

The Government's New Community Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy

David Conway



This autumn the Government unveils its new 'Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy', intended to become the basis for a renewed programme of action to strengthen social cohesion and reduce racial inequalities. In announcing its unveiling date, the Home Secretary invited all parts of the nation to participate in a 'robust and honest national debate' on what direction the strategy should take, and to submit their views to his office.

Even before the consultation exercise had begun, the broad contours of the strategy were already discernible. Another

minister, the portentously entitled Parliamentary Under Secretary for Race Equality, Community Policy and Civil Renewal, let it be known her government is not for turning on the subject, no matter what suggestions anyone might care to make. The give-away disclosure comes in the introduction to a Home Office consultation paper, entitled 'Strength in Diversity: Towards a Community Cohesion and Race Equality Strategy'. Of the debate for which the Home Secretary called, the Parliamentary Under Secretary remarked, 'Of course, this isn't the start of the debate... A great many people have dedicated their lives to addressing the issues and challenges ... and it is thanks to their commitment, passion and determination that we are able to elaborate such an ambitious progressive vision of British society'.

The vision elaborated in that paper was reiterated by the Home Secretary in a speech he made to an IPPR conference in July entitled 'New challenges for race equality and community cohesion in the 21st century'. For the most part, the vision amounts to nothing more than a summary statement of the various policy initiatives his government has introduced in recent times in pursuit of these objectives. Hence, the vision provides more than a foretaste of what the 'new' strategy will contain. For anyone concerned Britain remain a free, prosperous and tolerant country, it does not make for pleasant reading.

Pursuit of social cohesion and racial equality need not have resulted in anything as illiberal or damaging as what the government is seeking to introduce in their name. These terms admit of understandings in which they designate worthy ideals. Sadly, the government has chosen to construe them otherwise.

As a benign ideal, social cohesion consists in members of a society being bound together by ties of mutual solidarity. Such ties develop naturally when members of a society identify with and willingly accept and participate in some common set of established institutions and traditions. No society can remain viable unless its members enjoy such a form of social cohesion. A society as diverse as present-day Britain can enjoy such cohesion provided the vast majority of its citizens *(continued on page 3)*

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- Civitas on track to open New Model School



DAVID GREEN IS DIRECTOR OF CIVITAS

“The significance of a high degree of welfare dependency is that many people will look to the Government – in practice to one political party – for part or all of their standard of living.”

Letter from the Director

A Beholden People or an Independent People

Today, about 30% of households receive half or more of their income from other taxpayers. Is this degree of dependency compatible with democracy?

When the Blair Government first came in, it questioned the ‘old Labour’ doctrine of one-sided welfare rights and argued that we had both rights and responsibilities: if you can work you should. But, in reality, welfare dependency has increased. Despite a huge fall in unemployment, there were 240,000 more people on benefits and welfare tax credits in 2003 (6,383,000) than in 1997 (6,143,000).¹ How does that compare with recent history? In 1951 just over 3% of the population received national assistance or unemployment benefit. In 2002, not including the state pension, 26% of households relied on means-tested benefits (22%) or working families tax credit (4%).

Nor is this dependency a matter of ‘topping up’ largely private incomes. In 2002, 30% of households received half or more of their income from the state. Family breakdown is one of the main causes. Only 8% of couples with two children receive income-related benefits, compared with 65% of lone parents with two children.²

Does it matter? The significance of a high degree of welfare dependency is that many people will look to the Government – in practice to one political party – for part or all of their standard of living. This creation of ‘client groups’ in the population undermines the independence of public opinion and invites political manipulation. Before the 2001 election, the party in power claimed to have given a million people a pay rise in the form of the Minimum Wage. Having increased the number of recipients of working tax credit it can now make a similar appeal to them. In November 1997 there were 766,000 recipients of the old family credit. By February 2003 there were 1.4m recipients of working families tax credit.

What should we do? We urgently need to redefine the social contract between the community and its members. The safety net should always be there to prevent hardship, but we need to reconsider what the members of a society can reasonably expect of benefit claimants.

Welfare policy should be based on high expectations of human potential. In a free society, individuals can be expected to make provision for the normal expenses of living, periods during the lifecycle when expenditure will be high (such as child-raising) or income low (especially retirement), and to provide against possible misfortunes (such as ill health or accident). Moreover, individuals can reasonably be expected to choose a family structure that will allow them to support and care for children.

