

CRE Bows Out

The CRE made a final plea for the creation of an integrated Britain where inequality is rooted out and active civic participation by people from all backgrounds is encouraged.

The call is based on a damning analysis that 30 years after the Race Relations Act and the creation of the CRE, Britain, despite its status as the fifth largest economy in the world, is still a place of inequality, exclusion and isolation.

The CRE's race manifesto and legacy document, *A Lot Done, A Lot To Do, Our Vision for an Integrated Britain*, says that segregation - residentially, socially and in the workplace - is growing and extremism, both political and religious, is on the rise as people become increasingly disillusioned and disconnected from each other.

It says the national mindset has changed enough to make the "no blacks, no Irish, no dogs" signs that once appeared on boarding houses morally inconceivable now: "But let's not kid ourselves...An ethnic minority British baby born today is sadly still more likely to go on to receive poor quality education, be paid less, live in sub-standard housing, be in poor health and be discriminated against in other ways than his or her white contemporaries. This persistent, long-standing inequality is quite simply unfair and unacceptable."

The CRE, which is being replaced by a new Commission for Equality and Human Rights (CEHR), also warns that society is fracturing: "The pace of change in Britain over the last few years has unsettled many, and caused people to retreat into and reinforce narrower ethnic and religious ties. Bonds of solidarity across different groups have reduced and tensions between people have increased."

It warns that diversity, which should be a source of strength, risks becoming one of division, with people living parallel lives.

The CRE's legacy agenda includes recommendations for greater discussion of identity and citizenship in schools, a renewed emphasis to rid the prison service of institutional discrimination and funding mechanisms for local authorities undergoing rapid population changes.

This agenda is underpinned by the possibility of legal challenges to 15 out of 23 government departments and agencies for failing to comply with their statutory duties under race equality legislation.

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