

Measuring Migration



by Ralph Berry

It is impossible to measure migration. The Government's pretences at partial numbering are fraudulent, as of course they know. We can start with a non-starter, the Continental system of papers which everyone is obliged to carry. This duty is widespread and ancient—the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. Nobody believes that such a system could be new-born in England. So Government turns to other expedients to measure and control immigration.. All are useless.

The kids are different. Born in a British hospital and properly registered, their claim to be British is incontestable. That may not be so of their parents, one at least of whom has stayed around. A feature of the many seaborne migrants who show up on these shores is their absence of proof of identity, such proof having been ditched in the sea as they approach the border patrols. Each migrant is a tabula rasa on which they inscribe their own version of their life story. It may be wildly fanciful, as with strapping

young men in their mid-twenties who claim to be under age. If their teeth are not checked, they go to school to experience British education. It is not clear how well this fits them for later life, but the main point stands out: they cannot be deported because there is no country to which they can be dispatched. Let them be given permission to work here, say the siren voices. Can the system legitimize criminal activity?

The only honest work for the migrants is crime. Fortunately, this is well organized and well remunerated. All migrant groups have a diaspora—Britain has been popular for a very long time—and the newcomers easily make contact with elders of their tribe, some of whom have built up profitable people-smuggling businesses over the years.

They will always need new workers in the traditional occupations.

Demand meets supply on easy terms. A shocking new development is the latest news; there are illegal emigrants who are paying good money to leave England without being molested by the authorities. One does wonder if this, beyond self-protection, is a sign of lack of belief in Britain, or the pound sterling.

With the ever-swelling diaspora, the political future of this country belongs to the established migrant communities, which have two marked characteristics: they are constantly growing, and they vote Labour.

The political reality of today is the unbreakable alliance between Labour and the Muslim vote, which is established at 85%. The big city vote goes regularly to Labour, and Birmingham and Manchester between them send a single Conservative MP to Westminster. I take as especially interesting two constituencies less well known.

Bristol West's population is heavily, densely Somalian. What immortal hand or eye plucked them from Africa's teeming

shores, and deposited them on the no less teeming shores of Bristol West? That constituency, whose MP is Thangam Debonnaire (Labour, shadow cabinet) is hardly a showcase of traditional British values. Its referendum vote of 2016 went overwhelmingly to Remain, the largest such vote in the country.

Bristol is famous for its passionate remembrance of the slave trade, and the statue of a past notable finished up in the harbour, under the approving gaze of the police. They were against slavery too.

Poplar & Limehouse was once Clement Attlee's constituency. The population now is Bangladeshi, which has remained steadfast in loyalty to its local leader in Tower Hamlets, Mohammed Lutfur Rahman, after he was removed from office for 'illegal or corrupt practices'. After several years in the sin bin, he was allowed back to office, where he remains supported by his forgiving people. The constituency is represented by Apsana Begum, an ex-council officer who survived the scandal of an enquiry into a council flat which she acquired. She now sits quietly on the Labour benches.

These same benches will be much reinforced in the coming election.

The Tories cannot avoid a drubbing, and in Scotland the collapse of Nicola Sturgeon's ScotNats leaves Labour handsomely endowed. The electoral map with boundary changes is being re-drawn. The 2021 Census has not thrown much light on the nation's transformation—the Government well understands that the Census must serve the purpose of the Censor, which is to withhold information. But elections cast a klieg light on the people and their dispositions. We have less than eighteen months to know where we stand, and who indeed are 'we'.