The present Government is creating a group of beholden people who will look with gratitude to one political party for their income. The alternative approach should be built upon independent individuals who look first to their own efforts, but in the confidence that the wider society will always be there to help if things go wrong.

David Green

Notes

1. Client Group Analysis: Quarterly Bulletin on the Population of Working Age on Key Benefits, August 2003, Department for Work and Pensions; Working Families Tax Credit Statistics, Summary Statistics, February 2003, Inland Revenue.
2. Family Resources Survey 2001/02, Department for Work and Pensions.

Civitas Review

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identify with and willingly participate in its dominant culture and traditions. Minorities in Britain can do so without needing to discard their own minority faiths and traditions since, for a long time, its dominant culture and traditions have, by comparative standards, been exceptionally liberal and tolerant. They leave ample space for law-abiding minorities, who wish not to assimilate fully, to retain their own traditional faiths and customs.

The present government has chosen to construe social cohesion otherwise. For it, the members of no society as ethnically and religiously diverse as Britain today is can enjoy it without having learned to ‘value and celebrate’ whatever their cultural differences are. Given current levels of diversity in Britain, social cohesion demands its citizens do more than identify with and participate in its dominant culture and traditions, plus be tolerant and respectful of all residual difference. In particular, the majority must relinquish, to the point of almost total evisceration, the salience their historic national culture and traditions have long enjoyed. In place of such social cohesion as would result from all citizens identifying with and participating in Britain’s historic national culture and traditions to the degree compatible with minorities retaining such elements of their faiths and cultures as they wished to retain, the government wants to produce a different form of social cohesion. It will supposedly arise when we have all learnt to ‘celebrate’ diversity. It requires the vast majority having to undergo a radical cultural makeover in self-identity. It seems eminently more reasonable that, for the sake of social cohesion, the relatively small minority should be those who must make the appropriate adjustment as part of the price to be paid for choosing to the benefits of British domicile and citizenship.

Some claim it unfair to expect adjustments from minorities for the sake of social cohesion that the majority are not equally called upon to make.

These are likely to construe racial equality the way the government does. As with social cohesion, how it construes the notion has transmuted it from being a worthy liberal ideal into a highly illiberal and dangerous one.

In the sense in which racial equality forms a worthy and liberal ideal, it obtains in a racially diverse society when all members enjoy equal status as citizens regardless of their race. This they do by being accorded the same civil and political rights and by the state and all its agencies treating them fairly and impartially in all their dealings with them, regardless of race. In this sense, racial equality no more demands different racial groups enjoy equal average incomes or life chances than liberal equality in a racially homogeneous society demands all citizens enjoy equality of income or life chances.

Again, the government construes racial equality differently. For it, a diverse society enjoys it only when the members of each racial group enjoy, on average, equally as favourable incomes and life-chances as do, on average, those of all other racial groups. For the government, every racial group must occupy positions of power, wealth, and authority in the same proportion as they form of the overall population. Thus, if blacks comprise 5% of the population and there are 600 MP’s, racial equality demands there be thirty black MP’s.

To achieve racial equality as construed, the government has introduced numerous policy measures, vastly exceeding anything demanded by – or, indeed, consistent with – the need for it to treat all citizens equally regardless of race. For every branch of the public sector, the government has demanded racial targets and special measures directed towards minorities to increase their numbers to the desired proportion. Recently, the private sector has been called on to do the same, threatening legislation to force them to unless they comply ‘voluntarily’. The government claims

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this form of racial equality is needed in the private sector, not simply on grounds of equity, but because it is good business.

Rather than seeking to render race irrelevant in hiring decisions, the government is striving to make its consideration mandatory. Not only will this heighten racial awareness at a time when the need for social cohesion suggests race should enjoy less salience. It also presumes government knows better than private sector employers what is profitable for their businesses.

Discriminating against anyone on grounds of race has long been an offence in both public and private sectors. Can anyone seriously doubt that, were racial targets in the best commercial interests of private sector employers, they would not long ago have been introduced, or that, if they have not, it is because there are sound commercial reasons against their being introduced?

In recent times, nothing has done more to improve racial harmony in Britain than the sight of three or four black football players sporting the England strip running onto the pitch to play for their country in numbers far exceeding the proportion blacks make up of the total English population. It would be irony indeed, but doubtless a fitting *reductio ad absurdum* of the government’s strategy, were England selectors to become obliged to take positive action to increase the number of white players in the national squad to reduce the disproportionate presence of black ones.



