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Source: *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Sep., 1945), pp. 6-34

Published by: [Australian Institute of Policy and Science](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20631287>

Accessed: 10-01-2016 22:46 UTC

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Re-Thinking the White Australia Policy

By A. P. ELKIN*

National Policy and Dogma.

Man lives not by bread alone but also by dogmas—accepted beliefs on which he feels his welfare and even his existence depend. They constitute a light in dark places and become a battle cry in time of danger. If, however, economic, political, national, aesthetic or religious dogmas are made sacrosanct and put beyond periodical re-examination in the light of changing circumstances, of new knowledge and of fresh approaches to the problems of life, they will almost certainly divide, instead of unifying, mankind. Dogmas are apt to become verbal symbols, with which men identify themselves. Therefore, to question them or to suggest that they might be modified in form or content, is to meet with strong, and indeed violent, emotional reaction. This in its turn is likely to postpone too long the day of revision, to let pass the opportunity of strengthening unity through communal thinking and fresh decision, and, though apparently preventing change, to sow the seeds of inevitable dissension.

White Australia has long been regarded as a national dogma. In the opinion of Professor W. K. Hancock it “is the indispensable condition of every other Australian policy.”¹ Writing in 1928, Professor W. E. Agar said that to discuss the question of inter-marriage between Asiatic immigrants and Whites from the biological standpoint was somewhat academic, “since the White Australia policy is firmly rooted in sentimental, economic and political ground.”² It is believed to sum up the experiences of nearly a century of effort on the part of Europeans, 98% of British extraction, to build up a desirable way of Australian life. It has become a symbol of that way of life, and complete acceptance of the dogma has been, and is, regarded as essential if Australia is to work out its own salvation. “I need not add,” wrote the Minister for External Affairs two years ago, with reference to the encouragement of the birth-rate and of immigration, “that the basis of all our population increase is the principle of White

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¹ *Australia*, Australian Pocket Library edition, p.66. First published 1930.

² W. E. Agar, Professor of Zoology, University of Melbourne; “Some Eugenic Aspects of Australian Population Problems,” in *The Peopling of Australia*, edited by P. D. Phillips and G. L. Wood; pp.143-4.

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Australia, which is fully recognized by the United Nations as absolutely necessary.”³ The words “absolutely necessary,” should be noted.

The policy is beyond question and above political party divisions. As the national secretary of the Federated Ironworkers' Union said on June the 4th, 1945: “it has become part of our national policy, which none of the major Parliamentary parties has dared to criticise.” And when Mr. E. S. Spooner, a member of the Liberal Party suggested at a Church Forum on the 8th of July, 1945, that “some elasticity in the White Australia policy might remove distrust from stronger nations and give it a better chance for permanence without impairing its basic characteristics,” it was at once made clear by leaders of the Liberal Party that his views were in no way related to the policy of that party.⁴ Mr. Spooner's careful statement, which was not an attack on White Australia, was labelled by a Sydney evening paper as apostasy and heresy, and he himself a recruit to “the ranks of the heretics from the White Australia Policy.” This paper also held that unless the Liberal Party denounced unequivocally the views put forward by him, it would be finished politically.⁵

That suggested modification of the policy should be labelled heresy, is in keeping with its status as national dogma. So too was the somewhat rhetorical and emotional criticism of both Mr. Spooner and Mr. Thornton by a leading member of the Commonwealth Government. Referring to the suggestion of a quota system for immigrants such as prevails in the United States of America, the Minister said: “Would Mr. Spooner throw a spoonful of tea into a boiling billy and still expect to have plain hot water? Once there is any compromise on the White Australia policy, the whole policy, will be lost. If nothing else, the high Asiatic birthrate, rapidly multiplying in Australian conditions the number of each year's quota, will as time goes on see to that.” He then added: “We inherited the White Australia policy from our fathers and grandfathers. We have in large measure been saved by it during this war. It is our responsibility to see that it is there to be handed down by the great-grand-children of our great-grand-children.”⁶ In other words, this policy is a sacred trust, a dogma, which must not be questioned.

³ The Rt. Hon. Dr. H. V. Evatt, in an article in the *Sydney Daily Telegraph*, 18 August, 1943; reprinted in *Foreign Policy of Australia* (1945), p.133.

⁴ *The Sydney Morning Herald*, June 5, July 9, 10 and 11, 1945.

⁵ *The Daily Mirror*, July 9, 1945.

⁶ Mr. Beasley, Vice-President of the Executive Council. Quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 1945.

While, however, devotion to this ideal is sincere, and while it is believed that any change in policy would, or could, endanger the Australian standard of living and "purity of race", criticism by a political opponent of any aspect of the policy does provide an opportunity for political knight-errantry, which is too good to let pass. For example, the resolution "carried by an overwhelming majority" at the meeting of the New South Wales branch of the Australian Labour Party, was clearly as much, or even more, an attack on Australian Communists as a re-affirmation of an unmodified White Australia policy.⁷

The political inability, or fear to examine this national dogma is not, however, a justification for avoiding the duty of re-examining it in the light of changing circumstances. Such an inquiry is not an attack on, or criticism of, the policy or its objective, and may not lead to any revision of its form or methods. But a policy with international reverberations is not sacrosanct just because it has been inherited. Moreover, an increasing number of Australians are feeling a little worried about it. Carefully conducted opinion studies, as will be described later, suggested that over 40% think that some modification of the policy would be justified. The war has had a good deal to do with this. China is one of the five great powers and her long struggle with Japan prevented the latter from throwing all its weight into its southern advance. India is not only part of the British Empire, but raised a completely voluntary army of two millions, which served against our enemies in the west as well as in the east. A quarter of the manpower of the British merchant navy is Indian. And six million Indians have been engaged in war work. These facts are becoming known, and an appreciation of the culture of India is spreading. Moreover, the populations of India and China are immense; on the other hand we have space and must have population. Consequently many Australians are perplexed: should we, and even can we, shut our doors to these nations, and if we do, are we shutting the door in the best way?

The Churches, too, are interested. The Archbishop of Canterbury on March 19, 1945, stated that Australia would probably be approached by the International Missionary Society with the request that she "widen her immigration policy on Asiatics." In 1944, a

⁷ See report in *The Australian Worker*, June 20, 1945, p.1, and the leading article; p.3. The mover of the motion argued that the main reason for the Communists' opposition to the White Australia policy was their aim to flood Australia with people they could "use".

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Church Assembly in Melbourne expressed "dissatisfaction and concern" about our national attitude of mind as shown in the White Australia policy and asked that the Federal Government be approached with a view to revision of Australia's national policies concerning Asiatic races. In the light of this the National Missionary Council of Australia, which represents almost all the non-Roman Catholic Churches, issued (1/9/1944) a well balanced statement summarising the main arguments for and against modification of the present policy, and including several suggestions as worthy of serious consideration: one suggestion was that "an annual quota should be fixed for immigrants from any part of the world, who should be required to learn the language and accept Australian industrial conditions."

The Sydney Roman Catholic weekly journal (*The Catholic Weekly*) of June, this year, also gave voice to the growing perplexity. "China and India," it wrote, "with nearly half the world's population to-day look at Australia's rich, empty spaces, and are puzzled by the policy which precludes the free entry of their nationals. They do not envisage nor do they want large-scale migration of their peoples, but their national pride is hurt by the implication that they are not good enough."

