

## **Colours and words and Leonard Alfred Schneider**

TO BE bloody honest, it's a complete hassle keeping up with all the colours these days. OK, it's not too much of an issue for someone like me who still — he hopes — has most of his faculties. But my parents, Mum's almost 85 and Dad's 82, do get bloody confused.

When they were young it was 'the reds' we had to worry about and hate, all the different commies, those in the Kremlin, in red China, several red Marxist or Leninist or Trotskyist groups running rings round the Yanks in Central and South America, and I don't know who else.

For a while in the Sixties, Dad says, it was the bloody students, many of them his friends he says, who all declared they were 'red' and demanded an end to everything which didn't suit them. Then, they left college, got jobs and more money to spend, fell in love, started families, discovered how to pay less tax than the government demanded, bought a house, and decided life was perhaps more fun and certainly paid better if you were not red.

Some carried on being red, of course, but as far as I can see most of those were queer and didn't start families, found themselves jobs teaching a college and saw they could carry on being red as well as being paid quite well, thank you very much.

By the way, I'm certainly not suggesting all homosexuals are communists, by any means. In fact, the Brits have shown us that quite a few of them are far-right, especially the ones who worked for the British security services, and then there was that far-right South African farmer who was found out to be knobbing one of the black men who worked for him. That didn't go down too well in the veldt.

Oh, and sorry for being so crass by referring to queers as queers, and I do know there are far more polite words I should be using (and I might even be risking a criminal conviction by not using them, according to my mate Gaz). But the new words now change so fast it's really bloody difficult keeping up. Apparently, you can call a black man a nigger — and here's the catch — if you are black yourself. In fact, for them it's a badge of pride or something.

I suppose the same is true of all the other nasty words we use about each other. So only spics can call someone else a spic, and only guineas can call someone else a guinea and it's only offensive if we do it.

In Britain there's a football team (Tottenham Hotspur, if you're interested, and, no, they won't win the league this year, either, as they haven't for many a year) which has a large number of Jewish supporters.

So they like to call themselves the Yid Army. Well, it's all right for them to do that, see, as they are Jewish. But those of us who aren't Jewish (even those of us who like to be pro-Semitic to balance things up a bit, which frankly needs to be done) can't call them that.

See what I mean? It's all getting very confusing and sometimes I surprise myself by not ending up in jail by the end of the week because of something I've said. Maybe when it gets to talking about reds and queers and niggers and spics and guineas and yids we should all remind ourselves of a very wise man, one Leonard Alfred Schneider, better known as Lenny Bruce (and another yid as it happens) who pointed out — as it needed to be pointed out — that it is not the word which is offensive and causes the pain, but the intent behind using the word. See? Obvious when you know.

Oh, and to make sure it isn't all as simple as it should be, although it's racist to call a Spaniard a spic and an Italian a guinea, it isn't racist, apparently, to call a German a kraut and a Frenchman a frog. Odd that. And when the French, who are by turn besties, then bitter enemies with the Brits just 20 miles away, call the Brits 'les rosbifs', that isn't racist either! Well!

I've given some thought to the names we have for the various nationalities and why some are racist but others aren't, and I think it comes down to this: the further north you live in Europe, the whiter you get — not half as much sun, which is why Northern Europeans all take off for the Med twice a year — and everyone knows you can't exactly be racist about a whitey.

I suppose you could insult them as I might earlier have insulted queers by not remembering the correct term to use (and by the way, similarly to blacks only being allowed to refer to themselves as niggers, it seems it isn't at all nasty when a queer refers to himself as a queer, or so my mate Gaz says).

Anyway, Lenny Bruce tells us that these are only words anyway and not nasty in themselves, and what makes using them nasty is when the pillocks who use them mean to be unpleasant and nasty. And as Lenny Bruce didn't intend them to be unpleasant and nasty in the slightest when he used them in his famous routine but only wanted to show that words themselves are nothing but harmless words, I reckon that's me off the hook, too. (Check with a lawyer?)

Then there's the greens. Oh no, not the bloody greens!

Lord, they are a menace. Hail to them for setting out to save the planet and all that and I'm sure the Lord Our Saviour is chuffed to bits, but do they really have to be so pious about it all? I don't think they do, but word hasn't yet got through to them. Honestly, has anyone ever met an entertaining and funny green? Ever? I know I haven't.

The complicating factor is, of course, that as always happens with movements, the green movement has already fragmented into its various factions and those various factions have long taken to hating each other. Some greens insist other greens are giving all greens a bad name by glueing themselves to pretty much everything. Those doing the glueing say it is great to do it if it brings attention to the cause.

Well, say the greens, it does bring attention to the cause, but not the kind of attention the cause needs, damn you! How are we going to persuade everyone to save planet by sticking a couple of house bricks in each of their lavatory cisterns if the other greens are pissing everyone off? And just how green are greens who don't walk or cycle

several thousand miles to this year's definitive eco conference, but drive and take the train if they are in the same country, and fly in by jet if they are coming from abroad. Work that one out, because I can't. It's all very well saving the planet, but if part of your savings plan is to get a couple of hundred more air miles in, it all does seem a bit rum.

Talking of blacks, there is another sort of black, of course: the assorted kiddie fiddlers who now seem to staff the left-footers' church and have done for a very long time (and Gaz assures me that referring to left-footers as left-footers is perfectly OK).

We must not generalise, of course, as generalising is almost as much of a no-no as paedophilia, but there does seem to be an awful lot of left-footing priests who again and again get a pass by some bishop or other by being shunted off to a new parish whenever they are found out. And sadly it isn't just the left-footers: we now know an equally large number of right-footers have been escaping justice merely so the institution they belong to doesn't get a bad press.

Finally, of course, there are the rainbow colours of the LGBT community (and yes, I know there are a couple more letters and a mathematical symbol or two which should by rights be added to that name, but for the life of me I can't offhand discover what they are supposed to be, so I'll just leave it at LGBT for the time being.

I have to say they get my vote: when you're a young lad or lass slowly approaching, then making your way past the age of 12 and beyond, and in addition to all the puberty stuff you have to go through, you realise you aren't attracted to the opposite sex as you were told you should be, it's a relief when someone you respect who also isn't attracted to the opposite sex reassures you there's nothing wrong with you, it happens and it has been happening seen we don't know when.

Colours, though, who needs them? But at least let's hear it for the rainbow colours.