell's position did eventually turn downwards at the end of the 1966 Parliament, there was no doubt that from 1968 onwards the majority saw his position as basically more satisfying than that of the Government.

In a sense, this rejection of a policy which was seen as far too lax towards the admission of immigrants is odd, since in the case of the 1966 Parliament the Labour Party's immigration policy became progressively more stringent. The Prime Minister's White Paper of 1965, with its drastic reduction in the number of vouchers issued to Commonwealth citizens, was succeeded after the 1966 election by a steadily more restrictive attitude towards new entrants. This culminated in the 1968 Act and the announcement by the then Minister of Labour, Ray Gunter, in the same month, that immigration from the Commonwealth would be treated in the same way as immigration by aliens, for the purposes of the issuing of vouchers for new entrants.

This progressive increase in stringency, which bore political fruit in the shape of a sharp decline in the entry statistics after 1968, placed the Conservative Opposition in an awkward situation. Immigration policy clearly provided a fruitful ground for attack,

in the light of the rejection of government policy by the majority of the electorate. Yet full-blooded Powellism was equally unacceptable for tactical reasons as much as on grounds of principle. The official Conservative line eventually evolved by Central Office and enunciated by the Leader of the Party consisted of an uneasy compromise in which the style of the proposals moved some distance towards Powellism, with its emphasis on further restrictions on the freedom of movement and the status of newcomers, but the substance amounted to a reaffirmation of the Labour Government's policy of stringent numerical restrictions coupled with a much qualified right of entry for dependants. The fact that the British electorate perceived this policy as significantly different from that of Labour says more about the accuracy of their perception of immigration policy than it does about the distinctiveness of Conservative policy.

Party Policy on Race Relations

The other limb of official policy in the 1966 Parliament—what might be termed the constructive race relations aspect—displayed the parties in even closer agreement. The fact that the 1968 Race Relations Act had been opposed at various stages of its passage by the Shadow Cabinet—even if it was left to a group of malcontent backbenchers to divide the House on the third reading—masks the acceptance of the principle of anti-discrimination legislation by the Conservative Opposition. The efficiency of the Race Relations Board and the comparative smoothness with which it assimilated the new range of powers conferred upon it by the 1968 Act contributed towards this acceptance and helped the Board to ride out the frankly absurd episode of the Scottish doctor whose house-keeper's porridge made endless headlines in the silly season of 1969. On this front, at least, there was never any real sign that the Tory Party would yield to its extremists and adopt a policy of abolition.

In short, the area of agreement between the two major parties upon race relations as the election approached was very much greater than it might have appeared. Nor did the Liberals—who had corporately opposed the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968 and could reasonably claim to have a more consistent record on race relations than either of the major parties—choose to make an issue out of their disagreements with them. Thus there were substantial reasons in the past debate on policy for expecting that race relations would not be allowed to figure prominently in the election campaign. Richard Crossman, with his usual facility in

these matters, actually let slip during the campaign that such a tacit understanding existed. He did not mean (although he was misunderstood on this point) that a formal concordat had been concluded. He merely implied that both Conservative and Labour tacticians had decided, quite understandably, that the electoral profit to be obtained from stressing the differences in policy was insufficient to compensate for the risks that both leaderships saw in allowing the issue to get out of hand. For this view there was some support to be found in the opinion polls taken during the run-up to the election. In a survey carried out by National Opinion Poll in February 1970, immigration was ranked as the fourth most urgent problem out of ten facing the country, and was mentioned by 26 per cent. of those interviewed—a lower figure than that in a similar survey in October 1969. In the four Gallup surveys carried out in the month before the election, no more than 10 per cent. of the sample ever selected immigration as the most urgent problem facing the country and in the final poll, two days before the election, only 8 per cent. mentioned immigration, the cost of living issue having captured far more attention.

Two factors largely unconsidered in preliminary consideration of the campaign modified this situation. First, there was the nature of Enoch Powell's performance during the course of the election campaign. The view had been widely expressed that Powell had defined the furthest acceptable limits in his Eastbourne speech of November 1968, in which he pressed for the introduction of a Ministry of Repatriation. Although he had returned to a theme of race relations after that speech, there had been a marked change in the manner in which he approached the subject. In substance, his subsequent speeches had consisted of a detailed wrangle with the Registrar-General about the manner in which statistics had been assembled and the content of some of the population forecasts to which the Registrar-General's office had committed itself. Although it was not to be expected that Powell would entirely refrain from comment on this issue it seemed plausible to suppose that he would not make a major issue out of a topic which had cost him any expectations of office.