Finally, the attitude of coloured peoples themselves should be considered and respected. National pride is an important factor in international relations and it can be hurt. What is more, it is hurt by our use for the past fifty years⁸ of the term "White" to describe our population and immigration policy, and by the total prohibition of their nationals to settle in Australia. But, as Field Marshal Smuts said, with regard to the treatment of Indians in South Africa: for India it is a question of dignity, whereas for South Africa it is one of existence,⁹ so it is felt to be with regard to the White Australia policy. The problem, therefore, is to make the operation of a selective Australian immigration policy compatible with the dignity of such nations as India and China. This should be possible. It will be realized on the basis of an increased mutual understanding, and there is good hope for this in the formation during the past two years of an Australia-China Association in Sydney, of Australia-India Associations in Sydney, Perth and Melbourne, and quite recently of

⁸ The term "a white Australia" was frequently used as early as 1896. M. Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy*, p.99.

⁹ "The Indian Question in South Africa"; *The Bulletin of International News*, June 12, 1943, p.519.

an Australia-Indonesia Association in Sydney. These bodies work for the increase of mutual understanding, of friendship, of trade, and of cultural relations between Australia and the countries concerned, and many intangible but strong links will be, indeed have already been, forged. And amongst the many subjects the thinking people in China, India and Indonesia desire to understand, are surely our immigration policy, our standard of living, our population problem and our use of Australia. Can we give a good reason for the dogma to which we cling?

For such reasons as the foregoing, the time is now opportune for its fresh examination.

Origins of the White Australia Policy.

A policy which has acquired the status of a dogma must have been formulated not merely as a means for attaining a definite objective, but rather as the expression of, or as a reaction to, social experience in which emotions ran high.

One aspect of the White Australia policy was enunciated as far back as 1841 by an Immigration Committee, presided over by Dr. G. Broughton, Bishop of Australia. In the "1830's" when the economic possibilities of the continent were being realised, the problem of labour became acute. Not only were more labourers required, but the previous main source of supply, the transportation of convicts, was about to dry up. It practically did so in 1836 and in 1840 was discontinued to the mainland of Australia. For financial reasons, the Colony felt unable to assist British labourers to come out. A few pastoralists, therefore, looked abroad to Asia and the Pacific islands, and in fact 1203 labourers were obtained by 111 settlers. At that period, India in particular was regarded as the most hopeful source of labour. The Immigration Committee, however, pointed out that no system of coolie immigration would prevent numbers of Indians from remaining after their period of indenture terminated. They would then compete with European labourers, and as a result all workers would ultimately find themselves on a lower level than if there had been no Indians. Moreover, dislike of such competition would check British immigration. Indian labour would then be a necessity and so the social system would deteriorate.¹⁰

Thus in 1841, formative opinion in the Colony decided against

¹⁰ Myra Willard, *History of the White Australia Policy*, pp.4-7. The Secretary of State for the Colonies agreed with the opinion of the Committee.

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indentured coloured labour, which, incidentally, was meant to be cheap, because it would lower the condition of the white working class in particular and of the whole society in general. And though sinned against at times by individual employers and occasionally by States, because of labour shortage in a new country and because of the difficulties associated with developing the tropical regions of the north, this important principle, was never forgotten. On the contrary it grew in strength. For example, in 1882, Queensland which twenty years previously had acquired legislative power to indenture Indians, had at last after several years of discussion reached an agreement with the Indian Government on the matter. The sugar planters were delighted, but feeling in the Colony was so strongly against Asiatic indentured labour, that the plan was delayed and in 1886 the Act authorizing it was repealed. The collapse of the Kanaka indentured system was then inevitable.¹¹

The most interesting point about the Committee's report of 1841 is its emphasis on the dangers to the social system which follow in the train of indentured labour. It was the competition which the labourers would provide *after* their terms of indenture had expired and they had not been repatriated, which, it was felt, would cause trouble. Australia has been fortunate and wise; for the Indian problems in South Africa and Fiji have followed not normal immigration into those regions, but the indenture of Indians for work in them. Cheap and controlled labour brings its own nemesis. It is meant to be servile and debarred from full social rights. It therefore introduces a caste position which sooner or later is seen to be intolerable. The only way to avoid this is not to import human beings solely for the purpose of providing cheap labour. As Sir Henry Parkes implied in 1888, "I have maintained at all times that we should not encourage or admit amongst us any class of persons whatever whom we are not prepared to advance to all our franchises, to all our privileges as citizens and to all our social rights, including the right of marriage."¹²

This principle which has become part of labour policy in Australia, became clear through the threat to the conditions of the working class, arising from the introduction, both actual and threatened, of coloured labour. Two examples only need be quoted: During

¹¹ M. Willard, *op. cit.* pp.100-3; 137-8. Miss Willard's book is essential for an understanding of the development of the White Australia Policy.

¹² Quoted by M. Willard, *op. cit.* p.195.

the 1840's attention was called to China as a possible source of indentured labour for Australian squatters and by 1848 the first shipment arrived from Amoy. The Secretary of State for the Colonies discouraged this recruiting of Chinese, but it recommenced in 1851 because of the dire straits in which employers found themselves as a consequence of the rush of their white labourers to the newly opened gold-fields. Some thousands of coolies were brought in, but they were recruited badly, and many could not stand the Port Phillip climate. They were only paid one pound a month, and many absconded when they learnt what was the prevailing rate of wages. Some drifted to the towns, and employers had to make new arrangements with them. Needless to say, this attempt to get cheap labour found no favour with the working class, and it is a partial explanation of the bitterness of its members against the immigration of Asiatics at a later period. The settlers' action left them open to the charge that they sought to lower the conditions of labour in the Colony, and not merely to the interpretation that they were forced to get labourers as best they could.¹³ According to the *Australian Worker* (Dec. 1, 1943), one of the major grievances of the workers in the years preceding the establishment of the Shearers' Union was the pressure on the part of the pastoralists and other employers to introduce Asiatic employees. As a result, when the Queensland Shearers' Union was launched, it stipulated that no member of the Union should work with an Asiatic alien. Likewise, a meeting of Bushworkers, held in Blackall, 1890, resolved that no member of their union should work on stations on which alien Asiatic labour was employed.

The other example comes from the coast. In 1878 the seamen (employees of the Australian Steam Navigation Co.) struck against the use of Chinese seamen on the Queensland coastal route at £2/15/- instead of the usual £8 a month. This was regarded as an attack on the wages and conditions of the Australian seamen, with the result that workers of all types supported the strike. A meeting held under the auspices of the Trades and Labour Council, New South Wales, supported a petition signed by 15,000, against the introduction of any race which seriously interfered with the relations of capital and labour and with the best interests of the Colony. The strong feeling aroused can only be fully appreciated against the background of

¹³ M. Willard, *op. cit.* pp.8-12. S. H. Roberts, "History of the Contacts between the Orient and Australia," in *Australia and the Far East*, (Ed. by I. Clunies Ross), 1935; pp. 4-5.

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Chinese immigration to the gold mines, to be discussed next, but it is clear that the colonists as a whole were opposed to the attempt to employ cheap Asiatic labour. The strike was settled on January 2, 1879 and by 1882 the last of the Chinese crews were discharged.¹⁴

The foregoing facts indicate that one source of the development of the White Australia Policy was the recurring threat, danger and possibility that the wages and conditions of the European workers would be lowered by the importation or presence of coloured labour, and that, as a consequence, a desirable form of British society would not emerge. This threat and danger gave rise to fear and resentment which increased in emotional intensity and caused more determined reaction in the last quarter of the century, when the workers became organized.

Chinese on the Gold-Fields.

