

Rising Pressure: Immigration, Population Density and the Problems of Overcrowding

A Cornerstone Submission to the Shadow Home Affairs Team Review on
Immigration, by Julian Brazier

"Democracy is a favoured way of life because issues are taken off the streets into Parliament. But that is what the political parties resolutely refuse to do on immigration." Rt. Hon. Frank Field MP, 15th July 2006

Introduction

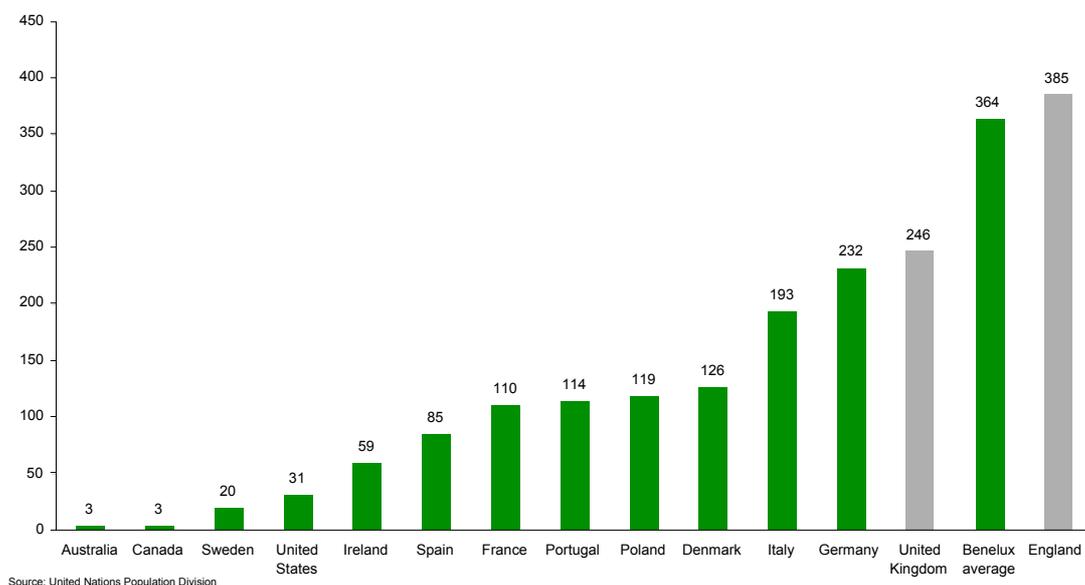
Immigrants have made a huge contribution to British life, economically as well as socially. Examples abound, from the impact on manufacturing and culture of the influx of Huguenots in the 17th century, through the contribution of Jewish immigrants to banking and the rise of supermarkets, to the last-ditch rescue and transformation of so many community shops by Indian families. From newscasting to football to music, we see a vibrant multiracial society.

Recent debates about immigration have tended to focus on two areas. On the one hand, the economic case is made for a requirement for labour, skilled and unskilled, to make up the shortfall caused by a low domestic birth rate. On the other hand are social concerns, including issues of assimilation, race and religion and most recently foreign criminals - who have accounted for half the recent rise in the prison population. Much of the latest Home Office package seems to focus on this last point.

Yet wider political considerations involve many issues in which *population density* is an important factor. These include housing shortages, pressure on land particularly in the countryside, water shortages, and congestion. Many of these issues are fundamental to our quality of life, which David Cameron has, rightly, put at the heart of the Conservative agenda. Earlier this month, the Conservative Home Office team invited submissions on future policy on immigration. This paper is a contribution to that debate which focuses on problems of overcrowding and how unprecedented levels of immigration are impacting on Britain, despite very heavy emigration. This author's constituency, Canterbury, is a case in point under all these headings.

When discussing immigration, work permits and asylum policy in the UK, it is often forgotten that **the UK has a vastly higher population density than its English-speaking counterparts and a significantly higher one than other EU countries apart from the Low Countries.**