THE HOUSE OF COMMONS

The EU Constitution: Fact vs. Fiction

Sonia Davda

Should we believe the Government when it says the new EU Constitution is necessary for an enlarged EU to work effectively and that national parliaments are still in the driving seat? Or is Tony Blair simply using these claims to cloak the arrival of federalism?

Following the recent enlargement of the EU from 15 to 25 member states, the EU Constitution has been allegedly designed to renew the functioning of the EU and its institutions to allow for greater efficiency, democracy and transparency.¹

The EU Constitution is a vast document, but allows governments to interpret it as they wish. However, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) will have the final say on matters that lack clarity. Voters are suspicious of the ECJ, which is known to promote further integration. They also remain wary of the government's claim that they have 'got everything they wanted'.² In reality, the New Frontiers Foundation has shown that out of the 275 amendments to the European Convention proposed by the government, only 27 have been acted upon in the final draft.

The Government is claiming to have kept control over the 'red lines' of taxation, foreign policy, criminal justice and defence, but it has lost its veto to majority voting in 43 areas.³ One of the most worrying regions is immigration. There has also been loss of vetoes in many aspects of criminal justice policy and policing, social security for migrant workers

and energy.⁴ Furthermore, changes to the powers of the European Central Bank (ECB) to act as a financial regulator have been very controversial and against Mr Blair's proposed amendments to the draft Constitution.

Despite this, the Government argues that the new majority voting system will increase British influence. Blair claims it has been altered so that the 'big four' can still veto all other member states put together. The Government also places emphasis on the introduction of an 'emergency brake', meaning that a country outvoted on an issue can take its case to the European Council. While some say that this is simply a delaying measure and not a veto, others claim it will be an effective tool for preventing the loss of member state sovereignty and influence.

Mr Blair feels that member states *do* still have control since the Constitution suggests a new President for the European Council, a position that will strengthen the intergovernmental body.⁵ Chosen by a qualified majority of the heads of member states, and with approval from the European Parliament, the President will serve for a term of two and a half years, renewable once. However, in Articles 1-27, the Constitution also states that there will be a new European Foreign Minister, suggesting that a common defence policy *will* rather than *might* occur. This change of language is noticeably different from past treaties. The British government was originally against the title of

'President' as 'misleading' and preferred the term 'EU External Representative' instead.

The incorporation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights into the Constitution is by far the most controversial area since it will hold legal force, and European law always supersedes domestic law. The President of the ECJ has stated that national law will undoubtedly be affected, but Tony Blair claims otherwise. Some aspects appeal to certain groups, such as trade unions but its democratic legitimacy is questionable. Jurisdiction over the Charter will be carried out by the ECJ, which has developed as a powerful supranational body in recent years.

Euroscptics assert that the EU Constitution is symbolic of a democratic deficit in the union. Larry Siedentop from Oxford University argues: 'The sad truth is

that the acceleration of integration in Europe since the late 1980s has not been accompanied by anything like adequate public debate about the nature of the political project and its constitutional implications for member states. The result is a crisis of legitimacy for the EU'.⁶ A YouGov poll of nearly 1,300 people for *The Sunday Times* shows that voters would reject the new constitution by 49% to 23%. Another poll carried out by ICM for the cross-party 'Vote No' campaign, shows 57% to 28% opposition to the constitution.⁷

Organisations such as the Centre for Reform contend that Europe must develop a new political culture of compromise,⁸ and the government argues that the Constitution is in the best interests of the British people, but sceptics argue that Blair's 'red lines' are simply a diversion away from the 'truth', that we are losing control of our own country.



SONIA DAVDA IS AN INTERN AT CIVITAS

INSIDE THE BRUSSELS HEMICYCLE



Notes

¹ http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/documents/presentation_citizens_010704_fr.pdf

² Neil O'Brien, *New Frontiers Foundation*

³ Michael Howard <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmhansrd/cm040621/debtext/40621-06.htm>, 21st June 2004

⁴ Neil O'Brien, *New Frontiers Foundation*

⁵ Tony Blair, <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page5993.asp>, 21st June 2004

⁶ *New Frontiers Foundation Press Summaries*

⁷ A. Porter & D. Smith, *The Times*, 20th June 2004

⁸ http://www.cer.org.uk/articles/grabbe_and_bbcnews_29april04.html



DAN LEWIS IS DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS AT THE STOCKHOLM NETWORK AND RESEARCH DIRECTOR AT THE ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Each year, Britain produces 28m tonnes of municipal waste. What form of waste disposal suits Britain best? Is it recycling, incineration or landfill? Following the introduction of the EU Landfill Directive, this freedom of choice is a luxury that Britain has been denied. Since 2001, Britain has had to increase its recycling rate. It currently stands at 17% with a target to reach 30% by 2010. Landfill is decried in EU circles because purportedly it wastes resources by burying them beyond reach forever and creates ideal conditions for the release of greenhouse gases.