By far the most potent source of the Policy, and particularly of its emotional content, however, was the unsought and rapid immigration of Chinese in what seemed to be very great numbers to the gold-fields in eastern Australia. It may be that the Chinese would have heard of these gold-fields and would have rushed to them whether we had spread the news or not. But the ironical fact is that when employers were seeking Chinese labour to replace their own workers who had hurried off to the fields, their agents, as a means of inducing Chinese to recruit for New South Wales, circulated notices in Hong Kong telling of the richness of the Australian gold-fields! In Victoria, 2,000 Chinese in 1853 increased to 10,000 by January, 1855 and six months later to 17,000 mostly on the gold-fields. This number rose to 40,000 by the end of 1857 and 42,000 in 1859. A mob riot, restrictive immigration measures and above all the rush to new fields in New South Wales eased the situation in Victoria and feelings died down.

1,223 Chinese arrived in New South Wales in 1856-7, but 12,096 came in 1858 and by 1861 there were 21,000 in the Colony, many coming from Victoria. In this year riots occurred against the Chinese and an effective Restriction Act was passed.

Queensland had its turn from 1875 to 1877 when the Chinese on the Palmer gold-field, in the north, where there were only 1400 whites, rapidly increased from 1,763 to 17,000. In the State as a

¹⁴ M. Willard, *op. cit.* pp.52-7. One result of this occurrence was the determination of the Queensland Government not to form mail subsidy contracts with shipping companies employing Asiatics or Polynesians on their vessels. The Commonwealth adopted the same principle in 1901.

whole, according to a statement by Sir John Robertson in the New South Wales Parliament, there were 25,000 Chinese. A Restriction Immigration Act in 1877 had the desired effect. During the next four years only 500 Chinese arrived, and by 1881 only 11,200 remained in Queensland.

South Australia, too, faced the same problem, because of its responsibility for the Northern Territory. Some Chinese had been engaged under indenture on the Pine Creek railway, but in 1887-8 there was a sudden increase to 7,700, attracted by the possibility of successful mining. The feelings of the 900 whites in the Territory can be easily imagined. By means of a deputation they succeeded in arousing alarm in the eastern Colonies, which, of course, had not forgotten their own "frightening" experiences. To allay this alarm South Australia took effective restrictive action.

A review of the facts enables us to understand the fears and other emotions which were engendered during the thirty-five year period of Chinese immigration to the mining fields. The rapidity with which they arrived, 7,000 or more in a year on several occasions, like mushrooms springing up over night, was frightening, especially when it was realized that there were millions more in the background. Their numbers assumed an alarming ratio to the adult population of the State temporarily affected. In Victoria, in 1859, this was about 1 in 12 or 14,¹⁵ and in Queensland in 1877, the proportion was 1 in 10. But as in both Colonies the Chinese were almost all male adults, the ratio to white male adults was obviously startling. In New South Wales in 1881 the ratio was 1 in 50 of the total population, being about 1 in 10 of male adults. This was roughly the proportion for all Australia.¹⁶

This proportion appeared more alarming than it was for three reasons. First, in some gold-fields and regions the Chinese far outnumbered the white miners or population. Second, in most places they formed minority groups; that is, they naturally lived and

¹⁵ The population of Victoria increased from 77,345 in 1851 to 538,628 in 1861. The greatest number of Chinese, 42,000, was in 1859. *Victorian Year Book*, 1941-42.

¹⁶ M. Willard, *op. cit.* p.60.

According to Year Book Figures, the Chinese in Australia in 1887 constituted 1/51 of the total population and 1/60 in 1889. In the latter year they were 1.5% of the population of New South Wales. I cannot verify Professor J. W. Gregory's statement (*The Menace of Colour*, p.154) that "Chinese immigration into New South Wales first became serious in 1879, when a stream began which grew until in 1887 the Chinese numbered 60,000 or 15 per cent. of the population." That would be about 1 in 6 or 7! It is doubtful whether the number was 60,000 for all Australia.

worked together and kept up their own social and religious customs. This was all the more natural seeing that most of them intended or hoped to return to China with their money or after they had finished their service for their Chinese employers. And, third, their very colour made their numbers obvious and, indeed, accentuated and exaggerated them.

Several other factors added to the general impression of the difference of the Chinese to other miners, and caused feelings of antipathy. Practically everything they obtained on the gold-fields was sent to China, either to merchants and speculators whose indentured labourers many of them were, or to their creditors who advanced the cost of the journey out, or to their own families. During one period of twelve months, ending June 30, 1857, for example, half a million pounds worth of gold was exported from Melbourne to China. Moreover, it was soon made clear that the Chinese miners intended to follow their savings back "home" as soon as they had made sufficient, and so would contribute nothing to Australia. This caused resentment, especially when the large aggregate of their earnings became known, the result of industry, frugality and luck.

As a result of these and other occasional factors, resentment, jealousy and suspicion were aroused. The European miners, a very mixed crowd from many countries and classes, "objected to the presence of an exclusive and, in their opinion, an inferior people," especially one which was so successful.¹⁷ In the words of *The Australian Worker* for Dec. 1, 1943, "the Chinese were detested as an inferior race, as the harbingers of degrading pagan morality and as alien competitors for the bread which the miners required for themselves and their families." Riots, petitions, anti-Chinese associations and restrictive immigration legislation expressed the emotions, in which, no doubt, jealousy and resentment were often uppermost, rather than fear for the future of British society in Australia. This could not but engender "race prejudice", which has usually, at least in part, an economic basis; it is, however, fanned by fear. And such fear gathered in potency even after the period of the eastern gold-rushes.

The Chinese in the "1880's" seemed to be seeking regions where they could settle in great numbers, perhaps even form a colony. The practical exclusion of further entry of Chinese into the United States of America, whither 100,000 had gone in thirty years, added to this fear, especially when the largest influx of Chinese into New

¹⁷ M. Willard, *op. cit.* p.36.

South Wales since the gold-rush occurred just at that time 1881, namely 2500 in two months. To this decade, too, belongs the rush to the Northern Territory, and also the Western Australian experiment (1880-1) to introduce fifty indentured Chinese. The latter drew immediate protests from the eastern Colonies, but before long (1886), the West applied restrictive measures because of the hold the Chinese were gaining over the Shark Bay pearl fishery, and of the fear lest they would rush to the new gold-field in the Kimberlies. Two years later, 1888, a state of intense excitement and almost of panic was aroused by the arrival in Sydney of four vessels with 531 Chinese. One of the vessels was the "Afghan" which had been turned away from Melbourne for bringing to that port more than its legal number of passengers, 48 of whom had fraudulent naturalization papers. An excited public meeting and deputation to Sir Henry Parkes, the Premier, were followed by drastic action and legislation. No Chinese were allowed to land unless they possessed naturalization papers. In the course of his speech on the second reading of the Bill, Parkes said that "neither for Her Majesty's ships of war, nor for Her Majesty's representative on the spot, nor for the Secretary of State for the Colonies, do we intend to turn aside from our purpose, which is to terminate the landing of Chinese on these shores forever, except under the restrictions imposed by the Bill, which will amount, and which are intended to amount, to practical prohibition."¹⁸

By the middle of 1888 it became clear to the Australian Governments, whose representatives met in Conference in June, and to Great Britain that the Chinese were to be excluded from Australia. By this time, the stream of resentment, jealousy and suspicion engendered on the gold-fields and by the more recent strong indications that Chinese were likely to enter the country in great numbers, was joined and strengthened by the other current of fear and resentment lest the wages and conditions of the workers should be lowered by the use of coloured labour. Feelings were so strong that no compromise would be accepted. The matter was clinched in 1896 by the holding of a Premiers' Conference at which it was decided that each Colony should enact a similar Restriction Bill to be applied "to all *coloured races*", whether they were British subjects or not. This, at least, gave the appearance of not directing legislation at any particular

¹⁸ Quoted by J. W. Gregory, *op. cit.* p.155 from Henry Parkes, *Fifty Years in the Making of Australian History*, Vol. II, pp.221-2. See also M. Willard, *op. cit.* pp.84-6. S. H. Roberts, in *Australia and the Far East*, pp. 8-12,

coloured people by name, although Australia had had no worries about Indians or Japanese.¹⁹ Neither the Indian or Japanese Governments had shown any desire for their nationals to come to Australia.²⁰

The Bills which were passed were held up by Great Britain on the principle that the Empire did not discriminate on the basis of race or colour. It was a question of finding a suitable formula, and a Dictation Test, such as that used by Natal was suggested and accepted. One reason for agreeing to this was that Japan, who had objected to Colonial legislation classifying her with coloured peoples and such less civilized peoples as the Chinese, agreed to this method.

