

OUR JAMAICAN PROBLEM.

In 1954 about 10,000 West Indians came to Britain. In 1955, it is believed, another 15,000 will make the long journey. Already their coming has caused a national controversy; but one point must always be borne in mind. Whatever our feelings, we cannot deny them entry, for all are British citizens and, as such, are entitled to the identical rights of any member of the Empire.

Now the end of their journey is near. What will they find in the land they regard as El Dorado? Somerleyton Road houses many of the three and a half thousand immigrants who have settled in Lambeth. Not exactly the paradise so many expect. At number 49, Mr. and Mrs. Austin live comfortably with their children. They are lucky, for many of their fellow-immigrants have been crowded six or seven to a room with a weekly rent of 30 shillings each. Mrs. Morgan and Miss Edna Young have lived in England happily for two years.

Samuel Davis works as a machinist, though he is a qualified commercial teacher. He too counts himself lucky. The Labour Exchange usually finds jobs for the immigrants within a few days - if they are employable. Some, it must be remembered, have never tackled any of the jobs that are vacant. But for many there will be wage-packets of nine or ten pounds a week - and, contrary to reports, the influx of West Indians does not cause unemployment amongst the white workers. There is work for all, coloured and white.

At a nursery in Goldharbour Lane, their children are cared for whilst the parents are at work. The children are often the main reason for a West Indian's emigration. "My child", he says, "must have a better education than us". It is a policy that can only bring good to the British colonies. A plea for controlled immigrations was taken to the colonial office by Lambeth's Mayor, Councillor White. There is an acute housing problem in the borough. Ten thousand are on the waiting list and naturally a further Jamaican influx is not favoured. When interviewed by our reporter, the Mayor put forward an answer to the problem:

The West Indies, the travel brochures tell one, are gay, sunlit islands - a tourist's paradise. The West Indian who works in the sugar plantations for a few shillings a day thinks differently. True, his music is gay and his homeland sunny, but hundreds of his friends have no work, and there is no dole. Many years ago, Lloyd George referred to the islands as "the slums of the Empire" - the ramshackle overcrowded houses tell why.

In the markets there is food for those who can afford it. For those who cannot, Britain seems to provide an answer. Eagerly they borrow their £80 fare - the market in Brixton is, for them, a happier place

than a market in the tourist's paradise they have left. Much of the outcry against the immigrants arises from the colour bar, which legally does not exist in Britain. Nevertheless we accept with little criticism the fact that thousands of white Foreigners (including 15,000 former enemies) have made their homes in this country.

Bill Strachen, in the centre, came from Jamaica during the war. He became an officer in the Royal Air Force, and flew as a bomber pilot. Bill, who now works in a council office, sums up the feelings of West Indians who wish to settle in Britain.

A pathetic sight. Yet they ask no pity from us, only that we respect "That all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". Does the answer to these Britishers' problems lie in Britain, or in the West Indies? And yet, perhaps if we dig deep, we may find the solution hidden within the conscience of us all.