Population density per sq. km

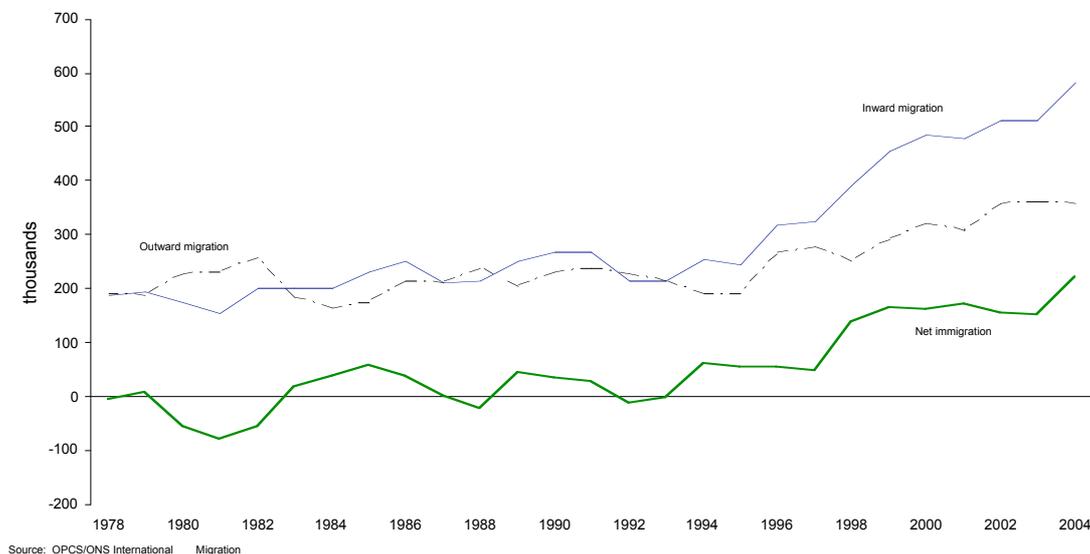


The Impact of Immigration on Population

In 2004 net immigration, (the total number of people coming in minus the total number leaving), was estimated by the Home Office at 222, 000. If we look at gross immigration alone, the number of people coming in was a staggering 582,000. Moreover commentators of all shades of opinion agree that these figures exclude a large number of undetected illegals.

Leaving aside illegal immigration, official figures show that *net* immigration has been the most significant component of population growth since 1994/5 and the government say it will account for 6 million out of the 7.2 million growth over the next generation¹. Yet that completely ignores the fact that *emigration* is running at a historically very high level. Heavy net emigration in past generations and centuries has prevented severe overcrowding in Britain today - indeed there are more people of British descent living in North America than in Great Britain. If people find their housing is highly valued and they can release equity by leaving for another country, a natural rebalancing occurs. Yet, today, heavy levels of emigration by British citizens - partially driven by the effects of overcrowding - are being vastly outweighed by unprecedented levels of immigration.

Net immigration, United Kingdom



Overcrowding leads to a number of undesirable effects: including pressure on housing stock and the countryside, overstretch on water supplies, transport and other

¹ Government Actuary's Department (GAD), population 2004 to 2031:
<http://www.gad.gov.uk/Population/2004/methodology/mignote.htm>

infrastructure and greater economic pressure on less-well-off indigenous families. Let us consider housing first.

Housing Shortages and House prices

In 2002 the Joseph Rowntree Foundation² estimated that Britain would need 4 million new homes by 2022 and that just over one fifth of the requirement would come from net migration. Their study ignored illegal migration - presumably because of the difficulty in estimating it - and based its estimates on government migration projections, which have been hugely exceeded. Even so, the Foundation claimed that the gap between housing demand and housing supply was widening by 56,000 homes a year. The report also commented, "...the effects of housing shortages in the South fall most heavily on the poorest families who cannot afford to buy and have no access to the oversubscribed rented accommodation provided by local authorities and housing associations."

In 2004, Kate Barker's report to the government recommended that the level of housebuilding be virtually *doubled* in order, allegedly, to halve the rate of increase in house prices. This month the National Housing Federation claimed that the average house price today is *ten* times the average income in some local authority areas, and that housing waiting lists are up nearly 50%. They estimate that there are 1.5 million people either on a housing waiting list or waiting to buy a first home but unable to do so. "Young working couples, key workers and people on low incomes have little chance of fulfilling their home ownership dream without financial support from parents or the state. This can have serious social consequences for the birth rate, for keeping essential public workers in high housing cost areas, for government expenditure and for the UK's business competitiveness³."

In 2006, The Department for Communities and Local Government's household projections for England⁴, estimated that out of 209,000 additional households per year between 2003 and 2026 about 65,000 per year (31 per cent.) are attributable to net migration into England.

Three important points are highlighted by these studies, however. First, all the government's projections of immigration have been greatly exceeded. Second, none of them take any account of undetected illegal immigration. **The most important point, however, is that all of these studies examine *net* immigration, rather than the impact of *total* immigration.**

On government figures, in round terms, three people legally move here for every two who emigrate. The government's own 2006 study estimates that future *net* immigration of 130,000 per annum accounts for 31% of all housing need. Thus, on the government's figures, *gross* immigration (roughly three times the net figure) must account for almost *all* projected housing need. It is true that the fall in average

² Joseph Rowntree Foundation and 'Guardian Unlimited' leader March 20th 2002.