Out of this background the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act of 1902 was evolved, with its dictation test in any European language, for the purpose of excluding primarily Chinese and secondly all other coloured people. In 1905 at the request of Japan, the test was altered to be given in any prescribed language, so that the obvious reference to coloured and Asiatic peoples would be removed.

The object of the Bill was made clear by a Government statement during the debate that the dictation test "was to be given to emigrants belonging only to non-European peoples." This being so, there is no point in glossing over the fact that the purpose was to ensure a non-coloured or "white" Australia. The argument is very academic and detached which maintains with reference to the Japanese protest already mentioned, that their "view of what constituted racial discrimination appeared on the whole to be unduly sensitive, since no reference to coloured peoples appeared in the Act, and phrases of this type had been used only by speakers during the debate on the Bill."²¹ The speakers expressed the intention, and the later application of the dictation test to a few Europeans was, to quote Dr. Hentze, "a surprising instance of its use."²² But to argue further that "so long as Europeans are regarded as coming under the Act's provisions, it is clear that no racial or national stigma can ever attach to its working," is to look at affairs from within an "ivory tower". The few Europeans who have been excluded by

¹⁹ In 1901 there were 4383 persons from British India and Ceylon in Australia, and a few Afghans and Japanese. 3000 Japanese had been indentured on Queensland sugar plantations in the 1890's.

²⁰ Professor Roberts discusses the South Australian plan for a Japanese "co'ony" in the Northern Territory in 1877, which came to nought. A somewhat similar scheme was rumoured in 1896. *Australia and the Far East*, pp.17-21.

²¹ Margot Hentze, "Australia and Oriental Immigration," in *Australia and the Far East*, p.43. This argument is still repeated.

²² *Idem*, p.45.

means of the test, have been deemed undesirable for a particular reason. But Indians and Chinese, for example, have no desire to be classed, as peoples, with odd undesirable Europeans. Moreover, when it was felt necessary in 1925 to restrict the numbers of immigrants from south-eastern Europe as peoples, and not as individuals, resort was not made to the Dictation Test, with or without notice. An Amending Act was passed giving the Governor-General power to prohibit, either wholly or in excess of specified numerical limits, the immigration into the Commonwealth of aliens of any specified nationality, race, class, or occupation, in any case where he deems it desirable to do so, if, for example, he regards the persons of such race as unsuitable or unlikely to become readily assimilated. This Amendment was not put into operation, because as the result of agreements reached with the European countries concerned, the numbers coming to Australia were voluntarily restricted by a quota or other method.²³

In other words, the significant feature of the Immigration Restriction Act, the Dictation Test, has been officially regarded as the means for excluding *coloured peoples* as such, and thus it has been understood by these peoples. The term White Australia, therefore, is a correct description of the policy and objective, enshrining an apparently final belief that the future well-being of Australia depends on complete loyalty to it. It was realized in 1901 that this adherence might cost the nation much and might delay its development, but it was held then, as now, that such sacrifices are nothing "when compared with the compensating freedom from the trials, sufferings and losses" (the words of Mr. Alfred Deakin) which would have followed from any departure from the principle of "racial" unity. "East is east, and west is west, And never the twain can meet" was a belief which seemed to be proved by experience in America and Australia. Chinese and no doubt Indians too, just because of the ancient character of their habits and ideas could not amalgamate with populations of European origin, so as to make possible the retention of a European type of civilization.²⁴ This fact that Australia has been willing to pay a price for the maintenance of its policy is, of course, another reason why it is clung to so tenaciously. The sacrifice must not be in vain.

²³ A. H. Charteris, "Australian Immigration Policy", in *The Peopling of Australia*, pp.86-9.

²⁴ Mr. Inglis Clark, Attorney-General of Tasmania, in 1888; see M. Willard, *Op. cit.* pp.189-91.

Colour a Symbol.

Because the restrictive side of our immigration policy had its origin in, and drew its emotional content from, a colour situation, mainly the yellow of the Chinese, and to a less degree the dark skin of Indians, colour became the symbol of our fear and of our goal—a fear lest our standard of living and our British way of life be undermined by Oriental immigrants, and a determination that our nation shall be white, that is, European and mainly of British extraction. But that is not all. On the negative side, the idea, “non-white” has come to symbolize our fear and dislike of, our antipathy and prejudice towards, peoples, cultures and ideologies which are not Australian. For very many people colour denotes what they regard as objectionable in the international sphere, and has been extended to include “Mediterranean” peoples. On the positive side, the term “white” symbolizes our aim to keep our country and nation Australian in culture and outlook, to maintain an unilineal culture development, and to eschew the “melting-pot type” of culture, with which the United States of America has experimented.

It is possible that we lose much by thus narrowing our cultural stream, and that we are insular in outlook and self-satisfied, but our policy in this regard is related to our small and scattered population. As in the periods of the gold-rushes, so now, unlike America, we feel unable either to absorb large minority groups or to find a place for them in our social, economic or political life, especially if their differences in culture are associated with differences in skin pigmentation or even in head-shape. Our attitude and our fears may be unwarranted but they are social and political phenomena which cannot be ignored. As mentioned above this attitude was quickly acted on in 1924-25.

Moreover, it can be argued that this cultural sacrifice has been justified, for in a world, always on the brink of war, it obviates the risk of the development of a “fifth column”. The Vice-President of the Commonwealth Executive Council said on July 9th, 1945, that we were in large measure saved by the White Australia Policy during this war, and urges us, despite the world security organization, not to “deprive ourselves of any safeguard which can help us to preserve Australia as a white fortress of the Pacific.”²⁵ Undoubtedly, many feel that the Minister is right. But we should carefully examine the facts that the United States population in 1940 included 126,947

²⁵ *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 1945.

Japanese, and Hawaii 157,905, that since 1901 more than three and a half million Italians immigrated into the States, 68,028 of them since 1931, and that many of such origins served in the American Army. The extent to which any of these Japanese and Italians were a source of weakness and trouble in time of war will no doubt be revealed later. It may be that to give citizenship rights and privileges, including compulsory education, to immigrants does make them loyal citizens of the country to which they immigrate. This, however, does not mean that no limits should be put on the numbers of immigrants from countries with different cultures, or that there should not be any process of selection. America has, through its immigration quota system set such limits so that the alien element at any one time will not exceed the nation's absorptive powers.

The Fundamental Factor is Cultural Difference, not Colour.