The Role of Immigrant Minorities

The significance of the role of the minorities themselves, which was the second factor, also tended to be overlooked. In the past, the minorities from the new Commonwealth have been patients, not agents, in the political debate on their presence. Previous elections

had been the occasion for speculation on the response of the white majority: immigrants have been seen chiefly as a stimulus which promotes certain sections of Labour supporters into defecting to the Conservatives. It was in this way that the unexpected deviation of the West Midlands from the national pattern in 1964—of which the Smethwick result was the most obvious example—was explained. Areas which had recently received substantial numbers of immigrants tended to show a lower than average swing to Labour at the election, in some cases a swing to the Conservatives. Butler and Stokes' findings suggest that the perception of differences between the positions of major parties was greatly heightened in areas of high immigrant concentration. It was also argued that a ripple effect would become discernible in due course, when constituencies in suburban areas began to display signs of anxiety at the prospect of the entry of newcomers with the attendant threat to property values. However, no convincing empirical evidence to support this generalisation could be derived from the results of elections of 1964 and 1966. A subsidiary effect of the presence of minorities in 1964 was the appearance and comparative success of candidates of small minor parties (or in the one or two cases independents) who sopped up resentment for which major parties were not at that stage disposed to cater.

There have in the past three years been some signs at local government elections that this situation would not persist in this form. But isolated incidences in which minorities have participated as actors in the political process have tended to be dismissed on the grounds that geographical concentration on a constituency level would not be high enough to enable coloured candidates to appear sufficiently attractive to major parties as vote getters. And, indeed, it is easily demonstrable that the level of concentration is not yet high enough to allow one to think in terms of a situation like the American, in which ethnic minorities have been able to establish themselves within the political system by virtue of the very high degree of concentration (see Table I). Furthermore, even granted that the level of concentration is increasing (a questionable proposition), the best evidence suggests that the level of registration among black and brown voters is still considerably below the national average.

But to argue in this way, it is now clear, was to underestimate the importance of issues in mobilising minorities. A great deal of the political discussion on race relations is based on the unspoken assumption that minorities are deaf or unheeding. This belief has

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TABLE I

The Twenty Constituencies with the Highest Proportion of New Commonwealth Immigrants (1966 Census)

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>% New Commonwealth</i>	<i>Constituency</i>	<i>% New Commonwealth</i>
Islington North	15.76	Hornsey	11.87
Stoke Newington & Hackney North	14.38	Battersea South	11.60
Birmingham—All Saints	13.75	Lambeth—Brixton	11.53
Willesden West	13.34	Islington East	10.95
Paddington North	13.09	Willesden East	10.82
Islington S. West	12.93	Lambeth—Norwood	10.80
Birmingham—Handsworth	12.09	Southall	10.62
Tottenham	11.94	Paddington South	9.96
Bradford East	11.93	Kensington North	9.79
		Hammersmith North	9.79
		Manchester—Moss Side	9.64

N.B.—New Commonwealth includes those born in the Commonwealth and colonies excluding those born in Australia, Canada and New Zealand.

Source : Sample Census 1966, Parliamentary Constituency Tables.

been given tangible form in the ministerial arrangements at the Home Office under the Labour Government, in which one Under-Secretary has been responsible both for immigration control—and hence for a policy of increasing stringency towards minorities—and for race relations and, in that context, a policy designed to reassure minorities about the Government's intentions. This contradiction has not gone unnoticed. In fact, the West Indians—a highly politicised minority group accustomed through two decades of highly controversial and competitive politics in the Caribbean to the dialectic of parliamentary election—have shown themselves highly sensitive to currents of opinion in the majority community that affect them directly. This is not as true of the Asian minorities, with the exception of a middle-class element, but with this group (especially the Pakistanis) the vernacular Press fulfils the function of informing and moulding opinion. Perhaps predictably, the coverage given before the election to the policies of the major political parties tended to be extremely hostile to the position advocated by Mr. Powell and not overscrupulous in drawing the difficult distinction between Powell's position and that of the Conservative Party. This hostility provided the necessary countervailing force to balance the disillusionment of all minorities with the record of the Labour Government.

