

Eureka Stockade

Birth of the Australian National Idea

Brian Knight. (11/11/1993)

The miners' "rebellion" on the Ballarat goldfields of December 3 1854 left the Nation with a powerful legacy, a "myth" of Australian identity and a symbol of patriotic struggle bathed in Australian blood.

The Eureka Stockade incident and its Southern Cross Flag were elements in the nineteenth century fight to define who the Australians were in the then environment of British imperial control of the continent; however, in this new era, these living aspects of our national drama still offer a beacon. Eureka was not a fight on a foreign battlefield; it was a fight **on our own soil** for freedom against an alien state.

Today, Australians are misruled by a state a hundred times more malignant than the old imperial state, and one which organises against its own National Idea and People. This "state" operates to sink Australia into a foreign East Asian trade zone, for profit and for power for its supporters.

As Australians rise to oppose this "Asian destiny", and to reclaim our own national future, a rebellious spirit is on the march in Australia today.

NATIONAL POET TELLS THE TALE, CREATES THE MYTH

Australia's national poet Henry Lawson wrote most avidly of the Eureka Stockade in those "springtime" years of Australian national political-cultural thinking. For Lawson, these themes were determining elements of our national history and character. In Eureka (1889) he described the sacrifice of the miners:

*"But not in vain those diggers died. Their comrades may rejoice,
For o'er the voice of tyranny is heard the peoples' voice
It says: 'Reform your rotten law, the diggers wrongs make right
Or else with them our brothers now, we'll gather to the fight."*

In Australia's forgotten Flag (1911) he added:

"Few and taken by surprise,
Oh the mist that hid the skies -
And the steel in the diggers eyes -
Sunday morning in December long ago;
And they grapple and they strike
with the pick handle and the pike
Twenty minutes free Australia at Eureka long ago"

Lawson served that plethora of labour and Nationalist journalists which sprang up in the years 1880 - 1910; he echoed his audiences beliefs and encouraged their Australianism.

For these patriotic Australians, Eureka was a grand moment when Australians stood for freedom against their foreign loyal state. But for Lawson there was a warning, and a promise:

"T'was of such stuff the men were made who saw our nation born
And such as Lalor were the men who led their footsteps on
And of such men there'll many be and of such leaders some,
In the roll up of Australians on some dark day to come." (Eureka)

Patriotic poet Ian Mudie recalled those very words in 1942 as Australian soldiers battled on the Kokoda Track for national survival. At the same moment, Nationalist politician Jack Lang, wrote that the Eureka Rebellion, alongside other militant patriotic outbreaks (i.e. Lambing Flat of 1861 and the Great Shearers Strike of 1891), moulded a patriotic popular tradition which combined fulsome Nationalism and agitation for social justice for all Australians. For Lang, this was the very expression of the **Australian promise**, against which every grubby internationalist capitalist has perennially conspired.

Lawson made another prophecy:

"Flag and banner of my dreams!
This time is not as it seems
And the tide of freedom streams
With the spirit of the people over all
We shall raise the bright Flag yet -
Ne'er to falter or forget -
And 'twill go through many battles ne'er to fall
(Australia's Forgotten Flag)

The Southern Cross banner was Lawson's political-Australian flag.

In 1936, Nationalist author, P.R. Stephensen told an apathetic imperial-mad Australia, that this Flag of Stars, when we choose to raise it, would symbolise the achievement of independence. That moment had neither arrived in 1911 - nor in 1936, but for contemporary Australian Nationalists, who fight beneath the Southern Cross for Australian Independence, in this banner we have our clearest statement of political intent.

A MILITANT CONSCIOUSNESS WAS BORN AT EUREKA

The "old - time" conservative patriot, good fellow though he may be, conceives of patriotism only through the prism of ANZAC Day, formal recitations about military glories and a commitment to restore the cleaner days of yesteryear. Australian Nationalists however go further. Nationalism accepts most of what the "patriots" stand on, as an aspect of the new patriotism, but (and it is a big but) go deeper into the wells of the Australian spirit.

To be spiritually Australian for the 21st century is to redream the dream of the pioneering visionaries of the 19th century.

AN AUSTRALIAN PROMISE

The Australian Promise envisaged Australia with its resources achieving a lifestyle conducive to a just social order. Australia was to be a **European society** drawing upon the rich veins of European culture to nourish a new Australian civilisation, unique and vibrant. There was a feeling that Australia was an identity unto itself. The Eureka Stockade was the 'birthplace' of that identity; men of the old European Nations fought together as a new Nationality. Such was the faith of the Nationalists 1880-1910; but Australia's history has failed to live to the Promise.

That "Promise" for Australia lies in the political program of Australian Nationalism.

As in the past, establishment forces have no commitment to any Australian identity or national democracy or social justice. The old establishment crushed the Shearers Strike with armed violence and conceded White Australia only under mass pressure. The new establishment would criminalise patriotism to achieve its "Asian destiny". The old Eureka tradition however, teaches the pathway.

Many years have elapsed since the roaring days of gold, the Ballarat Reform League, the miners mass meetings and the short and sharp clash at Eureka Stockade; but the fighting spirit of the men of 1854 and their patriotic impulse inspires us still. We would do well to reaffirm their oath "by the Southern Cross" "to defend our rights and liberties" and remember their fight made us much of what we are.

Australian Nationalists draw strength from these stirring events of the Australian past; when it came to choose a symbol for our sacred trust, it could only have been the Southern Cross. This flag did not perish at Eureka but rose at the great Sydney Maritime Strike (1878) against foreign (Asian) labour and at the Shearers camps in Barcaldine in Queensland (1891). It is a thin blood-line which ties our present to our past. Thirty diggers died at Eureka for national independence and inspired patriots of their time directly into the independence struggle until it was sidetracked by Federation.

Nationalists of today identify as heirs to the early tradition. Let us carry it forward - to victory! To the total national independence of Australia - the National Republic.