We Australians as a whole are on our guard against any people markedly different from ourselves. If, for example, a group coming from south-eastern Europe, settles in apparently useless country and, working long hours, denying themselves amenities and pleasures, make a success of their location, we become suspicious of them and are apt to resent their success. The situation is similar to that of the Australian-European and Chinese gold-miners last century. Fundamentally, every argument for excluding coloured people is equally cogent for excluding those whose way of life is different from ours, even if the skin colour differs little or even not at all, and we either recognize or feel this. Some would like to apply a Papuan or other impossible linguistic test to Americans, to Russians, to Italians, to Irish and so on, because of cultural differences—differences in ways of eating and living, in religion, or in other behaviour patterns. Moreover, these differences are real. They are the result of long and separate historical developments, having been handed on, formed and modified from generation to generation, each in its own geographical and cultural setting. Such differences in culture, in ways of dealing with life's situations, are much more important than colour. The very attitude to colour is, indeed, one of these cultural mechanisms. It varies with different peoples, Australians, for example, exhibiting a strong colour prejudice.

We have to realize that the social factors are potent and effective, though they are often confused with physical differences, which then come to symbolize them. R. E. Park considers that the chief obstacle to assimilation in America seems to be not cultural differences but

physical traits, for "immigrant peoples who bear a distinctive racial mark do not easily mix with the native population."²⁶ This is true in Australia, but the "distinctive racial mark," colour and appearance, is the symbol of the difference in history and outlook between ourselves and the immigrants, and itself becomes a barrier.

Intermarriage.

In all schemes of immigration, this fact of difference of cultural heritage must be borne in mind, but it is brought home most significantly in marriage between persons of different cultural heritages and traditions, especially if there is also some difference in colour. Two cultures and two histories meet in one house—a very small space; the differences appear in many apparently small details, but they are significant, and can lead to unhappiness. And of these differences, skin-colour, if it is present, becomes the symbol.

Moreover, intermarriage means half-castes and mixed-bloods, and Australians are very prejudiced against half-castes, Aboriginal, Chinese or other. Our attitude is for the most part emotional. We react with some degree of horror, or outraged feelings, when we hear of the marriage of one of ourselves to a person of colour. In addition, we feel so sure that their children will get a raw deal that unconsciously or otherwise, we see that such is their lot. To be frank, we are adepts in this, for Aboriginal-white "half-castes" have been with us for well over a century; to-day there are nearly 30,000 of them—mostly outcastes—and, as a consequence of our prejudice, bringing them into full citizenship is a tremendous sociological and psychological task.

Biologically, it is doubtful if any objection can be taken to "race-crossing". On the contrary, an examination of all the evidence very definitely indicates that such crossing and ethnic mixture "lead on the whole, to effects which are advantageous to the offspring of the group. Harmful effects, physical disharmonies of various alleged kinds, are of the greatest rarity, and degeneracies do not occur." Indeed, "the more unlike two human mating groups are genetically, the more likely it is that for many characters the hybrid offspring will be superior to either of the parental groups and will be a mosaic of their characters for the rest. It is far less likely that the offspring of such matings will exhibit anything like the frequency of defective

²⁶ "Social Assimilation", in *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, Vol. II, p.282.

characters which occurs in matings between members of the same ethnic group."²⁷

Such is the latest biological verdict, but human relationships and attitudes are seldom moulded by biological or other scientific considerations—except very tardily. The general attitude to mixed-bloods is well represented by *The Australian Worker* in its editorial, June 20, 1945, when it says with reference to admitting eastern peoples: "A coloured Australia would not only mean a lowering of the standard of living, but it would introduce into the Commonwealth *something infinitely worse*—an ever-growing community of half-growing castes."

Australia for the Australians.

No nation denies the right of other nations to control the make-up of its own population by immigration restrictions, and at the recent United Nations Conference at San Francisco, Australia's representatives saw to it that this right was preserved.²⁸

We are, therefore, entitled to our policy of Australia for the Australians and for those whom we choose to admit—but we shall only exercise that right successfully on certain conditions. (1) In reference to, and administration of, our immigration restrictions, we should endeavour to avoid hurting the feelings and dignity of other peoples. Both India and Japan agreed in the years immediately following the first World War that Australia possessed the inherent right to determine the constitution of its own population, but not on the basis of colour. For in spite of the attempt in the dictation-test formula to find a non-colour means, it was realized in the "twenties", as in 1901 and now, that exclusion of Orientals was meant, and it was also felt that colour was not free from the connotation of inferiority. As Daniel Lee, a thoughtful Chinese newspaper correspondent, wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* (July 4, 1945): "You have explained to me repeatedly with sincerity that the policy is by no means a racial discrimination against the Chinese. But the fact remains that since 1901 not a single Chinese has been allowed to enter your country as an immigrant, while thousands of Europeans, including

²⁷ M. F. Ashley Montagu, *Man's Most Dangerous Myth, The Fallacy of Race*, (2nd Edit. 1945) pp.128, 132, and the whole Chap. 8. Compare W. M. Krogman, "The Concept of Race", in *The Science of Man in the World Crisis* (Ed. by R. Linton, 1945), pp.38-62.

²⁸ Article 2, clause 7 of the World Charter, denies the United Nations authority "to intervene in matters which are essentially within the jurisdiction of any State." Correspondents stated that Australia's insistence on this clause was designed to ensure the inviolability of the White Australia policy.

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Italians and Germans, have been received by you, simply because they were born "white". My friends, just close your eyes for a moment and think. If you were a Chinese, would you believe that this was no proof of racial discrimination?" Other Chinese, whom it is a privilege to know, think along the same lines, and so do thoughtful Indians. The latter feel hurt in particular by a paragraph in the regulations governing the temporary domicile in Australia of certain classes of Indians, merchants, students and their wives and minor children, and Anglo-Indians, under an arrangement made with the Indian Government.²⁹ The paragraph to which objection is taken, deals with Anglo-Indians, and refers to the practice of regarding persons of fifty per cent. or more of Indian blood as Indians, and those with less than fifty per cent. Indian blood as Europeans. The latter may under special circumstances be granted permanent admission to Australia. In other words, a major proportion of British European blood lifts a person into the European group. This discrimination in favour of Anglo-Indians as compared with Indians is interpreted by Indians as showing quite clearly that our policy is really a "white-race" policy. It is, moreover, especially galling to Indian sentiment.

Can anything be done to enable us to realize our Australian ideal without putting a slight on cultured coloured men and women, which is calculated to promote ill-feeling and irritation?³⁰

(1) *Avoid the Term "White"*. Consideration should be given to the avoidance of the word "white" with regard to immigration policy by politicians and the general public.³¹ We are removed by over two score years, and two world wars from the period when feelings ran high lest we should be swamped by uneducated people from the "East". As a consequence of our part in these wars and in the Councils of the world, we can settle mutual immigration problems in a rational and friendly way without, as Daniel Lee says in the article referred to, political leaders shouting noisily, "White

²⁹ Similar arrangements were in existence between Australia and China, Japan, Ceylon, Burma, Hong Kong, Straits Settlement, Annam, Egypt, the Philippines and Hawaiian Islands. See A. H. Charteris, in *op. cit.*, p.84.

³⁰ The words of Mr. Chamberlain, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1897 to Colonial representatives. It should be remembered that much of the pressure for the development of a White Australia policy came from the masses of people who only met the uneducated coolie class of Chinese and Indians. This explains much of the prejudice.

³¹ The term "White Australia" is used in the *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, 1937, p.370 with reference to the exclusion of Asiatics and other coloured immigrants.

Australia'', to the resentment of all Asiatics. In other words, let us be less emotional about our dogma, and at all costs avoid using it as a political football, for this can only give rise to misunderstanding in the East. Why not refer to the policy in Acts and speech simply as the Australian Immigration Policy?