The Impact of Mr. Powell

In the course of the campaign this second effect went largely unnoticed by the Press and the mass media, who concentrated largely upon the first—the impact of Enoch Powell. The publication of Mr. Powell's election address so early in the election campaign created a flurry of publicity. Calling for an end to the automatic entry of dependants into Britain, a new law of citizenship and an emphasis on repatriation, Mr. Powell left no doubt that he was in fundamental opposition to the Conservative Party's views on immigration. This may not have been a great surprise to Conservative leaders, who had attempted a week before this to appeal to Mr. Powell to persuade his unofficial supporters outside the Party to withdraw from constituencies where they were endangering the official Conservative candidates, but it was certainly an embarrassment. Within the Party, Mr. Powell enjoyed considerable support—forty-three M.P.s had voted with him against the third reading of the Race Relations Act: several members of this group—Ronald Bell (Buckinghamshire South) and Harold Gurden (Birmingham—Selly Oak), for example—had used the immigration issue in their own election addresses. There is little evidence to support the view that Conservative candidates belatedly jumped onto a band-wagon after Mr. Powell had declared his position so forcibly.

With the possibility of a painful rift within the Conservative ranks emerging, Mr. Heath and Mr. Maudling were forced into defining their disagreement—and the tone was set for the duration of the campaign. Mr. Quintin Hogg's later speech explaining the Conservative Party's rejection of Mr. Powell's views complicated the situation further: and considerable speculation was provoked about Mr. Powell's personal motivation. But ironically it was a Labour Minister, Mr. Wedgwood Benn, who temporarily released the Conservatives from further embarrassment. Mr. Benn's emotional speech attacking Mr. Powell and invoking comparisons with Nazi Germany helped to deflect criticism of Powell's position and enabled the Conservative leaders to ride off on the question of Benn's irresponsible use of language. Sir Alec Douglas-Home and Mr. Heath both spoke in this vein. It is hard to see Mr. Benn's speech as anything but an unpredictable tactical error—Mr. Wilson and officials at Transport House appeared as surprised as the Opposition, particularly since there was little evidence that Mr. Benn previously had been greatly concerned about immigration or race relations. But despite the publicity given to Mr. Powell and Mr. Benn, the general public appear to have been less interested in this issue than

the media. For in the Gallup Poll taken during the week of May 31–June 4, only 9 per cent. of the population mentioned immigration as the most urgent problem facing the country.

Mr. Powell's most controversial contribution to the campaign was made only a week before election day. In it, he alleged that Britain had been misled over immigration figures and implied that there were traitors in the Civil Service, on the analogy of Philby and the Foreign Service. But even this speech did not succeed in injecting the race issue as a central element in the campaign. After these last two speeches, speculation turned largely on Powell's general political ambitions. Mr. Heath's campaign appeared to be failing, the polls were indicating a likely Labour victory and yet Mr. Powell was continuing his assault on the Conservative leadership. The manner and timing of this attack on Mr. Heath gained more publicity than the well-worn theme.

Coloured Candidates

Among the publicity about Powell's intervention and speculation about the significance of immigration as an election issue the presence of coloured candidates was generally ignored. Eight candidates from ethnic minorities stood for election, including three for the Liberal Party and one for the Labour Party. But it was only Dr. David Pitt, Vice-Chairman of the Greater London Council, Labour candidate for Clapham, who attracted much national publicity. The three Liberal candidates—who, like Dr. Pitt, were not campaigning on a race ticket—attracted minimal interest, and apart from an attack on Mr. Musa (Liberal candidate for Bradford East) by "skinheads", publicity was restricted to the local Press in Bradford, Smethwick and Sheffield where the candidates were standing. Of the other immigrant candidates, only Mr. Makoni (a coloured Rhodesian) attracted publicity—in the form of strong criticism by the *Yorkshire Post* over the misuse of public funds, since he was sponsored by York University Students Union. And though coloured immigrant organisations urged their members to vote Labour in the election, it is significant that many organisations presented this as an anti-Conservative vote. "There is now a general feeling that we can't opt out", observed Mr. Jeff Crawford, secretary of the West Indian Standing Conference. But he added that "there is a growing feeling that we must vote Labour—as an anti-Tory vote". Dr. Dhani Prem, Chairman of the Central Committee of Indian organisations, said "that though Labour had estranged the Indian community by 'various unnecessary controls' a