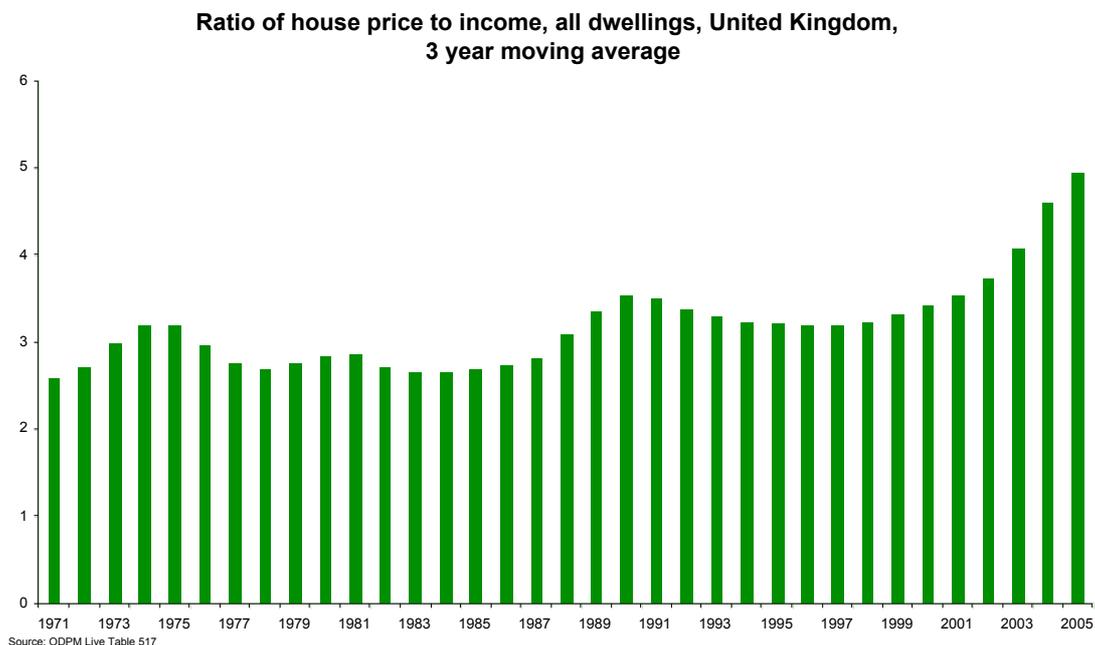
³ *England's housing timebomb: affordability and supply 2006 - 2011*, National Housing Fed., July 2006

⁴ DCLG. <http://www.odpm.gov.uk/index.asp?id=1002882&PressNoticeID=2097>

household size is a big factor but emigration, at around 320,000 per annum, roughly balances it. (In fact, recent government figures suggest immigration is much higher than their earlier projections so even more house building may be needed to cope with immigration)

Of course this does not mean that there are no good reasons for continuing immigration. Some British citizens marry foreign nationals and naturally wish to bring them to the UK, British businesses sometimes require key skills not available in the EU and there are genuine asylum seekers who cannot and certainly should not be returned to their countries of origin. As members of the EU, we are required to allow free movement of EU citizens; indeed much of our emigration is to EU countries. Nevertheless, Britain's unilateral decision to allow citizens of the new EU entrants immediate access has led to a large influx of people from accession countries.

The point is, however, that in determining cases at the margin (such as the vastly increased allocation of work permits to non-EU citizens) we need to bear in mind that we have to build houses for incomers. Let us look in more detail at the housing situation.



Income to house price ratios are close to an historic high. Regionally the ratios are highest in Southern England where population densities and average house price increases are greatest, but the erstwhile ‘South East England’ problems of unaffordable housing now extend as far west as Cornwall and as far north as Cheshire; even York has become a hotspot.

The average house price in the first quarter of 2006 ranged from £114,000 in Scotland to £221,907 in the South East and £258,500 in Greater London. Across the UK the

average house price was £173,000. Whatever happens to the housing market next, it has two highly undesirable features which indicate chronic undersupply: first each peak in the ratio to earnings is higher than the last and, second, it is unstable, with vicious upturns and downturns between each rising peak.