(2) In the second place, we should be quite explicit with regard to our Immigration policy, both on its negative and positive sides. Let us give our reasons, for in the leaders of the great eastern and of European peoples alike, we have to deal with reasonable personalities, even though different histories are focussed in them. Oriental leaders are quite aware that some of their own nations have imposed very stringent restrictions on immigration into their countries. Amongst our reasons we would naturally emphasize our intention to preserve and raise our standard of living, that is, our economic, social and political way of life. We also would make clear that, in our opinion, it would be unwise for Australia at this juncture to experiment with minority groups situations, or to risk cultural or biological inter-mixture with peoples, whose history and background of life is very different from our own; for rightly or wrongly, we think this would be good for neither. In any case, we would not countenance the permanent settlement in our country of any persons of any nation, to whom we would not be prepared to grant complete Australian citizenship.

This position would be clearly understood. Of course, there is nothing new about it, but it is a reasoned, as distinct from an emotional, dogmatic, "White", approach.

(3) These two conditions, however, still mean total exclusion of certain peoples. Obviously, courtesy and frank explanation are not sufficient in a world so closely knit by air, radio and a United Nations' Organization.

a. We shall, therefore, at least, as for many years past, admit, and let us hope, make welcome, merchants, students, scholars, artists, athletes and visitors for non-permanent periods—an arrangement, which if reciprocal, will help us to understand one another, in spite of differences in pigmentation and history—an essential step if a co-operative world of nations is to be realised.

Is a Quota System Possible?

b. The real problem, however, is: Can the ban be removed, *in principle at least*, on the permanent immigration of Indians, Chinese and possibly some other Asiatic peoples? This would mean the setting up of a system by which a *small annual quota* of their nationals

would be allowed to settle in Australia. I have good reason for saying that even a token quota of 40 or 60 approved immigrants would serve the purpose, and seeing that the American quotas for Chinese, Japanese and a group including Indians, were 100 each, this would be reasonable.

Such a suggestion is not new. It was made to Queensland in 1877 by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the effect that Chinese immigration should be recognized "under careful regulations as to number and occupations of the immigrants, rather than in its discouragement by final legislation." A respected and naturalized Chinese resident in Sydney put forward the same suggestion again in 1888.³² A quota system on the American model was also urged on the Commonwealth Government in 1924 as a means of regulating the numbers coming into Australia from south-eastern Europe, and indeed the Amending Act of 1925 made provision for this, and by arrangements with various governments, quotas were set.³³

Since, however, the suggestion of such a modification of the hitherto total exclusion of permanent Asiatic immigrants, has given rise to emotional outbursts,³⁴ it is necessary to examine its implications very carefully.

(i) One argument against it is that a small quota will be the thin end of the wedge, or a breach of the dyke, and the smaller quotas will be followed by larger.³⁵ But why? This has not happened in the case of the United States of America. The maintenance of the quota at a fixed number or its increase will be a matter for Australia's decision. Moreover, if we develop Australia, build up its population, and do our part in raising the living conditions of all peoples everywhere in accordance with the spirit of the United Nations' Charter (Article 1, clause 3),³⁶ we need not fear that any pressure will be brought to bear on us. It is worth remembering that none of these great Eastern nations have shown, or show, any strong urge for their nationals to emigrate to Australia. They have been more inclined to restrain them. The Chinese who came out last century

³² M. Wil'ard, *op. cit.* pp.45, 82.

³³ A. H. Charteris, in *The Peopling of Australia*, pp. 87-9.

³⁴ In the heat of reaction, the suggestion of a quota of approved immigrants is ignored, and references are made to wholesale indiscriminate immigration of Asiatics, or to a nefarious alliance of communists and capitalists to undermine the Australian standard of living, each for their own ends.

³⁵ The Vice-President of the Executive Council in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, July 10, 1945.

³⁶ "To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights, and for fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion."

mostly did so in the hope of gathering wealth and returning home. Others were induced to come. And to-day, the Chinese, and also the Indians love their own country. Let us help them build up their own economic, social, and educational life, and they will have no need for emigrating. Indeed, emigration will not solve their population problems. A member of the Australia-India Association, Sydney, who is responsible for the running of an Indian Club, and sees and with his keen helpers, gets to know many thousands of Indians—sailors and soldiers especially, finds that not one of them expresses any desire to return and settle in Australia, and in twelve months only two have said they would like to visit Australia as tourists. I am assured that Indian farmers are not likely to be attracted to Australia. On the other hand, some professional men might care to come. It may be of some comfort to us also to realize that northern Australia was known for some hundreds of years to the peoples (Malays and Macassars) of the Indonesian Islands—but apart from fishing around the coast, they were not attracted to it—nor has any one else, with any success, since 1788.

(ii) A second fear is that, even though only a small quota were admitted, "the high Asiatic birth-rate, rapidly multiplying in Australian conditions the number of each year's quota," would in the not far distant future turn White Australia into a coloured continent. Apparently oriental peoples are likened to certain animals which, when brought to Australia, thrive and multiply exceedingly. This belief in the abnormal fecundity of oriental peoples is not as well founded as many imagine. Visitors notice a dozen yellow or brown skinned children playing together in a street in Honolulu or China, and credit the lot to one pair of parents, when two or three pairs may be involved. But, as a matter of fact, there is nothing exceptional in Chinese or Japanese fertility. Thus, an examination of 2640 farm families in seven provinces of China showed that the family consisted on the average of about 5.5 persons, as compared with 4.4 persons per farm family in the United States. Likewise a very thorough study of a village (Ching Ho) showed that the average biological family unit was only 4.8, as compared with the average family of 4.3 in the United States in 1920.³⁷

Similarly, "an examination of birth-rate statistics gives no support to the view, that the Japanese are an extraordinarily fecund people. The highest birth-rate shown for Japan is under 35 per 1000. The English birth-rate was about 34 per 1000 in 1880 and the German

³⁷ These studies were made in the "1920's". See E. F. Penrose, *Population Theories and Their Application*, pp.109-110.

birth-rate showed this same figure as late as 1904. In 1931, the Japanese birth-rate was 32.16 per thousand." Moreover, the birth-rate in Japan had been falling probably for two decades up to 1934 and was still declining.³⁸

The popular notion that Oriental people who have migrated to a better social and economic environment than their homeland, increase at a rising rate, is not borne out by the Japanese in Hawaii. Between 1884 and 1907, 180,000 Japanese contract labourers had been brought to Hawaii; of these 74,000 remained in 1907 when this migration practically stopped as a result of an agreement between Japan and the United States. The masculinity was naturally very great, though many "picture brides" were brought in, and by 1930 there were 861 females to every 1000 males. At first the great majority were young adults and the rate of increase was high, but this rate was not maintained even when the proportion and total of females increased. In 1910 the number was 79,675; the increase during 1911-20 was 37.1%; 1921-30, 21.7%; and 1931-40, 13.1%, the 1940 total being 157,905. Of this figure, 77% were Hawaiian-born. An examination of the facts shows that "the rate of increase is now slowing down considerably, and all signs point to a gradual levelling out in numbers." Incidentally, the Japanese rate of increase during 1931-40 was only half that for people of Hawaiian ancestry.³⁹

In India the birth-rate is about 37 per thousand per annum. This is maintained amongst the Indians in Fiji, who with a death-rate there of only 10.15 as compared with about 22 per thousand in India, increased from 1931 to 1941 by 26.5 per cent. to a figure of 97,069. It should be remembered that the Indians are "mainly on low wage and living standards."⁴⁰ This may have some bearing on the high birth rate. In South Africa, the Indians increased (almost wholly by natural causes) during 1921-1936 by 33½% to 219,928, 82% of whom were born in South Africa. For the same period the Australian increase was 30%, 24.12% being due to natural causes. The average annual percentage increase of Indians in South Africa for 1921-36 was 1.784 as compared with 1.416 for Australia (including gain from immigration).⁴¹ This increase is even greater than that

³⁸ E. F. Penrose, *op. cit.*, pp.99, 102-3. Contraception was practised. *Ibid* pp.104-7.