Conservative victory in the election would have dire consequences". The guide issued by the League of Overseas Pakistanis said that "when the choice is between a Tory Government with stalwarts like Powell, and a Labour Government with people like Roy Jenkins in it, then our choice should be clear and positive". However, the influence of many of the small local organisations is likely to have been slight. As in previous elections, a number of candidates of minor parties and small anti-immigrant groups put in an appearance. But their ground for manoeuvre had been pre-empted by the major parties; Press attention was directed towards the right-wingers within the Conservative Party. In isolated cases like Leicester—where three far-right-wingers stood—a sustained campaign in one area did succeed in provoking debate on immigration, which may have been indirectly reflected in results locally.

By the close of the campaign, race did not appear to have established itself as a central election issue; its impact was expected to be confined to a small number of seats only. The mass media had devoted considerable attention to Powell and his supporters, but the issue appeared largely played out. Minority candidates and far-right-wingers, who had attracted some interest in previous years, were ignored; and little attention had been paid to the voting intention of the coloured immigrants themselves.

The wholly unexpected outcome of the campaign had the initial effect of masking some of the eddies in the pattern of results, among them the impact of the presence of minorities. But on closer examination a pattern clearly emerges. The swing towards the Conservatives slowed up considerably in areas of substantial immigrant settlement and was reduced to an even lower level in areas with a substantial Irish-born population.

How the Immigrants Voted

It is of course possible to argue that there are other explanations of the deviant behaviour of seats with a substantial immigrant population. In order to test the original hypothesis JUMPR carried out a survey of people voting in two wards of high immigrant settlement, one in Paddington North and one in Hornsey. In Paddington North, a seat held by Labour, 24.6 per cent. of the population of Harrow Road Ward is made up of West Indians, Africans, Pakistanis and Indians (according to the 1966 Census). At one polling station observed throughout the whole day, 33.4 per cent. of those voting were coloured. At the other four polling stations observed at the peak voting hours of 5 p.m.–10 p.m., 17.6

per cent., 21.9 per cent., 25.2 per cent. and 41.1 per cent. of those leaving the station were seen to be black. Allowing for the fact that these figures may be a slight overestimation, since a higher proportion of coloured voters may vote in the evening, and that there was no check here as to whether the individual was actually on the electoral roll or casting his vote at the right polling station, the figures do suggest that in this area of high immigrant concentration, a high proportion of black people voted.

In the Conservative-held constituency of Hornsey, the proportion of those in the South Hornsey Ward born in the Caribbean, India, Pakistan and African Commonwealth is 14.1 per cent. (according to the 1966 Census). Correcting for the differing age structures of the black and white population, the Census figures show that 15.5 per cent. of the population in South Hornsey over eighteen years of age was born in the New Commonwealth. Black voters cast 17.5 per cent. of all the votes in the ward, and observers were able to notice here that a considerable number of potential coloured voters found that they were not on the electoral register. So despite the fact that there has probably been a large increase in the black population of the ward since 1966, the survey showed that, as in Paddington, immigrants were far from alienated from the political process.

Though this survey produced no evidence of party choice, the Harris Poll carried out for the *Daily Express* showed 26 per cent. of coloured immigrants sampled intended to vote Conservative, 70 per cent. to vote Labour and 4 per cent. to vote Liberal. Other small surveys, and statements from immigrant organisations, support the view that coloured immigrants were firmly behind the Labour Party.

There does not appear to have been any substantial compensating disadvantage for Labour in terms of alienation of traditional support. Hoinville's and Jowell's analysis suggests that the sections of electorate among whom Labour suffered disproportionate losses were not those substantially represented in seats of high immigrant concentration (*New Society*, July 2, 1970). In this sense, the effect of Powell appears to have been limited to a restricted number of seats in constituencies close to his own in the West Midlands.

