RUNNYMEDE

Runnymede Platform

Labour and Cohesive Communities

A Paper by the Rt Hon John Denham MP

with responses from Professors Derek McGhee, Mary J. Hickman and Chris Gaine

About Runnymede

Runnymede is an independent policy research organization focusing on equality and justice through the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic society. Founded as a Charitable Educational Trust, Runnymede has a long track record in policy research, working in close collaboration with eminent thinkers and policy makers in the public, private and voluntary sectors. We believe that the way ahead lies in building effective partnerships, and we are continually developing these with the voluntary sector, the government, local authorities and companies in the UK and Europe. We stimulate debate and suggest forward-looking strategies in areas of public policy such as education, the criminal justice system, employment and citizenship.

Since 1968, the date of Runnymede's foundation, we have worked to establish and maintain a positive image of what it means to live affirmatively within a society that is both multi-ethnic and culturally diverse. Runnymede continues to speak with a thoughtful and independent public voice on these issues today.

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This publication is part of the Runnymede Platform series, the aim of which is to create a space in which senior political figures can discuss issues in race equality, with critical comment from the academic community. The facts presented and views expressed in this publication are, however, those of the individual authors and not necessarily those of the Runnymede Trust.

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Foreword

Race equality is a core value that transcends political boundaries. No mainstream UK political party seeks to operate racist policies, and all would agree that racists hold an illogical, immoral, and untenable position. This does not mean that the priority given or policy developed to tackle race inequality is not highly political. Political decision-making is crucial to creating a successful multi-ethnic Britain. Political decisions matter in areas as diverse as legislation to protect against discrimination and promote equality, the regulation of practice in public, private and voluntary sectors, the funding of voluntary sector organizations, redistribution through taxation and spending, enabling good relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds, security and counteracting terrorism, and responding to race inequalities in education, health, criminal justice, housing, employment and representation. While there is broad consensus among mainstream parties that racism is unacceptable, political parties take very different positions on the role of government and the state in the necessary steps to eliminate it.

Runnymede has initiated the Runnymede Platform Seriers in order to enable senior representatives of mainstream political parties to set out their views on what action is necessary to tackle race inequality and create a cohesive ethnically diverse society at ease with itself. Political parties and their representatives give voice to particular world views – they work from ideology and principle to develop legislation, policy and practice to shape our society. These world views or political traditions act as motivations for their actions, shape the debate internally within parties, and inform their interaction with other parties to political debate.

Our febrile political discussions do not often provide enough space for reflection on the relationship between core principles and political decision-making. This is likely to be even more the case during election campaigns, such as that we are due to enter in 2010. Runnymede is keen to create the space for senior politicians to reflect on what their political tradition has to offer contemporary debates on race equality and good race relations. We believe this to be particularly important given that so much of modern politics is subject to Macmillan's famous dictum; 'Events, dear boy, events'. The mixture of cool and collected thinking, political bargaining, 'kite-flying', focus groups, and triangulation that goes into producing manifestos is often quickly superseded by the need to respond to events. At these points it is crucial to understand the core principles that will underlie the likely decisions to be made.

Whichever political party finds itself in government after the general election, it is important that organizations that are focused on race equality engage with political representatives of all hues. This already often occurs at a local level, but at national level there is a requirement that our political debate recognizes that all have a role to play in delivering a successful multi-ethnic society.

In this paper, the Rt Hon John Denham MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, argues that the idea and practice of 'community cohesion' has been a fundamental commitment of the Labour government. We are grateful to Professors Derek McGhee (University of Southampton), Professor Mary J. Hickman (London Metropolitan University) and Professor Chris Gaine (University of Chichester) for their contributions to this paper and to the ongoing discussion. We have recently published Platform papers by senior politicians from the Conservatives (Dominic Grieve QC MP) and the Liberal Democrats (Lynne Featherstone MP), who have been invited to engage in a similar way, and we will shortly be publishing a Platform paper by the Scottish National Party.

A healthy political debate about race demands that all political traditions create the space for reflection and decision-making that will provide improved outcomes for all in our ethnically diverse society. We hope that this contribution, alongside our hosting of the re-constituted All Party Parliamentary Group on Race and Community, regular parliamentary briefings, and regional events bringing together local MPs and community organizations will play a significant part in creating debate and improving intelligence for a multi-ethnic Britain.

Dr Rob Berkeley
Director, Runnymede

Labour and Cohesive Communities

John Denham MP

I grew up in Lyme Regis on the South Coast. This community that I knew as home was, to the best of my knowledge, tight knit, supportive and cohesive. However, if I had only ever lived there I may never have discovered how even communities such as Lyme, with a strong sense of solidarity and rich identity, can sometimes exclude those who are vulnerable or different.

Since then, and for the last thirty years, I have been an elected representative in and for Southampton. In contrast to the Lyme Regis in which I grew up, it is a city whose citizens have origins in over 80 nations and regions of the globe, and whose daily life touches the world each and every day through its busy port. We have a strong community, but in a changing world, we cannot take cohesion for granted. We have to work continually to make it happen.

Throughout that time I have worked with the city's black and Asian communities, its mosques, temples, gurdwaras, synagogue, churches and its white majority. Over the years we have welcomed Vietnamese new arrivals, asylum seekers, and European citizens from the A8 countries too. Together we have faced challenges as the national and global economy has reshaped itself and this has had a knock-on effect on major issues like the kind of jobs that are most likely to survive and thrive locally, and how we maintain a strong sense of belonging in the face of the new social challenges that these shifts bring in their wake.

