PROGRAMMES FOR IMMIGRANTS

Note of a meeting held on Tuesday, 6 July 1965, in the Council Chamber, Broadcasting House

Present:

Mr. Ahmad
Mr. Tassaduq Ahmed
Mr. T.G. Ayre
Mr. G.M. Babb
Rev. P.A. Berry
Mr. S.P. Bourne
Sir Learie Constantine
Mr. T.F. Davies
Miss J. Derrick
Miss J. Henry
Mr. P.S. Khabra
Mrs. Hansa Mehta
Mr. Nisaz
Mr. P.M. Nanda
Dr. J.S. Nehra
Miss N. Peppard
Dr. D.R. Prem
Mr. K.C. Sen Gupta
Mr. J.F.C. Springford
Mr. S.B. Sufi
Mr. A.P. Truman
Mr. W.B. Tidhope
Mr. J.H. Turner
Miss N. Uberoi

Representing the BBC:

Sir Hugh Greene (Director General)
Mr. C.J. Whitley (Chief Assistant to Director General)
Mr. H.G. Campey (Head of Publicity)
Mr. D. Stephenson (Head of Overseas and Foreign Relations)
Mr. P.C. Galliard (Director of Sound Broadcasting)
Mr. R. D'A Marriot (Assistant Director of Sound Broadcasting)
Mr. A.P. Monson (Chief Engineer, Sound Broadcasting)
Mr. G.E. Mansell (Chief of Home Service and Music Programme)
Mr. J.A. Camacho (Head of Talks and Current Affairs (Sound))
Mr. P.M. Beach (Controller, Midland Region)
Mr. G.D. Miller (Head of North Regional Programmes)
Mr. D.P. Gretton (Assistant Head of Midland Regional Programmes)
Mr. R.S. Postgate (Controller, Educational Broadcasting)
Mr. D.M. Hodson (Controller, Overseas Services)
Mr. G.T.M. de M. Morgan (Head of Eastern Service)
Mr. R.J. Quinault (Programme Organiser, English by Radio and Television)
Mr. D.G. Scouse (General Manager, Television Enterprises)
Mr. C. Del Strother (Head of Productions, Television Enterprises)
Mr. D.B. Mann (Secretariat)
1. Preliminaries and Procedure

The Director General welcomed the guests to the conference, identified the representatives of the BBC, and outlined the procedure for the meeting.

2. Introduction by the Chairman and Mrs. Hansa Mehta

The Director General said the BBC felt that it had a duty to study what it could do to help immigrants to meet the problems which faced them. The purpose of the conference was to enable those concerned at the BBC to hear the views of the guests. Subsequently, the BBC representatives would be able to comment on the practicability of the suggestions which had been made. The Director General had no doubt that the BBC could do most to help if it had local broadcasting stations, for it would then be in close touch with the immediate local situation. Problems could be dealt with day by day in a way that would hardly be possible at the present time when there was no local broadcasting. Unavoidably, therefore, the BBC had to think in terms of what could be done regionally or nationally, and this meant that air time would have to be restricted. Radio, rather than television, was being considered as the medium to use, both because in radio the BBC had three national networks with regional variants, compared with one national network on television (with a second network which would reach about 50% of the population by the end of the year), and because radio was much cheaper than television. A radio programme cost on average about one-tenth of a television programme.

One suggestion which had been made was that the BBC should carry a weekly radio programme on Sunday mornings, somewhere between 8.15 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. It was important to emphasise, however, that the planners would not be entirely free agents. Programmes for immigrants would displace other programmes, some of which might be favourite programmes. It would probably be a mistake to do anything which might arouse resentments among the rest of the population.

Suggestions had been made for the programmes for immigrants to include English lessons, (of which an example would follow); general information about life in this country; job information, or even job training; and simple educational courses of specialised kinds, and regional information. It would be necessary to ask how such broadcasts could be integrated with what was being done by central government, by local authorities, and local welfare organisations, and whether a system could be devised for providing the BBC with information about the reception of the programmes. A lot of guidance would be required to show whether what the BBC was doing was right. On all these points the BBC would welcome comments.

Replied, at the invitation of the Director General, Mrs. Hansa Mehta said she understood that the problem did not entirely concern coloured immigrants. It would be necessary, therefore, to consider not only what steps could be taken to help immigrants, but also what could be done to make the people of the host country understand the problems of the immigrants.
First, people should realize that immigrants were a necessity to the host country. Immigrants made an invaluable contribution to industry, and to the health and social services. It would be necessary also to distinguish between the different types of immigrants, between doctors, and students, and unskilled labourers. Different types of programme would be needed. Similarly, Indian and Pakistani immigrants had different needs from Caribbeans, and different programmes would have to be devised accordingly.