So how do the different waste options measure up for Britain? What impact is the Landfill Directive having on its future?

Recycling

The most expensive and the most onerous is the EU's preferred option. The clamour for recycling is based on two premises: first that that we are running out of resources and second that we do not have enough space in which to dump our rubbish.

These assumptions are false. Recycling has succeeded only when it is based on economic sense. Look at the recycling of plastics. The price of oil is just not high enough to persuade producers to buy rehashed plastic. Recycling rates for plastic are in the low single digits. Plastic is very difficult to recycle. There are too many different types

The Waste of Nations & the EU Landfill Directive

Dan Lewis

and incompatible compounds and chemicals.

Conversely, there are instances when recycling has worked for the UK. With very little forest to grow its own paper, the paper industry is the nation's leader in recycling at 66% compared to a European average of 50%. The UK has been recycling paper for over 100 years. Paper is relatively easy to recycle and there's plenty of separated waste to exploit. The success of paper recycling in Britain is a cultural as well as economic one, achieved very largely without government intervention.

Recycling aluminium cans is the other green bright spot, because the cost of extracting bauxite, used to make aluminium, exceeds the cost of recycling. There is though still plenty of it – it makes up some 8.2% of the earth's crust.

The potential for recycling is inherently limited. Britain will struggle to meet the recycling target under the Landfill Directive.

Is incineration the answer?

Burning rubbish disposes of waste with the merit of providing power from the heat generated. Britain's 7,000 incinerators burn 2.5 m tonnes a year, or 8% of municipal waste. But this is very low compared to other European countries like France, 24%, and Denmark, 52%. Green purists such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth strongly oppose incineration, citing the threat of dioxin emissions – organic substances that can cause cancer. However, the threat of dioxins is far greater from diet, as meat and milk both contain dioxins, food only a vegan can avoid. Yet while the government and the EU play up the benefits of recycling, the hidden result is that incineration is expected

to replace up to 50% of landfill tonnage by 2010. It is far from obvious that this is what people want.

Landfill

Landfill is the cheapest option of all. And contrary to what one might think, it really does not require much space. Bjorn Lomborg, controversial author of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, estimated that even allowing for a growing population and a growing economy, the UK's entire 21st century quota of trash could be deposited in a square 8 miles by 8 miles and 100 feet deep or 0.07% of Total British Land Area. So, we are far from running out of space.

Britain has not only embraced landfill because it is cheap, but also because it possesses the impermeable clays that stop toxic leakage into the surrounding water, unlike some of its European neighbours.

The further benefit is that combustible greenhouse gases are captured from the putrescible waste, which can be used to create electricity. Indeed until recently, Britain's 99 landfill gas electricity plants were generating far more electricity at lower cost than all the wind farms of the UK!

To sum up, Britain is doing well with landfill at relatively low environmental and economic cost. The benefits from more incineration and recycling do not justify the financial outlays involved.

There is no magic bullet for waste disposal. Governments must embrace pro-growth and pro-market environmental policies: tax cuts for biodegradable plastics and pricing based on the weight of rubbish. Technology, not EU Directives will help our environment.

Seamus Heffernan

Not satisfied with merely writing about the problems with British education, Civitas has pioneered an independent primary school in Queen's Park, North West London. It will welcome its reception year class on 13 September.

The aims of the New Model School company are threefold: to open an independent school charging fees substantially below current levels; to create a replicable model for such schools to open across the country; and to use the most successful pedagogy and the best curriculum materials to provide a first-class education.

The New Model School Company plans to open many such schools in the coming years to give parents a choice beyond unsatisfactory state schools and unaffordable independent ones. By offering a 'no frills' education that focuses chiefly on academics, the New Model Schools will aim to keep their fees below £3,000 per year.

New Model Schools are not charities. The Company has been set up on the nineteenth century model of 'philanthropy and five percent'. Supporters are asked to buy shares in the school, on the understanding that any dividends will be limited to five percent and may take a few years to materialise. Such an approach brings the discipline of the market to bear on the way in which the aims of the organisation are achieved.