The primary effect of unaffordable housing is the servicing of huge mortgages, squeezing the disposable income of young people trying to get into the market, and those seeking to upgrade when children are born. Furthermore, the Housing Benefit budget has reached £5.1 billion, yet another obstacle to mobility for those in the rental sector, caught in means testing. The demand for housing, in whatever form of tenure, is rising rapidly. At the bottom of the income scale, it means homelessness for couples such as a couple who visited my surgery – he had served 24 years as a dustman and their accommodation (belonging to his wife's employers) was being redeveloped as holiday flats. Neither the council nor any housing association could help them; many of their properties are occupied by asylum seekers. Poignantly, a similar case in a colleague's constituency involved a couple who came to England 30 years ago, because they sought a better life in what they called their "mother country". They had moved into job-related accommodation, which had just ended on his retirement.

Impact on the countryside:

Britain has some of the strictest planning procedures in the world. This has enabled us to preserve some beautiful countryside even in Southern England, despite the incredible development pressures.

The architect, Lord Rogers, who chaired the government's urban task force has stated his fears about potential greenfield building; "The more [the Government] stand back, the more there will be pressure to do it the easy way and the easy way is to build on greenfield land..."⁵ The Council for the Protection of Rural England has repeatedly pointed to the threat of irreversible loss of our remaining countryside.

The government has set a target of 60% of all developments on brown field sites. It claims that this has been exceeded, most recently citing a figure of 73%. As has been widely reported, however, this has in part come about because of the ghastly practice of 'town cramming,' pushing dense developments into, for example, the gardens of less densely populated suburbs. Even if 60% of the government's house building target of 200,000 houses per year were on genuine brownfield sites, that would mean 800,000 houses on greenfield sites or crammed into unsuitable urban ones, in a single decade. Most of them will be in southern England. Yet in many areas, like Kent, the supply of brownfield sites is nearly exhausted, while unpublished work by the Environment Agency suggests that many possible 'infilling' sites involve flooding risks.

⁵ Interview with Peter Hetherington, Regional Affairs Editor, The Guardian Newspaper, Wednesday 20th March 2002.

This gloomy picture is worsened by regional tensions. Rising demand for new homes in London disproportionately outstrips supply. Overcrowding in the cities of southern England, caused mainly by overseas migration, leads to an exodus from those cities to the countryside, decimating rural communities by driving up prices beyond the reach of local workers. In urban and rural communities alike, it is the less well-off who suffer most. The queues lengthen for social housing and the prospect of owning a home recedes with each rise in house prices.

Unless there are major changes in government policy, the supply/demand housing gap can only be closed by the consumption of large areas of countryside.

It is not only many poor and lower skilled migrants who aim for London and overcrowded Southern England. The most prosperous - and economically active - entrants overwhelmingly head for Southern England too – attracted by the City, the most famous universities and tourist sites – even the slightly less atrocious weather. Yet Southern England has the highest population density in the UK, the highest income to house prices ratios and has experienced the highest price increases for first time buyers.⁶

Creaking Infrastructure

The problems are not only with housing. There are dire implications for infrastructure too. One of the worst of these is the shortage of water and the related problems of sewerage overload and flooding. In a damning recent report⁷, the House of Lords Science and Technology Committee demolished the government's claim that its projected housing plans would result in only a "marginal" increase in water use.

"Not only is the methodology flawed, but the findings are produced in such a way that even the minister with responsibility for water issues misinterpreted them. The government has (earlier) been more transparent about the fact that their housing growth plans will have a very significant impact on water use in southeast England..." They quote a report from the Environment Agency, "Over the next 10 years a huge increase in the demand for water in the South East is forecast."⁸ The report also points out that the four growth areas selected by the government to take the greatest share of the housing pressure are all notably dry locations.

Ironically, additional flooding risks come hand in hand with water shortages. Much of the remaining unprotected land in Kent, for example, lies in flood risk areas. Furthermore the building of properties on flood plains leads, during heavy rainfall, to water finding its way via gutters and roads directly into rivers. This increases the risk of flooding in winter as well as reducing the restocking of aquifers for summer.

⁶ National Office of Statistics 'Population Trends, winter 2001' p106.
www.immigrationwatchuk.org/overview.htm.

⁷ Water management H L. Paper 191-1

⁸ Defra, Study into the environmental impacts of increasing the supply of housing in the UK, April 2004, p19

Another pinch point is our road system. Tourists are often horrified by our traffic problems. A debate is taking place within the government, Parliament and our own Shadow team to try to find ways of squaring the circle. Does one build more roads across precious countryside, to ease pressures or allow congestion to deter motorists? Of course there are innovative ways of tackling these problems, such as road pricing and more use of public transport. Nevertheless, these can only provide one-off gains, and so will eventually be overtaken if the population continues to soar.