For me, then, the encouragement, development and promotion of community cohesion is not a theoretical or marginal project. Rather, it is an important one that grows from my long-standing involvement in the local community combined with my deep-seated belief in the political principle that no one should be unreasonably set apart in a country such as Britain.

Of course my own involvement has been developed through real responsibility as a Home Office Minister, as Chair of the Home Affairs Select Committee and as a member of the Cabinet at times when some of the local questions I have mentioned have been played out in even more demanding forms across the life of the nation more generally.

I want to argue that the idea and practice of 'community cohesion' has been a fundamental commitment of the Labour government. I also want to suggest that it has increasingly moved to the heart of all that we do. In our personal contributions as citizens, in the manner by which we come together and in the nature of the way that local and national services are designed and delivered, there has been consistent development which deserves to be continued in the years to come.

The Community Cohesion Agenda: Past And Present

There is no doubt that what happened in 2001 in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham and in other places was a tragedy for the communities involved. But just as the Lawrence tragedy led us to confront institutional racism, these disturbances made us look at what was really happening in some towns and cities.

We should all take great encouragement from the way that the government and others responded. At that time, I chaired the group of Ministers that worked to develop the report on the action the Government intended to take in response, and which was published alongside those reports. It was entitled *Building Cohesive Communities* (DCLG, 2001).

It was noticeable that Ted Cantle's report (Cantle, 2001), and indeed the others, were full of instances of local people of all communities who felt they were being done down to the benefit of someone else. Even regeneration itself, which has to be the key to raising living standards and opportunity, had become in some places a source of conflict, misunderstanding and jealousy.

So when we were approaching towns and communities as fragmented as those that were involved that year, when different communities live lives as separate as some of those who had spoken to Ted Cantle, something more was needed than what had been done in the past.

It was also clear that where relationships *between* communities were strong violence had been minimized, or even avoided altogether. When religious and other civic leaders knew each other or had access to each other's mobile phone numbers, it seemed, conflict had been less likely. Building those bridges further had to be a priority – both for the communities themselves and for any concerned government.

Without discussion and debate we were never going to be able to articulate common British values, and have the confidence that our respect for diversity and our opposition to racism is founded on clear common principles rather than local accident.

In 2006 we established an important Commission on Integration and Cohesion as an independent advisory body 'to explore how different communities and places in England were getting along, and what more might be done to bring people together - respecting differences, but developing a shared sense of belonging and purpose'.

The Commission and others made it increasingly clear that shared conversations and experiences would have to be even more positively encouraged if we were to break out of some of the divisions faced by many communities nationwide. In 2007 we made it a duty, for the first time, for schools to promote community cohesion.

But we have gone further still. We introduced a new inspection regime; we added a new community cohesion and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) policy; and our new Local Area Agreement (LAA) framework for local authorities and their partners was so designed that over one hundred councils have made community cohesion their strategic priority.

In August 2009 my colleague Shahid Malik announced new guidance to help local authorities design all of their policies so as to put community cohesion at their heart. And over the last three years we have provided £50 million of specific funds to support such efforts with £34 million provided directly to local authorities in most need of help.

There are other, specific, issues which are also important to any discussion of community cohesion – issues which we have pursued since I was appointed Secretary of State, and which are discussed in turn below .

Inter-faith and Community Action

Faith communities are present in every neighbourhood in our society and have a powerful role in shaping people's values and behaviours. Government needs to work in partnership with them, as welcome and constituent elements of wider communities. When people of different faiths do not know each other and when people with no faith know very few people who are actively involved in a religious community, the possibility for miscommunication emerges. In some cases this miscommunication can lead to personal resentment on the one hand or intense conflict on the other. Religion can also be turned from a significant civic resource into a proxy for racism or some other form of discrimination

A key first step in developing common conversation was to build on the work of my predecessor and the publication of *Face To Face, Side By Side* (DCLG, 2007). In November 2009, as Secretary of State, we were able to launch the first ever national Inter-Faith Week. Government's investment in a small number of national events provided the setting for local councils of faith, synagogues, churches, mosques, temples and other places of worship to organize their own events and celebrations. The week has been judged as highly successful both by those in government and those in the many places which took part. We have already committed to repeat the initiative in 2010.

Before, during and since Inter-Faith Week we have also sought to make it absolutely clear that people of faith are welcome contributors to debates in the public sphere. This does not mean that they should expect unique privileges but it does mean that as citizens their perspectives should be welcomed, taken seriously and considered.

We have also sought to increase the number of ways that government can secure access to information and insights from the faith communities

in order to make government's work more responsive. I have appointed a civil service Policy Advisor on Faith Communities. And we have also appointed a new Expert Advisory Panel.

In taking this commitment to develop capacity even further, on 17 March 2010 we announced £1 million of new resources to help national faith bodies to develop their own work and relate to government more effectively. We also announced a new £50,000 national prize to mark and celebrate some of the best faith-based social action initiatives in the country.

In building links across communities, it is this bridge from inter-faith dialogue to common action to address unmet social needs that will become increasingly important. For this reason the Department of Communities and Local Government also staged a major national conference to showcase examples of times that people of all backgrounds have come together creatively. Among those speaking were the inspiring Citizens UK who have brought together mosques, temples, synagogues, community groups, churches and trade unions. They have run effective campaigns to address the needs of all of their people not least to secure a 'living wage'. Such examples are inspiring both because they address real needs – and because they build new relationships that make us all stronger.

