

are growing slowly, so that any given fraction of that small *increment* is not a major factor in the over-all composition of the country's population or labor force. Even if it were, it is a *non sequitur* to say that special language programs must be established for newcomers, in a country where millions of newcomers have flooded in for generations on end, without any such programs being established.

Inflating the size of the population affected by language policy by speaking of "people of color" ignores the fact that most of those people of color are black, native-born, English-speaking people. Finally, even for those people who come to the United States speaking a different language, they not only can learn English but are in fact learning English, just as other immigrants did before them. Virtually all second-generation Hispanics speak English and more than half of all third-generation Hispanics speak *only* English.⁴⁰ All the sound and fury of the bilingual advocates is directed toward countering this natural evolution, which will otherwise deprive them of the separate and alienated ethnic enclaves so useful to "leaders"—and so detrimental to minorities as a whole and to the society as a whole.

The political success of bilingual activists—despite the opposition of parents and teachers, and despite both scholarly studies and journalistic exposés revealing the fraudulence of their claims—has wider implications for the vulnerability of the political process to strident special interests who are organized and ruthless. Education at all levels is especially vulnerable to promoters of their own ideological or financial interests in the name of some group for whom they claim to speak. In Los Angeles, which has one of the largest bilingual programs in the country, more than three-quarters of the school teachers oppose such programs—but to no avail. Bilingual activists have been so successful in branding critics as "racists" opposed to Hispanic people that an organization critical of bilingualism keeps their membership secret.⁴¹ Intimidation and character assassination tactics have proved effective all the way up to the college and university levels, and for other groups besides Hispanics. Sometimes it is sufficient to accuse people merely of "insensitivity" to accomplish the same political result.

"Sensitivity"

One of the most tendentious words in the vocabulary of multiculturalism is "sensitivity." When it is proclaimed that one must become more "sensitive" to various ethnic, linguistic, sexual, or lifestyle groups, neither a reason nor a definition usually accompanies this opaque imperative. Moreover, what is called "sensitivity" often involves being *less* sensitive, in order to be more ideologically in fashion. For example, it is considered "insensitive" to use the word "Orientals" instead of "Asians" (even though the Orient or east is ultimately just a direction—and no one considers it insensitive to refer to the West or to Westerners). But, where there is a substantive difference between "Orientals" and "Asians," the former is the more specific term, referring to persons of Chinese, Japanese, and related racial ancestry, while the latter geographical term encompasses as well the racially different peoples of India, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines.

In other countries as well, to be "sensitive" in the ideological sense is to be *insensitive* to finer distinctions. In Britain, for example, to be ideologically sensitive is to call all non-white Britons "black," whether they are in fact Chinese, Pakistani, or West Indian. In Canada, the phrase that lumps all non-whites together is "visible minorities." In the United States, the corresponding phrase is "people of color."

In plain English, to make finer distinctions is to be more sensitive, but in educational Newspeak "sensitivity" means going along with current ideological fashions. When racially and culturally heterogeneous groups are lumped together—whether as "Asians" in the United States, "blacks" in Britain or "visible minorities" in Canada—the ideological point is to depict them all as victims of whites, and their economic, educational, or other problems as being due to that victimization. What a finer breakdown would reveal is that some of these groups differ as much from one another as they do from whites, whether in race, income, education, or cultural patterns. In some cases, particular ethnic groups within the broad category depicted as victims actually exceed the income or occupational status of whites. The taboo against finer distinctions among such groups serves to conceal such ideologically inconvenient facts.