The wider pressures of heavy levels of immigration on infrastructure are also obvious in many cases. Many incomers do not speak fluent English, and so put pressure on schools, often the very schools which are already facing a difficult struggle with indigenous social problems. Expensive translators become necessary for essential public services. Our overloaded hospitals and social services are straining at the seams.

The impact is not only on infrastructure. The combination of pressure on housing and the availability of a cheap supply of labour is having effects on family life which have not been adequately examined.

The growth of mortgage slavery

Britain and Benelux have the highest population densities in Europe. The largest real percentage change increase in house prices between 1980 and 2001 occurred in Britain, Benelux, Ireland and Spain. Over a similar period the largest increases in employment rate for mothers were in Britain, Benelux, Ireland, and Spain.⁹ Yet British house prices have continued to race up for most of the period since then. In a speech last month, Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne, commented,

“Ask young families today what they worry about and the question of how on earth they are going to be able to buy a home is right at the top of their list.” The heavy cost of housing in this country is now the main burden on young families.

A major one-off international survey produced by the OECD in 2001, looking at coupled families with children under six years old, found that:

- 63% of UK families thought they “only just managed” on the household income. Only 23% thought themselves “well off”.
- A higher proportion of Britons, compared to any other major EU nation, feel they are having to work longer than they wish.¹⁰
- After the huge growth, Britain now has the highest absolute level of mothers’ employment, apart from Benelux, Austria and Portugal.¹¹ Yet, unlike many of

⁹ *The Economist* March 30th Edition 2002, House Price Indices % change 1980-2001, P78.

¹⁰ and ⁴ *OECD 2001 survey entitled ‘Balancing Work and Family Life: Helping Parents Into Paid Employment’*

our European neighbours, we no longer have a tradition of grandparents living with the family and rearing children while mothers work.

One effect of parents working such long hours is higher rates of family breakdown with knock-on effects for teenage pregnancies and crime. Several studies show that overwork and financial worries contribute heavily to stress on families. Of the fifteen 'old EU' members, Britain has the highest teenage pregnancy rate, the highest divorce rate and almost the highest illegitimacy rate.

This family breakdown has terrible social consequences. Norman Dennis' IEA study, 'Families Without Fatherhood', found that '...across the board ...educational achievement, criminality...are on average connected with the presence or absence of a committed father'.¹² Statistics by Patricia Morgan, in a study entitled 'Farewell to the Family,' found that 'Children of non-traditional families¹³ have higher rates of mortality and morbidity; are more at risk of abuse; more likely to become delinquent and go into care and more likely to become involved in crime'.¹⁴

Furthermore, if people are – and feel – overworked, they are surely less likely to engage in the kind of voluntary activity needed to rebuild our civic society.

Work Permits:

More often than not, in the debate about immigration the headline figures revolve around asylum seekers. Whilst important, the real numbers game - and the government seems to treat the statistics like a game - happens around work permits. In 1996 the number of work permits issued, both abroad and to foreigners already here, was 38,256¹⁵. The latest available figures, provided by the Home Office¹⁶ give a figure of 79,850 issued abroad, excluding nationals of the EU-accession states. In addition there were 41,385 dependants of work permit holders bringing the total to 121, 235 entrants. However, in a PQ tabled in July 2003 the government admitted that there were 51,648 in-country work permits issued in 2002. That covers people who arrived in this country without a work permit and later applied and received one. It is substantially more than the *total* number of work permits issued in most years under all previous governments. But in the Home Office's document cited earlier, for 2004 they don't give any figures for in-country permits, for that year or any other.

Indeed, this Government doesn't routinely publish this figure with the normal immigration statistics. This raises the question as to who these large numbers of people are, who come to the UK without a work permit and then, once here, apply and receive one. Some would have entered as visitors, others as students, many one

¹² Norman Dennis, 'Families without Fatherhood', IEA Health and Welfare Unit, London 1992, p44.

¹³ Traditional being defined as a married couple bringing up children.

¹⁴ Patricia Morgan, 'Farewell To The Family' IEA Health and Welfare Unit, London, p138.

¹⁵ Parliamentary Question tabled by Julian Brazier TD MP, Monday 10th February 2003, answered 6th February 2003, by Beverley Hughes.