Connecting Communities

But this overarching commitment to cohesion has also been developing at a time when even fresher challenges have come to centre stage. This is why, as Secretary of State, I introduced a new initiative called Connecting Communities.

Connecting Communities is targeted at communities which were least likely to prosper when the economy was booming and that are most vulnerable to recession. They are less likely to be confident about sharing in the recovery. They are under pressure from many changes in society.

The underlying challenge is no less than to build strong cohesive communities in these areas too, so that we can have communities which are confident that they can succeed in a rapidly changing world referred to at the outset; and that they have the resilience to gain fairly from recovery and rising prosperity.

We have worked hard to ensure that people know that Government is committed to making sure, in every community, in every corner of this country, that we are on their side and that this is reflected in everything we do. This means no favours or privileges for special interest groups. Just fairness.

Strong and positive relationships can only be built where people feel able and confident to speak up about their honest concerns – and feel that their voice is listened to. The Connecting Communities programme is part of that process.

The support that this initiative has received from local authorities led by all the major political parties has been encouraging. It is recognition that these are challenges for democratic politics as a whole, not just for one party. As Secretary of State I have committed £34 million to this initiative over two years.

The investments we have made have been taking place against a background of wider forces – forces over which they have little control and forces which tend to undermine some people's confidence and sense of security.

Traditional, often semi-skilled, industrial jobs have continued to decline, with many newly created higher paid jobs open only to those with higher skill levels. In predominantly white areas, recent migration is sometimes perceived as changing communities in unpredictable ways, as well as creating new competition for jobs and social housing.

Although anti-social behaviour has fallen across the country, it remains a real challenge in some of these areas and creates tensions between the majority of hard-working families and the troublesome minority.

More recently, these are some of the communities which have been hit hardest by the recession – in some cases because of the dominance of low paid jobs in industries which are proving vulnerable, and in others because of relatively low skills levels and higher levels of long term worklessness which make it harder to find work.

This does not mean that government investment has failed or has been wasted. Far from it. Communities would be in a far worse state today without it. So in the future we will need to persist with such commitments.

Local action will not stop the transformation of our manufacturing industry from semi-skilled to highly skilled. But our ambition of ensuring that everyone has a chance to increase their skills, and our efforts to open up university and to deliver apprenticeships, must feel real in every community.

Migration and its Impacts

Parts of the economy, in localized areas and in sections of the workforce – like self-employed construction – have experienced a bigger impact on wage rates and labour market structures from migration when compared to others.

Our response to these pressures, like tight controls on non-EU migration, the Migration Impact Fund, and action against employers who undercut the minimum wage or risk health and safety must become faster and more ambitious.

But all of this action to promote fairness for one group can be seen as unfair in another. Class still matters in Britain and the politics of identity ignores it at its peril. The very positive and growing self-confidence of minority communities can actually be seen as a threat to communities under pressure. Of course, this does not mean that we step back on our action to tackle racism, to address discrimination or to promote equality. You don't go forward by going backward. But we do have to recognize how that action may be perceived.

And, finally, despite a forest of consultation, we have not been as good, locally and nationally, as we might have been at enabling communities to question and challenge how things are run.

Without that proper discussion about national policy and local services, there is the danger that the wrong priorities are set. Or that even when they are right, myth and reality can be far apart. No number of national studies and reports has managed to dent local beliefs that too much social housing goes to those who do not deserve priority. And it is only when the issues can be aired, challenged – and changed – locally that confidence is restored.

We run the risk that resentment – or worse – at those who are seen to be better treated grows up or is promoted by those who want to exploit it for destructive and divisive reasons.

Either way, the dangers to communities themselves, and to wider community cohesion are real. We cannot claim to be doing our best to promote community cohesion if we are not seen to be addressing these real concerns.

This is not, then, about Government combating the BNP. That is for political parties, not the state. It is, though, about addressing the legitimate fears and concerns which, neglected, can prove fertile territory for extremism and those who would divide our communities. We have, with them, identified around 130 communities where some new focus and investment would help.

This programme gives these areas the resources to face the local problems frankly. To let people set out their concerns and priorities openly. To work out how over the coming months and years those problems need to be tackled.

The investment of Connecting Communities will support that work. It is not intended, of its own, of course, to solve practical problems, but to allow local areas to see how the much larger sums of money spent on working neighbourhoods, youth work, social housing, policing, future jobs and others can be used to tackle those issues.

So this is not what you might think of as a traditional approach to community cohesion – an extra programme which is tacked on at the end to pick up the pieces when everything has fallen apart. It is a package of support which enables local people to influence, shape and change policies on the issues which really matter in their community – whether that's anti-social behaviour, housing or jobs.

Tackling Race and Inequality

Of course it takes more than just a Government to change society and build a community. It takes

individuals, like Doreen Lawrence who has made such an impact since the murder of her son, Stephen. It takes the work of community groups who work with young and old people.

Crucially, it also involves many others such as those who campaigned to secure the changes which led to the Race Relations Amendment Act in 2000. In turn, this Act utterly changed the standards that black and minority ethnic communities can expect from public services – whether in education, in health care, or in the criminal justice system. It is a significant achievement of our administration.

Unlike before, no one working in public services today can turn a blind eye to racism or inequality. Every single public service, every single public body – all 43,000 of them – have to positively promote race equality and better race relations.

For example, each and every school now has a race equality programme, complemented by national programmes like the Black Pupils Attainment Strategy. This has helped thousands of students to achieve their potential.

Because of this, we have virtually eliminated the gap between Bangladeshi pupils and their peers at GCSE level, while Black Caribbean pupils have also made enormous strides forward.