In Wolverhampton S.W. the swing to Mr. Powell was 8.3 per cent. (the average for the Midlands being 5.3 per cent.). In Wolverhampton N.E., Mr. Geoffrey Wright, a dedicated supporter of Mr. Powell, almost dislodged Mrs. Renée Short with a swing of 8.7 per cent. In Brierley Hill, Fergus Montgomery, an outspoken supporter of Mr. Powell, also achieved a 9.1 per cent. swing to the

Conservatives. But perhaps the most surprising result was in Cannock, where Miss Jennie Lee's 11,027 majority was converted to a 1,529 Conservative majority in a 10.7 per cent. swing. This result attracted the most publicity, with references to a "Powell Belt", but since the result the new Tory M.P. has declared his support for the Party line on immigration.

The Results of Powellism

Although Powell supporters do appear to have reaped a benefit in the heart of the West Midlands, Mr. Powell's own appearances in support of his colleagues do not seem to have influenced the swing to the Conservatives throughout the country. For in Smethwick, where Mr. Powell spoke in support of Mr. Brian Rathbone, the Labour member, Mr. Andrew Faulds, held the seat with one of the lowest swings to the Conservatives (1.6 per cent.). Rugby witnessed one of the freak swings to Labour—2.6 per cent., in spite of Mr. Powell's much publicised visit; and in The Wrekin and Selly Oak where Powell also campaigned, the swing to the Conservatives was less than 2 per cent. Though there were a number of high swings to the Conservatives in what might be called "infection" areas, these were in constituencies with very low immigrant populations. There is an identifiable trend in the opposite direction in seats with substantial immigrant populations: All Saints 1.2 per cent. swing to Labour, Handsworth only 1.0 per cent. to the Conservatives and in Selly Oak a 1.2 per cent. swing to Harold Gurden, a fervent supporter of Mr. Powell.

Nor was advocacy of Powellite views a substantial source of extra support for Conservative candidates. There is no sustained pattern of higher than average swings to Powellite Conservatives, nor is there a significant difference between results in constituencies with a number of immigrants where such candidates stood compared with those with a negligible proportion (see Table II).

Generally, what is striking about the participation of minorities is that it took place in wholly orthodox style. The effect of the votes which were cast was to add one variation to the existing pattern, not to create a new aberration from it. Particularly suggestive in this context was the failure of the candidates put up on a purely ethnic basis—some within the Liberal Party and some as independents. Equally, the candidates of the small anti-immigrant parties and similar independent candidates did very much worse than on previous occasions.

In many ways, this is not a surprising situation. There is a

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TABLE II

Conservative Candidates who have Spoken in Favour of Powell's Views on Immigration

<i>Constituency</i>	<i>Candidate</i>	<i>% Swing to Conservatives</i>	<i>% New Commonwealth (1966 Census)</i>
Belper	Stewart Smith	5.0	0.21
Cannock	Cormack	10.7	0.55
Birmingham—Selly Oak	Gurden	1.2	7.87
Worcestershire S.	Nabarro	6.1	0.86
Brierley Hill	Montgomery	9.1	0.42
Islington East	Devonald-Lewis	2.8	10.95
Wolverhampton S.W.	Powell	8.3	8.36
Wolverhampton N.E.	Wright	8.7	6.01
Huddersfield East	Holt	7.4	4.12
Smethwick	Rathbone	1.6	6.59
St. Albans	Goodhew	5.3	2.27
Stratford	Maude	6.3	0.76
Ormskirk	Soref	2.9	0.44
Croydon South	Thompson	3.5	2.52
Dudley	Williams	9.2	2.15
Rugby	Griffith	-6.0	2.04
Birmingham—Northfield	Bell	8.6	0.61
The Wrekin	Trafford	1.0	1.28
Wells	Boscawen	5.2	0.68
Yarmouth	Fell	3.9	0.39
Ilford South	Cooper	4.6	2.85
Oswestry	Biffen	5.4	0.66
N. Dorset	James	4.2	1.38
Lichfield	D'Avigdor-Goldsmid	5.1	0.39
Falmouth	Mudd	5.1	0.90
Portsmouth S.	Pink	2.9	2.03
Lambeth—Brixton	Harkess	4.2	11.53
Truro	Dixon	6.1	0.64
Buckingham	Benyon	4.1	0.84
Portsmouth W.	Clarke	0.1	2.17

suggestive parallel with the way in which the Irish became absorbed into the mainstream of British politics but retained a distinctive tendency to vote on one side. There is no reason in principle why immigrant participation should not come to be accepted as legitimate, as it has been in the case of the Irish.