³⁹ F. M. Keesing, *The South Seas in the Modern World*, p.356. The Japanese figure are used as a reliable basis for thinking on population problems connected with oriental peoples. Japanese, even very young persons, are most unlikely to be considered as desirable immigrants by any nation for a very long time to come.

⁴⁰ Those on wages earn about 2/- or 2/6 a day and some less. See F. M. Keesing *op. cit.* pp.278 and 358.

of Indians in the mass in India, where it is about 15 per thousand per annum, the result of the heavy death rate. Figures are not available for the birth-rate amongst the educated groups in India, but I am assured that whereas formerly, families included seven and eight children, now in such groups there are only three or four children. Thus, given education, a rising standard of living and social responsibility, the Indian population trend would approach our own. Unfortunately, the Indians outside of India have never lived in such social and economic conditions, which would provide a test of this generalization—in other words, they have not had a chance to show that the birth-rate would fall.⁴²

The above figures and facts show that in our consideration of a quota system, we must rid our minds of the “bogey” that Asiatic peoples manifest abnormal fecundity rates either in their home lands or in the lands to which they emigrate. India in the mass is an exception, but we can confidently expect that “with the spread of education and a sense of responsibility, with greater interests outside the family, with the industrial employment of women, with a knowledge of birth-control, and with changes in social prejudice and religious tradition,” the effect of raising the standard of life there will diminish the birth-rate.⁴³ We can also be just as confident that if Asiatic persons of reasonable education were admitted to settle in Australia, to become full citizens, and were permitted, and indeed compelled, to fit into our educational, industrial and general social pattern, their sense of social responsibility would be such that we would find their family size approximating to our own.

An Extreme Result of a Quota System.

As there is so much fear lest a small quota of Asiatic peoples should be our undoing, let us picture an exaggerated and abstract situation. Suppose we fix the annual quota of a certain nation at 40. Suppose further that the 40 who immigrate to Australia consist each year of 20 young couples who give birth to 5 children each who, in their turn, reach adulthood, and marry and produce 5 children.

In 20 years, there would be 800 immigrants who would have 1600 children, a total of 2400. In 30 years, the number of immigrants would have reached 1200 and their offspring 2600, together

⁴¹ Australia's average annual rate of increase from 1901 to 1936 was 1.66%, while, the gain from natural increase during the heavy immigration years of 1925-1929 was only 1.27% per annum.

⁴² See P. M. Lad, *The Economic Problems of Modern India*, pp. 82-100.

⁴³ A. V. Hill, “Health, Food and Population in India”; *International Affairs*, Vol. XXI, No. 1, p.43.

with a possible 800 grandchildren, making a total of 4600. In 40 years the grand total could reach 8500.

But the conditions are highly improbable, if not impossible—that all immigrants should be young married couples and that they, and especially their children, though accepting our standard of living, should not retard their birth-rate below that which would ensure five children marrying and reproducing. We could rest assured that their rate of increase would soon conform to our own, and the average number of children would tend to be halved. The total in 30 years would be nearer 3500 and in 40 years, 6200, and only these figures if the immigrants came in as married couples, and none of them died.

A conservative estimate puts the Australian population in 30 years at between 8 and 9 millions, apart from immigration gains. 3500 Indians plus 3500 Chinese and 3500 other Asiatics, a total of 10,500 should not affect the Australian population or its culture in any marked degree in that time.

In America the Chinese, Japanese, and other coloured immigrants each constitute .1 per cent. of the total population, or .3 per cent. all told. That corresponds to 27,000 in an Australian population of 9 millions. This proportion is surely a safe one, half of which would not be reached by a total annual quota of 120 to India, China and another Asiatic people or group.

Australia, however, hopes to exceed the nine million mark through a policy of European immigration, reaching for some time at least, a rate of 70,000 a year. A total increase of 140,000 per annum is suggested by the Minister for Immigration.⁴⁴ In 30 years the total population would exceed 11,000,000. Thus, the admission of a small annual quota of Indians and Chinese would be less significant still from the point of view of the constitution of the population.

There is also another source of increase of persons of Chinese "race", namely, the Chinese who have been in Australia since the "1880's." Since 1881 the male Chinese decreased from 38,274 to 9,311 in 1937, whereas the females increased from 259 to 1,535, of whom 1,358 are Australian citizens. While the total number of Chinese will continue to decrease for some years, an increase based on the number of females of Chinese extraction, but of Australian birth and citizenship, will begin in due course. There is every reason to believe that the increase will be at the normal Australian rate, for Chinese born in Australia have all the privileges and responsibilities

⁴⁴ The Hon. A. A. Calwell, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, August 3, 1945. This figure is about 2% of the present population. If immigration makes up for the falling birthrate, this simple arithmetical increase would be maintained.

of Australian citizenship, and have a higher standard of living than do most Chinese in China.

The problem of miscegenation in relation to a quota system can easily be exaggerated. Those Chinese or Indians migrating to Australia would not come with the fixed intention of seeking marriage mates, especially if women as well as men came. Some mixed marriages will probably occur between the children of immigrants and Australians, but as their school life and much of their social activity will have been the same, no great problem should be involved.⁴⁵

Opinions and the Quota System.

Some reactions to the suggestion of the quota system imply that few, if any, Australians, would tolerate for a moment any modification of the White Australia policy. A candid examination of opinions, however, shows that this is not so.

In April, 1943, "Australian Gallup Polls" published the results of a "sample referendum" on the question: "After the war, would you alter the White Australia policy to admit a limited number of coloured people, such as Chinese and Indians?" 51% opposed any alteration, 40% favoured limited coloured immigration, and 9% were undecided. The percentage of those favouring a quota system ranged from 50% of owners, managers and professionals; 30% of farm-owners; 38% of the white-collar group; 39% of skilled and semi-skilled workers; 30% of unskilled workers; and 23% of farm-workers.

Almost a year later, a similar survey showed a slight rise in the opposition to the quota system, from 51 to 53%, and more indecision, from 9 to 12%, while only 35%, as compared with 40% voted for it. As before, all the economic groups, except the well-to-do opposed it. Semi-skilled workers were 2 to 1 against it; and the same was true of Labour Party supporters.

Thus in March, 1944, 35% favoured the quota system and 12% were undecided, while a year earlier, the percentages were 40, and 9, respectively. These minorities and indecisions must not be ignored.

In July of this year, the *Sunday Sun*, Sydney, asked for letters giving opinions on the White Australia policy and future immigration. 109 letters were received. These, of course, do not represent a sound sample of the population, but it is interesting to notice that 51 of the writers, 47%, would allow coloured people to settle in Australia. Of these 18 favoured the quota system; 16 desired such

⁴⁵ In the 1933 census there were 3503 Chinese of mixed blood. No doubt, the relative absence of females amongst the Chinese immigrants last century, was a potent cause.

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conditions as intelligence, health, money and character, together with regulations regarding their living conditions and wages when they entered Australia. 3 wanted Asiatics for cheap labour.

On the other hand, 28 were directly opposed to allowing coloured people to immigrate here, and 31 implied their opposition and talked of European immigration.