We have also invested in hundreds of community organizations to build up their leadership capacity and support their local contribution. In July of 2009 I committed nearly £9 million to help this invaluable work.

We have promoted diversity across the public sector – so there are more black and minority ethnic citizens in senior leadership positions in the Civil Service than ever before.

And we have concentrated our attention on the police and the criminal justice system, where we know that some of the challenges are most acute. We have made sure that the police take race and hate crimes as seriously as they should; we have changed the way that the police are recruited and trained.

As a result – though we would be the first to admit there is a long way to go – black and minority ethnic communities are now better represented in the police force and other criminal justice services and increasingly confident that they will be treated fairly.

And finally, there has been a renewed recognition of the importance of class. We know, for example, that ethnic minorities are twice as likely to be poor – and it it is poverty, or poverty and race together – which holds them back.

That means that it is no longer enough to make simple judgements or assumptions which equate 'race' with disadvantage. That would overlook, for example, the striking achievements of Indian and Chinese students – but it would also overlook the fact that white working class boys are struggling to keep up. It would overlook the growing black and Asian middle class – and the fact that they are now coming up against the old problems in new settings.

Instead, we need to appreciate and understand the ways in which race interacts with other social factors – especially class – to influence and shape people's lives.

So rather than reducing our efforts to tackle racism, we have got to be more nuanced in what we are doing. We have to make sure that our efforts are tackling today's problems, in a world we have begun to change. We need to continue to promote equality for all and combine that with efforts to address the specific challenges faced by particular groups. It is that approach which is at the heart of the Government's new Equalities Bill.

The Role of Prevent

Prevent is very new – and some aspects remain controversial – even though much has been achieved.

It has been criticized within some parts of Muslim communities. Criticized by parts of the civil liberties lobby. Criticized by those who say it is supporting the very forces that are part of the problem. Criticized both by those who say it is too soft, and by those who say it is too hard. Of course, criticism itself is never a reason to do something.

The success of Prevent depends on its effectiveness. That depends on public support, on consent. On openness and understanding.

So where we have heard constructive criticism, we have been willing to listen and to change in order to become more effective. And we have recognized that if Prevent is enveloped by suspicion or misunderstanding it simply will not work.

We have seen over a dozen plots disrupted and more than 200 people convicted for terrorism-related incidents since 9/11.

We continue to face a real and serious threat from Al Quaeda inspired terrorism.

But while Al Qa'ida inspired terrorism is a serious problem which needs to be tackled it must never be seen as the defining issue for British Muslims; or for the Government's relationship with Muslim communities nationally or locally; or for public agencies like the police or for the media.

Muslim families – like families across the country – are much more concerned about jobs, housing and education than they are about violent extremism. And for the vast majority of Muslims, as for members of other faiths, their faith is a source of comfort, inspiration and strong values – not a call to violence.

This Government will continue to work with the Muslim community as we work with all communities – taking in all the issues which matter to them.

Prevent cannot work as a Government programme imposed on Muslim communities. They need to feel ownership of the community based parts of Prevent and work as full partners in it.

So we all need to have the confidence to address concerns about Prevent directly, honestly and openly.

It is a proper role of statutory agencies to identify individuals who may be at risk of drifting into violent crime – and in the case of Prevent, those specifically at risk of being drawn into violent extremist crime. And to ensure that the community is able to offer a positive response and support to them.

But this cannot be a secret or covert activity which is not openly discussed.

All the more reason, therefore, for Prevent partners to discuss these issues openly and to share an understanding of how to respond appropriately.

In this way, we can build support for our fundamental aims of protecting young people.

Forging A New Identity: Towards A St George's Day?

Cutting across all of the challenges and responses I have described so far is an underpinning concept of 'identity': Some would argue that once you recognize multiple identities, you enter a world of identity relativism – where because all identities are allowed, none should in any way be promoted or implicitly or explicitly favoured.

The problem is that, in my view, identity relativism turned out to the Achilles heel of one of Britain's great social innovations, a real achievement – multiculturalism – which we, nonetheless, now have to re-assess.

The problem of multiculturalism was not its insistence on respect for those of different cultures, or of their freedoms to express themselves as they wish: it was the neglect of the glue that binds us together; it was the failure to recognize that a multicultural society can only work if there is equal engagement and activity in building and developing shared values and the framework of a shared identity which enables us to be multicultural within a cohesive society.

So being relaxed about multiple identities, and multiple national identities, does not mean that it is not important to invest energy in developing a shared story of Britishness; and for those within England, a shared English identity. This should not be required, nor compulsory, but should be shared as widely as possible. Britain, Britishness, British values, British history and Britain's future are the best way of expressing a national, progressive and patriotic message and this is a project that needs encouragement to help us sustain cohesive communities.

Conclusion

So it is vital that we continue to build on what has been achieved over the past decade. But we have also got to recognize that the context for what we are doing has changed, and that the struggle to build and sustain community cohesion will continually change. This is why questions of class, race and religion need to be addressed alongside each other in developing the common conversations to which I have referred.

In just a few pages I have sought to explain the personal reasons for my commitment to building a more cohesive, inclusive and equal society. More importantly still I have set out why such topics are so important to the government and why I have continued to develop fresh initiatives to complement our wider strategies.