The Case of Clapham and Dr. Pitt

There is, however, one exception to the rule that the effect of immigration took place in conventional form, and that is the result at Clapham. But in terms of this thesis of increasing minority

integration, the Clapham result needs to be explained. Dr. David Pitt, a West Indian, was standing for Labour in a constituency with a Labour majority of 4,176 in 1966. He concentrated his campaign upon the orthodox issues of the election: race was not raised by him or his Tory opponent, William Shelton. Dr. Pitt was well known for his contribution to local politics, having served for ten years on the G.L.C. Yet the swing against him was 10.2 per cent. What had contributed to the very low turnout and an 11 per cent. decrease in the Labour vote? To some degree, the internal conflicts within the Clapham Labour Party and the resignation of the former M.P., Mrs. McKay, may have contributed. The Party machine was ill-prepared, and Dr. Pitt and his new agent had only three weeks' campaigning time. After deploying these arguments in a letter to *The Times* and claiming that "if I had had three months instead of less than three weeks, I would have won Clapham", Pitt himself concluded: "I think it is therefore fair to conclude that race played only a small part in my defeat in Clapham and I think we will be doing the community a grave disservice if we rated it any higher". But these reasons cannot quite account for the enormous swing. Race may not have been totally ignored by the Labour abstainers, particularly since during the campaign Dr. Pitt had been misrepresented by the Press as a "Black Power advocate". Another possible source of injury was the racist propaganda circulated on the eve of the election. A leaflet of unknown origin proclaiming: "If you want a coloured for a neighbour, vote Labour. If you're already burdened with one, vote Conservative", which carried no identification as to printer or publisher, was circulated in the constituency. Ultimately, even if Party workers and candidates avoided reference to Dr. Pitt's colour or to racialism, and the campaign was conducted as in any other constituency, the electorate was not ready to accept a West Indian to represent them in Parliament.

The implications of the substantial degree of participation on the part of minorities and the form that it took are considerable. Despite the substantial identity of views between the two major parties and the almost complete absence of candidates prepared to strike out on a distinctively pro-immigrant line the effects of hostile views articulated by a senior politician seem to have been far-reaching. To this extent, those who have argued that the position of the minorities would be one of disillusionment with all major parties and very high abstention, have been proved wrong. The minorities have opted for ballot power, not Black Power; on this occasion, at least.

Can Labour Count on Coloured Votes?

Yet the assumption that Labour will become the beneficiary of an automatic increment of support from black and brown minorities is not necessarily justified. It has been argued that Labour will ultimately benefit in any event from an increment to the voting population of a group which is predominantly a working-class one and can be expected in the normal course of events to vote in line with its class allegiance. The comparatively high incidence of trade union membership—among West Indians, at least—tends to support this view. The gain to the Labour Party on this occasion was on a scale which suggests that the effects of Powellism were stronger than a simple class identification would suggest: but there is no reason to suppose that this will necessarily hold good in other circumstances. Some kind of institutional response on the part of the Labour Party will be necessary to underwrite this accretion of strength. It is argued that in the early 1960s some such process was slowly beginning to take place—West Indian members of General Management Committees of London Labour Parties were becoming a common sight, and a healthy sprinkling of Labour councillors was beginning to appear in successive borough councils in the London area. This process was cut off by a combination of circumstances—a cooling-off among black intellectuals towards Labour as Labour policies changed on obtaining office, a cooling-off of rank-and-file Labour members on the idea of Labour as the Party of the Commonwealth, and the loss of electoral ground by Labour over the middle and late sixties.

The 1970 election showed that personality-based politics involving a real threat to the minorities can reverse that process and give Labour a second chance, however undeserved. But this chance will not be translated into solid electoral gain unless Labour is prepared to face the policy and organisational implications. Campaigns to mobilise minorities during the course of an election that have not been sustained in the period between them are likely to become diminishingly effective, and the pressure on the part of minorities for candidates who are more responsive to their interests and, eventually, come from the same ethnic group is likely to increase. Possibly this process can be staved off by introducing alliances of convenience with representatives of immigrant organisations. However, the best evidence suggests that these organisations are losing their already limited effectiveness as devices for mobilising the vote. Increasingly, Labour supporters will have to be recruited as individuals—in the same way that the Irish have come to be recruited

after the initial wholesale transfer of support after the decline of the Liberal Party in the early twenties. But such an attempt demands a willingness to make concessions in organisational terms which the white rank and file may not necessarily be ready to make. The introduction of black candidates may be acceptable at local level, as David Pitt discovered during his ten years on the G.L.C.—but not at parliamentary level.