The school is dedicated to providing a well-rounded, liberal education and is strongly committed to numeracy and phonics-based literacy at a very young age. Teaching will be done in the traditional, whole-class style using interactive, direct-instruction techniques. There will be a firm approach to discipline, and

parents are expected to be supportive of the school's ethos.

As with most independent schools in the UK, the first New Model School will be Christian-oriented, with Bible stories making up part of the story-time curriculum and children participating in assemblies. However, the model is adaptable and parents could set up a New Model School on another faith basis, or on a secular basis.

Reaction to the school's opening in Queen's Park has been overwhelmingly positive. As our opening day approaches, we have been getting more and more phone calls from parents, regarding both the Queen's Park School and the possibility of opening their own New Model Schools in the future.

If you feel you could support us in this venture, either as a shareholder or by donating to our bursary fund for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, please contact Seamus Heffernan by e-mail:

Seamus.Heffernan@newmodelschool.co.uk or phone 020 7799 6677. For more information, please visit the New Model School website at www.newmodelschool.co.uk.



LEFT TO RIGHT:
JUSTIN SHAW (DIRECTOR), SEAMUS
HEFFERNAN (PROJECT MANAGER),
& ROBERT WHELAN (MANAGING
DIRECTOR) OF THE NEW MODEL
SCHOOL.

19 May 2004 **Dominic Cummings, Director of The New Frontiers Foundation**, presented a strategy for the European Union. Britain's commitment to liberal democracy promotes peace and freedom, and reliance on free markets and low taxes encourages prosperity. Therefore, an 'ever closer union' in the EU is unnecessary.

1 June 2004 **John Lloyd, Editor of *Financial Times Magazine*, and David Graham, Chief Executive of David Graham and Associates**, discussed the future of the BBC and the state of public broadcasting in its present form. Issues raised included the impartiality rule, as imposed on correspondents, and degree of analysis and editorial included in presentations.

11 June 2004 **David Taylor, Professor of Pharmaceutical and Public Health Policy at the University of London**, led a lunchtime seminar entitled 'Pharmaceuticals and Europe's Health and Wealth'.



THOMSON, THEIRAULT, HOLMES, KANAVOS, & GREEN

24 June 2004 **John Thierault, Head of Global Security at Pfizer, Jim Thomson Chief Executive of Depression Alliance, Panos Kanavos, Lecturer in International Health Policy at LSE, and Paul Holmes of the LSE** were speakers at a conference in the Attlee Suite, Portcullis House. The panel debated the merits of and potential dangers to consumers that result from the parallel trading of pharmaceuticals.

5 July 2004 **Christoph Lees, NHS Consultant and Co-founder of Doctors for Reform**, addressed a lunchtime discussion group on why the NHS must change and how Doctors for Reform, as a cross-party group of consultants, is well placed to encourage it. The discussion concentrated on supply side reform and the lack of patient choice in the current NHS structure. Lees, on behalf of Doctors for Reform, advocated a health care system based on social insurance.

12 July 2004 **Tim Kelsey, Chief Executive of Dr. Foster, producer of the annual Good Hospital Guide featured in the *Sunday Times***, led a lunchtime discussion on how to identify safe and efficient healthcare providers – what information do governments, patients and providers need?

14 July 2004 **Dan Troy, Chief Counsel United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**, discussed the relationship between regulatory authorities and drug pricing in the United States.

22 July 2004 **John Hutton MP, Minister of Health** addressed a lunchtime audience on what constitutes 'choice' in health care policy for the Centre Left. He argued that more choice, maintained within the public sector, would lead to greater equity and increased capacity in the NHS. Mr Hutton would not concede that a tax-funded system would fail to provide real patient choice.



DELEGATES AT PARALLEL TRADE CONFERENCE



ENGOVA & BRANT

CIVITAS is an independent research institute. CIVITAS is independent of political parties and accepts no government funding. It relies entirely on private donations to fund its work.

The aim of CIVITAS is to deepen public understanding of the legal, institutional and moral framework that makes a free and democratic society possible. Our object is to revive civil society, that network of voluntary social institutions, charities, mutual aid organisations and other collective bodies that lie between the individual and the state. We believe that in social affairs the alternatives to government are not exhausted by commercial services alone.

We have established a reputation for work on social issues that transcends party boundaries. Our authors examine, analyse and report on views about the best way forward on particular issues. The object is to raise the quality of informed debate. For further information about CIVITAS and how you could become a member, please email us at info@civitas.org.uk or call +44 (0)20 7799 6677.

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