Governments have to make tough choices especially in demanding and new times. Today we have begun the task by putting in place new race and equalities legislation, by seeking to invest in enhanced community cohesion and by taking faith communities and inter-faith initiatives seriously as one key sector within that overall task. Just as crucially we have supplemented those wider initiatives with specialist work such as Connecting Communities and – clearly – the beginnings of a new conversation as to what a progressive understanding of Britishness might mean.

In such a changing environment we naturally, together, have much more to do and learn. This will be the task of the next ten years.

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A Response to John Denham

Professor Derek McGhee
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It is a great privilege to respond to the Secretary of State's essay. John Denham is not only a graduate of the University of Southampton (where I am a Professor of Sociology) but also an MP in Southampton, the city I have lived in for over ten years. These essays and responses offer a good opportunity for MPs and academics to start a productive dialogue on particular issues or problems which we approach from different perspectives and for different reasons. In my research I have engaged with all of the issues and topics referred to by the Secretary of State in his essay, from community cohesion to Britishness. In this all too brief response I will attempt to focus on the unanswered questions, the assumptions or the potential problems associated with each of the themes or issues in the essay starting with community cohesion.

For a number of academics, community cohesion is a powerful discourse that emerged after the disturbances in 2001 and is associated with extremely loaded concepts, for example, segregation, and descriptions, for example 'parallel lives' and 'social apartheid'. Far from being benign, the discourse of community cohesion is closely linked to the new integration discourse that was introduced in the *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* White Paper in 2002 (Home Office, 2002) which is still unfolding to this day, the most recent evidence being Gordon Brown's earned citizenship proposals and his points system for citizenship (to complement the managed migration point system). When we talk about community cohesion, we need to appreciate that this is more than just the attempt to create dialogue and bridging social capital amongst local communities (which is all well and good). The Community Cohesion Review Team, led by Ted Cantle, made pronouncements beyond the local when they commented on the weak sense of British citizenship and the need to find a few common principles to unite us in 'our' diversity at the national level (Cantle, 2001). It is this national project of imagining and re-imagining the nation beyond what some describe as multiculturalism that has dominated my research in recent years (McGhee, 2005, 2008, forthcoming). Therefore, from an academic perspective there is more to community cohesion than just local projects; this discourse has also had an impact on many other a aspects of policy making, many of which are included in the Secretary of State's essay, for example, from the backlash against multiculturalism to the discourse of Britishness to inter-faith and community action.

There have been a great deal of activities on the inter-faith front in recent years. Once again, the government's promotion of inter-faith action and setting up of councils of faith at local/city and regional levels have forged alliances and relationships in these areas between the 'representatives' of faith communities for their mutual benefit. However, as noted in the Secretary of State's essay, there is more to this than just facilitating dialogue and building bridges at local and regional levels; there is something even more interesting going on here too and that is the potential modification of the liberal secular settlement with regards to the government's ambitions of creating vertical or linking social capital between faith communities and Government, for example, through setting up the Faith Community Consultation Council. Is the separation between religions and public policy being challenged by such fora? More than that, the negotiation of different perspectives in these settings needs further examination, not only across very different faith traditions, but also across the secular (immanent) and faith (transcendent) divide. There is also the question of how the new funding regimes mentioned by the Secretary of State will facilitate faith communities' engagement with government in terms of building on capabilities and capacities (including language, the whole 'ministers from abroad' issue) and in the process attempt to modify the inequalities of power that exist with regard to the established churches and less established minority faiths.

The Connecting Communities Programme came next in the essay. This programme has generated a lot of media attention in recent months. The Secretary of State could have been more explicit in the essay with regards to the particular focus of this programme, namely, the white working class. Furthermore, there was not a great deal of detail here, with regard to the three levels of fairness (Fair: say, chances and rules) behind this programme. In many ways this

programme is a symptom of the backlash against multiculturalism, which in Britain has become a by-word for preferential treatment, black and minority ethnic bias and the promotion of diversity at the expense of 'our' national commonality. This is the second time that I have noticed the relationship that is being drawn between the new restrictions associated with the managed migration points system (restricting non-EEA low-skilled migration) and the Connecting Communities Programme. Gordon Brown has also recently made this connection. The problem is that the restrictions, or closing off of low-skilled non-EEA migration has been made possible by the unlimited influx of A8 nationals since May 2004, which has caused its own problems with regard to the competition for scarce resources and jobs in local areas. I am intrigued by how, for example, the intention to encourage disadvantaged British white communities to have their 'fair say' will be operationalized in practice under this programme. There is little information forthcoming from the Department of Communities and Local Government as to how they intend to negotiate, filter, correct and re-channel the well-informed, distorted and also incited views on immigration, for example, that might emerge in these encounters. That is, how will the workers on the frontline of this programme engage with the grievances and sense of entitlement harboured by many members of the disadvantaged white working class? That is, how will these programme workers deal with what Roger Hewitt in his book *White Backlash* calls 'white resentment' (Hewitt, 2005) which can range in register from the explicitly racist to more subtle discourses of unfairness in the context of perceived preferential treatment. The worry I have is that by focusing on the disadvantaged white working class in this way the DCLG will just be instituting more preferential treatment of one group over others.