For those who did not know English, language lessons would clearly be useful; and for those who came from countries where ways of life were different, courses explaining the British way of life would serve a purpose. But it would have to be borne in mind that people would not change their religion, nor would they change their outlook on life. They would have to be absorbed into the community, not through religion or language, but through their sense of responsibility and knowledge of the situation in which they found themselves. They must, in short, be helped to become good citizens. To succeed in this aim, programmes would have to be based on an understanding of the needs of residents to learn about immigrants, and on an understanding of the differences amongst immigrants themselves. The Director General, having thanked Mrs. Mehta for her valuable introduction, said that an awareness of the differing needs of immigrants had led the BBC to call a second conference for West Indians. This would be held on 13 July.

3. English by Radio Demonstrations

Mr. R.J. Quinault said the demonstrations would consist of extracts from two lessons chosen as examples of a type of radio course intended for adults learning English by themselves. The BBC had considerable experience of broadcasting such lessons to listeners overseas, and this experience could be turned to the needs of the immigrant communities in Britain. The lessons, from a series "English for You", would be in Hindustani, and they both employed the device of trying to make the listener participate himself. One would want, if possible, to distribute texts to all listeners. (The two demonstrations then followed).

4. Points Arising in Discussion

In discussion the following points were noted:

Mr. Pran said the difficulties experienced by the Indian and Pakistani communities stemmed from two main factors, lack of knowledge of the English language and the possession of a different cultural background. But in some parts, notably the Midlands, the immigrants formed about one tenth of the total population: they had, therefore, a legitimate expectation of special programmes from the BBC, as entertainment only. He suggested half-hour programmes of short plays or music, or both. In considering education, it was right to regard this as a two-way business, as Mrs. Mehta had done. Not only should instructions about the way of life of the British people be given to Indians and Pakistanis, but the
British should be helped to understand the way of life of Indian and Pakistani people. The same applied to language, for lessons in Hindustani would be very useful for health visitors, midwives and nurses who were concerned with the welfare of immigrants, especially in areas of heavy concentration like the Midlands. Health education was most important, and could help the children, who suffered from their parents' ignorance of climate and conditions. From his experience of visiting homes in the Midlands, he thought that nearly every family with children had a television set. A television programme, embracing both entertainment and education, would be the most effective means of meeting immigrants' problems. But television, with its ability to teach visually, could be supplementary to radio. Dr. Prem agreed with the Director General that language teaching by radio would reach a sufficient number of people. The ideal time for the programmes would be between 8.00 and 10.00 a.m. on Sundays. On a point raised by Sir Learie Constantine, the Director General said that literature about broadcast lessons could be circulated simultaneously with the announcement of programmes. He invited suggestions on the best methods of drawing attention to any new service the BBC might provide, and the best method of getting back reactions from the audience once the programmes had started.

Mr. J.H. Turner said local authorities should be able to set up machinery to get the reaction from broadcasts. He saw, however, the need to consider in more detail the needs of separate groups; for example, infants, secondary school children, men and women, all, as groups, had slightly differing needs. Women, who tended to be cut off from the community, should receive special attention, and the best time for them to listen to a programme would be on week-day mornings after they had taken their children to school. If possible, some television time should be spared for lessons, because this was the more effective medium. The large firms for which immigrants worked could help to disseminate information, and one would need to consider whether they could also set aside rooms for group listening under supervision. He welcomed the emphasis placed by previous speakers on two-way traffic in cultural education.

Miss J. Derrick supported Mr. Turner's suggestion for opportunities for people to listen to lessons under supervision. She doubted also whether many immigrant homes had radio sets; they had tape recorders for music, but did not seem to listen much to radio. In Leeds, many language classes had started, and then fizzled out. It was possible that radio lessons would help to keep classes going. Much organisation would be needed to inform teachers and distribute material, but if radio only were being considered, it would be better to have some supervised scheme than to leave it to individuals to switch on and listen. The best time to broadcast a lesson to groups would be Sunday morning.