¹⁶ *Control of Immigration: Statistics, United Kingdom, 2004*

suspects as illegal entrants. For example, in the last figures obtained, 13,434 in-country work permits were approved to people of Indian origin. There were also 18,993 successful out of country applications from India indicating that applying for work permits in India prior to arrival is not difficult. So what legitimate reason could there have been for entering without one? In the last figures available, there were more people of Chinese origin getting work permits in-country than there were out of country. The same is true of people from the Philippines, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Ghana and Kenya¹⁷.

Why also does the government not publish these statistics on a regular basis? It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that illegal entrants and overstayers are being steered towards in-country work permits to prevent them showing up as asylum claimants. There has been testimony from immigration staff that they have been under pressure to discourage illegal entrants from claiming asylum. Deporting anybody who does not wish to go is a lengthy and expensive business because of the different approach of our courts to those of most other countries. In-country work permits provide a perfect way of hiding illegal entrants and overstayers from public view.

Perhaps one of the most absurd measures introduced by the Government was the Sector Based Scheme, introduced on 1st May 2003. This scheme allowed for up to 20,000 low skilled immigrants to receive work permits to work in the hospitality and food processing industries. Given that we then had over a million registered unemployed people, and much larger numbers of economically inactive people at the time, this seems all the more extraordinary. The situation has got slightly better. The 2004/05 quota was reduced to 15,000 and in June 2005 it was announced that the scheme would only apply to the food processing sector with a quota of 6000 until June 2006. This was not as a result of a change of heart, merely that accession countries are filling the gap for low skilled labour¹⁸. The pertinent question is whether we need to import unskilled labour – and this never seems to have been asked. The government's recent introduction of a points system restores some emphasis on skills, although there is no commitment to return to the much lower numbers of recent years.

Shifting from unskilled applicants eliminates some of the worst problems - including exploitation - but importing large numbers of skilled people raises issues of its own. If you import nurses, for example, the question why the indigenous population no longer wishes to join such a noble profession is not addressed (although the present muddle in the NHS means that, for the first time in a generation, the number of nurses may be in temporary oversupply). There are two other concerns here. We must ask ourselves whether it is right for the West to be stripping Third World countries of their precious skilled people, rather than helping those often desperate countries to provide financial packages to persuade them to stay where they are most needed. The most extreme example of this is medical and nursing personnel from AIDS-infected areas of Africa; there are more Ethiopian doctors, for example, in America than there are in Ethiopia, and we are almost equally guilty.

¹⁷ PQ, Home Office, 10th February 2003, Tabled by Julian Brazier, Answered 6th February 2003, by Beverley Hughes.

¹⁸ Home Office Press Release, 'Outcome of Review of the Sector Based Scheme' 23rd June 2005, www.workingintheuk.gov.uk

There is also the wider point that employers are much less likely to train indigenous people, especially from "hard to reach" and vulnerable groups, if they can recruit trained staff from abroad. Nobody is suggesting that all work permits should cease but, with the flood of people from the accession countries, the numbers should surely be *lower* than the 35,000 to 40,000 a year which prevailed before EU enlargement, rather than at roughly *four times* that rate.

Impact on the labour market

A number of studies have pointed to the economic benefits from a ready supply of cheap overseas labour. They boost the output and profit margins of British businesses, while providing a livelihood for people from desperately poor countries. Nevertheless, migrant workers, who often put themselves beyond the protection of both the criminal and employment law to secure work¹⁹, place pressure on the market for unskilled labour, denying jobs to native workers. Legitimate industry suffers directly and indirectly via unfair competition.

A report, conducted by Lord Grabiner QC in March 2000 on behalf of the Government²⁰, found that illegal immigrant workers were found in those sectors where casual and cash-in-hand work was common, where labour laws were unnecessarily rigid or welfare costs make businesses with small profit margins uncompetitive. The examples given were catering, contract cleaning, farm working, the clothing industry, child minding and domestic service. Indeed, in May 2006, five illegal immigrants were detected working as contract cleaners in the Home Office. Employed by cleaning contractors Techlean Plc, who claimed they had in place "recruitment procedures in strict accordance with government guidelines"²¹.

Legitimate migrant workers are in principle less vulnerable. But in practice, the role of the employer in establishing the work permits for non-EU citizens make them almost equally vulnerable. The work permit system was not designed to be used for unskilled or semi-skilled people - this government has been using it in an entirely new way, as well as on a much larger scale. Language and other problems for 'new' EU citizens put them in an anomalous position too. It is certainly not only the proverbial Polish plumber who works for cash and without insurance. Such practices may be good in the short-run for consumers but they cheat the taxpayer and pose unfair competition to local small businesses.