For Labour this development is a matter of the longer-term electoral consequences and the desirability of forging the kind of coalition which is loosely parallel to the Democratic Party in the United States and which will ensure that the allegiance of inner areas of major cities is retained despite the slow process of ethnic change that is taking place there. Such a process must not only survive those efforts of the Boundary Commissioners in their re-drawing of constituencies, and the plausible blandishments of the Liberal Party on the left flank, but must also avoid the risks of an ethnic polarisation on the lines of the Orange and Green confrontations of Belfast. As Roy Jenkins observed on television in September 1964: “if in fact you were to get into a position in this country where you had coloured politicians, one party on the side of the coloured and the other against, this would be even worse than religious parties—and as a politician I would be sorry to lose votes on it”.

The Issues Facing the Conservatives

For the Conservatives, as the Party in office, the implications are in some ways more pressing, because they involve short-term policy imperatives as well as the longer-term interests of the Party. It has traditionally been one of the arguments of Conservatives that their Party represents a national interest in the way that a narrowly class-bound Party like the Labour Party cannot do. It now becomes an open question whether the Conservatives' claim to be a broad-based Party can extend to the ethnic minorities. At present, there are few signs that the Party nationally seems aware of the desirability of not cutting this group of electors off completely. There are certainly exceptions at local level, but they are not typical of the attitude in the Party as a whole. The initial policy statement of the new Government seemed to bear out the view that the problem of sustaining such support as has been obtained in the past from minorities is not going to be taken into account when policy is devised. It would be right to delay judgment on Conservative proposals for immigration legislation until they are introduced into

Parliament later this year, but it is symptomatic of a set of attitudes towards immigrants from the New Commonwealth that Conservative proposals for aid to immigrant areas should have been advanced in the form that they take in the Queen's Speech. From 1968, the Labour Government were engaged in the important exercise of refining the aims of the Urban Programme so that they dealt with a population defined not by racial characteristics but by need. By reversing this process the Conservatives have endorsed the conclusion already reached by some local authorities, principally in the Midlands, that the presence of an immigrant is *ipso facto* a social problem and that aid should be related to the simple presence of minorities, regardless of their income, housing situation or family size. A revision of the Urban Programme on these lines would have the effect of reducing the resources available to areas of social need not affected by immigration—the classical slum areas of Merseyside and the North-East. There is an obvious danger that the Conservatives may write off the whole question of the participation of minorities in the electoral process as a closed issue and succumb to the pressure from the right to make a theatrical gesture of rejection of the minorities. Any further measures of immigration control would have few practical implications at a point when immigration has shrunk to 4,000 new workers per year (roughly two days' increment to the population by birth). But such a measure would be significant in broader terms, in hastening polarisation and signalling a clear intention to detach a large proportion of white working-class support from Labour.

Several commentators have pointed toward a parallel between the style of the early days of the Nixon Administration and that of the first months of the Heath Administration in Britain. Whether this parallel will extend to their assessment of the political role of minorities—who have effectively been written off in the American situation by the Republicans as a source of electoral support—is not yet clear. As we have suggested, any such assumption about the British situation would almost certainly be premature. Many black and brown Britons are accidental radicals, whose support for the Labour Party derives from their current perceptions of the position of the Conservative Party. Should good ground for changing these perceptions emerge, the entrepreneurial group within the Asian community might well be disposed towards support of the Conservative Party. Given a degree of willingness on the part of the local Conservative Associations, there is reason to believe, as isolated local

candidates have demonstrated, that a submerged community of interests exists.

There is a form of paradox here, in that Powellism carries with it the seeds of its own destruction. It is not in fact true, as Powell seems to suggest, that the centre of our major cities will be wholly alien territory in ten to fifteen years' time, but if it were, the consequences for the Conservative Party of adopting the current version of Powellite policies would be to cut the Party permanently off from any representation in those areas. And the consequences of such a separation would be to compromise the claims of the Party to be a broad-based organisation reflecting the interests of the community at large.