Mr. T.P. Davies supported the previous two speakers, but thought it would be difficult to get teachers to work on a Sunday morning. In Bradford there were television sets in most immigrant family homes, and few sets
in the houses occupied by men living without women. In such houses there were often radio sets, but these were used mainly for background music, and probably not for any other purpose. The first objective, to which other considerations should be secondary, was the teaching of English. Speaking English should, moreover, be regarded as much more important than reading; he did not personally feel that texts were particularly important. Television would be more effective than radio, and there should be two forms of instruction. For the minority, direct teaching of English without any Hindi or Urdu, as in Bradford's schools, and for others lessons following the pattern of the BBC's television series in Italian and German. If radio only were available, broadcast lessons should be directed to controlled groups. The local education authority could provide teachers in the evenings, say at teatime or from 7 o'clock onwards, but it would be necessary to repeat the programmes on a number of occasions because many immigrants worked on a shift system. All other subjects, hygiene, health and social habits, should be supplementary to the principal object of teaching English.

Miss Nadine Peppard said it would be most important to ensure that lessons reached the women among the Indians and Pakistanis. They had less opportunity to learn than the children and the men at work. It would also be important to broadcast at a time when groups could listen. Many voluntary committees in different areas were trying to start activities such as mothers' groups and play groups. She welcomed Dr. Prem's suggestion for some basic English and some health education on a weekday afternoon, or perhaps a morning. This could stimulate formation of groups. Television would be more effective than radio.

Miss J. Henry said that in Southall it had not been found easy to gather women together in groups, or to get volunteers to help in organising groups. Local authority support would be needed to help with this. In Southall, women were increasingly taking on shift work, like the men. Both mornings and afternoons could, therefore, be suitable times.

Mr. Davies said his authority had had very little success in establishing women's classes in further education. Women were reluctant to leave the home. Men's groups provided little difficulty.

The Rev. P.A. Berry said voluntary helpers had had great success in Coventry with women's classes run at the local authority health clinic. Every possible method of instruction should be used, both audio-visual and what he called senseo-audio-visual, or the use of models as well as sound and pictures. He liked the suggestion of Mr. Turner that women should be brought together at the schools to which they brought their children each morning. The health clinic classes in Coventry were held in the afternoons, at 2.30 p.m.

Mr. Tassaqgu Ahmed said evening language classes in London had at first been well attended but had fizzled out. The reason had been found to be in the method of instruction. The texts used for teaching had not been
sufficiently related to their everyday needs. He had felt that the same criticism could be made of the demonstration lessons. A serious study should therefore be made into the means of making language instruction relevant and attractive. Similarly, the structure of immigrant communities should be examined by means of sample surveys. Families mostly had television, but where there were no families, probably only about 10% of houses had it. There were, no doubt, a few radios, but an increasingly popular possession was a tape recorder. The provision of lessons on tapes might, therefore, be welcomed. At the experimental stage, language lessons should be in Hindi or Urdu, but later Bengali should be included. There were about 60,000—70,000 Bengali-speaking immigrants, who were particularly in need of help towards integration. The education of the host community, which was important, might perhaps be undertaken simultaneously within the framework of a single programme on immigrants' problems. For the immigrants, a particularly important feature of the programmes should be teaching about what the host community expects of immigrants in the context of social behaviour, and general information about health, the Health Service, and National Insurance. A course of instruction on tape would be appreciated, and a series of booklets on such subjects would remedy a need. Films would be especially welcome, because almost 80% or 90% of Indians and Pakistanis visited Indian films shows on Saturdays and Sundays. To encourage the learning of English, employers should be encouraged to provided incentives, possibly by means of a bonus scheme. Certainly national integration depended on the mastery of the English language. On a point raised by the Director General, Mr. Ahmed said that he was happy that the language of instruction should be Hindustani; his main criticism of the demonstration was with the content of the lessons. The content should be directly related to everyday life. Mr. Quinault said he accepted this point without reservation: the demonstration lessons had been examples only of what could be done, and a special course could be written based on the background of living possessed by immigrants. Mr. Ahmed said it would be particularly important to combine language instruction with entertainment: an experiment in doing this at Toynbee Hall had raised the attendance from 20 to 100 at Saturday and Sunday evening classes.

On the subject of films, Mr. D.C. Scuse said the BBC's Television Enterprises had two series of 13 programmes each called "English By Television". A series could be prepared in either Hindi or Urdu. Such films could be made available for non-theatric exhibition, meaning exhibition by means of a 16 mm. projector and screen to a non-paying audience. He would like to know what facilities existed for showing such films, and whether there was any central organisation for distribution.

Miss Peggard said most local organisations had difficulty in finding premises and having a projector. The difficulty was mainly financial. Her Committee had a number of enquiries about films. The Women's India Association tried to provide such facilities, but found difficulty in doing so. Miss Henry had mentioned local
authority support, meaning financial support. Such support was needed, but at present arrangements were entirely in the hands of voluntary bodies. There was no central organisation to co-ordinate and distribute.