The growth in outsourcing in most OECD countries is also a contributing factor to the employment of migrants. Employees of an outsourcing firm are effectively self-employed freelancers. The subcontractor can employ anybody he wishes and will often choose illegal or vulnerable immigrants in an effort to reduce costs and gain a contract²². Usually these will settle for below-market wages and the employer incurs no welfare costs. The immigrants' precarious situation gives them little bargaining power and makes them highly vulnerable to discriminatory practises in terms of long

¹⁹House of Lords, European Select Committee Report 5th November 2002, Page14

²⁰ Lord Grabiner QC, 'The Informal Economy' March 2000, www.hm-treasury.gov.uk, page 16

²¹ Guardian Online, Helene Mulholland and Agencies, Friday 19th May 2006.

²² Jean-Pierre Garson, Directorate for Education, Employment, Labour and Social Affairs, *OECD Observer*, 24th February 2000.

hours and the non-payment of employment entitlements²³. All too often, health and safety rules are flouted for migrant - legal and illegal - workers, in the knowledge that they are unlikely to have recourse to the Law.

Indeed it is the black economy that benefits most from illegal immigrant labour. An example of this was the terrible tragedy at Morecambe Bay in February 2004, when 21 illegal Chinese workers died whilst cockle picking. Lancashire Crown Prosecution Service reviewing lawyer Duncan Birrell said of the case, "*The victims died because their lives were considered less important than the pursuit of profit*".

One of the worst examples of exploitation is prostitution. A recent study by the Home Office admitted that as many as 4,000 women in the sex trade had been trafficked into the UK²⁴. In 2000 they had estimated it to be 1,400. In June this year, 55 police forces launched operation Pentameter, raiding 515 premises in the UK and Ireland rescuing 84 alleged victims, of which 12 were children aged 14 to 17. An earlier investigation by the Metropolitan Police found that 76% of the Soho brothels searched were staffed by foreign prostitutes, mostly from Albania and Lithuania²⁵.

Worldwide migrant smuggling and trafficking is worth an estimated \$12 to \$30 billion. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe believe that it has replaced the drugs trade as the world's most profitable illegal industry²⁶. The International Organization for Migration (IOM), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the UN all estimated 4 million persons are trafficked per year globally²⁷. The Government has accepted that most trafficking organisations started as straightforward people smugglers. The plentiful availability of in-country work permits boosts smugglers as they can point to clients staying and getting jobs. This strengthens their ability to lure vulnerable women and girls into trafficking.

Liz Kelly, has noted, "*The strongest flows now are taking place within Europe, a shift from the picture in previous decades, where trafficked women came primarily from Asia and South America. This illustrates the dynamism of trafficking, with rapid shifts in countries of origin and routes reflecting the ability of traffickers to respond quickly to changing political and economic conditions and counter trafficking responses*"²⁸.

Most trafficked immigrants will find themselves indentured to organisations within the black economy as an additional part of the price paid for being brought into the country. Thus illegal immigration fuels organised crime.

Looking at the big picture, the economic impact of migrant workers as a whole can only be fairly assessed if it includes the impact on the jobless and economically inactive in Britain. Today government figures show 1.6 million unemployed and the Department of Work and Pensions has recently estimated that there are at least one

²³ Georges Tapinos, Professor at Institut d'Études Politiques Paris, *OECD Observer*, 24th Feb 2000.

²⁴ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/5118942.stm

²⁵ www.ex.ac.uk, 'Sex Work and Sexual Exploitation in The European Union'.

²⁶ BBC News, 'Human Smuggling Eclipses Drugs Trade', 20/06/02, www.news.bbc.co.uk.

²⁷ "You Can Find Anything You Want", Liz Kelly, from 'Data and Research on Human Trafficking: A Global Survey', International Organisation for Migration, 2005, Page 239

²⁸ Ibid, Page 240, 2005

million on Incapacity Benefit who should be working. Yet what prospects do older or disabled indigenous workers have if somebody can employ a young fit foreigner, whether he or she has entered the country perfectly legally or not? The economic advantages to the employer are obvious but, even where employees are fully legitimate, the taxpayer has to take account of the benefit payments to the large number of those currently displaced from work, as well as all the infrastructure factors dealt with in earlier sections.

