

'HOW COLOUR PREJUDICED IS BRITAIN?' by Clifford S. Hill. *Victor Gollancz*, 32s. 6d. 262 pp.

How colour prejudiced is Britain? What shall we expect from a book with this title? Clearly, it will be a very complex work; there will be analyses of the different kinds and degrees of racialism among different social classes and groups, about how one area differs from another, with main chapters on Birmingham, large parts of London, industrial towns in Yorkshire and Lancashire – all the main areas of Commonwealth immigrant settlement in the last fifteen years. The attitudes of different political parties will be examined, of different newspapers, of schoolteachers.

But, as a matter of fact, this book is not like that at all. Mr Hill, a Congregationalist minister in London since 1952, has written an extraordinarily interesting piece of work, packed with useful information for a wide variety of readers, and readily understandable by anybody. His style is extremely readable, and interest never flags. He is fair-minded and at the same time deeply concerned; most important of all, he recognises just how many attitudes in this country *are* based on a deep, far-reaching racial prejudice. Yet, for all that, the book is seriously limited in scope: it gives the impression, casually, of being a comprehensive survey of the British situation and of being a serious sociological work based on rigorous analysis: it is neither of these things. Perhaps it is unfair to complain that Mr Hill should have written quite a different book: I think, rather, that he should have given us this one with a different title. Of course, his publishers may well be to blame for the one it has, but the fact is that, while the title promises to tell us about *Britain*, the facts given from surveys, from interviews with parishioners and so on, are almost all drawn from three areas in North London. These facts may, indeed, illustrate very well what prejudice is like throughout the country, but except for a few references to Birmingham, and some rather vague ones to 'the North', we

are not shown a general picture, nor guided to differentiate between the various places where Commonwealth immigrants have settled in large numbers and in small. The facts given about North London are copious, detailed and fascinating; they have a direct appeal which would be lost in wider generalisations. The informal and easy way in which the results of sociological surveys are presented may have the advantage of interesting many people who would not tackle a formal work of sociology, but it disguises the omission of information, whenever percentages are given, of strict accounting as to size of sample and so on. We receive, then, the same kind of impression as is gained of an unfamiliar country from a first-rate travel-book, which illuminates and informs about the real nature of a country without telling us what the chief towns and rivers are.

One of the omissions, which is serious, is of any full account of prejudice against Asians as distinct from West Indians. Mr Hill has been in the West Indies, and is deeply interested in West Indian immigrants here; he has comparatively little to say about Indians and Pakistanis, who in several towns are much the largest immigrant group, and who often arouse quite different prejudices from those met by West Indians. The excellent background material he gives about life in the West Indies, his sympathetic account of the evil wrought by slavery, and the legacy these have left in the lives of West Indians and then in the resulting English attitude to, for instance, common law marriages: all this contrasts sharply with the more perfunctory description of Asians. Mr Hill remarks that there are few facilities for social life here for Indians and Pakistanis, but that in Halifax, now, there are regular Sunday afternoon film shows for them. As a matter of fact, all large towns where Indians and Pakistanis have settled have such Sunday film shows: this was one of the considerations which affected the B.B.C.'s

decision to have programmes broadcast for Asian immigrants early on Sunday mornings. Much more could be said, too, about the social life within Asian communities.

It is plain from this book that Mr Hill is that rather rare creature these days: a man with a deep concern for the problems of people in society but with no *political* sense. I do not mean a party political sense, but an awareness of the interaction between public events and private lives, and how to influence this interaction. There is virtually nothing in this book about the part played in forming or affecting prejudice by newspapers, television and members of Parliament. There is little reference to what work is being done to combat colour prejudice outside the work of Mr Hill and other London clergy. Local voluntary committees are given a paragraph of high praise, but are not honoured by much description. The Campaign Against Racial Discrimination rates one brief, mildly disapproving reference. The National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants is not mentioned. The political views, organisation and action of immigrants themselves are given not a word. The final chapter, on what can and should be done to improve the situation, is thus somewhat out of key with the rest of the book,

which has described racialism in Britain as an aggregate of individual cases and opinions. Mr Hill begins by denying various remedies, and ends by advocating a combination of the same remedies. He seems uneasy with a fundamental statement of the problem in general terms.

Yet, in spite of serious limitations, this is a book to be recommended widely, because it says very well so many things that are quite unfamiliar to most people in this country, and which *must* become generally known and discussed if we are to have any chance of breaking down the ramshackle, eccentric but solid structure of British racial prejudice. The high degree of discrimination against Commonwealth immigrants by employers and landlords, the almost universal objection to racially-mixed marriages, the petty, everyday unkindnesses, the ignorance and misunderstanding of a great number of the British people, are all vividly described and documented; these facts will come as a severe shock to many readers without direct experience and knowledge of the lives of immigrants here. Mr Hill is an honest and reasonable man: any Christian who has not yet given much thought to the problem created by colour prejudice should read him at once.

ANN DUMMETT

DARK GHETTO, by Kenneth B. Clark. *Victor Gollancz, Ltd.* 35s. pp. xxxii plus 251.

*Dark Ghetto* will be rather heavy going for most readers. The dust-cover quotes Robert Penn Warren as saying that it is well written. It is, indeed, very well organised, and the quality of the thought is high – producing some forceful turns of phrase: but in general, unfortunately, the prose is turgid. The language is that of American academics – grammatically careless, the verbs mainly structural ('relates to', etc.), the sentences crammed with abstract nouns and often requiring re-reading if one is to catch their drift.

This is much to be regretted: for the greatest good would be done if everyone in Britain learned what *Dark Ghetto* has to tell. It analyses the racial situation in the North of the U.S.A. – an affront to human dignity as vicious as that represented by the Deep South, but different in character. It comments on, but is not, like other books on the subject, concerned to describe, the activities of civil rights groups and the utterances of Negro spokesmen: it aims, rather, at an exact diagnosis of the disease; of which the primary symptom is that appalling

phenomenon, the Negro ghettos in the large cities of the North. Since Dr Clark worked on the first stage of the Haryou project (Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited), he concentrates, with no apology, on Harlem. Dr Clark is a sociologist, and writes with a sociologist's jargon and turn of thought: but his book must enhance our respect for that discipline, because he is so deeply and consciously resolved that his work shall serve the human beings who are the subject-matter of his study, instead of being a mere exercise in one of the 570 varieties of academic research. He takes us through the various aspects of the ghetto's deformation of the human personality: he depicts the despair engendered by squalid housing costing more than decent housing elsewhere, by relentless discrimination by employers and unions, by schools that have failed even to pretend to teach, by the cynical inoperativeness of the social services, and above all the feeling of being trapped on every side by the devices of oppression which have been set up by white men, who exploit while they despise and reject, or at best