Mr. S.P. Bourne said he could enquire whether the Central Office of Information could provide such facilities. He knew of no other central organisation, and the reaction of the local authorities was not known.

Dr. Prem said he had in mind primarily television programmes, containing both entertainment and language lessons, combined with arrangements for group viewing. On the entertainment side, there seemed no reason why Indian films should not be shown on BBC-2, with English captions. It would be difficult to ask local authorities for financial help, but this might properly be the concern of the Government.

Mr. Ahmed said there were 30 film-showing organisations in existence.

The Director General said the BBC did not have the rights for showing films in theatres to paying audiences, nor was there any prospect of negotiating such rights.

Mr. T.G. Ayre said he would like to emphasise the importance, already mentioned, of the programmes being comprehensive. It would be necessary to sugar the pill, if language lessons were to be acceptable, and any BBC series should, in any event, set out to cover more than the teaching of English alone. There was a need for knowledge about the English way of life to be put over in an attractive way and, a most important point, a need for the BBC to educate the English people about the ways of life of people from overseas. It seemed as logical to put on courses in Hindi and Urdu as in Italian and French. These could be useful for English people going to India and Pakistan. The lessons could, therefore, be part of a wider educational scheme.

Mr. K.C. Sen Gupta said Indian immigrants arriving on employment vouchers came mainly from the Punjab or from the Gujrat. Of those from the Gujrat, nearly 60% of the men understood English, as did many of the women. The people from the Punjab were most in need of help. A good time to reach the Sikh population would be on Sunday mornings after the communities had attended the Sikh temples, of which there were 35 in the United Kingdom. It might also be possible to persuade many of the temples to buy 16 mm. projectors. On a general matter concerning BBC programmes, he thought that some broadcasts had not been very wholesome. Efforts should be made to correct the impression that, so far as Indians were concerned, strict measures had been taken to restrict immigration. In fact, 25% more vouchers had been issued to Indians in 1965 than in 1964. Moreover, when a large number of people were being invited to come to the United Kingdom, some attempt should be made to show the sort of jobs they did and the conditions in which they had to work. This would encourage mutual understanding.
Mr. G.T.M. de M. Morgan said he would like to return to the question of radio as against television. As the Chairman had said radio was cheap, and the BBC had more channels available, most women could listen to it without leaving their children and their domestic chores. Provided also that the programmes had a good mixture of entertainment, they would attract listeners. But it would be important to know how many immigrants had radio sets. His impression was that they had a large number of transistor radios, and also a number of short-wave radios because there was a surprising amount of listening to Radio Ceylon. A sample survey of one locality would be extremely valuable.

Miss N. Uberoi said she was engaged in a small survey in Southall. She had, however, no real evidence about listening habits on radio, which seemed to be used for music more than anything else. The women particularly seemed to switch off radio when a talk came on, because they knew little English, whereas they would watch television, because despite the difficulty of language, they picked up something.

5. Summary of the Discussion

The Director General said that, from the discussion so far, it seemed that the consensus of feeling in view of the practical possibilities seemed to favour a period on radio between 8.15 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. on Sunday mornings, which would be a mixture of entertainment and instruction, presented in an attractive way so that people would continue to listen to English lessons and other forms of instruction. The BBC would try to mount such a programme in its Midland, Northern and London Regions, assuming that it was agreed that other parts of the country were not sufficiently concerned with the problem. At the same time, the BBC should look into the matter of providing English by Television lessons and should see whether any suitable films were available for non-theatric showings, which it was hoped that local authorities might help to arrange. As well as the BBC, the Central Office of Information and, perhaps, some commercial distributors might have films which would be of value for the purpose. The question of finance would have to be examined, but he hoped to have an opportunity to discuss this with the appropriate department of Government. This was a limited beginning, but it was not possible to do everything at once.

6. Further Points Noted in Discussion

Advisory Committee

Dr. Prem suggested that a small advisory committee be formed to go into the details of the proposed scheme with those concerned at the BBC. The Committee might undertake surveys, say in the Midlands, for which Dr. Prem might be responsible, and in Southall under Miss Henry. The Director General welcomed this suggestion.

Mr. F.C. Gillard said it would be necessary before drawing any definite conclusions, to know the views of the West Indian representatives who would attend the next conference. The BBC would undoubtedly need help in
bringing the service to the attention of those for whom it was intended; and it would need to watch carefully the effects of the programmes. From what had already been said, it seemed unlikely that people would turn to language lessons on radio without persuasion. The help of everyone present would be welcomed. Mr. T. Ahmed said there were a number of publications produced for the immigrant community. He knew a number of people concerned with such publications and thought the easiest and quickest way of reaching people would be to enlist their support. Social welfare organisations could, of course, also be brought in.

