


# Living together in perfect harmony?

 The racial disturbances in Birmingham last month were a chilling illustration of the underlying tensions that lie behind the warning by the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality, Trevor Phillips, that Britain is "sleepwalking to segregation". Two decades have passed since the Lozells area saw the first eruption between elements of the black and Asian population.

The passage of time, all the public resources spent on promoting harmony, all the efforts of community leaders seem to have achieved little, judging by recent events, to bring alienated young people back into society. After a weekend in which two young men were killed, the apologists were filling the airwaves with excuses. The rioters were victims of social exclusion and society was to blame. Just a few commentators pointed out that some of the rioters had been involved in criminal activity.

Phillips made a brave speech at the Conservative Conference Muslim Forum. It contradicted nearly everything he and the CRE have been saying for years. It was so brave and so radical that the leading black newspaper, *The Voice*, roundly condemned him. Ken Livingstone's race adviser, Lee Jasper, invited him to resign.


Phillips challenged the need for public bodies to send out printed information in several languages, and the trend to treat ethnic religious days, such as Yom Kippur, on a par with Bank Holidays. He queried the High Court ruling on a school uniform for Muslim girls, and asked if it was really offensive to call someone "coloured". Well, remembering the all too recent use of the word in South Africa and the southern USA, perhaps you're wrong on that one, Trevor.

I hope that Mr Phillips can ride out the storm his ideas have provoked, and lead a genuine debate about Britain's need for true multiculturalism. One benefit for the police service would be a common sense approach to verbal indiscretions by officers who have made unguarded remarks, unwittingly, and obviously we have to be sensible here in relation to the nature of what is said, that have cost them dearly, even to the loss of their jobs. This has created a climate of fear, which has had an appalling effect on sensible human resource management throughout the service. Who knows, APCCPO (the Association of Politically Correct Chief Police Officers) might revert to being ACPO once more. 




Tony Judge, founder of *Police* magazine in 1968

# Leading by example

 When will the service learn that it scores an embarrassing own goal every time a very senior officer (especially a traffic officer) gets away with a glaring motoring offence? The latest in a long line of such cases concerns Chief Superintendent Les Owen, the Head of the Met's traffic division. He is a great supporter of speed cameras, and has said: "We aim to educate drivers about the hazards and repercussions of speeding."

Some time ago, Mr Owen found himself in the outer suburbs when he was due to attend a meeting in central London. He arrived in time, thanks to his driver, who touched speeds of 82mph in a 40mph zone, and 86mph in a 50-mph zone, a mission accomplished with the aid of sirens and flashing lights. Unfortunately, because of an unrelated serious incident, it was necessary to check the vehicles' video recorder, which revealed the unlawful speeds. The driver, a PC, appeared in court and was fined £250, with three penalty points (reduced from six on appeal).

No action was taken against Mr Owen until a public-spirited but anonymous employee of the Met, in keeping with force policy to encourage whistle blowing, spilled the beans to the *Sunday Telegraph*. This obliged the hierarchy to act. 19 months after the incident, Mr Owen appeared before a disciplinary tribunal, which decided to give a written warning for "failing to challenge the manner in which a police constable drove a car in which he was a passenger." The RAC and road safety campaigners have reacted with fury to this astonishing decision.

With breath-taking arrogance, a Yard spokesman insisted that Mr Owen had not been let off lightly, saying that a member of the public was unlikely to receive any form of reprimand. Oh no? How about aiding and abetting? I wonder if Mr Owen has had the common decency to pay the PC's fine? Sir Ian Blair has been known to blow his top when a tribunal has come up with what he felt to be the wrong answer. Will he intervene in this case?  Don't hold your breath.

# Will Sir Ian hold his tongue?

 The gossip columnist of the *Daily Mail* has revealed, and the commissioner's office has confirmed, that Sir Ian Blair has attended an Alpha course in Oxford, run by the fast-growing evangelical movement that seeks to involve more young and upwardly mobile professionals in the work and worship of the Christian church. This news may raise eyebrows in some police quarters, because the Alpha proj-

ect is very much opposed to homosexuality. I doubt if Sir Ian has become a committed adherent, because, like other evangelical groups, Alpha encourages followers to "speak in tongues" during services. This involves much hand waving and body movements, and in the words of the *Mail* writer: "talking gibberish". That doesn't sound like our admirable commissioner,  does it?