What connects the latter and the next section of the essay (Tackling Race and Inequality) is the government's rediscovery of 'class'. 'Class' is back, in legislation (see clause 1 of the Equalities Bill, public duty with regard socio-economic disadvantage) and in Government departments (see the Government's Equality Office's recent reports) and in particular programmes, including the DCLG's Connecting Communities programme. I think that the new primacy of class needs to be contextualized in what the Secretary of State later in the essay refers to as 'the re-assessment' of multiculturalism. Despite the DCLG's reassurance that the new focus on class will not reduce the momentum of their work in the area of reducing 'race' inequalities, there is a concern that the new discourse (promoted by the Government's Equality Office) that 'class' 'trumps' other social categories including race, gender, disability and age is a regression from the appreciation of 'our' multi-faceted identities and the complex intersectionality of the advantages and disadvantages associated with these different aspects of our identities promoted by, for example, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission. Furthermore, the white working class focus of the Connecting Communities programme in the context of the re-assessment of multiculturalism and the new primacy of class has left some feeling rather uneasy with regard to the future of the equalities agenda in the UK.

The next topic to appear in the Secretary of State's essay is Prevent. This is perhaps the most controversial of all the topics and themes included in the essay. In many ways Prevent-funded programmes seem to be the means through which community organizations, especially Muslim women's groups are attracting funding under the radar of the no-single group funding restrictions (recommended by the Community Cohesion and Integration Commission). From this perspective, the DCLG's Preventing Violent Extremism Pathfinder Funding, like the Community Cohesion Pathfinder Funded Projects, are not a great deal of concern to me, as they help to fund local organizations that might benefit local communities (but the former seem to have little direct influence on tackling violent extremism). The controversial nature of Prevent comes from its inclusion in the Government's counter-terrorism strategy called CONTEST. Prevent is one aspect of CONTEST, the others being Pursue, Protect and Prepare. In this context Prevent is ultimately an intelligence gathering strategy replete with intelligence gathering agreements (set up between police and local authorities) to facilitate the flows of information between local communities to police. Prevent ultimately promotes community, neighbourhood and familial vigilance in the form of internal community surveillance in order to identify 'at risk' or 'vulnerable' individuals for the purposes of 'early intervention'. This is a government imposed programme which has been set up in

the context of the 'war on terror' and its continuing legacy, and it is unlikely that Muslim communities will ever 'feel ownership' of it, although, as noted above, some community groups have taken advantage of it for the benefit of their communities with little reference to tackling violent extremism.

The final part of the Secretary of State's essay focuses on the forging of a new identity which takes in both David Blunkett's promotion of Englishness and Gordon Brown's promotion of Britishness. In many ways the final section of the essay is a commentary of the unfinished project of creating a sense of identity, a sense of unity (in diversity) and a common set of principles and values that will underwrite these. In this section of the essay the Secretary of State gives us tantalizing snippets of Brown's discourse of the 'patriotism of common purpose' and the articulation of Britishness and 'British values' through 'our' enduring national institutions. The Secretary of State, like the Prime Minister, in their promotions of Britishness and British values, have uncoupled this process, especially the discourse of 'shared British values' from the process of establishing a Statement of Shared British Values. The Statement of Shared British Values was to be forged in a national debate for the specific purposes of including aspects of the Statement of Shared British Values in the preamble of the British Bill of Rights and Responsibilities (I prefer the Joint Committee on Human Right's revised title: The UK Bill of Rights and Freedoms). My parting comment in this response is that perhaps it is high time that the government in their attempts to re-imagine and re-brand 'the nation' with regards to 'our' identities and 'our' values should shift the location of the discourse of Britishness and British shared values from abstract assertions to re-locate these (not particularly British) values of tolerance, equality, respect for the law and fairness as the organizing principles of Britain's human rights future.

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A Response to John Denham

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There can be no disagreement that during the past decade the New Labour government has had 'community cohesion' policies at the heart of their strategies about 'community relations' or 'race relations' or 'a multi-ethnic society'. Ever since the government accepted one particular interpretation of the evidence produced by analyses of the civil disturbances in some northern cities in England in 2001, 'community cohesion' has been the mantra, as passionately sung as any hymn. Community cohesion is clearly positioned as necessary because there was a problem with multiculturalism. John Denham states that this problem lies in multiculturalism's 'neglect of the glue that binds us together'. Multiculturalism failed to recognize that a multicultural society can only work if there is equal engagement and activity in building and developing shared values and a shared identity as in respecting those of different cultures and their freedoms to express themselves as they wish. It is this double engagement, John Denham argues, that enables us to be multicultural within a cohesive society.

In this brief response I want to question the assumptions underpinning notions of shared values and a shared identity, and also reflect on the contradictions inherent in the 'community cohesion' project. The government commissioned an Independent Review Team (IRT) to investigate the disturbances in 2001, and the Cantle Report was published later that same year (Cantle, 2001) and became the source of the community cohesion policy framework. The report led the way to the production of a particular language for talking about 'diversity' which became further embedded by developments around the 'business case for diversity'. Within community cohesion policies the importance of valuing diversity is stressed at the same time that strict limits are set upon the acceptability of 'difference'. The Report argued for an approach counterposed to multiculturalism which it characterized as entrenching separation and reinforcing differences. Other accounts question this approach to understanding the civil unrest in 2001 and think it should be understood more as a demand for full inclusion as Britons rather than as a story of parallel lives.

The concept of diversity, a seemingly positive one, is in fact used in the community cohesion context as a more troubled signifier of difference, of immigrants, of minority ethnic groups, in other words of a national community that includes 'Others'. For example, integration is often described as a two-way process with settled communities accepting that new people bring change while newcomers must realize that they have to change if society is to be integrated. The subtle distinction is that this definition of integration relies on a change of attitude amongst the settled but a change of behaviour and values amongst migrants, that is, they have to sign up to and behave in a way that demonstrates their acceptance of (the imagined) shared values and common traditions that existed prior to their arrival and settlement. This concept of integration is predicated on positioning (certain) migrants as outsiders who have to change. Hence Tony Blair's statement 'Our tolerance is part of what makes Britain Britain. Conform, or don't come here'. The rhetoric of core values masks the inequalities of diversity and the class character of a multi-ethnic society. Many middle-class professional migrants are not positioned as outsiders by the 'diversity' discussion as they bring recognized cultural and economic capital, and are seen as acceptable on arrival. British 'comfort with diversity' is based on power and class relations in which the settled 'us/we/our' have it within their gift to be 'tolerant' of and distinguish between the newcomers 'them/other'.

