



## Letter from Lord Green of Deddington, Chairman of Migration Watch UK, to Sir David Clementi, Chairman of the BBC

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History & Miscellaneous: MW 450

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Dear Sir David,

I am writing to express my serious concerns about a BBC video produced for 'teaching' 14 to 16 year olds about immigration.

I am sure you will agree that immigration is an important and sensitive issue which should be treated with care and objectivity. Unfortunately, this video fails to meet these criteria.

Net migration to the UK has been running at a quarter of a million per year over the past decade and nearly two-thirds of the public wish to see a reduction. Polling makes clear that most people in the UK are not opposed to immigration per se, but they are concerned [we think rightly] about its present scale, which is surely unsustainable.

Yet the overall impression of the video is that anyone who questions its current scale is unreasonable and prejudiced. There is even a reference to "a huge rise in people going towards EDL or Britain First".

The entire format of the video seems designed not to inform and stimulate discussion but to promote a particular opinion. The video begins with a voiceover introduction containing a litany of errors and biased statements some of which I have listed in the Annex to this letter.

The discussion of immigration by the young discussants in the second part of the video does not improve matters. Indeed it is shallow, unbalanced and unrepresentative. According to recent polling, a larger share of 18 to 24 year olds believe that immigration levels over the past ten years have been too high than the proportion who say the levels have been too low or about right. Yet there does not appear to be one person on the panel who represents the former viewpoint. Nor is it stated anywhere throughout the piece that two-thirds of the British public want to see a reduction in immigration levels. Indeed, one poll has found that 65% of the public want immigration levels reduced significantly.

Teaching should surely be aimed at encouraging young people to be critical thinkers and to develop their own views on the basis of a balanced understanding of the facts. Yet this video makes no attempt to do this. Accordingly, it fails to meet the BBC's own editorial guideline, namely that: 'Impartiality lies at the heart of public service and is the core of the BBC's commitment to its audiences.'

I trust that you will arrange for it to be withdrawn and revised.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Green (Chairman of Migration Watch UK)

3 August 2018

## Annex A

- i. The narrator states that Britain was 'multicultural long before curry and carnival' using as evidence a study (reported here) which found that the average Briton is only 36% Anglo-Saxon. What is not mentioned is that the study also found that the average British person's DNA is at least 90% European (ancestry.co.uk/dna). Any impartial observer would have to agree that the impact of modern inflows of hundreds of thousands of people a year from all corners of the globe is entirely different to the fusing of a comparatively small number of people from Northern European tribes during the centuries preceding Norman times.
- ii. The narrator also implies that mass immigration has always been a part of Britain's history. On the contrary, Britain is not and has never been a 'nation of immigrants'. In 1951 less than 4% of the population of England and Wales were foreign-born. This proportion doubled to 8% in 2001 and nearly doubled again to 15% in 2016. Far from being in our DNA, mass immigration is a recent phenomenon.
- iii. The narrator skates over the implications of EU free movement rules for the UK, breezily referring to the UK joining "the EU" and saying "Then we could move to Paris, Rome, Berlin and Barcelona and people from there can come here". It is surely misleading to refer to four Western European cities and none in Eastern Europe, as it is from Eastern Europe that inflows have been so large, with over a million Poles now being the largest migrant population in the UK. The result has been quite unprecedented inflows of people into lower-paid work, with an attendant impact on public services and infrastructure as well as a negative impact on the wages of the lowest paid, as the Bank of England confirmed in 2015. Such contextual points were not mentioned at all but are vital in explaining why many people are concerned about the present scale of immigration.
- iv. The piece states that European migrants contribute 34% more in taxes than they receive in benefits, referring to UCL research. In fact this research found that, over the period 1995 to 2011, immigrants were a net fiscal cost of up to £140 billion. The 34% figure is a cherry-picked component, referring only to recent EU migrants and only over a part of the period. Ironically, the BBC itself took a careful look at this claim in a More or Less article by Ruth Alexander <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-25880373>. She correctly pointed out that, "*focussing on the most recent immigrants..... doesn't give a complete picture, because what you are capturing is a very particular time in their lives - some of their youngest, most productive years.*" It is disappointing to see the BBC now in an educational video simply serving up the cherry when her article was an excellent example of impartiality.
- v. Finally, the title of the piece was "Don't hate the debate". It is not obvious why the word "hate" was introduced into the topic but there was certainly no informed debate, still less an impartial format.