The Nationality Asylum and Immigration Act 2002 claimed to tackle abuses in the asylum system but did nothing to mitigate the “pull factor” of the UK as a place to work illegally. The government's latest announcement, on a points-based system for work permits, talks vaguely about prioritisation but there is no clear commitment to ending the importation of unskilled and semiskilled labour from outside the EU. Yet, once a worker has arrived here, successful or not, their chances of being deported are slim.

The Shadow Home Secretary, David Davis, has repeatedly pointed out that the virtual breakdown in our immigration controls has helped to create tensions. This problem is not unique to Britain, as last summer's rioting in France showed. The rise of the far right across Europe and recent BNP victories in local elections are clear symptoms of great unease. This paper is focused on economic rather than sociological factors but it is worth noting that as far back as 2002, BBC Newsnight reported the increasingly vocal opposition of 2nd and 3rd generation Pakistani Britons to the lack of immigration controls, which are contributing to a breakdown in race relations within their communities²⁹.

Summary and Conclusions

Britain is one of the most overcrowded countries in the World, with a higher population density than any EU country apart from the Low Countries, and a much higher population density than any of our English speaking counterparts. Indeed England, on its own, is more crowded than the Low Countries, China and India.

The combination of this overcrowding with a laudable wish to plan to protect countryside has led to some of the most expensive housing in the world, leading in turn to the misery of mortgage slavery for millions and lengthening queues for social housing. A higher proportion of British families work more hours than they wish to than in any other developed country, with paying the mortgage their main problem. Millions more are trapped in means testing by the housing benefit needed to pay high rents.

The effects of immigration on this sad situation have been concealed by a muddled focus on *net* immigration which completely ignores the fact that we have today unprecedented levels of *emigration*. The government forecasts that 6 million out of the 7.2 million government population growth over the next generation will be caused by *net* immigration. Yet, on the government's own figures, the other factors driving

²⁹ Full Transcript available at the Newsnight website, Archive 19th November 2002.

housing requirements are broadly balanced by emigration. In other words, the principal factor in the growth in requirement for housing is immigration.

The problems go beyond housing and planning and mortgage slavery. We are critically short of water in some areas of the country, including all four of the areas the government has selected for housing growth. We face serious flooding problems, often enhanced by the threat of run-off from the same developments which create water shortages in summer. Our roads are desperately overcrowded and our human infrastructure, from casualty departments to special needs provision in schools, is struggling.

This does not mean there should be no immigration. We are after all committed to free movement of people within the EU, although the Government's decision on the accession states grossly underestimated the number of new arrivals, and there are factors like genuine asylum and marriage, as well as some skills we need from outside the EU.

What it does mean is recognising that overcrowding is a key cause of many of the factors which are destroying quality of life: mortgage slavery, overdevelopment, congested roads, water shortages, flooding and overstretched public services. In planning our future, immigration is one of the key issues to take into account. We should do everything we can sensibly - and fairly - do to reduce the level of immigration to well below the level of emigration. The first and easiest step in this direction would be to return to a much lower level of work permits, as occurred under all previous governments, and restrict them, as was also always the case before, to highly skilled people. (The government's new points system makes no commitment on numbers). Surely the 400 million strong population pool of the EU can fulfil most of our economic needs, obviating the need for most work permits? The government should also consider whether, at this late stage, it is possible to prevent a flood of new arrivals from Bulgaria and Romania. Could we not bring our arrangements with those two countries for their accession in line with our existing major EU partners?

Other areas of immigration besides work permits need careful examination. The abolition of the "primary purpose" rule has re-started a trade in phoney marriages, for example. We also need to overhaul our court system radically so that those who come here legitimately but overstay can be rapidly deported. Our recent commitment to repealing the Human Rights Act, which the courts have used to shred our immigration controls, will be critical in delivering this. Our parallel commitment to reintroduce embarkation records, now picked up by the government, will enable us to ensure that work permits, student visas etc are properly policed. The controls should not only be at the border, however. A much more practical internal control than the government's bureaucratic proposal for ID cards would be tightening up on the checks on those applying for housing and benefits. Strengthening sanctions against employers who take on workers without checking their right to be in this country is also important.

We are a small, overcrowded country and should see the decline in our birth rate, at a time when people are working later in their lives, as an opportunity to alleviate overcrowding. Today's unprecedented influx of migrants *may* provide short-term economic benefits but, even leaving aside all issues of assimilation, the sheer numbers represent a serious problem for our housing, infrastructure and quality of life. Britain

has a great deal to offer to help make a better world. But continuing to provide homes and jobs for further large numbers of incomers on our overcrowded island, is not the best way to help our country or the wider World.