Rather than the identity relativism that John Denham highlights as a negative repercussion of multiculturalist policies of the 1980s and 1990s, the salient problem with their implementation lay elsewhere. Much of the political and policy rhetoric about multiculturalism did not recognize the white population as constituted ethnically. In other words the term 'white' was stripped of ethnic content. This assumed homogeneity of the white population, epitomized in the wording of the 1991 Census ethnic origin question that set one 'white' category against an array of 'black' categories, reinforced the idea that ethnicity was the property of historical immigrations and not of the majority ethnic group, the English. This has made it all the more difficult in a period of renewed immigration, this time on a bigger scale involving a diversity of white ethnicities and drawn from across the globe rather than Britain's former colonies, to open up the 'box' of Englishness. If this 'box' could be opened up it

would enable the variety of experiences of those who identify as English to come to the fore and enable them to participate equally in contemporary heterogeneity.

It is the problematization of communities that community cohesion policies entail which can be objectionable and counter-productive. The use of the term 'community' has widened in recent years and it now includes both a way of characterizing sets of social relations so that we are all defined as members of communities based on places, relationships and identities, and it also acts as a catch-all term for characterizing problematized populations. Within 'problematic communities' what is usually identified as a cause for concern are their ways of relating both internally and externally so relations within and between (particular) communities become simultaneously problematized. This focus on problematic communities eclipses society as the focus of attention, obscures the role of the state in constructing communities (for example, the current, counter-productive, fixed gaze at 'the Muslim community' despite all the myriad differences that distinguish Muslims one from another) and distracts attention from the inequalities resulting from deep-seated transformations driven by individualization, post-industrialism and globalization shaping the everyday life experiences of all the population. Such problematization and blaming also diverts attention from the complex processes underway in which newly constituted communities are learning to get along within the changing realities of contemporary life.

Disruptions to cohesion are therefore not attributed to processes of socio-economic change, but to the failures of social groups to integrate, in particular new arrivals and deprived communities. Against this identification of the problems of social cohesion being the product of failed integration of certain communities and certain new arrivals we have found in our research that it was the changed circumstances of social and economic life themselves that generated problems of cohesion. People asked questions such as: 'How does prosperity produce deprivation?' and 'How is it that working life can sustain poverty?' Others were more specific: 'How did exceptional levels of migration square with persisting levels of worklessness?' Or 'How is it that work leaves so little time for life?'

Most people do not expect their neighbours and the people they meet each day to share a consensus on values and priorities. In fact many value their children growing up in a multi-ethnic society. Instead they understand social cohesion to be about the negotiation of a balance between separateness and unity. Trying to create a fixed sense of Britishness will not achieve cohesion; tolerance and fairness are surely values shared across the EU and beyond, rather than being uniquely British values. Britain is a multinational and multi-ethnic state and all the evidence is that minority ethnic long-term residents and new arrivals are most positive about what is good about Britain. White English people often find it difficult to reflect on their feelings of belonging to Britain as it is a taken-for-granted 'home'. People in Scotland and Northern Ireland often feel they belong more to their respective nations or jurisdictions than to Britain.

There needs to be a shift away from assuming that transnational ties weaken a sense of belonging to Britain – there is no evidence of this - to one that recognizes that it's possible to have diasporic ties without this being at the expense of belonging to Britain. And a shift away from a set account of what Britishness entails towards a recognition that belonging to Britain may more often be expressed through various forms of localism rather than identification with the nation. A key factor influencing whether new migrants, for example, are accepted, is the dominant story in each locality about who belongs there. Areas where people saw their locality as belonging to everyone, usually because narratives of historical immigrations are intermingled equally with other narratives, tended to be more open to new arrivals. Whereas areas where people thought of a locality as belonging to them in particular were more likely to blame new arrivals for problems that pre-existed their arrival. The evidence is that these different stories of belonging can be found in both working class and middle class areas of Britain's town and cities.

There is little doubt that in order to ensure the cohesion of the social fabric of society it is necessary to address both relational and structural issues. That is, we need to address fundamental issues of deprivation, disadvantage and discrimination because poverty and lack of opportunities can undermine social cohesion. We need to address how people relate to each other but not within a framework of problematizing certain groups but within the context of the myriad pressures and benefits of changing social realities. In addressing the structural aspects of social

cohesion it is necessary to ensure that the benefits of investment in local places accrue to both the long term settled (majority ethnic and minority ethnic) and new arrivals. This could be facilitated by, for example, a restructuring of the housing debate away from need and entitlement to a focus on the provision of adequate housing for all. In addressing the relational aspects of the dynamics of social cohesion it is necessary to enable and support both expressions of *difference* and of *unity* in local areas.

What people do expect is safe, secure and convenient neighbourhoods in which they have reasonable neighbours, amongst whom they can choose to get to know some more than others; and they want good public services, especially in housing and schools. If problems arise, particularly with neighbours, they want responsive local structures that can either mediate effectively or can identify the structural cause of the problem and deliver a solution. It is in the provision of this environment that social cohesion, rather than a problematizing community cohesion, lies.

