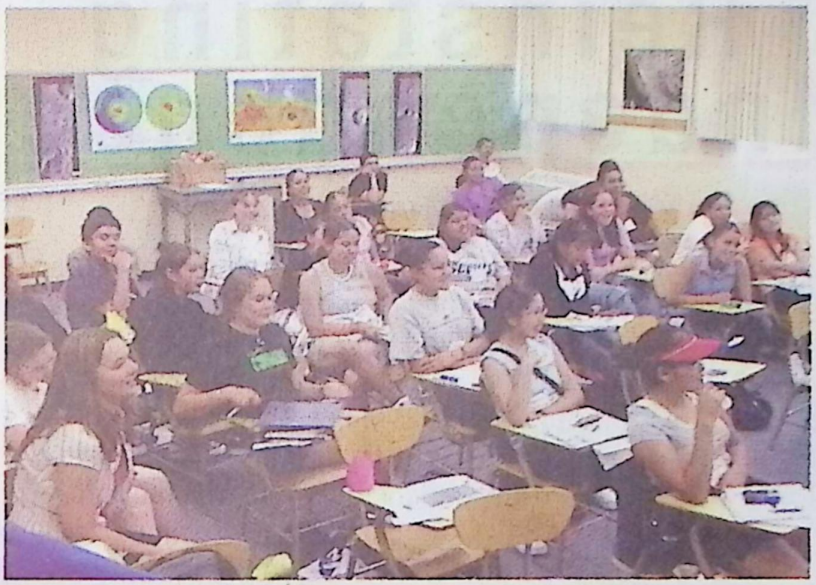
the community after receiving death threats for her attempt to do the right thing. Sadly, many Italians will just not know or care about her plight...

Emotive issues aside, there is little doubt that immigration in large numbers does raise new issues that have to be addressed. For example, in the town of Boston in Lincolnshire, there is general agreement that the influx of migrant workers has led to a business boom. But it has also led to shortages of housing and health facilities, and put pressure on local schools. Clearly, politicians need to come to grips with the real problems, rather than simply demonising foreign workers, as is all too common.

The extent to which the issue of immigration has become a political hot potato is indicated by the recent discovery of the British Home Secretary's attempts to cover up an embarrassing scandal whereby some illegal immigrants had been given licences by the Security Industry Authority and ended up working for the Metropolitan Police, Whitehall and some airports. Documents were leaked showing that the Home Secretary was aware of the problem involving 5,000 illegal immigrants at least four months before the news became public and the government was held to account for the situation. Reports also appear to indicate that she accepted advice from officials that a news blackout should be imposed on the story "for fear that it could spark negative headlines".



Cultural diversity is no longer welcomed with the enthusiasm of the past.

But fortunately, there are some voices of sanity left in Britain. Jack Dromey, the Labour Party treasurer and a close ally of the current Prime Minister Gordon Brown, has attacked both the Labour and Conservative Party leaderships for conducting a "hysterical" debate about immigration and accused them of "demonising" migrant workers. Such voices are particularly important in a situation where the Prime Minister recently pledged to provide "British jobs for British workers", a slogan previously used by the far right British National Party and National Front, both notoriously racist organisations!

Mr. Dromey's comments were welcomed by the Labour chairman of the all-party parliamentary group on refugees, who suggested that the Prime Minister should "choose his words more carefully". "We are in danger of this turning into hysteria and a competition between the parties about who can sound toughest. The debate is being framed by numbers rather than by what migrant workers we need and ensuring they have responsible conditions and rights of work", he said.

Indeed, there is little doubt that the tone of the debate needs to be raised considerably, and some use of empirical facts and figures would not go amiss either. Everyone seems to have an opinion on immigration, and all too often one is left wishing that they would keep such ill-informed opinions to themselves.

The musician Morrissey recently made an unexpected contribution to the debate by mourning what he considers to be Britain's encroaching multiculturalism and the loss of national identity "England is a memory now... the gates are flooded and anybody can have access to England... Although I don't have anything against people from other countries, the higher the influx... the more the British identity disappears."

Quite apart from the fact that most of us would argue that the situation is hardly such that "anybody can have access to England", this also begs the question of how weak British national identity would have to be, in order to be so easily wiped out by migrants who remain a fraction of the total population! It seems particularly ironic that such comments about England being a distant memory should come from a man whose parents were initially Irish immigrants to Manchester (now living in Los Angeles!) and who is himself currently living in Rome...

Nevertheless, the final (highly inappropriate) word on immigration and bad attitudes can be left to Julie Etchingham, a presenter on Sky TV. Commenting on a speech by the Conservative Party leader who said that his party's response to the rising immigrant population was obvious, Ms. Etchingham (who thought she was making a private joke without realising that she was in fact on air), suggested what appeared to be the most obvious solution to her - "Extermination!" How very amusing... Perhaps she should give up her day job and become a stand-up comedian?

All facts, figures and quotes taken from the UK Independent.