

Religion Fragments

The Role of Religion

Discussion Point: Election 2005

As you may be aware, the 2005 UK General Election was dominated by questions (raised by both politicians and the media) of "immigration and asylum". Read the following extracts and discuss - either initially in small groups or as a class - the following questions:

1. How are "immigrants" discussed by politicians and the media? (what, in postmodern terms, is the main "immigration discourse"?).
2. How do these extracts illustrate Giroux's ideas about "community" and "identity" in relation to fundamentalist groups?
3. How might fundamentalist religious groups and movements "exploit public fears" about the "loss of British culture and identity"?

Tories deny immigration obsession

[Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk>]

Conservative leader Michael Howard has denied his campaign is focused too closely on immigration.

He had said failure to tackle uncontrolled immigration could harm community relations, pointing to lessons from the 2001 race riots.

Conservative Party Policies

The Guardian: <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/>

Immigration controls: Set an annual maximum limit on the number who can settle in Britain, including a quota for asylum seekers. Establish 24-hour security at ports to prevent illegal immigrants entering the UK.

Refugees and asylum seekers: A limit on the maximum number of refugees allowed into the UK. A quota of around 20,000 a year would be set. Applicants for entry to the UK would be processed at offshore asylum centres.

BNP tries scare tactics to win voters

[Hugh Muir: The Guardian 27/04/05]

The far-right British National party is claiming that Africans are being paid up to £50,000 to move into its number one target seat to protect the majority of a government minister.

BNP pledges

- Complete halt to all immigration and "voluntary resettlement" of ethnic minority Britons to their "lands of ethnic origin"
- British troops to secure Channel tunnel and Kent ports against illegal immigration

Labour Party Policies

The Guardian: <http://politics.guardian.co.uk/>

Work permits: A points system to ensure only immigrants who benefit the economy would be granted entry. More failed asylum seekers would be deported.

Refugees and asylum seekers: Refugees will only be given temporary leave to stay while conditions in their home country are reviewed. There will be more detention of failed asylum seekers. Rights to appeal in cases that do not have a family element will be removed.