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**Chair of the UK Statistics Authority, Sir Michael Scholar KCB**

Editor  
The Times  
1 Pennington Street  
London  
E98 1TA

12 February 2009

Dear Sir

**LETTER FOR PUBLICATION**

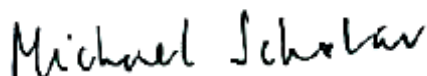
Your leading article (12 February) attacks the Office for National Statistics as being naïve and politically motivated, in issuing a news release on trends in the country of birth and nationality of workers in the UK. You further accuse the release of being misleading and unnecessary.

In view of the concerns that have been expressed about the news release being misleading, the Statistics Authority will assess it against the Code of Practice for official statistics and publish our findings.

I reject, however, the suggestions of naivety and political motivation. The statistics about foreign workers were included, as they regularly are, within the data from the Labour Force Survey released in the usual way on Wednesday, the same day as the news release. The National Statistician exercised her professional judgement in deciding to bring forward by two weeks the ONS' regular analysis of these country of birth and nationality figures, both because there has been misinterpretation of these figures in the recent past and because she judged that it was in the public interest to publish neutral and objective statistics on this subject as soon as possible.

Whether you call it naivety or openness, statisticians must be encouraged to publish independent and objective statistics, not pilloried for doing so. The Statistics Authority will not only defend them in this, it will continue to require it of them.

Yours sincerely



**Sir Michael Scholar KCB**