Late in July, I made a survey of opinions in Sydney; this showed 58% in favour of admitting a small annual quota of Indians and Chinese, while 39% were opposed and 3% were doubtful. It is interesting that those under 35 years of age were 59% in favour, while those over 35, and with longer conditioning in our attitudes were only 35% in favour. This was not a Gallup Poll, though all groups were represented; the purpose was to ascertain people's attitudes on White Australia and related questions. But this result, along with the others mentioned, shows that there is certainly a strong minority opinion in this country which is not opposed to a quota system. It may not be very vocal, but an examination of their opinions and reasons, shows that they are thinking, and are concerned, and in many cases are convinced.⁴⁶

Conditions Governing a Quota System.

A quota system does not mean the absence of all other conditions of entry, apart from the limitations on number. Few who favour the suggestion, imagine that it does. What we have to consider is whether or not the time has come to abandon the negative exclusive dictation-test method for preserving Australia as almost wholly British and European in extraction and outlook, and to substitute for it a positive method, which, while limiting quite severely the numbers of oriental persons who can settle in Australia, will be positive in form and will not be galling to the sentiment of the peoples concerned.

I have good reason for suggesting that the following conditions governing the admission of a small annual quota, would be acceptable to Indian thought and sentiment. I believe, too, that something similar would be acceptable to the Chinese.

⁴⁶ In passing, it should be noticed that the feeling against Italian immigration is very strong. My own survey showed that 25% would exclude them altogether, while another 64% would admit them only under very definite restrictions and regulations. There are many other evidences of this hardened attitude. The reasons are found to some extent in the part played by the Italians in this war; but also by their tendency to make "little Italies", and not to assimilate. Many regard them as trouble-makers, and attribute a number of bad qualities to them. There is also a religious aspect to the opposition. The Returned Soldier Organizations, too, are much concerned.

1. Australian economic standards governing wages and conditions of work should not be endangered by Indian settlers and any legislation for this purpose would be acceptable. A period of two years or so after arrival, before full citizenship is conferred, would be a reasonable requirement.

2. Any Indian settler should know English or at least learn English within two years or so after arrival, and any regulation for ensuring this condition would be unobjectionable.

3. The grant of Australian citizenship to an Indian settler could be made dependent upon the possession of a certain amount of property at his disposal in Australia.

4. Any Indian settlers in Australia, after getting full citizenship rights, should regard themselves only *as Australian citizens* and not depend on the protection of the Indian Government. On the other hand, such Indians should not be discriminated against in any way.

5. They should *not form separate colonies or groups*; their children should attend ordinary public schools; any tendency to keep up their separate identity should be discouraged.

6. There should be no interference with religion, but Indians should not claim any special privileges for their religious buildings, ceremonies, etc. They should, however, have full liberty to follow their own religion in their own homes.

7. Indians would be bound by ordinary Australian laws; for example, polygamy would not be allowed. An Indian with more than one wife need not be admitted.

8. An Indian, who is allowed to settle, should be allowed to bring with him his wife and minor children only. The question of unmarried adult daughters would need to be considered carefully.

9. Any existing status of marriage at the time of arrival should be recognised, but after arrival every marriage should be registered according to Australian law and no special privileges should be claimed for any marriage celebrated according to Indian rites, though no objection should be taken to any additional celebrations by Indians in their own homes.

10. Any personal law applicable to Indians in India on account of religion should no longer be valid, but they should be subject to Australian law only.

11. Professional qualifications already obtained and registered in India should be recognised in Australia on the basis of reciprocity.

Other Considerations for an "Australia for Australians" Policy.

The maintenance of "Australia for the Australians" is not assured by deciding either on total exclusion or on a quota system of Eastern peoples. We have still to show that we plan, and attempt, to make full use of our continent. This implies increase of population, both by natural causes and by immigration, the falling birth-rate making the latter necessary. With regard to the increase of our population, it is worth pointing out that from 1881 to 1922, Australia's annual increase per 1000 was 22, as compared with the United States of America 19, Canada 18, Japan 11, and England and Wales 9.

Our further increase depends on a number of factors, such as our economic absorptive capacity, which can be easily over-estimated; our psychological absorptive capacity, which is not high; the immigrants' capacity for being assimilated, which varies with different peoples; and the willingness or desire of peoples abroad to emigrate to Australia, which may not be very marked for some years, for they have their own countries to rebuild.

In this connection, we should be quite frank. Australia is too often advertised in glowing and misleading phrases. It has open spaces, but they are not rich. "Watering the inland" is a glorious phantasy, but an Australian source of water adequate for the purpose has not yet been found. A study of the distribution maps (in the Commonwealth Year Books) of our population, wheat, agriculture generally, dairying, cattle, and sheep, must make all thoughtful people hesitate before clamouring for rapid increases of millions of population. It is time we told the world the reasons why so much of Australia is empty, and, as far as we can at present see, cannot sustain a vast population. The narrow strip reaching about 200 miles inland along the east and south-east, and on the south-west of the continent may, through industrialisation and intensive settlement, carry a much greater population than at present, but much planning and developmental work is required before that can eventuate.

We are sometimes urged to rush into population schemes in the interest of self-defence; but we now realize that freedom from attack depends only in part on our readiness to defend the continent, even though our capacity to do so increased very greatly. It depends much more on a positive world peace-policy and machinery, on co-operation for dealing with an aggressor and for removing the causes which make for discontent and aggression.

A potent cause is the economic one. This is of special concern to us, for our really fundamental dogma is the maintenance and rais-

ing of the standard of living, of all groups in the community. But, as we have seen, our restrictive immigration policy is causally connected with this objective, for we fear a rush of workers here, who through competition, would lower the standard of wages and living. We recognise, however, that our standard of living is inter-related with that prevailing in other countries: therefore, for that reason alone, we should do all we can to raise that standard wherever it is lower than ours. In doing so, we should give the lie to the fallacious doctrine that there are different standards of living amongst different peoples—some lower, some higher, and that these are eternal. It is quite possible that some eastern peoples, for example, would be stronger workers, clearer thinkers, and even less docile, if they had a more varied and adequate diet, good medical services, better hygiene, education, literature, wireless and so on. After all, there is only one minimum standard: health, strength, work under good conditions, capacity to take part in government, and opportunity for leisure. And we will keep these desirable conditions here, provided all people everywhere enjoy them.

Finally, this implies, if we are not to be hypocrites, that we practise what we preach. We are responsible for the native peoples of Papua and New Guinea and for the Aborigines of Australia. At long last, after much argument, we have decided to abolish from the former Territories the indentured labour system, which we long ago decided should not be used for our advantage in Australia. We shall now be judged by our sincerity in raising the standard of living for the Papuans and Melanesians—and also for the Aborigines. In “White Australia” we still have over 50,000 pure blood chocolate-skinned Aborigines, and nearly 30,000 “mixed-blood” Aborigines. We failed in the past and we became pessimistic. But we believe now that there is ground for hope that the Aborigines, both full-blood and mixed-blood, can attain the stature of full citizenship and make a valuable contribution to the development of Australia especially in the northern regions.⁴⁷ It is a matter of our own intelligence, sincerity and determination.

If we face squarely these tasks, remembering that we are part of a great functioning unit, the United Nations, we will find a solution of our population and developmental problems. Of these, immigration, whether from Europe or Asia is one. This one, however, if wisely ordered, will weave us further into that great fellowship of peoples, which we feel must come into being, if the human race is to persist and reach a worthy goal.

⁴⁷ A. P. Elkin, *Citizenship for the Aborigines*, (1944).