

Robert Kilroy-Silk writes...on Fiddling the Immigration Figures

*Note: This article was first published in the Sunday Express on 3 October 2004*

Funny, isn't it, that whenever the government get caught out - oops!, sorry! - makes a mistake, in its immigration figures, they are always discovered to have undercounted, never to have overestimated?

Why is that, do you think? Whatever the reasons, the figure-fiddlers were at it again last week. They mislaid the equivalent of the entire British army. The government was forced to admit that immigrants had been coming to Britain at the rate of 100,000 a year more than it had previously acknowledged. A 100,000!

But that is not the end of the matter. It also confessed that 21,500 of them went straight on to Jobseekers' Allowance or Incapacity Benefit.

How did they manage that? It's extraordinary, isn't it, that people can come to this country and go immediately on to benefit? I thought the Home Secretary said that immigrants were a benefit to the economy.

The Prime Minister made several mentions of 'hard-working families' in his conference speech. Indeed, it was, for a time, the slogan on the screen behind him as he spoke. He is clearly after their votes.

Before soliciting their support at the ballot-box, perhaps he ought to discover whether hard-pressed hard-working families are prepared to sanction his immigration policy. He should ask them: (1) are they happy to endure the pressures put on the local services by the arrival of well over a quarter of a million newcomers every year? - and (2) if they are content for their taxes to be diverted away from schools and hospitals and towards state benefits for the new arrivals.

Well, that's what it's all about. He says he wants their support. Let's see if he can get it if he actually tells them the truth.