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Some Observations

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I lived in John Denham's constituency before and after he became its MP, bumping into him once while knocking up on the fateful night when the party (and Mr Denham), then led by Neil Kinnock, lost the election. His contribution to this pre-election discussion interests me because while at that time I lived in his city and had close involvement with two almost completely south Asian schools, I've often been more concerned in my work with less diverse areas of Britain to which his piece also refers, and recently much involved in looking at the scale and impact of new EU immigration into a part of the country that's not seen many newcomers since the Romans.

There is nothing in the sentiments John Denham expresses that I would take exception to, but it's not likely there would be: on the topics of race and ethnicity politicians have to be excellent wordsmiths. Of course the minister wants harmony and the absence of conflict, and naturally enough he cites some of the measures the current government has taken to promote these.

But there are details in his analysis, spelled out or implied, that I would query.

For instance, while I said that politicians have to be elegant wordsmiths, I hope I haven't spotted a deliberate elision in the statement 'In predominantly white areas, recent migration is sometimes perceived as changing communities in unpredictable ways, as well as creating new competition for jobs and social housing'. In some parts of the country, certainly my own, there is no evidence of this competition, with not a single new immigrant family in social housing and – at least until the recession – rising employment levels. But to be fair, he does recognize that mere research reports seldom dent public perception, fuelled by local myth and mischievous media coverage.

Another detail I would take issue with is the assumption repeated too often by too many people who know better that the 2001 riots in three northern towns were due to 'divided communities'. This is true as far as it goes, but misleading when linked with an alleged self-segregation by south Asians, Muslims in particular. What this now largely accepted idea does not take into account is the years of discrimination, both in jobs and housing, experienced by Asian (and black) populations. Post-colonial and non-European migrant groups tend to be residentially segregated throughout Europe because of the same processes, yet most 'host' populations duck the structural issues and devise rhetorical and policy strategies that blame minorities for not integrating. The segregation is also over-simplified, as explained very well in Finney and Simpson (2009), a book I'd recommend to all aspiring British governments.

The assumption above is often linked to the alleged 'failure of multiculturalism', a stance which much to my disappointment Mr Denham repeats:

> *The problem of multi-culturalism was not its insistence on respect for those of different cultures, or of their freedoms to express themselves as they wish: it was the neglect of the glue that binds us together; it was the failure to recognise a multi-cultural society can only work if there is equal engagement and activity in building and developing shared values and the framework of a shared identity which enables us to be multicultural within a cohesive society.*

Where was this, I'd like to know? It's a parody of the negotiation I saw all over the country for two decades, and in so far as multiculturalism (in a slightly different sense, I'd argue) reached most schools, I have copies of every local authority policy and pretty much every published text promoting multiculturalism in schools since the late 1970s and I have to say I don't recognize the account above. (That's not to say there weren't unreflective and ill-thought-out things that happened, but to represent these as typical is about as misinformed or dishonest as saying the essence of anti-racism is objecting to black coffee.)

The sub-text here is religion, and when anyone in this context says 'religion' of course they mean Islam. Less than 8 per cent of the majority population attend religious ceremonies regularly so the statement that 'When people of different faiths do not know each other and when people with no faith know very few people who are actively involved in a religious community, the

possibility for miscommunication emerges' is a bit disingenuous. Similarly, the statement that 'people of faith are welcome contributors to debates in the public sphere' is really code that Muslims should not be ignored. This is as it should be; the rise in resentment among British Muslims evident in the Rushdie affair, well before the events of 2001, was a signal that for many, religion was a source of identity above ethnicity, and of course the government has to recognize this. It may be unsurprising, but while we are told about Prevent there is a silence in this document about the effect of two wars that involve British soldiers fighting Muslims.

But to return to my point that the portrayal of multiculturalism is a dangerous parody, and the idea that segregation is self-imposed, I will commend Mr Denham's own words: 'Class still matters in Britain and the politics of identity ignores it at its peril'. A point he repeats later when he says 'We need to appreciate and understand the ways in which race interacts with other social factors – especially class – to influence and shape people's lives'. This, it seems to me, is the essence of what community cohesion ought to be about, and it should be the core of the measures like Connecting Communities to which he alludes.

I have some involvement with local community cohesion measures, sitting on a multi-agency group that meets regularly, not in an area of traditional BME settlement but a place which outside of London and Slough has seen a greater proportional increase in immigration than anywhere else in the South East (mainly from the EU). The Migration Impact Fund Mr Denham refers to finances some good work and I hope it survives the election.

Just before the conclusion there's a rather bizarre and unexplored reference to a new St George's Day as a means of forging a cohesive British identity, so I have to hope this is not pursued, certainly not with the idea that 'a progressive understanding of Britishness might mean' unproblematic references to 'British values and British history'. Such things make me wonder about wordsmithing once again: is this a sentence intended to be read many ways?

These are some reflections on what the minister has written, and I have dwelled mainly on points where I think there is too much myth and too little clarity. But I do not want simply to rubbish the record of this government. It came to power with the Lawrence case unresolved, a weaker Race Relations Act, almost no specific action on hate crime, rather less positive action in certain state agencies, before the 2001 riots, when educational underachievement blighted the lives of more minority ethnic pupils than it does now. Events, like 9/11 and its aftermath, and the advent of massive cheap labour pool from Eastern Europe, have changed the landscape, but there are ways in which I think they haven't done a bad job.

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