The Responsibilities of the Host Country

Mr. Gillard said he had heard with interest what had been said about the responsibilities of the host country. The BBC would do what it could to help. He believed, however, that this was something which the BBC should try to do in the course of general programmes, and not as a form of indoctrination or brainwashing.

Mr. E.K. Miagi said discussion programmes on radio or television, in addition to the English lessons on radio, would prove useful. Mr. W.E. Tuhope said the root problem was the business of race. A number of people had spoken about the two-way problem, and the programme which would do most good would be a sort of "Any Questions?", in which problems ranging over a wide field of racial relations, could be discussed with the opportunity for replies and comments. Such a programme, with the opportunity for follow-up correspondence, could do a great deal to help both the immigrants and their hosts.

Times for the Language Broadcasts

Mr. Turner said he would like to make a very strong plea that the broadcast came at a time when it could be supervised. The Director General said the difficulty was to find a time when it would not displace something that a great number of people had become used to. The danger lay in arousing resentment against the immigrant community. Between 9.15 a.m. and 9.00 a.m. was a time which could more easily be made available. Mr. J.A. Camacho suggested that broadcasts made on Sunday could, if appropriate rights were taken, be recorded, by local authorities, firms, and other interested bodies, for groups listening at some other time. This might solve the problem of supervision.

The Educational Aspect of the BBC's Role

Mr. W.B. Tuhope said there was an urgent need for English to be taught to the many immigrants who spoke no English. He doubted, however, the ability of the BBC to teach any considerable number of these. Many facilities for learning English existed already, but immigrants, especially the latest arrivals, did not seem to want to make use of them. The role of the BBC, therefore, should be to help the teachers, including both those engaged in teaching English to immigrant children in schools, and those engaged in adult education. The teaching of
English should take precedence over other subjects, such as health education, which could, in any event, be handled by other bodies, which were already involved in such things. Mr. E.G. Postgate said the BBC had experience of teaching languages, both in the domestic and in the external services. For schools there was at present a series, "Joseph and Sarah", for the first and second years of teaching English at primary level to children who would not have English as a first language. The series was considerably used in overseas countries, had been tried out in London, and was capable of rapid adaptation for use with children in the United Kingdom, provided that they were in classes. The series was for radio, supported by literature, and it needed teacher supervision. There was a further series which could be developed, given the resources, to teach English by audio-visual methods, using coloured film strips synchronised with the radio transmission, which were meant to be tape-recorded.

The teaching of language to adults was more difficult. It required a short period of broadcasting at frequent intervals. The other aspects of educational broadcasting for immigrants - acclimatisation and knowledge of English living - should, if resources were available, go out on television. The idea would be to depict an immigrant in contact with other people, so that the instruction could be two-way.

Mr. Quinault said the attraction of a specially designed course on radio in the immigrant's language, with a well-known presenter, had, perhaps, been underestimated in the previous discussion. With an appropriate setting and appropriate description, a mental picture could be conveyed which would put the English instruction across. Miss Derrick said she had seen the "Joseph and Sarah" apparatus being used in schools. It was tremendously helpful and was a great stimulus to classes and teachers alike. As a quick short-term measure, this was the line on which to work. Modified, it might well appeal to adults when broadcast in the afternoon. The musical element had tremendous appeal to a wider age group.

7. Conclusion

Mr. Beech said that, as suggested by the Director General, the BBC would start by examining the possibilities of mounting a series of radio programmes on Sunday morning. In the experimental period, it would be most important to have a follow-up committee on the lines put forward by Dr. Prem. The Director General said he very much welcomed Mr. Prem's suggestion. Probably three advisory bodies would be needed, one in London, one in the Midlands, and one in the North. He hoped that many of those present would be willing to act as members of such bodies. In conclusion, the Director General said that he, as well as Mr. Gillard, entirely accepted the view put forward by Mrs. Mohta that there was a need for two-way education, by various means, some of them, in the case of people of this country, indirect. He thought that Sir Learie Constantine favoured the indirect method of education by showing immigrants in a natural setting in ordinary programmes. The BBC had been giving thought to the problem and would continue to do so.
The Director General thanked those who had attended. The discussion had been valuable and stimulating and the BBC would examine all the possibilities that had been raised. Those present would be informed of the BBC's plans when proposals had been agreed. The BBC would also consult with the Department of Economic Affairs about the establishment of advisory bodies.

The meeting adjourned for luncheon at 1.00 p.m.